

Sight Unseen

By ChibiJaime

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The latest in the Flash legacy, Wally West is content in the knowledge that he will always be fast enough. But when something starts attacking him, something no one else can see and he can't outrun, will his confidence stand up to the test?

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Chapter 1 - Night and Day

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1 - Night and Day

*Most of this is based on the JLU cartoon, but small inferences are taken from the comics and books (i.e.: I kept Wally's original back-story and J'onn is a fan of Oreos, as well as the inclusion of Linda Park, who **was** in one episode... and Wally going public with his identity with Linda's help, from the Flash novel). Other than that, this is pretty much cartoon based. I'm sorry this first chapter is so short, too! I promise the next one will be longer.*

I have this weird thing about picking on Wally. I have no idea why. Oh well. Enjoy!

--Sight Unseen--

-Part One - Night and Day-

Somehow, running had always been his escape. Even as a child, before summers with his Aunt Iris, before Barry, before the incident. As long as he could remember, Wally West had run. He had seen from his early years the heroes of the Golden Age. Hal Jordan, the Green Lantern. J'onn J'onzz, the Martian Manhunter.

Barry Allen, who was his uncle by marriage. The Flash. His hero.

He had often dreamed of running toe to toe with the speedster who wore the crimson costume, a lightning bolt emblazoned proudly on his chest, the stylized wings of Mercury on the cowl. His aunt had made meeting his childhood hero a reality. A somewhat fortuitous chain of events and an unexpected accident had made him more. He had become the protg to his hero due to an accident identical to the one that granted Barry his speed... and did the same for him.

But Barry was dead now. He had run himself to death and become one with the Speed Force, the singularity and existence of all things. A place only speedsters who obtained and broke the speed of light itself would ever see.

No speedster had ever stood at that brink and lived to tell of it. None but him. None but Wally West, who had taken on the mantle of the Flash shortly after the death of Barry Allen. Within that year, the Justice League was formed. In a few more, a desperate Wally West had run faster than the speed of light to defeat Luthor-Brainiac.

These days, he knew Barry would be pleased with his actions, and in that knowledge, he carried the mantle just as proudly. Things had calmed. With the League on top of things as they were apt to be, he had taken time to slow his *life* down. Unafraid, he had begun a relationship with television reporter Linda Park. She was the first person to know, outside of the League, his face beneath the cowl. She had stood beside him when he revealed to the world that the cheerful and enthusiastic forensic scientist Wally West and the bold and super fast Flash were one in the same.

And things only kept getting better, it seemed. Just the other day, his closest friends had thrown him and Linda a party. An engagement party, to be exact. The untamable Wally West had finally been tamed, and in a little under a year would be getting married. Linda had shown a great deal of ease in the face of some of the giants and legends of the superhero business. Superman and the Green Lantern were there, as well as a somber-faced J'onn J'onzz (who, to Wally's amusement, Linda had quickly won over with a piece of her famous Oreo cheesecake). Even the elusive Batman put in a brief appearance. He, Wally was aware, had been the least approving of Wally's openness with his identity, but he congratulated him all the same on the engagement.

It was the arrival of Shayera Hol, once known as Hawkgirl, that truly pleased Wally. He had been

an only child, so sibling relationships were outside his experience, but very shortly into their friendship, the Thanagarian had all but adopted him as a younger brother of sorts. Shayera, he noted often, was probably one of the bravest people he knew, and he both respected and admired her for that. She was like the sister he never had, and much to his relief, Linda seemed to pick up on this and welcomed her openly.

Now, days later, he was relaxed. Lying in bed with the single most gorgeous woman in the world spooned against his stomach and chest, Wally was perfectly content. He was Wally West. He was the Flash. He was a speedster, the third in the Flash Legacy... and he knew he would always be fast enough.

It was as he was falling asleep that he heard it. A faint, terrible scratching at the edge of his consciousness. Feeling irritated, and at the same time unnerved, the scarlet speedster lifted his head. The sound faded and he saw nothing. Linda must've felt him move, as she mumbled, shifting to glance back at him through a fall of ebon hair. "Wally?" she inquired, voice still heavy with sleep. "Everything okay?"

Wally blinked, then smiled down at her and, for a moment, marveled at his good fortune, sound forgotten. Then, he flashed one of his most charming grins. "Everything's fine, sweetheart," he countered, kissing her shoulder. "Go back to sleep. I know you've gotta be at work early."

It didn't take Linda long to comply, and Wally made an attempt to follow suit, settling next to her. But he no more had his head on the pillow than the scratching began anew, louder this time... closer.

This time, Linda didn't even flinch.

Wally was out of the bed and around the room to check before Linda drew her next breath, and in the hall before she let it out. He moved on towards the living room, then, senses accelerating at a rate proportionate to his speed to keep up with his swiftness of motion.

Something was in his apartment.

Somehow, the faster he moved, the louder the noises became... and then he saw it. Was it a figment of the dimly lit flat as he moved? No. It stayed as he slowed, lingering before him. Dark and menacing, almost viscous, swaying like a living shadow, its hollow eyes - how could he even tell they were eyes? - burning into him with all the hatred something that seemed to be so *unreal* could muster.

By the time he stopped, he was some five feet from the thing. Only two or three seconds, if that, had passed since he'd left the bedroom on the other side of the apartment. The thing remained, lingering and cold.

/If it lunges,/ Wally thought, /I can outrun it. It's moving like gravity is too much for it./

His muscles tightened, ready to move, but it didn't take more than that. As if his movement had broken some ethereal hold on the creature, it was on him, even as he made to run out of the way. He cried out, startled, and crashed into an end table, his skull cracking hard against the arm of the couch as he fell, its claws tearing at his chest and arms...

And then, blackness.

Wally woke to the sound of Linda screaming his name between sobs, alternating between cupping his face and swabbing his cheeks and forehead with a damp cloth. He could tell someone else was there as well, but his vision was still far too blurry to tell who it was.

It took a moment or two to find his voice, croaking out all he could think to. "Linda...?"

"Oh my God, Wally...!" That was Linda again, sobbing. "Oh God oh God... baby, are you okay...?!"

The speedster groaned. "Something... there was something *here*... it..." He hissed softly in pain. His head hurt something fierce. "How did I get away?"

"You were alone when we found you." Now he know the other presence. J'onn. His vision was starting to clear and he could make out the form of the Martian standing above him. "I felt your terror and immediately made my way here. Linda was to you before I was, however..." He pointed at the door. "I did knock."

Linda had a weak smile on her face. "I had no idea your friends were so polite, sweetie." She sniffled softly, and when Wally shifted, she fluttered, trying to brace him. "Oh, don't move... your head--"

"My head? My chest has to be worse... and my arms." He blinked. His eyes were finally focusing now and he could see the baffled expression both J'onn and Linda wore. "...what?"

J'onn shook his head. "Your chest and arms are untouched, but you have a concussion. Perhaps a night terror? You may have been sleep walking."

The expression on the speedster's face was shocked. "But... no! I... I *know* I was awake! I saw it and... whatever it was, it jumped at me! I felt the claws... it was trying to rip me apart! I couldn't get away from it!"

"Baby, maybe you're delusional from hitting your head..." Linda murmured, stroking back his mussed red hair. "Maybe we should get you to the hospital..."

"The concussion should not be that severe, Linda," J'onn was soothing. "I would, however, like to perform a mental scan... if Wally will permit."

Linda gave her fianc a terribly worried look and the speedster, looking surprisingly vulnerable in a muscle shirt and boxers, gave a sigh and a weary grin. "I don't think I have a choice."

His arrival at the Watchtower went mostly unnoticed as most everyone was otherwise occupied. John Stewart, the Green Lantern, he knew must be with Shayera. He was glad they'd patched things up. Batman would undoubtedly be prowling Gotham at this hour, and if Diana wasn't with him, she was likely on duty in the Monitor Womb. Clark Kent? He was willing to bet good money that he was with Lois Lane.

Which left everyone that hardly ever noticed him anyway... and J'onn, who was carefully bracing his otherwise injured teammate. Wally was feeling very sick to his stomach, and despite having changed into his costume save for the cowl, which stayed pushed back, he still felt horribly cold.

"Are you all right, Flash?" Up here, J'onn seemed all business. He couldn't recall a time the Manhunter had called him "Wally" while in the Watchtower. "You feel feverish."

That made Wally blink and he turned a curious expression on the Martian. "Feverish?" He laughed a little. "J'onn, if you really wanna know, I'm absolutely freezing."

J'onn arched his thick brow. "I see. Probably a side effect of the concussion, then." He said little else as he helped Wally to a dimly lit room where he could better access the speedster's mind, without risk of distraction. "Wally, I must have your complete consent. I cannot do this in sound mind without that."

Wally gave a slight nod. "J'onn, that was one of the most terrifyingly real things I've experienced in a long time. This may be the only way to prove it. Something attacked me, in my own apartment. I want to get to the bottom of this before it hurts Linda."

J'onn nodded. "Then let us begin."

Twenty minutes later, J'onn finally withdrew his hands from Wally's head, and his expression was troubled. "I could find nothing."

The speedster blinked. "Nothing? At all?"

"I spent twenty minutes searching, Flash. I assure you... there was nothing concerning whatever happened to be seen. I am more convinced now than ever that you were dreaming, and walking in your sleep."

Immediately, Wally shook his head. "I don't believe that could be the *only* answer, J'onn! Couldn't

there be something you're missing?"

For a long moment, the Martian Manhunter regarded him rather calmly, although his expression remained just as distraught as it had been when he released his comrade from the mental scan. "Doubtful. Although I do find it quite odd that I found *nothing*. I should have at least seen memories..."

That last statement rankled Wally far deeper than his simple encounter with the mysterious *other*. The strange being that had no shape or persona had been a fear he could put a face on, but the fact that it seemed like he was going insane? That wasn't something that sat well with him. He fidgeted slightly and J'onn frowned, resting a hand on his shoulder. "Wally." The fact that the Martian had used his real name brought the Flash's attention around again, and he glanced at J'onn quietly. "I will look into the matter. Right now, it is best that you get some sleep. Even with your accelerated metabolism, the blow to your head will probably have you out of sorts for a day or two. We will see to it that your area is seen to until you are well."

That didn't sit well with Wally either, but he said nothing. When one of the League was injured, someone would usually pick up the slack in their home turf until they were well enough to take up again, and in his case, it was usually Shayera. He nodded, slightly, and sighed. "All right, J'onn. I... *really* hope you're right... that I'm just imagining things." He gave a weak smile. Right now, all he wanted to do was *sleep*. "Beam me home."

The next morning, he discovered Linda had called in to work, letting one of the other reporters cover for the day to opt for taking care of her superhero fianc. He smelled the coffee, decaff without question, and the very subtle hint of that perfume she liked to wear, and both served to be an excellent catalyst for bringing him back to the waking world. That and what smelled very much like chocolate chip waffles.

"Hey... good morning, there, sleepyhead." He turned his head towards the door, noticing her peeking in. "I was starting to think you'd sleep all day."

Wally blinked, a bit puzzled for a moment. He was home, in bed, in his muscle shirt and boxers, but... when had he gotten there? When had he changed? "When did I...?"

"Sometime last night. I heard you come home and get in the bed. When I got up, though, I saw how tired you looked even sound asleep and decided I'd stay home to take care of my man." She walked over to brush back his hair, giving him a kiss on the forehead. "I'm making waffles, and there's coffee already on. Decaff, of course."

The speedster gave a tired smile, tilting his chin up slightly. "Mmh. I knew I made a good choice when I proposed to you, sexy. C'mere."

Linda squeaked, hopping out of the way when he made a swipe for her before sticking her tongue out at him. "No way, fleet feet. I've got waffles on the iron that I'm not gonna let burn. But if you behave, I'll bring you breakfast in bed." Smiling, she gently tousled his hair, which reminded Wally all too sorely that he still had a horrible headache. "Just hang in there, baby."

As she made her way back to the kitchen, Wally sighed and sunk back against the pillows again. Had he really imagined the monster in the living room? Was he dreaming? Walking in his sleep during a nightmare he just couldn't wake up from?

Why had it all seemed so real? He could still see those hollow eyes burning right at him, as if he was the only thing in the world the thing despised. That he, Wally West, was the only thing it wanted to destroy.

But why? It hadn't been an intelligent creature, just a malignant force of... dark. That was the best way he could think to describe it. Sighing, he flopped his arm over his eyes, groaning. He needed to stop thinking right now, but the image of that thing was firmly burned into his mind and he just couldn't get it out.

The next thing he was aware of was Linda sitting down on the edge of the bed next to him, moving his arm. "C'mon, sleeping beauty... breakfast."

Had he fallen asleep again? Blinking somewhat blearily, Wally smiled up at her and shifted so that he was sitting up, leaning back against the headboard. "You'll be happy to know I'm technically off-duty for a few days. I'll have to call work."

"Already did that." Linda was smiling as she placed a lap tray, complete with waffles, syrup, and a cup of decaff, over his legs. "They're a bit more understanding since they know who you are now."

The speedster nodded, and he was careful not to burn through his breakfast as quickly as he tended to at times. *Not* eating fast was something he'd trained himself in. He could only hope he had the patience to stand still through a thirty minute wedding ceremony. It would look pretty awful if the groom was fidgeting.

"I think I'll go check on my tux today," he was saying between bites, head slightly lowered. When Linda gave him a look, he smiled. "I promise no running. I'll take it easy. Besides, I think if I tried right now my poor, abused head would explode."

Chuckling, Linda kissed the side of his head. Seemed she'd already eaten. "Well, just be careful, okay? I'm making chili for dinner, and I'd like you home in one piece."

Wally laughed slightly, reaching out to turn his reporter's face for a full kiss. "Don't worry, gorgeous. Shayera's keeping an eye on town while I'm out, and I'll be extra careful. What could go wrong?"

Central City was just about as quiet as Wally had ever seen it, which put him in surprisingly good spirits. With every passing minute, his encounter the previous night was seeming more and more like a bad dream. Perhaps J'onnn just couldn't see it because he'd blocked it out, despite how vivid the memory seemed.

His tux, he was happy to see, was coming along nicely. He and Linda had opted for four people total in the wedding party, two for her and two for him, which suited both side fine. They both had one person chosen by the other, and one chosen by them... although Wally had found it quite amusing how vehemently Shayera had protested having to wear a bridesmaid dress. He knew she was mostly teasing, but it had been downright hilarious when he'd first proposed the idea.

It was nice walking through town and having people still greet him as they had before they'd known he was the Flash. Most everyone now, though, knew his name.... he made sure people knew that *out* of uniform, he very much preferred to be called Wally. "Flash" always sounded too formal when he was casually dressed.

He'd seen Shayera earlier on a flyover, but she hadn't spotted him. All the best, he supposed. He would start thinking about *that* job then, and he couldn't really do for that.

At first, he thought he was imagining it. That somewhere, in all the hustle and street noise, the scratching had a different origin.

It became very clear as he came to a stop on the sidewalk that it wasn't. Something was *making* that noise, something nearby. Very nearby.

Frowning, he turned staring down the alley next to him, and there it was. Standing, or maybe floating, at the dead end opposite, its plasmic form shifting this way and that. Again, it moved as if weighted down by gravity, and Wally was almost afraid to even flinch. Last time he had tensed, and it was on him before *he* could blink. A feat, to be certain.

The strange thing was, he was standing perfectly still, and he could see people glancing into the alley and looking at him as if he were mad. What was he staring at, they were wondering. Couldn't they see it there?

The thought made his brow furrow, and again, the small movement unleashed the creature's fury. Wally tried to outrun it... tried to accelerate out of the way, to move before it reached him, but before he

could, it was again on him, ripping and tearing. He stumbled, trying to fight it off, and the world was suddenly he and the creature as he accelerated rapidly, trying to throw it off as he backpedaled. In his haste, however, he hadn't noticed the curb, and when his heel hit the edge, it sent him tumbling backwards into the street. The fall knocked the wind out of him, and almost immediately he decelerated rapidly.

All in the fraction of a second, he'd made himself look as if he'd just jumped in the street.

And with sudden horror, he realized that the terror that thing had left in him made every muscle in his body near rigid. He couldn't move. He couldn't accelerate; he couldn't run out of the way.

This was all the worse, for no more than twenty feet from him was a semi bearing down with no chance of stopping in time...

To Be Continued