

The retired hero led us further into the field, which to our eyes, was completely empty. I could tell Wally was struggling not to call him out for leading us to what looked like nowhere, his logical side at war with the rest of him. About thirty feet into the field, our patience was rewarded as a seam appeared in the air, and a medieval-style wooden door was suddenly in front of us. It creaked open to let Kent and Flash walk in, the rest of us stuck, staring at the doorway. When Kent realized we weren't following, he turned back and chuckled.

"It's not as weird as it looks. The building is just invisible," He explained, snapping his fingers with a smile. "See for yourself."

From the ground up, a massive tower was revealed, the tan stone structure going up higher and higher until eventually ending with a large parapet on top. In hindsight, it did make the suddenly visible door less disturbing, as I already knew from experience that invisibility was possible, even easy on some level. In contrast, doorways leading to possible dimensional shenanigans were a lot more disconcerting.

"There's gotta be a SEP field or something on this..." Wally said as we all stared up at the structure. "No way it does not make national news every time it de-cloaks."

"It does, actually," Kent explained. "It's not called that, but it does the same thing."

"You've read Hitchhiker's Guide?" Wally asked, looking back down and stepping into the building, prompting the rest of us to follow. "You don't strike me as the science fiction type."

"Ehh, fantasy books are either too boring or too close to reality to enjoy," He explained, turning back to lead us further into his home. "Science fiction, though, that's something new."

"Huh..."

We followed him into a rather large foyer, decorated in the style of an older mansion, with dark wood paneling and large portraits on the wall, and an even bigger chandelier hanging from the ceiling. I could see several closed doors and a large staircase leading to a second-floor landing that I couldn't quite see into.

"So much for no dimensional shenanigans," I muttered, Artemis, M'gann, and Kaldur turning to me with questioning looks. "This room is way too big for the tower we saw outside. It might fit, but there's no way you would have space for so many rooms."

They followed my gestures to a nearby door, eyes going wide when they realized I was correct. I turned to look at Wally, Flash, and Kent, who were already at the top of the stairs. The older mage looked back at us and nodded, which told me he was probably listening in somehow.

"And the decor is kind of tacky," I said mentally to M'gann, watching the older man closely. "Might as well be wearing wizard robes and call himself Dumbledore."

"What? I think it looks nice," M'gann responded. "Though I guess it does kind of lack the homey feeling...."

"Sorry, I was testing if he could listen in on us," I explained, sending her a mental hug. "He is listening to our audible conversations somehow."

"What? Why?" M'gann asked, her surprise coming through our connection despite her keeping calm externally. "Why would he do that?"

"Probably something to do with the tower," I guessed. "It's common in stories that a wizard's tower is connected to them through magic... I know he inherited this place through Dr. Fate, but he must be connected to it."

We followed the other three up the stairs, M'gann explaining to the rest of the team that Kent could likely hear us wherever we were. It wasn't that important, but still something worth letting everyone know.

Kent Nelson led us across the second-floor landing, stopping in front of a large, ornately carved door. It was inlaid with several different metals, two I easily recognized as gold and silver. He tapped a few spots with the head of his cane, and the door unlocked with a loud thunk sound that reverberated through the hall. The door cracked open down the middle and Kent stepped in, all of us following behind.

This new room was even larger than the first, though ninety percent of it was empty space. A huge, clean, unpolished, and completely solid white marble slab sat in the middle of the room, set down into the floor by half a foot. Along the furthest walls were a few bookshelves, two desks, and even more shelves filled with crates, various items, boxes, jars, and bags, all stacked neatly. As we all stepped into the room, the door shut behind us with a heavy clunk, sealing itself shut again. Instinctively I tried to sink my energy into the stone floor, only to find I couldn't penetrate it in the slightest. Kent immediately turned around and gave me a look when I did, however.

"I would appreciate you not trying to redecorate my house with your earthmoving," He said. "But we should talk when all of this is done. It's been a long time since I've felt that kind of energy."

I looked at him with wide eyes, not expecting him to respond like that. I hadn't meant to do that, but the fact that he recognized the energy was a big deal. I wanted to immediately push him for more information, but after glancing at Wally, I simply nodded my head. Wally needed this way more than I needed to sate my own curiosity.

According to Kent, the first step was scanning Wally to find what was causing his instability and what made him different from his mentor. Kent had them both of them stand

against the blank wall to the right of the entrance, before taking a circular, golden device down from a shelf. When he reached out to grab it, he let go of his cane, and instead of it falling to the ground, it just floated there, following him as he carried the golden circle closer to the hero and his protege.

The device was an inch-thick circle of golden metal, with runes carved around it on the top, bottom, and sides, and a thick green transparent material in the center. He carried the device until he was about seven feet away from the speedsters before releasing it, the device floating in the air in front of them. He then put his hand on the transparent materials and started muttering. About a minute after he began muttering, the device glowed and projected a ray of pale green light that encompassed both heroes.

The green light beam shifted and moved, almost like it was pulsing in intensity. After about thirty seconds, the beam shut off, and the device slowly sank to the ground before projecting upwards. This time it was a very Clarke tech-looking display of both heroes, side by side. The scans had clearly penetrated through their bodies, but rather than looking for bones or biology, it seemed to have focused on more ethereal concepts.

On one side was an image of the Flash. He had a red and golden-yellow energy radiating and coiling around a soft pale light that glowed in his chest. The red and yellow energy seemed to pulse out through his entire body evenly, permeating every fiber of his being. It even spread around him, giving him an aura of red and gold that seemed to breathe, pushing out before sinking back into his skin. It was calm, balanced and consistent.

Wally's scan was a lot more chaotic.

Where the Flash's scan was calm and rhythmic, Wally's was off-kilter, seemingly random. He was radiating the same amount of energy, if not more, but it came out wildly, spraying out of his body before fading away completely, unlike his mentors, which seemed to sink back into himself. What energy his body kept seemed didn't permeate evenly, most of it sinking into his limbs, with almost none in his head and only a small amount spread out in his torso.

"Well, kid, I think you can see what your problem is for yourself," Kent said, looking up at the projection. "The connection is attached to your soul, just as the Flash's is, but your body isn't absorbing most of what's coming through. I assume you can't speed up your mind like he can?"

"No, not at all," He said faintly, staring up at the projection, eyes wide. "Last time I tried, I was out for two days."

"Mhmm. Alright, let's see the actual connection," he said, raising a hand out and chanting a few quick words.

The runes around the golden circle glowed for a second, and the images shifted, both zooming in to focus on the light glow in both of their chests. It cycled through a half dozen colors before stopping, flickering, and seeming to lock on to what it was looking for because the pale light glow in each recording was now outlined by a red and gold sparkling halo.

"Right... Well, the good news is your souls are fine," Kent explained, focused intently on the projection. "In fact, the connection to this extra plane might have even made them stronger. It's not uncommon for chosen champions, which explains a lot about why your connection hasn't killed you,"

"KF... you don't look so good...." Artemis said, clearly worried.

Where Flash's soul was stable and in seeming harmony with the connection, the gold and red energy in tune with the flow of his soul, both slowly growing and ebbing in tune, Wally's was entirely out of whack. His soul still thrummed in a steady rhythm, but the gold and red energy was on a completely separate tempo, erratic as it bulged and shrunk chaotically. The connection almost seemed to chug under strain, faltering before slowly returning to normal, only to repeat the process moments later.

"No, the red and gold energy isn't his soul. It's the connection to the plane or, more specifically, the transition point into the energy that fuels his powers. His connection is unstable and chaotic, poorly formed, and extremely inefficient. It's a wonder he can use his abilities at all," Kent explained, shaking his head. "The good news is, I'm pretty sure we can fix this. The bad news is that this will be a massive work of magic. I won't be able to do it alone, and the list of people I trust with this level of magic is a short list."

"What about Zatara?" The Flash asked. "He should be at League headquarters right now."

"Zatara... would work. He doesn't specialize in rituals, but my magic works well with his, he is a powerhouse, and he knows the rules. I could coach him through the rest."

"What about the mages of Atlantis?" Kaldur asked, stepping forward. "We have several mages capable of great ritual works."

"If they have the right qualifications and their magic is compatible with Zatara's and my own, then yes, they would likely work," Kent responded.

"Then I need to make a call," Kaldur said. "Prepare the ritual. I will call my king and ask for his aid. How many ritual experts do we need?"

"One very powerful would be preferred, it makes the ritual easier to balance," The older man explained. "After that, we would need five more to make seven."

Wally, who had been looking up at the magic recording of his soul and his powers, looked around at his mentor and old friend, looking lost but hopeful. The Flash stood nearby, hand at his ear, already reaching out to the League for assistance, while Kaldur had pulled out his phone and was dialing his own mentor and king.

While they were talking into their communication devices, Kent made his way toward us, corralling Wally as well.

"There's a burger joint down the road. They serve the best milkshakes in the state," He said, patting Wally's back. "Why don't you guys get something to eat? I have all the information I need to put the ritual together, but setting it up and getting everyone together is going to take some time."

"That sounds like a good idea," I agreed with a nod. "C'mon guys, let's leave everyone to their work. When Kaldur finishes getting in touch with his people, send him after us."

The older man nodded before reaching into his pocket and pulling out a stack of papers and a pen. He quickly jotted down something before handing it to me and repeating the process. I looked down, recognizing some Japanese Kanji written on them, though I had no idea what they actually said.

"There, that should keep people from prying into your business, should work for a few hours."

I nodded and stuck the impromptu talisman into one of my pockets, the rest of the team following suit. We then made our way out of the tower, the front door closing after we had all stepped out.

The group was quiet for most of the walk to the burger place, with most of us just wondering how this would all turn out. Eventually, though, Artemis started us talking.

"My mom robbed a bank near here, I think," She said nonchalantly, looking around while the entire group stopped to stare at her.

Before anyone could follow up with a question, Wally started to laugh, prompting the rest of us to do so as well. When we finally arrived at the burger place, some of the tension had burned away, and we spent the next few hours eating and killing time. Kaldur joined us eventually, explaining that Aquaman had promised everything they needed and that Zatara had already arrived by the time he left.

We killed a bit more time, letting Aqualad eat and Wally have his second massive cheeseburger and third milkshake, before finally heading back to the Tower of Fate. This time the front door appeared without prompting, opening up as we stepped onto the field. We headed back up to the ritual room, where the door was already opened. Inside were quite a few more people than when we had left. The Flash was still there, as well as a man I recognized to be

Zatara. Aquaman and three other Atlanteans had also arrived, two of which were around our age, while the third was an older woman. While the League members were in the far corner of the room, the three new Atlanteans turned to us as we walked in.

"My Queen, when I asked for aid..." Kaldur started to say, but the red-headed Atlantean, the Queen and Aquaman's wife stepped forward and put her hand on his shoulder.

"Kaldur, please. You needed a ritualist who could meet Zatara and Kent Nelson for power. Who else would come but me?" She said, her hand coming up to pat his cheek. "Besides, this is as much a favor to you as it is to the Flash and his protege. I would never say no."

"Thank you, my Queen," Kaldur said, bowing to his queen before turning to the side and gesturing to us. "These are my friends and teammates. Robin, Miss Martian, Ice, Snapshot, Superboy, Skarn, my fellow leader, and Kid Flash, the man of the hour."

"It is good to meet you all. My husband has spoken of many of you, particularly of recent successes and proving yourselves capable heroes," Queen Mera of Atlantis said with a regal smile. "These are my personal apprentices, Tula and Garth. They wished to accompany me to witness the ritual. It has been some time since I have participated in a ritual of this scale."

I could see Kaldur resisting the urge to look at the other two. I could only imagine he knew both of them and was hesitant to acknowledge them for some reason. I made a mental note to ask about it later.

"So this... isn't a small thing?" Wally asked with a wince.

"No ritual on a living person is ever easy," She explained, turning back to the large slab of unpolished white marble. "And dealing with something bound to your soul only makes this even more difficult. That, as well as the apparent depth of the connection and the amount of energy passing through it, only further complicates things. And what is the cost of complications in a ritual?"

She turned to look at the younger female Atlantean, who, unfortunately, was looking at Kaldur and took a moment to realize we were all looking at her.

"Oh! Sorry, the more complicated a ritual is, the less energy efficient it is," She explained as if she was repeating information she had memorized. "Those involved with the ritual must hold it active while the magic has time to pass through the ritual. Otherwise, it will collapse from the strain or even rebound."

"Precisely. Now, Kid Flash, I believe the last thing we need to complete the ritual is the tying marks, which in this case, we decided would need to be done in a mixture of electrum and your blood," She explained, turning to the speedster with a smile. "Just a little over a pint should

do, so why don't we make our way over to Kent Nelson so we can get that done. The rest of you, take a seat. Garth, Tula, stay with them."

Queen Mera reached out and grabbed Wally's wrist, who was now looking at her with nervousness that bordered on horror. The royal Atlantean led the young speedster away, leaving us alone near the entrance to the room.