Leaps And Bounds

by Earthiana

Summary

Barry treats Wally like his own kid because, well, he might as well be. He wasn't aware this extends to his team.

OR

Wally fluff over the years.
Meeting Bruce

Wally tiptoes down the stairs, frowning to himself. His Uncle Barry’s new friend doesn’t seem very nice and Wally really likes his uncle, so he’s checking up on them, just to make sure there’s no fighting.

As perceptive as Barry Allen seems to be, he fails to notice the tuft of red hair scrambling down the staircase and into the corridor.

In the kitchen, Wally’s uncle talks with a big looking man. Now, Barry is big but he’s big like an adult. His friend, however, is big like a wrestler and Wally wonders if maybe he looks like one of his action figures. Then again, he might not be strong. Big people aren’t always strong, he knows.

Uncle Barry is strong, even if he’s thin.

“I haven’t spoken to Clark about it, but—”

“Shh.” The man silences Uncle Barry. Wally doesn’t like that. If Uncle Barry is big and strong and, well, an adult, then why is this man telling him what to do?

Wally doesn’t run away when his uncle pokes his head out of the open doorway, smiling at Wally gently.

“Hey, Kid.” Barry approaches Wally with fast, excitable footsteps. Barry moves in leaps and bounds. His hands hold Wally by his sides, lifting him into the air and onto Barry’s hip. “What’re you doing down here? I thought you were playing upstairs?”

Wally sends his gaze to the new man, resting his head on Barry’s shoulder as he maintains an uneasy eye contact.

The man’s features are dark, Wally notices. With his blond, blue-eyed uncle and red-haired, green-eyed aunt, it’s an immediate difference. The only other person with dark features Wally knows intimately is his dad and Wally does not like his father.

Barry bounces him, even though he’s too old for being held (in his mother’s opinion). “Wally, this is Bruce. Say hello, Kiddo.”

Wally doesn’t speak. In fact, he buries his face in Barry’s shoulder and wraps his arms around his uncle’s neck.

“Wally’s a little shy.” Barry explains over his red hair, then nudges Wally’s cheek with his finger. “Walls, Bruce is really nice.”

Wally sticks his head up this time and, surprisingly, is rewarded with a small smile from the scary man.

“Hello, Wally.” ‘Bruce’ offers.

Clearly, this is a nice man like Barry, then. As opposed to a not nice man like his daddy.

Encouraged, Wally stretches out his arms for Bruce, pawing at the tie around his neck. Wally likes red, and he doesn’t think this man suits it the way his uncle does but it’s still nice to look at.

The tie is rough to touch when Wally tugs on it.
Bruce slips the thing from around his neck without hesitation and Wally really starts to worry. His nails dig into his uncle’s shoulder in fear as Bruce approaches with the loop. He shies away, closing his eyes, but the man places it on his head like a bandana. It doesn’t touch his neck.

Barry bounces him some more, smiling in encouragement.

Wally reaches up to touch the tie with both hands, adjusting its position. Once again, Wally paws at Bruce. This time, he manages to touch the man’s cheek before he moves away.

“I should be going,” Bruce announces.

Barry nods beside Wally, giving a short wave as he follows Bruce towards the front door.

“Bye-bye.” Wally says because he’s a good boy.

Bruce smiles at him again, just a little. “Bye-bye, Wally.”

His uncle laughs, closing the door when Bruce leaves. The boy reaches for Uncle Barry’s hair, taking some in his hand to look at. Barry doesn’t seem annoyed with him, he never does, as he bounces Wally again.

“Well, Kiddo, you’ve won Uncle Bruce over.” Barry chuckles to himself. “We have some time before Auntie Iris comes home, should we make some yummy cookies?”

He nods, eyes lighting up. Barry’s the best chef.

Wally turns his head to the front door as Barry carries him away, wondering about Bruce. Uncle Bruce, Barry said.

Maybe Bruce is Barry’s family?
Wally’s excited when Barry has a house party. It’s an adult party which means it isn’t really a party, it’s a gathering.

And Wally isn’t really sure where Uncle Barry gathered these people but he’s assured that they’ve all been dying to meet him.

The first to arrive is a happy-looking man that reminds Wally of his uncle.

So when Wally answers the door and finds a grinning man in a green shirt, he latches onto his leg immediately and doesn’t really expect to be in trouble.

“Wally!” Barry shouts, horrified, from the top of the stairs. It’s ok because Barry’s shouts are calls. “What have I told you about talking to strangers?”

Wally doesn’t want to leave this new man, though, so he clutches tighter as he sends a shy look to his uncle.

“Wally, I see you’ve met Hal.” Barry hums disapprovingly, then herds Wally back to him.

“He’s got a good grip.” Hal smiles, reaching out quickly to ruffle Wally’s hair or, would have, had the boy not whimpered and jumped behind his uncle.

Wally expects his uncle to tell a lot of people that he’s shy today.

“It’s ok, Walls, Hal’s a nice stranger.” Barry mulls that he might have worried the boy, who is acting jumpier than usual lately. First with Bruce and the tie…

“Why don’t we go inside?” Barry finally suggests. “Wally, why don’t you go bring Hal some of your toys?”

Wally has a lot of toys at his uncle and aunt’s house. They’re nice to him that way. Even though he only stays every weekend, they give him lots of nice things and even bought him a nice bed with no lumpy springs.

Wally searches through his toy chest before finding the little red figure – his favourite Flash toy. The Flash is a big hero in Central City but he sometimes makes trips to Keystone, where Wally’s parents live. Wally always hopes that maybe he’ll come stop his dad from hurting him, but no such luck.

Wally takes the stairs slowly because there are new people here and he’s not certain who’s in charge.

“Uncle Barry?” Wally steps into the living room, startling at the sight of Bruce who emerges at his shoulder.

The boy squeaks and bolts across the room, losing his toy in the process. Wally stops beside his uncle and some more of his friends. Bruce must be the last to arrive.

Wally freezes when the dark man lifts his toy, inspecting it quietly. He crouches on the carpet for a moment, then holds it out for Wally to come and take.

Eagerly, the redhead sprints across the room and almost runs right into Bruce, skidding to a halt.
“Uncle Bruce!” Wally chimes happily, favouring wrapping his arms around the man over actually taking his toy.

“Uncle what?” Hal, in the green shirt, gapes at Barry. Barry’s mouth is also open, however, and it quickly turns into a laugh when Wally explains.

“Uncle Barry said.” Wally claims, pointing at the blond.

“Did he now?” Bruce doesn’t sound anything but normal, however, as he reciprocates the hug with one arm, then pulls back and gives Wally his red toy.

“It’s the Flash!” Wally announces.

“You picked that one, Kid?” Barry laughs, beckoning.

Wally rushes back to his uncle, squirming his way onto the couch to sit beside him and the armrest. A couple of laughs resonate in the room but nothing cruel.

“It’s my favourite because Flash is really fast and he helps people.” As an afterthought: “And he’s red.”

Barry just pats his head, then starts introducing him to people. He’s met Hal and Bruce, but Clark, Diana, and J’onn are new faces. Wally’s not too fond of Clark (he’s even bigger than Bruce) but Diana is very nice to him when he meets her. She doesn’t pinch his cheeks or “aww” like most women do. Instead, she offers a handshake.

“I imagine you’ll become a fine man like your uncle.” Diana tells him, rolling her eyes when Barry appears beside them, rolling on his heels and grinning.

“Shucks, Diana, I’m blushing.” Barry smirks. He does notice that Clark seems a little disappointed because he just loves kids, he and Barry actually have that in common. Instead, Wally drifts towards where J’onn is observing quietly to the side.

He seems to like J’onn, not in the same way that he likes Hal or Bruce, but Wally seems quite comfortable in tugging his sleeve curiously.

“Why are you here?” Wally asks and, just for a moment, J’onn’s heart stops in his chest. How on Earth had the child figured out that—

Oh. In the house.

“My colleagues were curious as to which creature could elicit a kind response from Bruce.” J’onn responds, looking over at Hal in particular.

Wally stares at the man because that’s a lot of words.

“Bud, your uncle was telling us all about how Uncle Bruce was playing with you and we wanted evidence.” Hal laughs, quickly joined by Barry’s chuckles.

Bruce doesn’t look very happy – maybe he wanted to play and Wally’s not talking to him enough?

Wally looks around for his toy and, after a gust of wind that he barely registers, he finds it sitting near him. Pouncing, the redhead grabs his toy and brings it to Bruce, making ‘zoom’ noises with his mouth as he moves the Flash toy through the air.

Bruce takes his phone from the pocket of his suit jacket and crouches beside the boy, drawing up a
video for him to watch.

“That’s the Flash!” Wally exclaims, jumping up and down on the spot. Wally watches the reddish tinge of light zoom through the streets, legs a blur under a slightly more visible body. Bruce touches his phone again and, suddenly, it slows down. Everything moves in slow motion as the red clad figure runs, moving quickly even as the world barely changes in the background.

Then the figure crumples to the ground as the video speeds up, tripping and hitting the road. The red body bounces and tumbles for a while before coming to a halt, face first on his stomach.

Wally stares in horror but then the body gets to his feet and dusts himself off, at which point Wally bursts into little giggles.

“Are you showing him that—Uhh…” Barry sounds angry until Wally looks up, curious. He says nothing and Wally watches as the video replays over and over again.

It’s a good night.
“Noooo!” Wally wails as Barry carries him from the car, Wally’s red backpack slung over his shoulder.

“Wally, it’s just Bruce. You love Bruce.” Barry insists, huffing as they approach the manor. Wally barely registers a new person but it’s not a fact he dwells on.

“I wanna go home!” Wally cries, wiggling.

“Wally, your parents are on holiday and I need to go to work.” Barry bounces his nephew, even though he’s a little heavier to hold now that he’s older. Barry wouldn’t be carrying him now but the boy refused to leave the car.

The sobbing doesn’t stop but at least the screaming does. Wally cries into Barry’s shoulder, clinging on like a monkey, as Barry struggles to place him on the ground. “Walls, don’t be like this. I’ll be back before you know it. But Auntie has the night shift and I have overtime.”

“Don’t leave me, I’ll be good.” Wally cries, grabbing his uncle’s arm desperately.

“Wally, Kiddo, I’ll be back tomorrow.” Barry insists. “I love you so much, Kid. This isn’t a punishment, ok?”

Wally feels like it is as his uncle runs back to the car without him.

“Master Wallace, Sir is—” The new voice announces from beside him. An older man stands, holding his bag and looking as stoic as Bruce does.

Skittish, Wally takes off without listening and bolts out into the expansive gardens. The only problem is that Barry has left him now so Wally takes off into the rows of smelly flowers and hedges. Wally blinks free tears and runs until his legs ache, then some more.

Not looking where he’s going, Wally finds himself tripping over a potted plant.

It doesn’t hurt when he hits the ground but it does shock him out of crying. It shocks something else too – a big, black dog that runs to investigate. Wally scrambles to flee but his chest was already sore before he fell and now he doesn’t think he’s going anywhere.

The dog snorts in his face, pointed ears flicking back and forth as the dog licks the wetness from Wally’s face.

“Dog.” Wally claims, reaching out nervously to touch the furry face of his new friend. The dog licks him more, wiggling around in excitement.

“Wally!” A voice calls.

“Shh!” Wally tells his friend, hoping he’s not in trouble. Unfortunately, the dog starts barking and even gives a short howl.

Seconds later, Bruce runs towards Wally in a pair of sweatpants and a T-shirt. It doesn’t look as fancy as he usually dresses.

“Don’t run off again.” Bruce warns Wally sternly, crouching to assess the situation. He checks Wally briefly for cuts and, satisfied that he won’t have to return Wally to an unhappy Mama Flash, helps
the boy to his feet.

“Good dog, Ace.” Bruce directs at the animal.

“You have a dog!” Wally exclaims excitedly, wrapping his arms around the pet.

“I don’t own the thing, he does as he pleases.” Bruce scowls, then places his hand on Wally’s back. “Come along, no more adventures or your uncle will skin me.”

“Out.” Bruce waves away Ace, as Wally learns he’s called, but he’s so taken with Wally that he follows the child right inside, ignoring Bruce.

“I’m sorry, Uncle Bruce.” Wally offers, shifting uncomfortably.

“Apologise to Alfred for running away.” Bruce waves a hand behind Wally, at the older man Wally recognised from earlier; a greying man with expressive eyes.

“I’m sorry.” Wally ducks his head nervously.

“Apology accepted, Master Wallace.” Alfred gestures to the kitchen. “Now if you both would retire to the dining room.”

“Thanks, Alfred.” Bruce sighs tiredly, herding Wally with him. Who knew kids were such work? Barry makes it look easy.

“Ace!” Wally calls the dog, who bounds towards Wally and snuffles his cheek.

Wally doesn’t eat much for his dinner. He picks at the burger Alfred begrudgingly made him and then sat silently, watching Bruce with his lasagne.

So when it’s time for Wally to go to bed (not long after their late dinner), Bruce is concerned that Wally still hasn’t perked up.

“Do you think Uncle Barry doesn’t want me?” Wally pipes up, right outside one of the manor’s many spare rooms. This one is right next to Bruce’s.

The man in question narrows his eyes; with the way Barry fusses over Wally, how could the child even conceive not being wanted?

“Why do you ask that?” Bruce responds instead, pausing at the door.

“Mommy and Daddy don’t want me.” Wally confesses, lowering his eyes. Ace is still by his side, following closely, so it’s not surprising that the hound starts licking Wally’s hand when he notices how upset the boy is.

“And what makes you say that?” Bruce takes his hand off of the door handle, fully turning to Wally.

“Mommy tells me.” Wally explains, his voice dropping as if scared. “And I try to be good but Daddy keeps…”

Bruce frowns, training his eyes on Wally. “Go on. You can trust me.”
“Daddy hurts me and I don’t know why.” Wally sniffs, tears dripping onto his cheeks. Hot, hurting feelings swell in his chest as Bruce crouches on the floor in front of him. He draws Wally into a hug, not even commenting on his wet face.

“Does your father hurt you often?” Bruce asks over Wally’s head, gently rubbing circles on his back. He feels Wally nodding against his shoulder.

“Alright.” Bruce shifts back, making some space between the two. “I’m proud of you for telling me this, Wally. You should get some rest for now.”

“But…!” Wally stutters, following Bruce into the room.

“Your uncle loves you very much.” Bruce clarifies, guiding the boy towards the large, soft-looking bed with far too many pillows. “Into bed with you now.”

“Can you tuck me in? Uncle Barry tucks me in.” Wally sits on the bed until Bruce relents, finally lying down.

The man draws the sheets over Wally, lightly pressing them in around his figure.

“Uncle Bruce?” Wally squeaks when he starts moving.

“Yes?”

“Can you—Can you stay until I fall asleep?”

Despite the fact that Bruce’s time is very precious, he finds himself perching on the edge of the bed, gently holding Wally’s hand as the boy drifts off. Ace leaps onto the bed from the floor, curling himself into a ball at Wally’s back and resting his furry chin on Wally’s shoulder.

“Goodnight, Wally.”
Bruce piles mini marshmallows into Wally’s hot chocolate because he’s the best uncle ever (ok, second best).

“Ace!” Wally calls on the furry creature, presenting a tiny, pink marshmallow. The dog takes it eagerly, then drops it on the floor, sniffing and snuffling curiously.

“Your uncle is coming to get you at lunch.” Bruce tells Wally, who bounces in his chair eagerly. “Now, about what you told me last night…”

Wally looks down, his mood changing immediately.

“Are you hurt anywhere?” Bruce watches Wally pick marshmallows out of his hot chocolate with interest.

Wally gestures to his chest uneasily, then twists his body away as if to make sure Bruce has no access to Wally’s injury.

“Your chest?”

“Mnhmm.”

Bruce shifts, standing up. He quickly types something into his phone before turning to Wally. “Wally, is it difficult to breathe?”

Wally shakes his head.

“Take a deep breath for me.” Bruce instructs which Wally does, with no visible signs of pain.

Bruce sits with Wally in his living room, the boy tucked in under a blanket beside him. To make up for the unconventional breakfast, he’s watching Wally eat apple slices.

And Bruce isn’t even angry when Barry bursts in unannounced. He races for Wally, collapsing into a puddle of tears in front of the boy. “Oh my god, Wally, are you ok?” He lightly reaches for his nephew, pulling him into a gentle hug. Wally feels tears against his head and frowns in confusion. “I had no idea, Kiddo.”

Barry hugs him for a good minute, dotting kisses over his head between words of love. “If I’d had any idea you were being hurt, Wally…” Barry trails off, then gives Bruce a brief glance and wipes his face, cheeks and eyes bright red. “Wally may need an x-ray.” Bruce stands, facing Barry.

“Well, why aren’t you…!” Barry snaps before freezing. “Oh.”

“So I was thinking I give Wally an x-ray.” Bruce watches as Barry’s mouth falls open. “WaitwhatareyouseriousBats?” The words are a blur but Barry’s just so worried about his delightful, amazing, adorable nephew that he literally gives no fucks.
“Yes.” Bruce turns to Wally, then gives the boy a pleasant smile. “Wally, go get Ace and we’ll have a look at your ribs, ok?”

Wally nods curiously, then toddles to the kitchen. Ace comes at his call and Barry doesn’t even have the time to be happy about that because Bruce is leading them both to the library.

Both Barry and Wally watch as Bruce passes by the books in the old library in favour of the grandfather clock. He moves the hands around the clock’s face when, all of a sudden, the bookshelf draws back and a tiny metal room appears.

It’s only when they step in that Wally realises that the room is, in fact, an elevator.

The compartment moves slowly downwards until the doors open, revealing a large cave full of interesting mysteries. The most interesting of which, Wally finds, is the giant dinosaur, a playing card, and a giant penny.

Wally runs forward to investigate but Barry is in front of his face in a second. “No playing.”

Instead, he reaches for Ace, petting him slowly.

“It’s dangerous, Wally. Bruce might give us a tour later but not now, ok?” Barry explains, one hand reaching out to rest on Wally’s shoulder. Barry’s been pretty fussy since he returned.

When Bruce steps free from the elevator, a storm of bats start flapping their leathery wings, swarming around the network of caves in a flurry.

“Ah, Master Wally, Master Bartholomew.” Alfred emerges, holding a bowl of dead insects and wearing gloves.

“I told you not to call me that, Al.” Barry scoffs, grinning when the older man scowls.

“It seems I do remember, Master Barry.”

“Wassat?” Wally points at the bowl, to which Bruce replies.

“Bat food.” He scowls at the cave walls.

Wally finds a little bat on the ground, looking slightly like a rat. He runs towards it but Barry scoops him up. “Wally! You’ll get unwell.”

“Speaking of which.” Bruce glares.

“No, no. You can’t bring him down here and not tell him.” Barry grins, guiding Wally to stand in front of Bruce, facing him.

“Tell me what?” Wally asks. Bruce has a big house.

“I’m Batman.”

“Wally, you need to sit still.” Barry reminds Wally for the umpteenth time as the child chases around after Bruce’s flowing cape. Sure, the man looks stupid in sweatpants and a cape but Wally’s puppy dog eyes know no bounds.

Wally’s wearing the helmet.
“Can you fly?” Wally asks as Barry tries to pin the child back down, dabbing at his back with antiseptic.

“No, I glide.” Bruce smirks.

“Awesome.”

“Wally.” Barry scolds at more wriggling.

“How do you know Batman?” Wally gapes at his uncle, who suddenly got so much cooler.

“I’ll tell you if you sit still.”

Wally calms down, at least. There are two full minutes of complete silence until Barry cleans him up.

“I’m the Flash.” Barry explains, nonchalant. Wally makes a face, staring straight through Barry to the very core of his soul.

“No way.” Wally accuses, but his uncle surprises him. In a blur of light, Barry moves across the room to where Bruce is standing and, when Wally can finally see him, he’s clad from head to lightning bolt ear things in red and gold.

Wally considers that there might not be enough air in the world to suck in because the gasp he makes is otherworldly. And the resulting squeal.

And… the resulting thud as Wally passes out.
Wally understands the importance of secrets, but Bruce and Barry drum it into his head regardless, expressing that UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES can Wally ever talk about Batman or the Flash. And only when his uncles are content with that does Bruce herd them both out of the Batcave.

Barry is more surprised than anyone that Bruce trusted a kid with any of his secrets, but he usually has a pretty good intuition about these things. Who he trusts, for the most part.

Plus, Wally’s bruised rib turned out to be pretty minor (thank goodness) but it could have been so much worse, so Barry is nothing but thankful to Bruce.

“Bye-bye, Uncle Bruce.” Wally wraps his arms around the tall man, then turns mournfully to Ace. The dog whines when he walks away, clutching to Barry’s arm.

“Hi, Sweetheart.” Iris gives Wally a warm hug when her favourite boys return home. She’s careful not to spill her coffee when she bends to kiss Wally’s head.

“Auntie Iris, Barry took me to see Uncle Bruce and I got to pet his dog an see the,” Wally pauses, remembering his promise, “the really big gardens and the flowers.”

“That sounds fun.” She runs a hand through her hair, smiling even though Barry can tell she’s exhausted.

“Auntie I knows about the Flash, Wally.” Barry explains, ruffling the kid’s hair lightly. His efforts are appreciated, if not necessary. “And Batman.”

“You told him?” Iris gapes, blinking in shock. “Is that wise?”

She doesn’t expect her husband to turn morose.

“Well, Wally told Bruce a pretty big secret. His parents have been hurting him.” Barry frowns, dropping his eyes to the floor. Luckily, he has enough time (he always does) to grab the falling mug before it smashes against the ground, then to look at Iris’ face and recognise that she doesn’t give a damn about spilled coffee.

“What?” She breathes, turning to look at Wally.

It makes so much sense.

And Iris West stares at her nephew, wondering how in the world they never realised – a reporter and the God damned Flash – that their precious little boy wasn’t shy, he was terrified. Is terrified.
“Oh, my baby.” Iris drops to her knees, barely noticing the coffee stains seeping across her skirt, and pulls Wally into a firm hug.

Wally’s not really sure why everyone keeps crying, so he figures that talking is a good idea.

“Bruce’s dog was called Ace and he’s really big with floppy ears and Uncle Bruce even let him sleep in my bed which was nice because his house was kinda cold—” Wally explains, quietening when Iris starts sobbing louder and placing sticky kisses on his cheeks. He glances at Barry, who gives him an unhappy smile, then shuffles his feet.

“I have an idea!” Barry raises one finger emphatically. “Why don’t we make cookies? Maybe this time I can actually eat more than a couple.”

Iris just sends him a smudged-mascara look but Wally seems interested so, instead of going to bed like she should be, they all herd themselves into the kitchen.

Barry wipes stickiness off of Wally face with a wet cloth, smiling knowingly. “Makeup.”

Wally’s amazed at how much his uncle actually eats and starts to feel a little bad that Barry was having to eat secret meals when he’s at their house. Admittedly, the guilt fades away when Wally watches tray after tray of cookie dough being loaded and unloaded from the oven.

It’s amazing when Wally watches Barry just eat and eat and eat, wishing he could eat that many cookies.

Maybe that’s why Barry’s a great chef. Though, maybe it’s because Iris burns everything she touches.

“Hey Walls, what would you think about living here with Auntie and I?” Barry asks over a mouthful of cookie. He swallows, zooms through a couple more in a blur, and then pauses to look at Wally.

“For how long?” Wally asks, feeling full on his second cookie. After all, Bruce did stuff him full of hot chocolate and fruit and it’s only midday.

Iris gives a fond “Really?” look over Wally’s head at Barry. He never ceases to amaze.

“Forever, like a family.” Barry explains, leaning against the countertop. “You won’t be able to stay with your parents anymore.”

“Why not?”

“I think what Uncle Barry means is that you shouldn’t have been living with them in the first place. They were hurting you, Wally.” Iris reaches out to pat the top of his head. “We’d like you to stay with us.”

They don’t need communication to figure it out. Having Wally for even a weekend makes their little family feel so much more whole. Even without the love they feel for Wally, he’s a child who needs a home. Their nephew, but their kid.

“You’ll be my new Mommy and Daddy?” Wally asks, more interested in picking the chocolate out of his cookie and making a mess than actually paying much attention.

“We’ll still be Uncle Barry and Aunt Iris, but you’d be living here and we would be taking care of
you.” Barry catches a lump of cookie that Wally drops, halfway to the floor, and pops it in his mouth with a smile.

Wally reaches out, intrigued, with greasy hands and Barry figures they should clean up, looking around at the messy bowls and sticky trays.

“That sounds like now.”

Barry looks up at Wally, then smiles at the cookie crumbs on his face.

“Yeah, it kinda does.”
If Barry wasn’t already concerned at the sound of his nephew’s screams, Iris’ call for “Barry!” was enough to get him running.

Now that he’s in the upstairs bathroom – the one that actually has a bath – he understands why.

Wally’s clawing at Iris, desperately attempting to scramble out of her grasp.

“Whoa, whoa!” Barry kneels beside his wife and the newest addition to their family. He opens his arms, reaching for Wally, but the kid darts into them readily, grasping the front of his shirt as he weeps. Barry looks to Iris for some kind of hint, at the very least, while talking to Wally. “What’s going on, Kiddo?”

“Don’t wanna.” Is the gist of what Wally has to say, through broken sobs and sniffles. His little hands are cold and shaking but full of force as they clutch onto Barry and don’t let go.

The kid doesn’t like baths, or water in general, and Barry doesn’t really want to think about why that might be. He’s in enough turmoil over Rudolph West and lawyers to add in waterboarding to his list of daily anxieties.

Barry can’t imagine how Wally must have felt, all of those years, but he doesn’t want to think about that either. He’d rather not cry in front of the kid.

“Wally, Wally, Wally.” Barry rubs circles on the child’s back. “I bet, if you’re good, Auntie I will make us some yummy cookies for when we finish.”

Iris gets the hint and strokes a hand through his blonde hair, probably wishing him good luck, before going.

“Now, I know it’s scary, but I’ll help you.” Barry pats the side of the bath.

Wally doesn’t look any more comfortable.

“Y’know, no wonder you don’t like this.” Barry makes a show of boredly splashing the water for the kid. “We’ll have to get you some toys, right?”

Wally peeks up at his uncle, then back at the floor again. “I’m scared.”

Barry sighs. Not a disappointed sigh, like Wally might expect, just a sad, sympathetic sigh. “I know, Kiddo. But you trust me, right?”

Wally’s a little hesitant in undressing for the bath, this dark look coming over his face as he grows quieter. By the time he’s undressed, Barry can see the scars (predominantly across his back and chest).

“Good boy, in we get.” Barry encourages him, then looks across the countertop for Wally’s shampoo. He helpfully points it out.

“That one.” Wally points at the familiar yellow bottle. The water is rippling around him as he shakes with fear. However, the tremors are dying down as he realises that there are, in fact, bubbles in this bath. He’s never had a bubble bath before. It smells nice.

“Awesome.” Barry grins, squirting out a fantastic dollop of yellow goo. He gives it a sniff and

Cookie Monster
decides that, no, it’s not as interesting as he thought it might be.

Upon this realisation, Barry starts to wonder if he should really be the one doing this. Then again, Wally seems to feel safer around his uncle.

“What shall we have today, Sir Wallace?” Barry massages the dollop onto Wally’s head, directing his hair upwards into a bright orange mohawk.

Wally laughs at him, swatting nervously at some bubbles.

“Uncle Barry?” He asks after a moment of contemplation. “Do you like your hair?”

“My hair?” Barry glances up, as if he’ll be able to look at his hair even though it’s too short to see without a mirror. “Is this your way of telling me you don’t?”

“No!” Wally insists, a little abruptly. He shrinks. “Your hair’s bright, like mine and Auntie’s and Mommy’s.”

Barry glances at the soap-laden orange locks. “I like your hair. I like Auntie’s hair, too, she’s very pretty. Where’s this coming from, Kid?”

“I just want normal hair.” Wally laments, looking down at the bubbles.

“Well, you know, you can always dye your hair when you’re older. But it shouldn’t be because of what people think, it should be because you want to look funky.” Barry smirks, grabbing a handful of bubbles and fashioning a beard for himself.

“Auntie says blonds are dumb.” Wally smiles proudly.

“Auntie said what?” Barry gasps, wiping away his ‘beard’. “I’m a genius, just you remember that.”

A few moments later, Barry stands staring at charred lumps of cookie, spread haphazardly across a baking tray.

“I just realised I let you cook.” Barry tells Iris, making her aware of his presence. Soaked with bathwater and covered in stray bubbles, he rushed down to meet the horror of Iris’ burned creations.

Woefully, he takes a bite anyway because, hey, food is food.
“Barr! Little help!” A voice screams from outside. Wally’s watching the window, waiting on his uncle to return with his birthday cake. The big day is coming up and Barry decided to get the thing early, then promised several times that he wouldn’t eat it. So Wally’s watching the window, his green eyes scanning the surroundings for Barry’s minivan. Why he loves that thing, Wally will never know.

The screaming diverts Wally’s eyes to a man who is, amazingly, on fire. As in, the hot stuff that burns flesh. It’s covering him.

So Wally is a little confused but, regardless, the person is running towards the house in a frenzy.

“Hey, Wall, I got your—” Barry speeds in through the back door, leaving a gust of wind in his wake. He pauses, looking at the window, then darts outside. Wally doesn’t know what happened but the man is brought into the house, standing beside Wally and no longer on fire.

Barry catches the cake before it can fall to the ground, then looks inside to check that it’s ok. It is.

“What’s the story this time?” Barry steps towards the coffee table, placing the cake down. He ruffles Wally’s hair on the way back to the mystery man.

“Well, I slept with this hot alien chick and she was hot.” The adult frowns, rubbing his arm gingerly. Unfortunately for him, that’s where Barry slaps him, hard.

“Children, Hal!” He scolds, then herds Wally towards him.

“Huh?” He glances down at Wally, who jumps behind Barry. This strange man is in a green suit, looking rather strange. Then again, Uncle Barry is the Flash and he spends time with a lot of strange people. Wait…

Wally gasps as he recognises Hal for who he is. The meeting is vague in his memory but it’s still there and Wally knows he likes Hal.

“Wait, you told him?” Hal screws up his nose, even as he bends down to high-five Wally. The kid is nervous and his hand is shaking but he partakes.

“Bats told him.” Barry grins, knowing that’ll get a reaction.

“No sh—Mnf!”

When Wally looks up, there’s an apple between Hal’s teeth.

“Anyway, does this mean I have to take you to the Watchtower?” Barry huffs, rubbing his head. “Because I kind of have responsibilities, Hal.”

Hal’s about to ask “Like what?” when he remembers there’s a child living with Barry now.

“You don’t need to come with me.” Hal scowls. As he pulls off his ring, his suit disappears with it. His clothes appear normal once more and Hal looks like any regular adult, to Wally at least.

“I do if you want to get to the zeta tube. It’s in Central City.” Barry corrects. He touches his own ring, changing into his own suit in a red blur.
“But you live in Keystone.”

“I’m the Flash.” Barry grins, looking down as he feels Wally’s little hand reach out and touch his gloved hand. The boy is looking in complete awe at the suit and, now that Barry thinks about it, he hasn’t really shows Wally the suit since he first seen it. “Wally, you up for a trip into space?”

“Really?” Wally jumps up and down, tugging Barry’s arm. It might just be the happiest he’s seen his nephew.

“Sure. I mean, just don’t tell your aunt.”

“I would have much rather got some alien infection than piggy back here.” Hal complains, in his green suit once more, as he, Barry, and Wally all pile into a phone box. It extends into the wall of the building beside them so it sort of looks like the Tardis, to Wally.

Wally glances up at the scanning flash of light that meets his eyes.


The last thing Wally remembers is Barry taking his hand before a shimmering light ensnares them all at once. Frightened, Wally makes an “eep!” sound and squeezes his eyes closed.

The hand in his wriggles a bit. “Walls, you’re ok. Open your eyes.”

He does, hesitantly, and sees a sci-fi looking interior to whatever the Watchtower must be. Everything is greyish as Barry and Hal lead him towards a set of doors. When they slide apart, the image of Batman slowly appears from the shadows. Wally’s a little scared that he might be in trouble as Batman slowly strides towards the boy, his cape billowing.

“Hello, Wally.” Bruce extends his hand, fist closed. Wally edges closer, peeking at it curiously. Sure enough, Bruce offers a small, stuffed bat. It’s shaped vaguely like his batarangs (which Wally is not allowed to touch, especially on his own).

Barry gawks at Bruce, wondering how he even… Just how he even.

“Green Lantern, I’ve alerted medical that you’re on your way.” Batman dismisses the hero easily, then looks Flash over before he can respond. “This is a dangerous place for a child.”

“Aw, c’mon, Bats, look at his little face. He just wants to say hi.” Flash complains, ruffling Wally’s scruffy hair to emphasise his point.

“Please Uncle… Uncle Bats?” Wally switches the name hesitantly, unaware of who exactly is here. Best to be safe.

Barry gestures as if this somehow makes his point and it must do just that because Batman beckons to Wally, turning and striding along the bleak corridor without another word.

“Uncle Bats, I’m going to call him Wiggles.” Wally tells Bruce as they enter a big room with a crescent moon table. It’s the Hall of Justice, Watchtower edition.
“Like Snuffles and Scratchy in your cave.”

Bruce pauses in his walk, looking directly at Wally. “You named the bats?”

“No, Alfred did.”

Batman doesn’t make a face, despite his mild shock. Snuffles and Scratchy, huh? He walks towards his seat at the table but, instead of sitting down, he places Wally on its surface. Flash joins him but the glare Bruce sends his way is enough of a deterrent and he climbs down, disheartened.

“What is the emergency?” Diana, Clark, and J’onn are here, so Batman called each one over the comms for a re-introduction. Clark hovers after her immediately, his face softening at the sight of Wally.

“Wally, this is Diana and Clark.” Barry nudges Wally’s arm with a grin.

“Are you a princess?” Wally remembers Diana and he remembers thinking the same thing then, but now he’s less nervous about the whole thing. There’s no risk of a beating, after all.

“Yes, Young Warrior.” Diana bows her head at him and Wally takes the opportunity to reach out for her tiara.

“You’re very pretty, Princess.” Wally tells her. She chuckles lightly in response.

“Wally, you remember Clark.” Barry gently takes Wally’s hand, gesturing to the larger man. Wally’s eyes shift away from Superman but he does reach out for the red cape, eyes never leaving the floor.

“It’s very nice to see you again, Wally.” Clark gives his best smile, ducking a little in an attempt to meet the boy’s eye contact but there’s no hope. “I see you two have been on an adventure?”

Wally doesn’t engage, dropping the cape in favour of his little bat. He squeezes it between his hands and Clark steps back, recognising that the boy needs space more than Clark needs a conversation with him.

“Batman, you sent an urgent—” J’onn steps into the room, later than the others. He’s always been more familiar with Batman than the other humans on this planet, so he’s the first one J’onn looks to when he hears a gasp from Flash’s nephew.

“Wally, don’t worry, J’onn’s not scary.” Barry rushes to reassure the boy but Wally isn’t worried, he’s ecstatic! He rushes towards J’onn and stops dead in front of the Martian.

“Hello, small humanoid.” J’onn states, slightly wary of the child. He hears Flash snorting at him.

“Why are you green? Are you jealous?” Wally asks curiously, then reaches for a new, bluer cape.

“J’onn is an alien, Kiddo.” Uncle Barry calls over his shoulder, sniggering to himself. Unfortunately, Hal’s not here so no-one else is laughing.

J’onn, before Wally’s very eyes, turns back into the human-looking man Wally met prior. His mouth falls agape as he takes in the image of J’onn, still in his costume.

J’onn might be the coolest out of them all, even if he likes Uncle Barry and Uncle Bruce and Hal (Uncle Hal?) more.

“Did you forget to wear clothes?”
Another Year Older

Wally presses against the interior of the closet, staring at the locked door with weepy eyes. He remembers this. Being locked in the upstairs wardrobe, listening to his father complain about the rat.

The rat.

It was one of many names but, this time, perhaps more befitting.

Because when Wally’s fingernails clawed against the bolted wooden door, he supposed his bleeding fingers sounded like scuttling paws on hardwood flooring.

Because when Wally gnawed at the fallen garments of clothing he could find, he supposed his starvation looked like a rabid animal chewing on spare scraps of cheese.

Because when Wally lashed out at that bolted door, hitting until the red door has a fresh coat, he SUPPOSED his terror looked like a caged animal, unwilling to be domesticated.

Because when Wally screamed and screamed and screamed MOMMY LET ME OUT and DADDY I’M SORRY, he SUPPOSED his wails sounded like squeaking mice.

And the walls closed in.

And the walls closed in.

Wally’s eyes draw open to a dry throat and a sore head. Uncle Barry is crouched by the side of his bed, holding his arm gently. Barry is here.

“Uncle…” Wally starts, no idea where he’s really going with that.

His middle is wet.

“Shh, shh, it’s ok.” Barry continues to hold his nephew’s hand as he leans over to press a kiss to his red hair. The room reeks of acrid urine, but Wally’s crying and he couldn’t care less about the smell. “I’m here, Wally, I love you. You’re safe, Kiddo.”

His boy is shaking and trembling in his arms and he can’t do anything about it. An awful feeling grabs Barry in the gut and twists at the thought of Wally being upset, even just for a minute.

Barry chants in Wally’s ear until the crying simmers down, his face turning red in shame.

“Don’t worry about it, Kid.” Barry kisses his head again. “Why don’t you go through to the bathroom and wait for me, ok? I’ll clean this up.”

“I’m sorry.” Wally’s face burns as he slips out of bed, a large, wet patch around his crotch.

“Don’t be, it’s not your fault.” Barry assures him, reaching out to lightly squeeze his hand.

Wally turns to follow his uncle’s instructions when the man calls out to him, smiling softly.

“Happy birthday, Wally.”
Barry doesn’t ridicule him over what happened, of course he doesn’t. Uncle Barry’s nice. So he tells Aunt Iris, who sits him down and lets him know that he has absolutely nothing to be embarrassed about and that they both love him very much, but doesn’t mention the event otherwise.

 Turns out Aunt Iris had to run out for an emergency birthday cake. Thanks, Uncle Barry.

Regardless of his cake (Barry expressed his utmost apologies, even though Wally didn’t really mind), Wally felt a little down throughout the day.

Every time he looked at his nails, he saw blood and ripped skin. Painted wood.

“Wally, Kiddo, we can do anything you want today, it’s your big day.” Barry tells the boy as he stares at his hands.

Wally slowly looks up, feeling colder all of a sudden. Barry wraps his arm around Wally, who curl into his uncle like a baby bird, closing his eyes and simply revelling in the attention. Iris and Barry really know how to make someone feel like part of the family.

And despite this, Wally feels very lonely and very sad.

“We could go to the zoo and see all of the animals?” Barry suggests, smoothing a hand over Wally’s wavy hair.

“Can you hug me?” Wally asks, even though Barry has his arms around the child. So he coaxes Wally onto his lap and cradles his nephew.

“Hey, did I ever tell you about how I got my speed?”

“I don’t know, I mean, he’s having a bad day.” Barry is in the living room, audibly pacing back and forth as Wally sits on the stairs, listening. “He had a nightmare and he’s really shaken up about it. Maybe tomorrow?”

Wally tried to seem happy about his presents from Barry and Iris but he just couldn’t bring himself to smile at the Justice League action figures, or any of his new toys. They’re trying to make him feel at home, treating him in the nicest ways they can, but Wally can’t even appreciate some new clothes or a toy.

“You should have said that, then! Just—Just come in, but don’t stay too long. I don’t think he’s in the mood for visitors.”

Wally frowns, wondering what all that could have been about, when Bruce emerges through the front door. His eyes lock on Wally, giving him a knowing look.

“You’re thinking about your parents.” Bruce states, kneeling in front of the carpeted steps.

Wally shifts his gaze away.

“I have something that I think might help.” Bruce holds out his hand, in a fist, for Wally to peek at. When draws his eyes to his honorary uncle’s fist, Bruce uncurls his fingers to reveal a metal lightning bolt.

Wally frowns, confused, as Bruce beckons to him. He follows the older man outside, right up to the big, black car, and joins Bruce by the passenger side door where a gangly mass of limbs spills out.
Wally backs away, memorised by what appears to be a big, thin dog. Bruce takes the bolt from Wally and attaches it to the wide collar around the dog’s neck, then presents the animal to Wally.

Now, Bruce isn’t an emotional man. So when he gives the pet to Wally, he doesn’t tell the boy that his gift is unconditional love, but the meaning is there, if he can’t give it himself. Just as Alfred had done for him when he needed it.

“You got me a doggy?” Wally asks, gently reaching out to touch the thing. Its long face sniffs at his hand, inspecting his new owner carefully, before gifting a gentle lick.

“Why don’t you go in and tell your uncle?” Bruce suggests, a smile playing on his lips.

“You got him a WHAT?”
Bud

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Buddy is a basic name for a dog, but Wally thinks it suits the brown and white greyhound. Buddy is his new friend, after all, even if Iris and Barry don’t seem to take the same approach.

On the night of his birthday, Wally coaxes the dog around the house, room by room. He’s a little picky about the surroundings, for a dog, but he does care to sniff a couple of stray objects, looking down his nose. He’s a refined dog.

Uncle Barry is shouting at Uncle Bruce in the living room. Well, not like Daddy used to shout, Wally considers.

“My room is up here.” Wally tells the dog as he approaches the stairs. The lanky dog just looks at Wally, displeased at the concept of climbing. Wally pats the steps, but Buddy doesn’t really move. Eventually, he starts copying Wally when the boy gets on all fours and climbs with him. Buddy does an awkward hop up each step, but he manages to reach the top.

“This is my room.” Wally pushes open his door, beckoning Buddy. The dog struggled with the stairs, but he has no trouble hopping onto Wally’s bed, sitting as if the animal were a king atop his throne. He bends forward to sniff Wally’s face, a pink tongue darting out in short sweeps to lick his cheeks.

Wally smiles, until his face starts to screw up. Wetness, and not dog saliva, drips down the child’s face as he start to bawl. He reaches out for his new pet, wrapping both arms around the tall dog.

Today has been difficult in so many ways, but now Wally has a thing. He has a dog. His dog. His new dog, which can be with him at night so maybe he won’t be as scared when the walls creep in.

“I love you so much.” Wally sobs, hugging the dog in the same way Uncle Barry hugs him, with gentle strokes on his back.

Speaking of his uncle, both he and Iris climb the stairs.

Iris places a hand on Barry’s chest, stopping him in his path. They both look at Wally, and all thoughts about where the dog is going to sleep or who is going to walk him have flown out of their minds.

This could be good for Wally, so they’ll make it work.

“Wally, Honey, I think Buddy might be a little nervous. Being in a new home, and all.” Iris speaks up, jogging up the remaining stairs and into the boy’s room. “Remember to be gentle with him.”

Wally nods, continuing to sob into the animal’s chest. Buddy licks away some of the tears with interest.

“Please?”

Barry’s never thought Wally was annoying, until he got a dog. For three weeks, since his birthday,
he’s been begging to let Buddy stay in his bed at night.

“Wally, I know you love him but he’s still a dog. Let him get used to the family before throwing too much at him at once.” Barry reprimands, watching Wally smother the animal with more cuddles. Then again, the dog does look pretty pleased with all the attention. Bruce really picked well – there’ve been no problems with Buddy, thus far. He eats all of his food and is very good with Wally; the dog is even quite relaxed in the house, not overly underfoot or excitable. Then again, with all the love Wally showers on the poor thing, he’s no doubt looking for some alone time.

“Now, Auntie’s going to take you to school, go grab your bag.” Barry urges the child, going to the coat rack in the hall for Buddy’s lead.


“And you will, Kid, for his afternoon walk. Now, you have to go to school.”

Iris gives Barry a light kiss as she guides Wally from the house with Wally’s backpack in her hand. Buddy pads into the hallway, looking like a small deer, and glances at Barry blankly.

“Walkies.”

Barry’s never been the type to like pets. He’s never had one, as an orphaned child, and it was never on his to-do list since the lightning. With Iris as a cat person, a dog was the last thing he expected to be dealing with.

“Go do your thing.” Barry gestures to the grass park before them. Buddy stands for a moment, looking around, before sitting down on the grass.

Deflating, Barry sighs. He unclips the dog’s lead and starts walking across the grass, lamenting the loss of his shiny sneakers to the mud.

He perks up, however, when unclipped. Buddy lifts himself up and, in several happy bounds, makes his way around the park in a circle. He’s pretty fast, for a dog.

Since his shoes are already dirty, Barry jogs towards the dog, matching the animal’s speed. He’s careful to check for anyone who might notice, but the speedster joins the dog in running around the park, enticing him to play.

Soon enough though, the animal slows down, poops, and looks expectantly at Barry as if to say “I’m done for now”.

So they leave.

Barry has to take Wally to bed when he starts tilting to one side, falling asleep on the couch as they watch some Disney movie. Barry’s not really paying much attention.

“C’mon, Kid.” He gets to his feet and scoops Wally into his arms.

The redhead stirs, half awake.

Barry moves past Buddy, who shuffled into the hall with them, and climbs the stairs steadily. The dog starts yelping, pacing in circles at the foot of the stairs.
“Your bed is in the kitchen.” Barry deflects, crossing the landing to Wally’s room. Once inside, he places the boy on his bed, drawing the covers up and lightly tucking him in.

“Barry!” Iris calls from the foot of the stairs. The dog is still yowling. He moves to look at the thing and sees Buddy with two paws on the stairs, looking helpless.

“Maybe we should…”

“We told Wally we wouldn’t.” Barry retorts, sighing. They exchange a look before Buddy lets out another yelp, dropping his paws and circling the hall once more. “What’s wrong with him?”

“I hear they can’t climb stairs very easily.” Iris tilts her head, giving the dog’s back a stroke. “So are you going to carry him to bed, too, or do I have to?”

Barry smirks, trudging down the stairs. “Very funny.”

He bends to pick up the dog by his chest and bottom, then carries the animal to the landing, where Buddy makes a beeline straight for Wally’s room. He places a paw against the door, waiting.

“You’re a menace.” Barry teases, pushing the door open. Buddy sneaks inside, padding towards Wally’s bed, then jumping up beside the boy.

Wally shuffles as Buddy curls at his back, placing his scruffy chin on the child’s arm contently. Barry smiles at them both, then pushes the door closed.

“Goodnight.”

Chapter End Notes

I would like to thank all my readers for the lovely comments you’ve been leaving on this work, it really brightens my day when I see that one of you has left one. You guys are the best :P
Takeout

It’s the last day of school before the weekend. Wally hasn’t thought about his father for a long time, not since his aunt and uncle assimilated him into their little family. But, with his report from weeks prior stuffed into the very bottom of his bag, marred with two fantastic fails, he can’t help but imagine what Rudolph West would say to him. What he would do to Wally.

He never quite understood what happened, even then.

Now, as he leans against the school gate and waits for his uncle to pick him up (Barry’s always late, even when Iris tells him the wrong time on purpose in the hopes that he’ll be prepared for once), Wally’s heart starts to race and his mind, for the first time in years, drifts back to the wardrobe.

It was a symbol, less often, of impending doom. Somewhere to wait until the worse punishment came along. Frequently, it was the punishment itself.

Wally’s heart is racing, now. He twists his backpack around so he can reach into the main zipper. Perhaps he should just give the report to Barry. His teachers will stop nagging him and he’ll finally be able to—

It’s gone.

Wally stares at the contents of his bag, all shuffled around, for a long moment. Double and triple checking, he haphazardly shoves his papers around in search for the brown envelope but, alas, no report.

His hands are shaking, now, Wally realises, as he comes to the conclusion that someone must have taken the report. That means Iris or Barry knows, they’re the only ones who would look through his bag.

Just as he’s about to collapse on the sidewalk in a fit of tears, Uncle Barry’s red, obnoxious minivan races around the corner to the school gates, stopping in front of Wally.

“Sorry, I’m late!” Barry calls through the window, just over Buddy’s head. The dog sniffs the air around Wally as the teen slowly approaches the van and stiffly pulls the door open.

Wally wraps his arms around the worried dog before pulling on his seatbelt.

“One, Kid, are we wanting hamburgers or hot dogs because I could go for either. Maybe both.” Barry talks animatedly, even while driving. “Ooh! Is it too cold for ice cream?”

It’s been a cold February, but Wally’s spirits lift despite the fresh chill in his bones. It’s never too cold for ice cream.

“Hey, we can go for ice cream and bring enough burgers home for dinner, Kid. Let me make up for making you wait.” Barry pats Wally’s knee in a friendly manner.

“It’s ok, Uncle Barry.” Wally recites.

Barry gives him a quick once-over before nodding happily.

Barry talks a lot but, man, Wally never realised how much until he stopped to listen to every single word. He even speed-talks when he’s excited. The problem is that Wally can understand it.
He usually would love these fast paced talks with his favourite and only uncle but, now, his chest is aching and all he wants to do is curl up in a ball.

“So how’s school going? Met anyone new?” Barry asks, pulling into a parking space with his eyes carefully trained on the road.

Wally lowers his head, a frown coming over his face. Barry notices, drawing the car to a halt.

“Kid, don’t look so sad.” He reaches to tap Wally’s chin upwards. “You’ll make friends, you’re a good kid. It can be intimidating when someone’s smart.”

“Yeah.” Wally murmurs; his teachers didn’t agree.

“Kiddo, what’s wrong?” Barry shifts, his hand resting on the back of Wally’s chair, unnerving him a little.

“Nothing.” Wally dips his head away, smiling at the floor. “I’m fine. Let’s just go eat.”

“I’ll get to that, Wally.” Barry lowers his head, obviously trying to meet his averted gaze. “Are you upset because I was late?”

“It’s not that.” Wally insists, rubbing his hand over his face. Why can’t Barry just take him back to the house already? His report card might be in his room, somewhere.

“Then what is it, Kid?” Barry shifts his hand onto Wally’s shoulder in a gesture that was probably supposed to be reassuring and would be, for most people. For Wally, the hand is something he finds difficult to ignore, causing a strange blend of guilt and fear to build up in his chest until it all spills out in a stammered explanation.

“I failed English.” Wally chokes, shrinking away from Barry.

“That’s all you’re worried about?” Barry tilts his head, receding. The look on his face, however, is telling. Barry found his report card and clearly intended to put it back. Looks like they’ve both been caught. “Kiddo, that’s not so bad. I mean, we can always get you a tutor if that’ll help. How’d you do in chemistry? I know you love it.”

Wally does love Chemistry. “I got an A. And in Math and Physics.”

“See? You’re doing great, Kid, you just need to put a little more focus on English and you’ll be fine.”

Wally flinches when Barry moves suddenly but, when he opens his eyes to look, the man is stepping out the car. Wally gets up, joining him.

The young speedster feels slightly like a duckling when Barry places a hand on his back, leading him briefly across the parking lot.

“Hey, how many burgers do you think we can grab before they start asking questions?” Barry grins widely, nudging his nephew’s bruised arm. Wally shifts uncomfortably, nodding with a fresh smile.

“How hungry?” Aunt Iris looks between Wally and Bruce when they return to the Allen residence, bags of warm burgers tucked under Barry’s arm.

“Always.” He swoops around the couch where she’s sitting, pecking his wife on the cheek before
looping back into the kitchen. His head pops out of the kitchen, eyes searching for Wally. “Tell your Aunt how many we captured.”

“We ‘caught’ thirty.” Wally sits on the couch, smiling nervously. “Uncle Barry gave them a story about a party.”

“Like a true actor, my audience was memorised!” Barry calls from the kitchen, jogging through with two loaded plates of greasy goodness. “Dinner is served.”

“I think they were just surprised at how much you talk.” Wally mumbles, earning a laugh from his aunt.

“Oh, God.” Iris laughs, giving him a look. “Barr, what brought this on?”

“Do I need a reason?” Barry defends, gesturing to the duo. “Thought I’d give us all a feast. I even got you a couple of sandwiches.”

“Did you now?” Iris shakes her head. “And I imagine you’ll be happy to finish them when I only manage one.”

Barry sends her a fantastic grin before zooming through a portion of the pile. Iris watches in her usual amusement as Barry wolfs down the food in a flash of light.

“Wally got an A in physics.” Barry reaches out to ruffle the boy’s hair as he tells Iris the news. “Physics and Math, too. Isn’t that great?”

“It is, Sweetie.” Iris smiles at Wally, even if the smile drops from his face. He’s not exactly sure what it is, but he’s having trouble concentrating in English. There’s too much reading and, while Wally can read perfectly well, something stops him from sitting down and reading several pages at once. It drags on too slowly.

“I’m so proud of you, Kiddo. You’ll be a mad scientist in no time.”

Wally drops his head, looking at the plate of burgers before him. Suddenly, the anxiety in his chest takes a trip downstairs, turning to hunger in his stomach. Wally scans the plate of food, all piled up, mostly for Uncle Barry.

So he eats one. And another. And another.

“Watch you don’t make yourself sick, Kiddo.” Barry pats him on the back, standing up to take Iris’ empty plates to the kitchen. Wally glances up at his uncle, watching him walk at a somewhat-fast-but-not-really pace, then looks down at the plate again.

Wally eats seven burgers that night.
Life in the Fast Lane

Wally shifts in his seat, trying to concentrate on his English teacher’s ramblings. They’ve been reading *Of Mice and Men*, a short book that Wally is sure he can read if he just figures out how to concentrate.

The teacher’s voice just seems to drone on and on, toneless and slow.

Wally glances at the clock for the eighteenth time that class. He’s been keeping track.

Unable to sit still, he glances towards the window and keeps a mindful eye on the squirrels darting around on the football pitch.

The teacher’s voice starts to blend into one monotonous syllable. Wally looks up, sitting up in his chair in order to see the teacher over the heads of his classmates. Something is wrong.

Miss Miller’s mouth is open, her eyes fixed on the class. Wally wonders if she’s having a stroke, then glances at someone else, anyone else, for some kind of indication as to what is going on.

They’re sitting still, frozen in position. Some, mid-writing, others stuck in suppressed yawns.

Wally slowly rises to his feet. His eyes move to the window, staring down at the squirrels.

His knees feel weak as he spots one, in the process of falling from a branch. Suspended in mid-air.

Wally realises he’s not moving slowly at all. He’s moving fast. Really fast. So fast that everything around him has ground to a halt.

Wally runs home because what else can he do? Cars are stuck in time, not even inching along the roads. It takes a while to run the whole way, proportionally, yet he doesn’t feel tired by what would usually be an hour-long walk.

He doesn’t feel tired at all.

So Wally jogs up the stairs to his room. Buddy is curled on his bed, eyes unblinking.

“Waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa…”

At the sound of a voice, Wally turns around immediately.

The voice, Barry’s, grinds to an abrupt halt. Barry doesn’t move, just like everything else, for a long moment. His faze is fixed in a state of general shock, any words lost in his throat.

“Uncle Barry, I don’t know what’s going on.” Wally trembles, moving forward.

“Wally.” Barry responds, eerily still, at a normal pace. “Can you understand me?”

He nods, tears glazing his eyes as fear wells up in his chest. What’s happening to him?

Barry nods, finally closing his mouth. He lightly reaches out for Wally. When Barry’s hand connects with his arm, a strange feeling washes over Wally, something that reminds him of the restless feeling he experienced in school.
“I need you to explain everything you know.” Barry tells him in a collected voice, not looking at all concerned about the fact that the world has stopped.

Wally can’t help it, he bursts into sobs. “I w-was in class and—and I wasn’t really paying attention because I-I couldn’t sit still and then this happened and I don’t know what’s happening to me, Uncle Barry.”

“Alright, alright.” Barry frowns, wrapping his arms around the boy in a short hug. He pulls back, frowning curiously. “Wally, you’re moving at the same speed as I am. As the Flash does. Do you understand that?”

Wally stares, frowning back.

“Everyone else, they’re not frozen. They’re just moving really, really slowly.” Barry steps back, giving himself some room in which to move. He runs a circle around Wally, not much faster than he himself was running earlier, and a loud blast of noise hits him, square in his ears. Barry slows to a gentle halt.

“That was the sound barrier, Wally.” Barry explains, staring intently. “The Speed Force is attaching itself to you. Why, I don’t know. Perhaps prolonged exposure? No, Iris would have…”

Barry starts talking to himself and Wally starts to wonder just how often he thinks out loud at super speed.

“Regardless, this is a problem. A big problem. Ok, Barry, think.” He paces back and forth. Just looking at Barry wander around his room idly is enough to make Wally antsy.

“You can’t slow down?” Barry directs hopefully at Wally. He shakes his head, frowning.

“Uncle Barry?” Wally whines, his stomach starting to ache after all that running. “I’m kinda hungry.”

Barry smiles, somewhat fondly. “Come on, Kid. Let’s get you something to eat. You’ll get used to it soon enough.”

Since Barry ransacked their fridge the previous night, he takes Wally to the best source of food he knows.

Wayne Manor.

He slows down on the run there but Wally keeps up with him pretty well. He kid doesn’t seem to be getting tired which just reinforces the idea that he’s somehow merging with the Speed Force, even if he can’t control it.

Barry can’t express how amazing it feels to run alongside Wally. With the redhead keeping up with him bound by bound, it almost feels like they have something. Something they can share, like a father and son.

It’s the best run he’s ever had.

It’s not a long one, however, and Wally seems surprised at how quickly they make it to the manor. Albeit, it doesn’t seem so fast when you don’t slow down afterwards. That’ll become a problem quickly.
And it does, when Wally and Barry run straight through Wayne Manor via the Batcave.

Thankfully for Barry, the bat himself is camped out at his computer with bloodshot eyes and tired circles.

Barry slows down, all of a sudden, and Wally realises that he’s just sorta left doing… nothing. So he waits, while Barry makes long, slow syllables at Bruce, who returns the drawn out words. Wally waits and waits, finally taking the time to zip around this floor of the Batcave while he has the chance.

It takes what feels like half an hour for Barry to find him.

“I told Bruce what you’re… experiencing. For now, I’ll have to get some food in you.” Barry narrows his eyes at Wally, inspecting the boy, dumbfounded. Wally thinks about those last couple of minutes (for Barry, at least).

“It’s going to be a long couple of days.”
“Wally, can I have a chat with you?” Barry pokes his head into the kid’s room, just to make sure that his speed is still running low. The high speed only lasted a couple of hours, in which Barry has never heard his nephew talk so much in his life, is this really how he sounded?

Regardless, Wally slowed down quickly, as if he was recovering from a quick ailment, and is speaking like any normal, yet hyperactive, young teen. The energy hasn’t died off but he advised Wally to stay mellow, not to go faster if he doesn’t know how to slow down. Maybe this is the part Barry missed in his coma – he does know that his heart was incredibly fast after the lightning strike.

“Sure thing, Uncle Barry!” The words come out with antsy zest, instead of Wally’s quiet mumbles. Perhaps the allure of powers, perhaps the inability to sit still.

Barry enters Wally’s room, giving a short smile at the way Buddy is curled up beside the boy. He draws his shirt sleeve up to reveal his watch, presenting it to Wally.

“This is my father’s watch.” Barry explains. He lowers his hand, glancing away. “My mother died when I was a young boy, by a supervillain I’m not even going to start talking about. My father was framed and he went to prison, but he left me his watch.”

Wally wonders how he would feel if his mother died. Not very much, probably.

“I struggled in the orphanage – I was always a family-oriented person and I felt too alone.” Barry frowns, then undoes the watch from around his wrist, passing it over to Wally. “This has always meant a lot to me, Wally and you… You’re my kid, I want you to have it, so it can help you feel a little more ‘in time’.”

Wally gapes, not sure what to say. “Like an heirloom?”

“I guess.” Barry does his signature goofy smile.

“And I get it?” Wally asks. I. Me.

“Yeah, Bud.” Barry gives him a nudge. “Go ahead, try it on.”

Wally slips his wrist into the watch and struggles with the back – his hands are shaking so badly with excitement – until Barry reaches over to help him. Not too tight, not too loose.

The mechanical tick-tock of the clock grounds his heart immediately, and his uncle’s proud face sets it on fire again.

“Mr West.” His English teacher eyes him as he approaches the door to his class. Wally lowers his eyes. After disappearing and not returning for a week, she’s been unrelenting since he returned. This is his second class since the increase in his speed.

Wally’s glance shifts to the door, ready to walk inside, but it morphs before his eyes. The door is smaller and brown. It’s creaky and it opens outward, not inward, revealing a cramped interior. There’s a rail for hanging clothes, dangerously close to crumpling in on itself, and some scattered clothes that might be from Wally (they’re smeared with brown blood) or his mother.
“Wally.”

Wally flinches at his father’s voice. He glances to the teacher, but the young brunette has been replaced with Rudolph West.

However, Wally can’t see his face. Somehow, there’s a blank spot in his mind where Rudolph should be.

When he looks back at the door, he can make out scratches across the old wood.

Everything goes away when Wally goes to check the floor for chips of wood.

“Wally.” His teacher repeats, much softer than she was just seconds ago. He steps back from the door, knocking into the crowd of his classmates that he’s blocking from the doorway. The backwards movement doesn’t stop. Wally keeps falling, as if there’s something pushing him down.

He doesn’t feel his head hit the floor.

A short woman with straight hair accosted Iris as she stormed her way into the hospital. She approaches quickly, giving an awkward wave.

“You’re Mrs Allen?” She asks hesitantly. “I’m Laura Miller, I spoke with your husband on the phone…”

“Iris West.” Iris corrects lightly. She never felt the need to take Barry’s name and the blond never questioned it. “You’re Wally’s teacher.”

“Yes, I brought him here with the headmaster.” She gestures to the door across the corridor. Laura gets into the explanation about how Wally fainted, assuring Iris that the doctors seen no problem with his condition and that he would be fine.

“Iris!” Barry literally runs – thankfully at a normal speed – through the waiting area, ignoring the scolding of a tired-looking nurse. He skids to a halt beside the duo. “Have you seen him?”

“Not yet.”

When they do see Wally, entering the room with the same look worried parents have when their child has been injured, he’s curled in a ball on his hospital bed, rubbing at his eyes.

“Sweetheart.” Iris melts into the seat facing the bed, despite how lumpy and uneven it is. Wally sniffs, opening his eyes when she reaches for his hand, and avert his eyes to the ground.

“The door.” Wally breathes, his chest heaving halfway through the word. “I-I couldn’t—I—”

“It’s alright.” Of course Barry’s the one to say that. “Wally, you have nothing to get upset about. We’re not mad.”

Iris studies her nephew’s sweet, little, innocent face before sighing under her breath.

“But it costs…” Wally turns over, sitting up slowly.

“I think you’ll find you have another worried uncle to contend with.” Barry hums, smirking. He zips over to the bed when no-one’s looking and reaches for Wally’s back, gently rubbing circles over his shoulder blades. “Your teacher told us you fainted – was something bothering you?”
“The door… reminded me of dad.” Wally drops his head, fumbling with the bed sheets. Barry exchanges a look with Iris before wrapping Wally up in his arms. He runs a hand over his red hair, then presses a kiss to the top of his head.

“You’re safe, Kiddo.”
Stress

Bruce Wayne doesn’t even see to care that he attracts attention when he makes his way into Wally’s hospital room, only an hour after Barry first arrived, with a couple of sandwiches.

“Alfred made them.” Is his greeting, followed by the presenting of a plastic tub. Wally seems pretty happy about it though.

They want to keep him a couple of more hours for observation, but it’s been made clear that they think he’s ok.

“Barry.” He addresses the blonde, standing in one corner, far away from anyone else.

“Brucey.” Barry grins, then tilts his head. “Too much? Too much.”

Wally laughs into his sandwich. His happy eyes are enough for Bruce to feel a little more at ease about visiting. It’s irrational, really. Wallace West is fine; not hurt, not injured, not dying. He’s fine. There’s no reason for Bruce to be here.

Except that there is. Bruce just can’t determine what it is.

“Uncle Barry?” Wally grabs his uncle’s attention by literally grabbing his sleeve and tugging lightly.

“Yeah, Kid?” Barry runs his hand over Wally’s head. He hasn’t changed much since he was a boy, not even his mannerisms.

“Can I talk to Uncle Bruce for a second?” Wally glances over at his aunt as well. “In—In private?”

Bruce doesn’t let his surprise show, but his eyebrows do narrow as Barry insists that of course it’s ok, despite how confused he is.

Soon, Bruce and Wally are alone in the hospital room. The redhead pats the side of his bed, beckoning Bruce closer. The older man draws his eyes away, slowly edging towards the bed. He places himself in the spot beside Wally, turned towards the young teen.

“Before I fainted… I was going into class and I just—The door started to look like the wardrobe in my old house.” Wally looks to the side, past Bruce. He frowns. “I saw it. Like it was there.”

Bruce’s face twists into a frown. His mind drifts to the way Wally avoids Clark then, immediately, back to the shy boy in front of him.

“Wally,” he starts, softening his voice, “why the wardrobe?”

“Dad put me in there.” He twists his head away. “When, uh… When he was mad.”

Wally knows he should be saying ‘when I misbehaved’ but it’s the kind of thing Barry would sit him down and have a nice talk about.

“Did it feel as if it was happening again?” Bruce takes Wally’s hand, strangely sympathetic. Wally narrows his eyes in suspicion (Bruce does not hold hands).

“Yeah…” He trails off, not sure what Bruce wants him to say. It seems like enough because Bruce
nods definitively, lightly giving Wally’s shoulder a comforting (or at least relative to Bruce) pat.

“PTSD?” Barry breathes into his hands. They brought Wally home hours ago but, even as his wife went to bed, Barry couldn’t bring himself to sleep. Bruce stayed. “You really think so?”

“He was abused.” Bruce remarks sternly.

“I believe you, Bruce, I just… He’s a kid, he’s my kid.” Barry lifts his eyes to where Bruce is sitting with his elbows on the dining table. A mere second later, a glass sits in front of Bruce, another in front of Barry. The speedster pours Scotch for them both. Barry drinks the glass at full speed, looking no less worse for wear.

The alcohol has no effect, but he likes the burn. Bruce sips slowly, nursing the drink throughout the course of a quiet five minutes until Barry hisses under his breath.

“He hasn’t made any friends.” Allen admits, running a hand over his head. “He needs friends, Bruce, someone he can tell secrets to and misbehave with, y’know? He needs the chance to be a boy for once.”

“He’s under a lot of pressure.” Bruce agrees. “He’s not got to relationships yet.”

Barry makes a shocked face, then grips the bottle of Scotch. He drains it in an instant before directing his words at Bruce. “You don’t think Rudolph would have…”

“Has he told you otherwise?” Bruce is pretty blunt and it’s one of those moments Barry doesn’t appreciate it, Batman can tell. “Regardless, he’s likely to face a lot of difficulties. Now, he’s having flashbacks and nightmares.”

The crease in Barry’s brow softens out as he glances towards the stairwell. “I have no idea what I’m going to do.”

“Did you come to tuck me in?”

Wally thinks the most preposterous things, Bruce considers as he approaches the young teen’s bed and sits on the side, huffing out a sigh. “I’ll leave that to your uncle.”

“I was joking.” Wally whispers, no sign of humour in his expression. He shifts under the covers, then looks up at his Uncle Bruce once more. “I’m not in trouble, am I?”

“No.” Bruce laces his fingers, then stares up at the open door. After a moment, he sends Wally a short smile. “You were very mature today. Telling me what happened was a smart move.”

“Really?” Wally bolts upright, visibly startling his uncle. “You think I’ll be allowed to be Uncle Barry’s sidekick soon? I-If I’m acting adult-y.”

Bruce raises an eyebrow, conveying exactly what he means.

“I haven’t asked him.” Wally clarifies sheepishly. “I was just hoping, if I worked on using my powers, I could join him. Right?”

“That’s for your uncle to decide.” Bruce dodges that bullet, then stands up to deflect any more. “It’s late, go to sleep.”
“Yeah…” Wally winces. They both know it’s unlikely to happen anytime soon. Bruce pats his hand on the redhead’s shoulder, a more serious expression taking over.

“If you have any other problems, Wally, or if anything’s concerning you. You can bring them to me, do you understand?”

Wally nods, his cheeks flushing as he rests back against his pillow and draws his sheets up over his shoulder. “Goodnight, Uncle Bruce.”

Bruce nods, turning to the open door. He should get some sleep, himself. After all, he has a circus to attend the very next day.
“I don’t understand why I can’t go to Uncle Bruce’s.” Wally objects for the fourth time as Barry directs him at a sprint to Metropolis. The kid is intentionally lagging.

“Because Bruce has some family business and Hal has gone off-world.” Barry huffs, slowing down to Wally’s speed. He glances at the boy sidelong. “Clark is very nice, plus he’d love to get to know you.”

“Bruce has family?” Wally stops altogether in the middle of dusty road and Barry has to stop, too.

“No.” He gapes. “Uh – forget I said that.”

“Do you mean like how Bruce is our family but not really?” Wally rephrases, removing his backpack by slinging it off one shoulder to the ground, puffing up a cloud of dust.

“Yes, that’s exactly what I mean. Bruce doesn’t have any blood relatives anymore.” Barry looks back at the road, then at Wally’s bag. “Would you pick that back up? I know you’re scared of Clark, but you need supervision. You’re a teenager with superpowers, I’m not leaving you alone.”

“Why not? And you’re the one who leaked the Speed Force all over me.” Wally grabs his bag, irritated. He is not looking forward to spending an entire afternoon with Clark Kent. Or Superman.

“I didn’t leak it.” Barry snorts, nudging his shoulder. “Get moving already.”

“Clark!” Barry hugs the lumbering (at least to Wally) man with zest, grinning. “Thanks for doing this for me, what with Bats being occupied.”

“No problem.” Clark smiles easily, then at Wally, who avoids his gaze.

“Well, uh, Wally has some homework so no doubt he’ll occupy himself.” Barry claps his hands together. “I’d love to stay and chat but duty calls! Wally, be good for Clark and I’ll come get you tonight.”

Barry ruffles his hair and sends Clark a quick wave before sprinting back down the stairwell of the apartment block.

Wally looks down at his bag.

“Well, make yourself at home.” Clark gestures for the boy to go inside but Wally remains stock still. Seeing this, Clark lowers his arm and moves away from the door, further into the hall so he’s not looming over Wally. “I got some groceries, just in case you wanted some snacks. I assumed you would share your uncle’s appetite.”

With Clark laughing kindly at his side, Wally feels really bad. He knows Clark is a good person, logically, but that doesn’t make entering a door near him any easier.

He forces himself to scurry inside and, all in all, it’s not so bad. No wardrobe, no problems.

Maybe Wally wouldn’t be feeling so bad if he’d seen Bruce in the past two months. Or if his uncle and aunt weren’t working over the weekend. Or maybe even if Scott Aldrich hadn’t beat him in the 100 metre sprint Wally knows he could’ve won last Tuesday. Who knows?
“Is Uncle Bruce ok?” Wally turns to Clark, who freezes. He smiles sympathetically, then nods.

“Bruce is fine, he’s just busy. I’m sure he would like to see you.” Clark wanders to the fridge, marking something on a piece of paper pinned to the door under a dolphin magnet. “In fact, I think he’s quite fond of you.”

Clark’s apartment is quite homey. Nothing like Hal’s neat apartment or Bruce’s sparse mansion.

It almost reminds him of home. Before Barry. Before the wardrobe. A long time ago, in Wally’s earliest memories. In the spaces between pain and suffering when he was mildly happy.

See, the Allen-West household is an oddity. An overfilled pantry, a busy office covered in red lengths of wool, and a little bedroom. A little bedroom with crackers stored under the bed, hidden from Iris and Barry, just for when Wally feels nervous. A little bedroom with an empty cupboard, boarded over from the inside (Wally remembers seeing Barry phase for the first time). A little bedroom with a little boy and a little dog and a whole shitload of drama.

Clark’s home is homey. Pictures of a young boy and two loving parents. One fridge with handwritten notes pinned under magnets. A woman who enters through the door with her own key and greets Clark with a smile.

Sometimes Wally wishes Barry was less busy. That Iris didn’t work so late.

He knows that’s selfish. He has a good family; that should be enough. It’s not enough.

“Wally?” Clark breaks away from the beautiful brunette in his arms, turning to Wally with a confused expression.

And sure, Superman is fast, but not enough for the speedster.

Wally knows he’s in trouble, so he figures going to Bruce’s mansion is better than going home and spending the afternoon alone. After all, he could probably ask Alfred to look after him.

Ace greets Wally, the floppy-eared monster, with a wet kiss to his cheek and undying love.

“Hi, Boy, I’ve missed you.” Wally smiles, patting the old dog’s head.

He’s outside, which usually means Bruce is home. He probably hasn’t got around to telling Barry that he’s returned from a mission, or something of the like.

“Uncle Bruce?” Wally opens the front doors, peeking inside. There’s no-one there and the only light in the entrance room is the natural light through the tall windows. It’s sort of creepy, actually.

Wally coaxes Ace to follow him into the mansion, slightly wary.

Alfred should be here. Bruce should be here. Wally looks around the entrance room for a short moment (he’s not very patient) before taking off at a normal jog up the marble staircase. At the top of the stairs, Wally quickly finds Bruce’s bedroom.

“Uncle Bruce!” Wally knocks loudly on the door. “Are you in there? Helllooooo?!”

When his shouting does nothing, Wally huffs and turns around, expecting to see Ace looking up at him happily. Instead, a smaller, dark haired boy stares at him with piercing eyes.
Wally flinches back violently, pointing his finger accusingly. “Who are you?!”

“Richard Grayson.” He scowls, stepping even closer to Wally. Startled, Wally presses himself up against the door. “I didn’t know Bruce had any family.”

Wally stares at the younger boy for a moment in utter disbelief but, when Ace bounds along the hall, he snuffles at his hand, wagging his tail affectionately.

“Yeah, ok.” Wally crosses his arms. “I’m Wally.”

“You can call me Dick.” The boy answers, then takes a step back. He rubs Ace’s head lovingly, just like Wally does with Buddy, but there’s a little crease between his eyebrows. “Bruce doesn’t spend much time here.”

“Master Wallace!” Alfred rushes around the corner from the direction of the library, looking as if he’s been running. “Master Bruce would like to see you.”

Dick looks hopeful, but his eyes fall when Alfred tells him to go spend some time with Ace.

“See you around.” Wally tells Dick with a shy smile, then hurries after Alfred.

He doesn’t see Dick smile back.
“You should be with Clark.” Bruce accuses once Alfred leads Wally out of the elevator to the Cave.

“Clark is scary.” Wally claims, turning his head away. He looks back at the elevator, thinking about the other boy.

“I’ve taken in a ward.” Bruce addresses the issue. “He doesn’t know about Batman or you, for that matter. I expect it to remain that way, Wallace.”

So he’s in trouble, then. Actually, maybe not; Bruce looks pretty riled up but he’s flexing his fingers and looking restless, not unlike Wally himself.

“So he’s your son?”

Bruce gives him a look that tells him no, that’s not the case.

“Perhaps you should spend some time with Master Dick. He did look awfully lonely.” Alfred insists over Bruce’s shoulder.

“Not the time, Alfred.” Bruce stands up, striding away from both of them. “Wallace, I’ll be calling your uncle immediately.”

Bruce leaves them via the elevator, looking moodier than Batman ever has.

Alfred seems happy enough, though, as he suggests ice cream. This might be more of a Bruce thing than Wally actually being in trouble.

Alfred failed to mention that Dick would also be eating ice cream and, hence, Wally would be eating less ice cream.

Bruce isn’t there to stare in amusement and disapproval as Wally shovels food into his mouth with a complete lack of manners.

Dick giggles from the other side of the table, just as Alfred places a bowl of strawberry red down for him. Alfred gives him a subtle look, watching the way he eyes Wally nervously. He leaves, however, and gives the boys their peace.

Wally looks up at the giggles, chocolate cream smeared over his lips. He licks it away and frowns, but Dick doesn’t laugh at him, just in happy amusement.

Dick doesn’t even say anything mean when Wally gives his messy bowl for Ace to slobber over. In fact, he drops a spoonful of pink on the floor for the German shepherd to lick.

“Do you live in Gotham?” Dick asks softly.

Wally shakes his head. “Keystone.”

Dick looks upset by that, but he doesn’t say anything about it. Instead, he asks, “Do you like video games?”

“Do I ever!” Wally hops to his feet, looking at the half eaten mess of melting strawberry in Dick’s
bowl. “Are you going to eat that?”

Dick is pretty good at video games. From the lack of attention he tells Wally he’s been getting, it seems like he’s had enough time to practice.

But Wally is a speedster, so Dick complains when he completely wipes the floor with the younger boy.

“No way!” Dick shoves Wally, not too hard, and the redhead laughs happily. He sticks his hand into the bag of popcorn Dick secured from the pantry.

“You should try melee. Sniping is hard if you’re not great at aiming.” Wally doesn’t mention that he has all the time in the world to line up a shot. Dick’s not a sore loser and, even though he looks irritated, he tries switching to an obnoxiously large hammer instead of the gun Wally’s character wields.

Neither Dick nor Wally hear Bruce stepping into the lounge.

“You’re cheating!” Dick accuses with a smile when yet another zombie KO’s him.

“Just ‘cause you suck!” Wally fires back, scrambling away on his stomach when Dick tries to hit the buttons on his controller. Wally cackles when he shoots his target, grinning back at Dick. He sees Barry over the boy’s shoulder and scrambles into a seated position, looking bashful.

“Are you boys having fun?” Barry grins, crossing his arms as he leans against the side of the opposite couch. “Dick, we haven’t met but I’m Wally’s uncle.”

“Barry is a friend.” Bruce adds, an indecipherable expression on his face.

Dick gives a small wave, smiling hesitantly.

Barry’s gaze shifts to Wally, though he doesn’t look angry. “I believe I dropped you off with Clark.”

“I’m sorry.” Wally looks down at the controller, then hands it over to Dick, who frowns.

“We’ll chat about it later.” Barry shrugs it off. With Wally and Bruce’s adopted son hitting it off so well, he doesn’t want to ruin anything.

“Can’t you stay?” Dick blurts out, looking hopefully between Bruce, Barry, and Wally.

Wally’s cheeks light up at the prospect of someone his age actually wanting to be his friend. Maybe he’s being presumptuous. Wally looks up at Barry with doe-like eyes. Thankfully, Barry exchanges a look with Bruce before nodding readily. “Sure thing. Sounds great, right, Bruce?”

Bruce doesn’t move for a long moment. When he does, it’s nothing more than a stiff nod.

“So why do you live with Uncle Bruce?”

Dick’s bed must be big enough for ten people, so Wally shares with no issues. He took the left side readily and collected some soft pillows from the other rooms to bundle around him.

“My parents died.” Dick immediately turns stony. It happened pretty recently, Wally figures. Ick
looks young, maybe a year or two younger than himself. Wally wonders how he would feel if his parents died. He thinks about that a lot.

“My dad hit me, so I live with my uncle.” It’s a crude summary, but Dick seems to appreciate the honesty.

Dick looks pretty upset though. Wally isn’t surprised when he turns over onto his side and sighs into his pillow. “We should go to sleep.”

Wally scowls.

Wally understands the importance of secrets – that UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES can Wally ever talk about Batman or the Flash. Wally knows this.

But this is Dick and he doesn’t know is he has Batman’s sense of judgment or the Flash’s optimism, but he’s grabbing Dick’s arm and dragging him from the bed before the younger boy can object.

“Come with me.” He beckons.

“I want to go to bed.” Dick whines, despite the fact that his feet are following Wally out of the door. They turn left, tiptoeing past the door to Bruce’s room, and straight along the corridor to the library.

“You brought me here to look at books?” Dick raises an eyebrow, way too snarky for a kid that’s younger than Wally.

“No.” Wally rolls his eyes. “Be quiet.”

Wally understands the importance of secrets.

“Ten… Forty-eight.” Wally mumbles as he rushes towards the old grandfather clock on the far way. He draws back the panel over the clock and twists the hands around.

Wally understands the importance of secrets.

“What is that?” Dick gapes as one of the bookcases retreats into the wall, revealing a large elevator.

Somehow, Richard Grayson means more to him.
Batcave

Chapter Notes

So this is just some fluff with Wally and Dick getting to know each other. Next up is going to be some superspeed stuff, then we'll move onto the team! I just love Young Justice so I'm excited to write about the team.

“Uncle Bruce can’t find us.” Wally stops Dick with an arm on his shoulder, grabbing his attention as they take the fast elevator down to the depths of the Batcave. Dick nods but his eyes are trained on the roof above them. Irritated bats leap from the straw stalactites hanging above, grouping together into a black swarm. Dick’s eyes are trained on the black mist and that’s when he notices the Batcave before them in all its glory.

“How do you know about all this?” Dick breathes, pressing his hands to the doors of the elevator until they open. His steamy handprints slide left and right until Dick can freely run into the cave, towards an obnoxious computer with just under twenty screens.

“That’s the best part.” Wally grins, taking a slow step out of the elevator. “But you can’t tell anyone, promise?”

“I p—” Dick can’t finish because Wally disappears in an instant, reappearing before his face with an abashed blush. “I mean, I’m the Flash’s nephew, but I’m hoping he’ll train me someday.”

“Barry?” Dick asks softly, still gaping at Wally. “This is... I’m totally whelmed.”

“Whelmed?”

“I knew this would happen.” Bruce growls through his laptop screen at the face of Barry Allen, stuffing his face full of marshmallows. In his hand, he’s spinning a blood sample at high speed.

“Hey, B, is this really such a big deal? I mean, he was bound to find out anyway.” Barry yawns through a mouthful of pink and white sugar.

With the idiots that know his identity, that’s a very valid point. He’s not in a great mood.

“I mean, he probably should have guessed that you have surveillance in your own house.” Barry smirks, slowing down his hand to inspect the blood sample. He whooshes away before returning, looking happy as usual. “I mean, do I look concerned that Dick knows about my identity? He’s just a kid, even if he uses it for bragging purposes – who’ll believe him?”

“I never should have trusted a child with—” Bruce starts mumbling, so Barry cuts him off.

“B!” Flash exclaims, waving at the camera on his laptop. “Listen to me – it’s no big deal!”
Bruce scrutinises him solemnly, nothing passing his lips.

“Why’re you in an even worse mood than usual, anyway? Y’know, Wally was upset that you didn’t want him to visit.” Barry reclines on his stool, almost falling off. He catches himself quickly and turns his head back to Bruce, pouting when he notices the slight twitch upwards of the man’s lips. “Is this because of Dick?”

Anything reminiscent of a smile evaporates entirely.

“I’m not fit to be a father.” Bruce states bluntly after a long pause. His eyes don’t leave Barry’s and, though he hates to admit it, the scrutiny is somewhat uncomfortable.

“That’s what I thought at first.” Barry shrugs. “If you can’t be a father, be something else.”

Like an uncle. Barry ponders as he reaches up to scratch the back of his head. “Anyway, I already took one coffee break to come see Wally, I should probably get to work.”

“As if you’ll run out of time.” Bruce responds dryly, perhaps even enviously.

Barry beams.

Dick reaches down to grab Wally, hauling him up to the spot beside the younger boy. They’re sitting on the back of the giant dinosaur, Dick with his legs in the same direction while Wally straddles the statue, intimidated by the height.

“If I was a superhero, I would want to ride a dinosaur like this.” Dick explains proudly while Wally just snorts. Dick shoves him playfully but Wally grips the T-rex’s back, very aware of the fact that he may be fast but so is gravity.

“Are you scared of heights?” Dick pesters him, shoving lightly again.

“No!” Wally objects, thinking about the ground beneath him. “Just falling.”

Dick’s face changes. “My parents fell. That’s how they died.”

Wally’s mind wanders to suicide and a beautiful woman standing on a ledge, walking into the sky and dancing through the clouds for a split second. Then he imagines a red smear on the sidewalk. Bones seem somewhat fragile when they’re shattered inside a limp body.

Wally thinks of watermelons and exposed muscle.

“How?”

“Trapeze.”

Maybe that’s just Wally’s mother.

Wally wonders how he would feel if his parents died. He thinks about that a lot. When she stepped off of the edge, if his father would join her. Wally thinks about that a lot. If something broke inside him when she danced with the birds.

“Oh.” Wally draws his eyes down. A moment later, he looks up at Dick. “Can we get down now?”

Dick makes a leap of faith, perfected into a forward roll. He helps Wally slide down the tail, the
redding clinging for dear life even though the dinosaur looks much smaller from the ground.

His powers need wiggle room that he’s not prepared to look for atop a statue.

“I think Alfred will be asleep by now.” Dick explains, not looking affected by the, admittedly lame, display of fear by Wally. Then again, he’s younger. “I never see him after midnight.”

“Let’s go back to bed.” Wally agrees. His hands are shaking. “Can we stop by the kitchen?”

When they do, tiptoeing down the marble staircase and past the tall windows, Dick watches Wally quietly. Neither boy seems ready to go to bed. Wally comfort eats because he feels sick, which doesn’t even make sense in his own head, with some leftovers in Bruce’s fridge. No doubt Alfred will scold him for the goose, but no matter.

“Is Bruce nice to you?” Dick pipes up from the counter, where he quietly slipped onto a stool.

What is Bruce to Wally? The redhead peeks his head out from the fridge to stare blankly at the dark haired boy across from him. “Uncle Bruce is reliable.”

Wally doesn’t think Bruce is ‘nice’ to anyone, but he’s reliable. Trustworthy. The kind of person Wally knows he can approach. Bruce is a man of routine and Wally knows what to do if he has a problem. Bruce gets things done, Barry does the cuddling.

“I think you’ll like him.”
“Bruce is going to train me to be Robin!”

“Who?”

“Batman’s awesome new sidekick! Obviously, Walls.”

Wally remembers the conversation. Almost a year has passed since Wally met Dick, and almost two weeks since Dick passed a gruelling trail, devised by Batman himself, which would ensure that the Boy Wonder was ready to become the Robin. The Gauntlet, Dick explained in passing.

So when the news came back that Batman had a new sidekick, Wally couldn’t quite bring himself to look at Barry. Not out of anger for his favourite, beloved uncle. Just hurt. After all, weren’t they supposed to be a team?

Wally hasn’t been able to decide how he feels.

“Have fun at school, Kiddo!” Barry calls as Wally trudges towards the front door, dreading a whole day of droning classes and simple work. Well, except English.

“…yeah.” Wally responds softly, tilting his head to the ground. Aunt Iris kisses his head – he’s far too old for that now – but he lingers in the gentle warmth she exudes before swiftly stepping from the doorway.

Wally’s always hated English. He could never write an essay with droning on for pages and pages in a series of ill-made tangents, could never sit still and read a page in one sitting.

There’s something about *Of Mice and Men*. It took a Herculean display of effort to actually get through the thing, short as it is, but Wally never stopped thinking about it. Never stopped reading it. Never stopped carrying it around.

There’s a degree of comfort that he finds while fidgeting at his desk if the little book comes into view. A moment of stillness.

Today, when he brings the book from his bag and sits it in front of him (hoping it will inspire him to sit through a whole hour of class, even if it is Chemistry), the hands of Barry’s father’s watch, now his, stand still on his wrist. In moments of speed, like this, Wally should remain still, align his heartbeats with the seconds of the minute, and go home if he can’t slow back down.

It happens sometimes, after the nightmares.

Wally isn’t concerned with any of that, however. He’s thinking of Barry and running together and months of training that Dick never had. Stupid things like how to carry liquids or turn a corner when seconds feel like years and a step spans a mile.

But he knows things now. How to punch without caving in someone’s skull. How to stay quiet when tiptoeing is a tectonic movement.

So why, for the love of all that is good, did Dick get to be the sidekick? Dick, the circus orphan with no superpowers and no training and the emotionally constipated mentor.
They’re supposed to be a team.

Today, when he brings the book from his bag and sits it in front of him, Wally can’t feel his hands because Lenny killed the puppy.

It all built up. Lenny, the mentally disabled main character in Wally’s little book, killed the mouse, killed the puppy, and killed Curley’s wife. It was accidental, each time. He wanted something to love something to tend to.

Wally has the strength (and the speed). He has the want, the need for love. Barry’s just waiting for the killing to start.

Wally feels utterly disgusted with himself when the teacher’s voice registers in his ear. She’s new. She’s nice. She’s extremely nice when Wally’s eyes glisten with tears, streaming across his cheeks as his body turns rigid, refusing to twist and bend.

Barry doesn’t trust him. The thought is sickening as Mrs O’Malley places a light hand on his shoulder and asks him if he’s ok. He’s not ok.

Is Barry going to ‘put him down’? Get rid of him, for his own good? Just like Lenny, just like Rudolph West?

He must be shaking, Wally figures as he stumbles to the door of the classroom, making it outside. The teacher makes an attempt to guide him along the hall, go to her office or somewhere, but Wally crumples in the hall. He sits curled up in a ball, hiding his face in his knees.

“Wally, would you like me to call your parents?” She asks, sweetly, as if she already knows what’s about to happen. Wally’s not sure if he would prefer to be taken out and shot. Anything seems better than the idea of Barry and Iris sending him away.

“Hello, I’m Mrs O’Malley from Keystone Middle School, is this Mr Allen?”

“Hello.” Barry’s brow creases as he looks up from his case file in surprise. “Yes, yes, this is Barry Allen. Is there a problem?”

“Of course not, Wally is a very well behaved young man.” That’s a little surprising to hear, not that Barry expected there to be any trouble. Usually, he goes unnoticed by many of his teachers. And the other students, judging by his lack of friends. “You see, Wally started crying today in his first period class and he’s still quite upset. He hasn’t told me what’s going on, perhaps you would be able to come and collect him?”

“Oh.” Barry frowns. “Yeah, I… I can do that. I’ll be right there.”

Admittedly, Barry could have left his lab coat at the lab when he raced from his work, but he was too focused on running – literally – to Wally’s school to collect him. He drew the dash into ten minutes to it would seem somewhat believable.

When he arrives, he’s sent from the receptionist to the Head of the Science Department’s office. Inside, Wally is sitting silently across from who Barry presumes must be the woman who called him.

“Hey, Kid.” Barry tries but Wally doesn’t even look at him. There hasn’t been a lot of that lately. He
glances towards Mrs O’Malley, then back to Wally. “Walls, do you have your things? Are you ready to go home?”

There’s a slight nod, accompanied by a sniffle. Barry watches Wally leave without a word, slipping out of the room with downcast eyes.

“Thank you for calling me.” Barry tells O’Malley sincerely. “I worry about him sometimes.”

“Of course.” She responds with an understanding smile. Nodding at his coat, she adds. “I’m sorry for pulling you from your work.”

“No problem, I care more about Wally.”
Wally tries to sneak upstairs when they get to the house but there’s no way Barry’s not talking to him so he follows the boy to his room, only to see him herding Buddy from the room and sending him out.

“Wally, can you please talk to me?” Barry asks, giving Buddy a gentle pat as he passes the rejected animal.

“Wally?” Barry repeats when he doesn’t get an answer. “Kid, clearly something’s up. I just want to help.”

“I want to be alone.” Wally insists, sending an angry look at the dog. “Take Buddy with you.”

Barry sighs, but doesn’t know if there’s anything else he can say that would be helpful. If he wants to be alone, Barry can do that.

“I’ll be in my office if you need me.”

“Do you think I’m like Dad?” Wally spits out, glaring at Barry with more hate than he’s ever seen in the kid.

“Whoa.” Barry holds his hands up in surrender, really wishing Iris was here. She’s better at saying the right things, even if Wally’s attachment seems to be firmly rooted in Barry. “Where is this coming from?”

“Why does Robin get to be the sidekick?” Wally actually throws his book at Barry. The man is so surprised that he doesn’t dodge, instead he feels the flimsy thing make contact with his chest. Wally has never been violent with him. He’s struggled after a couple of nightmares, but he’s never lashed out like this.

“Wally, do not throw things at me.” Barry chastises as he reaches down to pick the book up. Thankfully, there’s no more projectiles. “I’m going to forgive you for that because I know you’re upset but I will not be so forgiving if you try to hurt me again, are we clear?”

“You’re not listening to me!” Wally shouts, fisting his hands as he glares Barry down.

“No, you’re not like your father!” Barry exclaims, sighing. Even as he raises his voice, he’s aware that it’s a bad move. “He was a horrible man who done some very horrible things – why do you think you’re anything like him?”

“You don’t trust me! I-I’m Lenny!”

Barry knows, at this point, he has no idea what Wally’s point is. “What?”

“I’m Lenny.” Wally points, shaking, at the book. “And you don’t want me to be your sidekick because I’ll kill the mouse and the dog and Curley’s wife and—”

“Wally, I don’t understand what you mean.” Barry softens his voice as the redhead starts breathing fitfully, taking sharp inhales.

“I-I’m bad and I’ll do bad things, just like Lenny and—and Dad.” Wally pants, pointing at the book again.
Barry lifts it from where he was holding it at his side and inspects the front cover, there’s nothing especially interesting. He tosses it into the corner of the room, already blaming it as the cause of all this mess.

“You’re not bad.” Barry steps towards Wally, but the boy just backs away and clambers onto his bed, looking more than just anxious. Barry pauses and holds up his hands once more. “I’m not going to hurt you, Wally. I’m sorry for getting angry. I won’t hurt you.”

The boy shifts in his spot but he eventually stops making eye contact with Barry, displaying some modicum of trust. Barry makes it to the bed and climbs on beside Wally, sitting to his right.

“Walls, I know you’re getting older and things are probably confusing for you just now.” Barry starts off, probably in the same way every other parent does. “Just because your father was a bad person doesn’t mean you are.”

Wally turns his head away. “Then why can’t I be your sidekick? I want to help you.”

“That’s what this is about?” Barry tilts his head to look at his nephew. “Wally, I don’t want you to be my sidekick because I never want you to get hurt. I want to keep you as far away from Captain Cold and the Trickster and anyone else who might hurt you. This has nothing to do with me thinking you’re not a good person.”

“We’re supposed to be a team.” Wally objects, his voice small.

Barry immediately feels as if he’s been punched in the gut. Wally looks as if he feels the same way.

“We are a team.” Barry insists, reaching for Wally’s hands (How can they still be shaking?) and giving them a squeeze.

“You’re my hero.” Wally shuffles closer. “I want to keep you safe too.”

“Wally, I know it would be cool to work with the Flash but it’s dangerous.” Barry runs a hand through his blond hair. The kid is really killing him with those sad eyes.

“Uncle Barry’s my hero.” Wally mumbles.

Oh God. He just can’t say no to this, can he?

“I promise I’ll do everything you say. I’ll work really hard.”

Barry closes his eyes for a long moment before looking back to his nephew. *Sure, let me just recruit you as a child soldier to fight dangerous enemies with more than just guns.* Barry sighs to himself, looking away. *This is dangerous and stupid and you’re going to regret this for the rest of your life, you stupid, stupid…*

“You have to do everything I say, Wally, I mean it.”

“I will!” Wally insists, sitting up eagerly. “I-I promise I’ll be the best sidekick ever!”

Barry realises immediately that Wally’s world is all-or-nothing. Either Barry trusts him or doesn’t. Loves him or doesn’t. It’s going to be a problem, just like it was today, but he would do anything for the kid. If that includes being his mentor (as Bruce clearly interpreted his poorly-worded advice about child-rearing) then so be it.

If it means being his father, despite how poorly-equipped Barry feels, then so be it.
Perhaps one day, Wally won’t feel pressured into competing with his fantasised idea of ‘the ideal son’. At least Barry can teach him everything he know and hope his genius nephew is satisfied with that. Who knows what’ll happen if he breaks out the puppy eyes again.

_Damn you, Bruce._
“When I tell you to read quickly, I don’t mean skim the book.” Barry clarifies, sitting across from Wally at the dining table. Surprisingly, the only thing the kid’s been struggling with falls in the everyday category – reading and talking and sitting still. “You need to read to understand things adults take years to understand, like why Captain Cold’s gun works the way it does or what kind of things the Trickster can use to hurt you or how to properly investigate a crime scene.”

Wally nods eagerly at him. True to his word, he’s been following the ‘Flash’ like a duckling, listening to Barry’s every command. They haven’t even reached combat and Wally hasn’t complained in the slightest, even though he’s eager to start fighting.

“Our minds work at our optimal speed, otherwise we wouldn’t be able to take in the kind of things we see when moving at higher speeds, do you understand me?” Barry waits for Wally’s nod. “Good. That means the top speed we can move at without feeling physically tired or not being as perceptive as we should be. If you can’t focus on what you’re running past, you’re going too fast.”

“Like on the motorway.” Wally recalls how the world would zoom past him and now, how everything crawls by.

“Exactly. So that means you can take in knowledge at that amount of speed, too. Just like studying, but you can learn so much more in that period of time than the average person.” Barry affirms. “So I’m going to give you some of my books from when I was studying and whatnot… But, for now, I think you’ve been a good enough apprentice to merit a trip outside.”

Wally cocks an eyebrow, leaning forward to listen to Barry.

“Ready for some fighting?”

“Now, the Speed Force provides us with a… force field that prevents us from catching on fire or anything when we move, along with our clothes.” Barry calls over to Wally as he hauls a dusty old statue out of the garage. It vaguely looks like one of those training dummies Wally’s seen on TV for people to hit. Except, it looks as if it’s made of stone or something.

Barry drags it on an old rug to prevent the grass from being destroyed, then brings out a plastic-looking dummy. “But you shouldn’t run around in your sneakers because it won’t take long to ruin them, Uncle Bruce will need to make you some gear.”

Lining up the sour-faced dummies, Barry looks back over his shoulder.

“I want you to run, as fast as you can, and push these over. Without breaking them, as fast as you can at short distance, and try not to ruin the lawn because your aunt would kill me.” Barry huffs, smiling under his hand. It’s pretty sunny out today.

Wally has his sunglasses on, thankfully. It feels weird sweating. He doesn’t do it unless he’s hot – Barry explained about a speedster’s muscles not being able to cultivate lactic acid (the stuff that makes muscles feel sore and tired) because the body works faster and can process oxygen more efficiently. It was long and tedious and really, really interesting.

So Wally lines himself up, directly facing the stone statue to start off with. Trying his best not to ruin the lawn (it’s the one domestic chore Aunt Iris is proficient at and she’s proud of it), Wally sprints
along the length of the garden and makes an attempt to push over the statue. However, it refuses to
budge and Wally smacks, face-first, straight into the torso.

“Oww.” He moans, rubbing his face. There’s blood on his hand from the scrape on his nose but
Barry’s worries are quelled when the cut closes over before he even crosses the garden and crouches
beside Wally.

“All good?” Barry frowns. “Maybe we should take a break.”

“No way, I only just started!” Wally objects, scrambling to his feet. “Let me try again.”

‘Let me’ might be the wrong words because Wally is already at the other end of the garden, primed
to go.

“Remember you don’t have to move everything at the same speed – your arms can go faster than
your legs.” Barry advises, completing the pushing motion for Wally to watch.

This is just like the time Barry had Wally carry watermelons to make sure he wouldn’t try to shake
someone’s hand and dislocate their shoulder or anything.

“Did you do all this when you were a kid?” Wally stops, turning to Barry.

Barry looks a little downcast at that before scratching his head. “No, I… I didn’t know any other
speedsters. I made a lot of mistakes and I got hurt more than I should; I want better than that for
you.”

Wally looks even more determined, if that’s possible. He runs at the statue, this time moving his arms
faster. When he gets to it, the statue seems a little bit lighter than before. He manages to push it over,
sparing the grass, but his legs don’t take the hint and, with his increased speed, Wally trips over the
base of the statue and tumbles onto the ground.

“Better, better!” Barry calls out, speeding over. “We’ll work on it – why don’t you try the lighter
one?”

He does, remembering the thing with the melons, and it doesn’t take much more speed than Wally
would already be running at.

“Well done, Kiddo, you’re getting it already!” Barry pats him on the shoulder. He points at the
statues with a sly grin. “The heavy one – that’s how rough you can be with a threat, Wally. Enough
to break a couple of bones, not hurt them too much. Someone in armour or someone who’s
reinforced. This one is for regular people, like the Trickster. Perhaps, someone who relies on
weapons and not physical fighting, you get me?”

Wally nods, looking down at the statues.

“If you’re not sure, go by appearance, perhaps choose a middle ground. You’ll only develop an
intelligence for that sort of instinct over time – it’ll become common sense.” Barry advises. “But
fighting isn’t really our thing, anyway, not like Superman or Batman. Speedsters are all about
pushing and dodging and smarts, got it? But one should always be prepared.”

“Did you steal that from Uncle Bruce’s garden?” Wally squints his eyes at the heavy statue of a…
Greek god?

“No!” Barry blushes, putting his hands on his hips. Immediately, Wally knows he’s lying and starts
cackling. “I borrowed it from Alfred and I fully intend to return it… as soon as Bruce notices.”
Wally giggles, pulling the lighter statue onto its base so he can try again. Even Barry struggles with the heavier one. Strength is all about speed for a speedster. The faster one goes, the harder they hit. So Wally does see the merit to Barry’s point about ‘pushing and dodging and smarts’, even if Barry’s training him how to hit.

Barry freezes when he hears Iris getting out of her car. He slowly turns to see her approaching the back garden from the side path with a disapproving look on her face.

“Barry Allen! You’d better not be ruining my garden!”
Bats And The Bees?

Chapter Notes

So, based on the title, you can probably guess what this chapter's about. It shouldn't be a trigger but, anyway: talk of sexuality, no explicit terminology.

Wally is watching the live stream of Keystone’s main news channel (Picture News, which also happened to be a major international newspaper and the workplace of Wally’s Aunt Iris) when Bruce wanders into his lounge. He tilts his head at Wally and Dick, curled up together on the sofa, before Alfred enters the room and grabs his attention.

“Sir, are you ready?” The old butler asks.

“I’m not going to be long.” Bruce tells the boys, hovering over the back of the couch. “Alfred will be here if something goes wrong, but I trust you both to behave for an hour or two.”

It’s another charity gala, but Bruce fully intends to flirt with some poor women and disappear, hoping people will assume it’s his playboy antics.

“I have cared for children, Sir, if you do recall.” Alfred snarks, making Wally smile against the couch pillows. His eyes move to Bruce, who gives him a flat expression before turning to them again.

“Bye, Uncle Bruce.” Wally pipes up, beaming.

Bruce eyes him and nods. Dick is less engaged, playing with his Nintendo. “Yeah, bye.”

When the adults disappear, Wally watches Dick for a while, wondering what exactly he should be asking his friend in this moment. If he’s ok?

The dark haired boy makes it easy for him and turns to Wally, lifting his eyes from the handheld console. “Wally, can I ask you something?”

“Sure.” Wally smiles, but his happy mood washes away when Dick’s eyes move to the doorway.

“Have you ever seen your aunt and uncle… y’know, doing it?” Dick turns somewhat red, but he seems determined to get through this conversation. “Cause I walked in on Bruce and this lady…”

“I don’t, I mean, I don’t know if they do.” Now that Wally thinks about it, his uncle and aunt usually don’t share the same shift patterns. Sometimes, Barry’s at home watching Wally while Iris is working for the night, or vice-versa. “I don’t think about it.”

“Bruce said he’s not as bad as the papers say, but he’s an adult and that he does this stuff.” Dick confesses. “I don’t understand why he’s not married or anything – aren’t adults supposed to get married be all sappy with each other?”

Wally turns his head to the TV, watching Iris give some boring monologue. Wally’s just hoping she might give ‘the Flash’ a mention.

“I don’t know.” Wally admits. He’s a preteen now and he’s had the talk in school but he’s never
really thought about girls in the way his classmates seem to. They’re all interested in kissing and holding hands with their ‘girlfriends’ while Wally... Wally just wants to run and sometimes play video games with Dick when Bruce is babysitting. “Have—Have you kissed anyone?”

“No!” Dick protests and Wally remembers he’s a little bit younger. “That’s gross, what are you talking about?”

“I haven’t either.” Wally defends himself. “My classmates all think it’s cool or something.”

Apparently, at his age, boys are supposed to stop pulling ponytails and start looking at things they shouldn’t, which Wally just doesn’t have any interest in. Barry must miss this because his face changes immediately when Wally (mid-drive, since Barry has some case files to bring home) asks about girls.

“Should I want a girlfriend?”

Barry stiffens a little in surprise, giving Wally a quick look of what might be horror, then settles himself in the driver’s seat. “Well, I mean… Do you want a girlfriend?”

“No.” Wally fidgets, looking at his knees. It’s warm, so shorts are good enough for the sunny day. Wally thinks he looks stronger, somewhere in his mind. “Everyone else does.”

“Does Dick?” Barry asks, forming the obvious conclusion after their afternoon together.

“No, he thinks it’s gross.” Wally shrugs.

“Well.” Barry sighs, taking a hand from the wheel of his silly, red van to run it through his hair. “You’re young, Wally. You don’t have to worry about girls now.”

“I don’t want to hang out with girls, I like Dick.” Wally explains, resting his head on the window. He shuffles a little, already too cramped after only five minutes of driving.

Barry doesn’t respond for a moment, not until they reach a traffic build-up and have to wait. He relaxes back in his chair, then reaches out to nudge Wally’s arm. “Kid, you don’t have to like girls if —if that’s not your thing. Your aunt and I love you either way, you know that.”

Wally looks up at his uncle, then nods in agreement. “Uncle Barry, why isn’t Bruce married?”

“Because that’s not what he wants.” Barry sighs, so much more relieved that the topic has moved from sexuality to something he can deal with. “He’s a busy man and marrying someone just isn’t something he wants.”

Barry almost curses himself when he realises that, being Wally’s father figure, he’s supposed to be the one who explains the proverbial birds and bees. Damn the world.

Wally’s supposed to be his tiny, innocent nephew, not the new Hal. Barry’s fully aware of this every time Hal talks with his kid.

“Wally…” Barry grimaces. “Sometimes, when you like a girl – or anyone – and you’re an adult, not right now, you’ll maybe start to feel a certain way about them and…”

He’s explained blood splatters to his kid but he can’t go through a simple anatomy lesson? Regardless, this is a speedster strand of knowledge that Barry really needs to go through.
“Uncle Barry, Mr Blackwell told us about this last year.” Wally looks bored, at the most.

“Oh thank goodness.” Barry breathes. Wally gives him a pointed look but he doesn’t entertain it. “I just need you to know that if someone doesn’t know about the Speed Force, you might want to exercise a little more control in—”

“Ew, Uncle Barry!” Wally squeals. “I don’t want to talk to you about sex!”

“You think I do?” Barry rolls his eyes. “This is just as bad for me as it is for you.”

Wally turns his head away, disinterested once more. He watches a couple of cars go by before shrugging.

“I mean, Aunt Iris already beat you to it last year.”

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