Djinn

by mantinos

Summary

*ON HIATUS*

When I woke up on the wrong side of the moon (namely, the side where there is no air), with an instant lyposuction, a new skin and a fluent mane of hair (my favourite part, I admit), I didn't expect what would happen next.

Such as the bottle. Or the magic.

Or the superheroes.

.....

Definitely the superheroes.

Notes

You can also find this work here (https://forums.sufficientvelocity.com/threads/djinn-young-justice-si.32685/) or here (https://forums.spacebattles.com/threads/djinn-young-justice-si.444349/).

For obvious reason, any and all explicit content will be published only here.

Also, I'm not a native English speaker and it's my second language.
You have been warned.
Chapter 1: Sheherazade in Moonlight, or: my story start here...

I woke up, stretching my arms and turning on my side, trying to return to sleep, searching for the sheets with my hands. Not founding them, I flailed a bit, moving both arms and legs to try and find them.

I didn't found them, not around me and not around my waist or ankles.

That was what woke me up for real. And the first thing I saw was a white, dusty, wasteland full of craters and rocks. And nothing else. My arm and hand was also purple and deep blue. And with nails that resembled claws.

Aaaaand now is the time where I should wake up or, in the impossible situation that this is real, faint from shock or something. So, why I am not doing that?

Pinching myself on the arm with my other hand (that, yes, it is purple and blue) it hurts, so I....

Think... It's not a dream. But it have to be a dream, things like that don't happen in real life.

Maybe in a comic or in a book. Or in a fanfiction.

But not in real life. It's simply impossible.

Only in that moment I started to notice all the rest. Namely, I'm orbiting around the moon, in the void of the outer space and I'm still alive.

Who the hell ripped off the start of With This Ring? I didn't even finished reading it.

Well, at least I'm not a Lantern of any color, I would be an horrendous Lantern.

... Maybe Yellow, but mainly because I feel fear, not provoke that in others.

"Okay, stop. You're rambling... And apparently able to talk in the void. How?"

There wasn't, pretty obviously, any air in space, so I didn't have air to vibrate my vocal chords, couldn't produce the vibration required to move the air to create sounds, so how I could speak out? And yes, I'm rambling.

This looked more and more like a dream, but it is supposedly impossible to feel pain in a dream. Or was reading coherently? Or was the number of the fingers? Nope, five fingers.

In every hands, not five fingers in total. Just to be clear.

Well, the pinch did hurt, even if didn't pierce the skin with what looked like claws that replaced my nails, so I could conclude - for now - that I wasn't in a dream.

"Now the only question remaining is what the hell happened" And where I was I. And when. And how. And... Well, you get my drift.

I floated there for a bit, looking at myself and what my body became.
First: My skin was a deep purple in color, with blue marks that looked like trails of smoke, tattooed on my body. I think tattooed, they didn't feel particularly different from the skin.

Second: I was fit. Like cartoon fit, something that I surely wasn't before. Gone were the fat, I was physically fit. With abs. And hairless, except for my hair, eyebrow and private area.

Third: I could see. Not that I was blind before, but I was shortsighted. Now I wasn't.

Fourth: My hair now reached my waist again, but they were black instead of the brown I had before. And they moved like in The Little Mermaid, in the under-the-water-Disney sort of way. It was really strange. Dunno if my eyes changed colors too, I don't have a mirror.

Fifth: I wasn't naked. No, I had something like a middle-eastern fairy tale sort of dress. It was a couple of white poofy pants in some kind of silk (I think) with silk shoes. Not with the upwards swirl at the end, that would be ridiculous. A sash of purple silk around my waist with a jeweled dagger in a sheath attached to it.

I had also a purple jacket, the useless kind. It was a piece of cloth with hole for the arms. It didn't cover my chest, it was a lot if it covered - barely - my nipples. And in length it stopped like halfway down my chest, around my diaphragm. Something like the one from Aladdin, just more fancy and embroidered with gold thread.

And I even have jewels. A gold chain around my neck with a gem, a big one, in the center. Guess which color? You're right, it's purple. I'm starting to sense a theme.

A gold ring on my right ring finger with a blue gem and a silver ring on my left pinky.

I still had my original earring on my left lobe - that was nice, it was a gift from my mother - but two earring on top of both of my ears appeared. They felt simple, just a pair of circle with some kind of engraving and with a rough surface.

All in all, I looked like a fetish remake of some kind of demon AND I was still in space, with no way to return back to Earth.

"What the hell..."

I muttered, crossing my arms in the back of my head, positioning myself in some kind of reclined position. The scene was incredible, that was a sure thing, but I knew myself well enough that I would become bored really fast.

Then something bumped my hands, making me flail a bit, catching what I touched in reflex.

It didn't feel like a rock, so I brought it in front of me to look what was that. And I stared in disbelief.

In my hand there was a - purple - bottle, the Arabic type, with elongated neck, spherical bottom, with band of gold and gems around the neck and a stopper on it. It was made of what looked a lot like spun glass.

"... What? No, what?"

My mind was blank, while I tried to calculate what I had in my hand. After a few minutes(?) I recovered my abilities to think coherently and assessed my situation.

Not that I had many choice. Or I rubbed the lamp and a genie came out or I was the genie and I would enter the lamp.
I could remain in the void of the space for how long it would need to myself to fall prey of my own boredom and curiosity, but I knew that I couldn't resist. I really can't stand boredom, it's one thing that make me all jittery.

So I rubbed the lamp and, as I suspected, the stopper popped out and purple smoke enveloped me, dragging me inside the lamp.

When I opened my eyes when I was inside, what I saw was rather... Underwhelming.

It was a bedroom, a fairly nice bedroom, granted, but still a bedroom. There was a queen size bed, covered in purple silk sheets, with blue pillows, and a bedhead of polished brass, that arched and twisted in what looked a bit like flames turned to metal.

A dresser was on the other side, with a closet incorporated. That, too, had brass decorations, but these were of some kind of middle-east fairytale cityline.

In the middle of the room there was a table, in what looked like polished mahogany - I think - with the table legs decorated with more brass, this in spirals that climbed and spreaded without solution of continuity on the surface.

On it there was a small pamphlet.

-Congratulations! You are now a Djinn!-

That was on the top.

-Congratulations! You are now a Djinn, an extremely powerful magical being with the ability to grant wishes to whoever say the words "I wish..." With no limit! No rule of three required! With a host of various magical power at your beck and call (Reality Warping*, Innate Magic, Immortality and much more) You are now free to do whatever You want! Whoever have the Lamp can ask for a Wish, but, thanks to the new rules, You are no more a slave! Please remember that rules and limitation still apply.

*We remind to our dear reader that this can be used only for wish granting activities-

And that's it. Obviously there wasn't any kind of rule, no mentions on the limitations or what would happen if I broke them on it. It was just the print on the front and a bulletpoint list on the back. The bulletpoint list was blank, of course.

Look like I need to discover the rules myself. Great.

"..."

I lowered my head, until it was almost between my knees, hands on the side of it and trying to breath deeply. 
"Hello, panic attack. I meet you for the first time..."

I used the next minutes to regolarize my breath, trying to not hyperventilate and faint. Some time later I regained my calm, feeling exhausted and emptied. And more than a bit hopeless.

There was a bed, a very comfy bed, so I kicked my shoe out, removed the flimsy piece of cloth that passed for a jacket and went under. The silk sheets embraced me and I fell asleep after a couple of seconds.

My only coherent thought that passed in my mind before falling to Morpheus was that I was completely screwed.

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I woke up in complete darkness. No light whatsoever entered from the window and behind my closed eyes, I reminisced my last dream. I remembered it fairly well, after all, and only two or three dreams in my life had that sort of impact.

I was cocooned in darkness and black. It was somewhat reassuring, I always had problem to sleep when there was light in my room. But there was something missing. I couldn't remember what, but something wasn't there.

.............

My cellphone.

It didn't ringed with my alarm clock. Did I woke up before it?

I exended my left arm to the side, searching for the bedside able, trying to find my wristwatch, to see what hour was. I must have went to bed early, because it was the only occasion I woke up early. Well, or my alarm sounded, but this wasn't the case.

My left arm didn't find my wristwatch. Or my table. It fell on the bed, the whole forearm poking out.

I gulped, keeping my calm somewhat, and moved my hand towards the wall, searching for the light switch, but finding nothing.

But the room lighted up when I tought of the word "light".

It was some kind of candlelight, or at least it was what looked like that behind my closed eyelids, dancing wild with purple refraction. Only then I worked the courage to open my eyes.

It wasn't a dream.

I was in the bed inside the lamp that was floating in space near the... Moon? The wall of the lamp were now transparent for me and what I saw was...

"Wow..."

I exhaled, looking to the side, transfixed on what was one of the most magnificent show that nature have to offer.

I wasn't near the Moon anymore. No, it moved during the night and my bottle didn't. And now I was looking at the scene of the Sun, in all his bright glory, rise over the Earth.

It was a blazing sphere of plasma, that I knew, but it was also this breathtaking force of nature that I
couldn't do anything except looking.

I could now see the Earth in all the magnificence our planet had. It was a real gem in all the Solar System, the green and the blue mixing perfectly, gleaming under the morning sun. I could recognize the shape of the landmasses and it looked like the morning reached the Eurasian continent right now.

I think I could see the shape of Italy, still wreathed in the shadow of the night.

I watched this show until the morning passed trying to collect my thought.

Point one: I wasn't in a dream.

Point two: I didn't knew if I will see my family again, if I'm only a copy, if I'm dead, if they are dead....

I took a couple of deep breath and I let the thought go. It wasn't over, obviously it wasn't, but I could think about them later. When I was more... Emotionally stable.

Point three: I didn't know if I was in my universe or somewhere else. If I was in mine, then it was... Simpler on some accounts. If I wasn't, it was simpler on others.

Point four: I had magic.

The night before I couldn't feel it, but now I could, it was this energy bubbling and roiling inside me, eager to be used, fizzling and jittering al around, like a shaken bottle of Soda. It was exhilarating and terrifying at the same time.

There was just so much!

I think, I could be some sort of crippled geni-

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Smokeless Flame. Scorching Fire. I am Marid, not that wretched imitation.

I climbed up from the floor, with the aid of the bed.

"Note to self, don't use that word. I really hope it work only with me, because if it trigger that reaction whenever I heard that word used...." I shuddered. I was a Djinn, not a... That... And I could be a crippled one for all I knew.

I didn't think so, I didn't exactly have a measuring stick, did I?

Crippled. As if. The Wishes I grant are perfect. Always.

Next point on the list: I extended my arm and snapped my right-hand fingers.

Nothing.

I tried to snap my left-hand fingers. Nothing.

I wasn't a prodigy to magic, it seemed. I was doing something wrong, but what?

A Child that play with the World and hope to bend it to his will. Very well, I'll help

The gesture was there, don't know if it necessary, but everything help. What missed?
Well, I didn't think about anything. And my Magic didn't move, either. So, maybe, it missed direction and intention?

The pamphlet did say something about Innate Magic, after all...

Steeling myself, I brought my hand up again, thinking hard about going out of the lamp. My magic bubbled, roiled, felt excited, and rushed.

I snapped my fingers.

Dling!

There was the sound of a crystal bell and purple smoke engulfed me, the sensation to float and I was out, in the fresh absence of air.

My clothes where again on me, especially the jacket.

"Didn't I leave it on the table?"

You'll understand.

Also, my shoes where again on my feet, together with everything else.

"This... Is a sign of something. Don't know of what, but of something. Of that, I'm sure"

My eyes gravitated to my bottle, looking at it with curiosity. It looked pretty fragile and I didn't know if the destruction of it spelled my doom.

Aladdin says yes, but other legends....

Can I change it with my magic? Maybe an oil lamp?

Dling!

Nothing. Still a bottle. Not an oil lamp. Maybe a ring?

Dling!

Nope. A gem? Or a dagger? Or, maybe, a vase?

Dling! Dling! Dling!

Aaaaaand..... Nope. Nothing. Can I make it bigger? Or smaller?

Dling! Dling!

Jackpot! I could make it change size. It looked like something I could put on a bracelet or a necklace.

....a necklace, uh?

Interesting...

I took out my necklace. It was a gold chain, exquisitely crafted (to my untrained eyes) and there was a big gem at the centre.

Maybe I could reshape the gem, encase in gold and add a little hook or something.... Oooor I could simply snap my fingers and...

Dling!
Done. One pendant-size bottle for my necklace ready to go!

I felt better knowing that I could keep my bottle near and pretty safe. Also, I could hand the bottle to whoever I wanted. After I studied them, of course.

Now, let's see... How I could go down to Earth?

Well, I could try to move towards it, but there this little thing called Gravity that could make me a pancake when I enter in the atmosphere again. Another idea was to launch the bottle towards the planet, enter in the bottle and wait to stop, then repeat until I reach the ground.

I took a couple of second to imagine the face of whoever monitored this kind of things and what a bottle reaching the Earth from space looked like.

Then that idea crystallized itself in my mind and I knew that I had to do it. It was suicidal and completely crazy? Yes. But I was feeling pretty suicidal, after all, so I enlarged the bottle again, took it from the neck with my right hand and pointed with my left.

Adjusting the aim a bit, I brought my hand on my back, trying to use as much strength I could, and then I threw.

Dling!

I reappeared inside the bottle, seeing that everything wasn't sideways. Apparently the inside is a stable room, independently of the position of the vessel.

The bottom of the bottle became transparent, allowing me to see the course of the travel towards the planet. Then, something appeared in front of me. It was brown and grey and...

"Rock!"

The bottle hit the mini asteroid right in the centre and, instead of becoming a pulverized fog of glass, the rock became a cloud of shrapnel that flew in all directions.

It will need more than this pitiful impact.

Hand on my chest, I tried to calm my heart, that was beating furiously.

"Ok, the bottle is stronger than the rocks. Good to kno... ASTEROID!"

This times, my impromptu space vessel only clipped a side of it, causing a shower of pebbles and changing the direction of my trajectory.

"This way of travel is not healthy for my heart. Or everything else, it seems. Well, now it should be m- SATELLITE!"

The bottle passed just under it. I started relaxing again, then another one appeared in my line of view.

"OTHER SATELLITE!"

I passed just over it, barely scratching the paint and sending it rolling somewhere.

"THIRD!"

This, I hit fully. And destroyed it fully, too, spraying metal, circuit and whatnot around it, not even slowing down.
Then I hit the atmosphere, seeing the air superheating outside the apparently flimsy spun glass was a interesting view and, apparently, not hot enough to melt or otherwise damage my house.

"For being a spun glass bottle, it is pretty resistant."

I was right on course for the U.S.A. and it seems that everything would go pretty calm. My course was towards a mountain, apparently devoid of life and I relaxed a bit, letting the light of the moon shine on the glass, when...

"Oh, come on! Airplane ahead!"

And that meant passengers. People. Alive people.

And?

Dling!

A snap of my fingers and my space ship/bottle changed its course, redirecting itself towards a city, wreathed in purple smoke, silencing the shrill whistle of the air somewhat.

I had my power for less than 24 hours, I don't know why, ok?

However, this time my trajectory was towards a city, specifically towards what looked like a destroyed building, so no one to hit. Then, there was someone to hit. A lot of someones.

And one turned back, seeing me in that precise moment. Then I it him.

I closed my eyes and covered my face, not wanting to see the pulp that would remain of it.

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Superman turned his back on me, preparing to fly away, when something hit him in right in the face, at enough speed to sending him to the ground. The flying object bounced on him, arched through the air, spinning on itself, and hit me on the chest, sending me sliding back a few feet, my hands clutching at it.

When I looked at it, I was surprised, seeing as it was a glass bottle in a dark color, covered in bits of rock and dust. I rubbed it a bit, removing the soot that covered it, when it started vibrating and glowing.

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Something catched my bottle. Or, maybe, the right world was someone, seeing as outside of it the bottle was in the hand of someone. And, noticing the missing bit of blood and meat sprayed around the outside of my bottle, I didn't kill anyone.

On another note, apparently the atmosphere of a city were filled with dust. Who would think of it?

And then, I felt something. It was electrifying. It was exhilarating. It was someone who was rubbing my lamp!

Your First.. How You called it? Customer?

I was glowing and vibrating, some part of me excited. With a grin, I composed my face in one of
seriousness, and I surged upwards, the stopper of the bottle simply vanishing on my way out, under the shape of a cloud of purple smoke, that was lighted with small lightning.

It was my first customer and, I admit it, I love the classic, so, let's do this One Thousand and One Nights style. The upper part of my body materialized, three times bigger than the normal, with my lower body made of smoke. Strange sensation. I looked down to the... Uh, was a boy... To the boy who rubbed my lamp, and spoke, my voice resonating around.

"You. I am the Djinn of the Bottle and you rubbed my bottle. I will grant you three wishes for freeing me"

Nailed it.


And then I looked better to who was around me.

Superboy, Kid Flash, Aqualad and Robin. With mentors. That were all looking at me.

I did tell that my appearance was practically identical to the protagonist of With This Ring, didn't I? Well, apparently even the setting was identical.

Fan-fucking-tastic. And I never saw the cartoons, either. Only read fanfic.

I'll wing it. And hope for the best.

You just need to Wish it and the world will comply. I'll accept nothing less.
Flying, Fairytales and Shopping or: I'm not searching for a new bottle.

Chapter Notes

Honestly, I'm not sure about the characterization of the various character, so I ask of you: What do you think?

Flying, Fairytales and Shopping or: I'm not searching for a new bottle.

"What?"

Superboy looked perplexed, a strange look on his face.

I arched my left eyebrow, still with my arms crossed in front of me.

My body condensed, returning to my normal size, recreating my legs, but floating in the air in front of him.

Superman just got up again, watching us both with some sort of strange look on his face, the other member of the League talking.

By the corner of my eye Wonder Woman looked worried. Did she know something about Djinn?

Whatever, I concentrate again on my current bottle-holder, noticing in the back of my mind that he is a couple of inches taller than me. Strange, he doesn't look over 6 feet.

"Well, pretty much what I said. I am a Djinn, I am tied to that bottle..." For what I know "...and Whoever rubs it gains three rule-free wishes. The only exception is Free Will; I don't mess with that. So, no mind control or something like that"

Oh? But it's so useful...

"What is the mean-" "This is abs-" "Magic doesn't work like-" "Superboy, listen to me-"

The voices rise and create a lot of noise, devolving in an incomprehensible noise that doesn't seem to make favors to the hearing of the poor boy.

He looks even more confused than before, a bit lost and, after hearing the last sentence, more than a bit pissed.

"What can I ask for?"

"The correct term is "What I can Wish" for. And, as I said before, whatever you want, except for interfering with the Free Will of another person"

"Anything?" "Anything. You want to be the richest man on Earth? Easy. Want to own the Moon? Ask and will be done. Want an ice cream? That is.... Actually gratis, if I think about it. Is chocolate
good?"

And, with a Dling!, a couple of ice cream cones, both plain chocolate, appear from thin air, one in my hand and one in his.

"Superboy, wait. Djinn are famous for tricking whoever makes a wish!"

Superman was particularly... Oh, wait. That was Batman. Oops, my prejudice was showing.

In the meantime, Superboy was looking at the ice cream like it was some sort of strange creature he'd never seen before.

"It's just ice cream, honest. If you prefer another flavor you just need to ask"

"No, it's just... All a bit... Unexpected"

Seeing as this statement was, apparently, the sparking point of another round of shouts, I had one of my famous bad idea.

I snapped my fingers again.

Oh? I will lend my hand again.

Dling!

Oh, so THIS is what Innate Magic means.

Everyone around us was moving slowly, like they were trying to swim in molasses.

This, also, caused Superboy to jump in surprise.

Oh, not everyone else. Everyone, us included.

Good to know.

"What...?"

"A zone of slowed time. I think. As I said, I'm pretty new."

I shake my head.

"Not the point. What I wanted to say, before everyone and their dogs decided that they should have a saying in this..."

And they started to return to normal time, it was pretty obvious. Flash's eyes were following me.

"...is That the Wishes are yours and no one, not Batman, not Superman, can take away from you"

He looked a bit like I was talking in Aramaic.

A child that is not a child. Curious.

"Look, with that in hand..."

And I pointed at the lamp. Time was starting again, my magic vanishing just after five seconds.

"...the sky is the limit. You want to be free, you can. You want to be a King, a Chef, anything and
everything under the sun, you can. You..."

Time started again.

"...could fly, if you wanted. Just wish for it."

Hook.

"Fly?"

"Yeah, like the fashion disaster there" I point to Superman, who looked a bit like he munched on a crate of lemons.

Kid Flash stifled a snicker. Flash did the same. Superman looked affronted. You wear underwear on the outside, dude. It's a disaster, simple, no way around.

That, I agree.

"Really?"

Line.

"Yes"

"Wait a sec-" "You are being rec-" "We don't know its-" "Superboy, don't...!"

Aaaaand that last phrase is what deal the last blow.

His face stoned itself in a determinate frown.

Sinker.

"Just say the magic words"

I'm pretty sure I have a grin on my face, I'm certain that my eyes are shining and I don't know why Flash or Mini-Flash didn't try to remove the bottle.

Glancing at it solves the mystery. Superboy is gripping that thing with enough force to destroy concrete.

It's like the lighter touch of a feather.

"I wish I could fly!"

Gotcha!

With a drawling voice, simply dripping with satisfaction, I bring my hand upwards.

"As You Wish"

Snap.

So full of Good Will, He is. Well, I don't really care. But I will teach Him.

Dling!

The sound of the crystal bell makes its presence known, as a nimbus of purple magic envelopes the
broad figure of the boy, seeping into him.

And, more strange than that, I can sense the magic at work.

For example, I know that if I slide things a bit towards this side, I can steal Superman ability to fly and give it to him. Or, I can slide it that way and Superboy would grow wings.

There are so many choices!

But I think I will keep things simple. My magic finds the Kryptonian genes suppressed by the human DNA and activates them, at the same time balancing all the rest.

Reality warping at is finest, uh?

Well, against a Kryptonian, doesn't mean much. They are particularly weak to magic, after all.

...does Reality Warping count as magic?

After a few seconds, the light show ends and everyone is staring.

Dunno why it's not like my (new) species has a bad name.

Sarcasm, thy name is me.

"It is done"

"Really?"

"Try it by yourself. Dunno how, mine is instinctive"

And, showing a bit, I fly upwards a bit, slouching in a reclined position in the air, lying around the height of his eyes.

With a hesitant look in his eyes, he bends his legs and jumps.

Then, instead of falling, he remains up there.

I followed him, floating lazily, enjoying the view of his face, the pure wonder of it.

"I can fly, I can fly..." I mutter while glaring at Hawkwoman, Green Lantern - what was his name? - Wonder Woman and Superman. They glare right back.

Peter Pan, in the original you were a creepy bastard, but Disney did a good job on you.

"How is it? Good?"

"It's..."

He looked like a kid, a strange expression on his face like he didn't know what to say or feel.

"Don't worry, my friend. You will have a lot of time to explore your new power."

"...thank you."

"My pleasure. You still have two, completely rule free (for what I can tell) wishes to do, but take your time. I don't have anywhere else to do and you look like a good guy."
He looked shocked, maybe I was laying it on a bit too thick.

We landed the next minute, witnessing the last part of an argument between Robin and Batman. I saluted the other guys with two fingers and returned to smoke, entering in the bottle again.

Then, sitting on my bed, I let myself freak-out, nearly going into a panic attack again.

"What the hell... What I'm supposed to do? I know nothing except for fanfiction. Well, at least I gave Kon the power of flight. This would count for something, right? Yeah, butterflies!"

I answered my own question, twirling my hair between my fingers, pacing around the table.

In the end, I propped myself against a wall, that promptly turned on itself and sent me rolling down a flight of stairs and crashing into something small, round and metallic.

Oh, yes. I almost forgot. That shiny metal that Humans like.

"I'm Scrooge McDuck"

Who?

In a room around the double size of my bedroom there was a literal carpet of gold coins, around two-to-three feet thick, with gems and gold jewelry mixed in, like a pair of hairpins, multiple necklaces, a really tacky pair of earrings and a lot more.

"I have absolutely no idea of how much this is worth, but I know that will be pretty hard to convert gold in American Dollars"

If this is what You want...

And then, magic happened. Again.

A small portion of the coins flitted in the air and vanished, replaced by a couple stack of bills.

"...ooookay..... Magical money converter. Why not? It's not stranger than being here, after all."

Once returned to the bedroom I opened the closet, discovering that there were other clothes.

One looked like a strange pajama, so I took it out and put it on. It was some kind of loose pants and a small shirt.

Not what I was habituated to, but it didn't bother me, soooo, why not?

Before going to bed, I looked out of the lamp, seeing if I was still with Kon or not.

Mhhh, it seems a bedroom.

And...yes, here's Kon. Wait, where is he going?

"Can't sleep?"

I ask, reduced in size to a miniature version of myself, propped with my arms against the neck of the bottle.

He turned towards me, looking around a bit before spotting me.

"I'm not used to sleeping in a bed"
"Why? Where did you sleep before?"

"The pod."

Yes, I knew that already. But this is simply too sad.

"Well, why don't you try to lie down on the bed and I tell you a story?"

"A story?"

"You know what a story is, no?"

"Yes, I know what a story is."

"But nobody ever told you one, I bet."

"...."

"There is no harm in trying, no?"

"...fine," and he returned to the bed, lying down under the sheets. I returned to my normal size and sat near his head, snapping my fingers.

Dling.

A book of the Fairytales of the Grimm Brothers appeared in my hands, while I was trying to decide what story to tell him.

Not Pinocchio. Or The Little Mermaid.

Maybe...

"I can tell you the Disney version if you prefer, but I honestly prefer the original version. A bit more dark, but more realistic, in a fashion."

"The original version is fine." Grumpy, are we?

"Okay. If you don't like them, tell me and I stop. Now close your eyes and let me start."

He, finally, closed his eyes, relaxing marginally. He tensed a bit when I started to stroke his hair, but he relaxed again after a bit.

Operation: Snow White is a go.

"Once Upon a Time..."

************************

The morning after, I am glad to see that Wally didn't found Kon in his closet.

Eh, in the original he got out of the closet.

How didn't I see this before?

"Eh." I chuckled to myself a bit, from my bedroom in my bottle.
I slept. I got up. I used magic to clean myself. Then, finally, I conjured a mirror.

"Yesterday I was really slow, eh..." I muttered, looking at myself.

The changes were... Astonishing, to say the least.

My body wasn't fat anymore, it had a swimmer build, really thin compared to what I was before.

My eyes were purple - no surprises there - and my earrings weren't simple.

They were studded with small gems, creating an impressive reverberating effect when struck by the light.

What else I could do.... Oh, right!

I could change my appearance somewhat. Mainly changing my coloration from purple - a really noticeable purple - to my Caucasian appearance I had before.

Eyes, hair, nails, blue tattoos, and earring not included.

So, after only - time? - heavenly love on the cross, seven hours?!

Okay, I'm relaxed. I'm calm.

I'm not, in any way, bothered by the fact that I lost seven damned hours while trying to change appearance when just yesterday I slowed time with a snap of my fingers.

...my head hurts...

Deep breath aaaand yes, I'm okay. More or less. Maybe.

I'm shelving the freakout for the night. I can revisit it after.

As I was saying, my eyes are still purple, my nails are still black and my hair is still Disney-style.

Well, that is easy to resolve.

A string, two minute of work and I have a braid.

A very crooked and not really good braid.

"...fuck it..." Snap

Dling!

A very perfect braid.

It keeps my hair from fluctuating like Ariel, so I'm happy.

Then someone rubs the lamp.

I become smoke and get out of it, finding Superboy and Wally in front of me.

"Uh, my mom asked if you want to come to dinner."

The redhead looks a bit uncomfortable. Wonder why...?
OH, FOR FUCKS' SAKE!

That damned jacket is on me again!

At least I'm still in my 'disguise' as a normal human.

If looking like a stripper is a disguise...

"I will gladly come to dine with you, thanks for asking."

I follow the two boys to the table, already prepared for five people.

"Oh, good evening. You must be the genie."

No effect. At least I don't end in a heap on the floor if someone else says that word.

"Yes, I am. Sorry for my attire, but I don't actually have any kind of clothes that don't make me look like a runaway from a One Thousand and One Night film."

"Don't worry, young man. You can go to the Mall tomorrow with Wally and.. Supey?"

"Ump?"

Wally is already eating. Kon - Supey - are watching me.

"...do I have something on my face?"

"No, just... You're different from yesterday."

"Oh, right. I found the way to dissimulate myself as a human."

"Ih whash whond" "Wally, don't talk with food in your mouth!"

He swallows loudly and returns to look at me.

"I was wondering why you weren't purple-y anymore"

"Purple-y?"

"Oh, right. My true appearance is, well... This"

Snap.

Dling!

My magic receded and I'm left again in all my glory: purple skin, free hair, and a wisp of smoke that drifts around me, enhancing the whole 'genie of the lamp' appearance.

"Oh."

Their reaction is somewhat subdued and the dinner is kind of normal after that.

Then, after I finished eating and was ready to re-enter my bottle, it hit me.

This was the first time I ate from when I came here.

Luckily, before I could fall in another almost-panic attack, Wally and Kon - SUPEY, at least for now
- enter in the room.
"Goodnight!"
"Uh, goodnight."
"Wanna hear a story again?"
"What?" "What?"

Both of them are looking at me now.
"Well, he never had someone to tell stories to him before, so I thought it was a good idea. But if you don't want, it's no problem."
"No, no, tell a story."

Wally, there's no need to look so excited.
"Do you want to hear one, too?"

A shrug of the shoulders is my answer.
"Okay, then. Under the sheets, lights out and let me start. Tonight I'm thinking Hansel and Gretel. Once Upon a Time..."

***********************

Morning, why do you exist?

"Mrrrhh"

I am not the brightest in the morning, especially not after only five hours of sleep.

It seems that changing anything about yourself except for the coloration is really damn difficult. I found a way to materialize a shirt under my jacket, though. I still wonder why my default appearance is one of an Arabian stripper.

I get out from the bottle, change to a normal coloration and go in the kitchen, really grateful for the offering of a bowl of cornflakes, the chocolate kind.

No soy milk, but I can hardly be a picky eater, so normal milk is okay. I have enough money to buy my own milk when I go out.

I wonder when Batman will interrogate.... yes, interrogate me. What are my goals, why I am here, etc. etc.

After finishing the milk in the bowl, I got up, walking towards the two teenagers by the door.

Wait, why is everything incliiii--?

Ah, yes. Your first encounter with the White Liqueur

I am saved from a face plant thanks to Wally, that sped to me and blocked my fall. My head feels full of fuzz, everything is out of focus and I'm feeling quite bad.

"Dude, you're okay? You look a bit sick"
"Yes, yes, I'm okay... I just feel strange"

"How strange." Kon, your question missed the question mark.

"Fuzzy head, unfocused sight and I think I need the bathroom"

"Why?"

I would really like to answer his question, but I'm currently trying to not to puke on the floor.

I can barely create a bucket - purple with pink stripes, with polka dot in the form of yellow ducks - and then my breakfast reappears from my stomach, barely digested.

"Gross!"

And I'm now on the floor, hands firmly blocked on the side of the bucket and reviewing everything I ate this morning and the evening before.

Strange, it looks burned.

"Water?" I manage to ask.

Thanks to every saint in heaven a glass of water is placed near me and a hesitant hand on my back.

"Thanks..."

After finishing retching and vanishing the mess I made, I'm feeling a lot more human.

Just a headache, but that is something I know how to work around, so no problem, and a stomach growling from the hunger.

"Are you sure you should be eating after... you know... puking on my floor?"

"Yeah, sorry for that. Apparently milk have the same effect of alcohol. No idea why, though"

I am currently wearing a pair of sunglasses, shielding myself from the sun and walking in the mall, eating a brioche and sipping - slowly - an orange juice.

"What day is today?"

"7° of July, 2011" "Thanks Superboy"

I look around and yes, the Terror Twins. They didn't look me, luckily, because with all the jewelry I have on me I'm pretty sure that they would try to rob me and I'm still a bit out from before that I don't know how wonky my magic could go.

Better not attract too much attention to me.

"I hate wearing your father's clothes." "Doesn't thrill me either, but the solar suit had to go. With your Aladdin-style clothes"

And then he point with the thumb to a clothing store.

"Besides dude... That's what we're here to fix."

The shopping goes easy, at least for Ko-Superboy. He really takes the same rack of t-shirt.

"You sure you don't want some variety? Or, at least, something more? Underwear, swimwear, that sort of thing?"

He doesn't have the time to answer that the sound of the glass breaking reaches our ears.

Both of Kon and Wally go to look what is happening, when I am trying to calm the pain in my head after the sound of shattering glass.

However, I have the time to wave my hand towards Kon before he goes hero-ing

After a couple of seconds, I go out from the store, my skin already turning to purple and my shirt disappearing.

Fuck it, I'll think about it after I resolve the situation.

"...ges?" "Hostages."

"Yeah, how about no?" Snap.

Dling!

Claw of concrete sprout up from the floor and catch both of the Terror Twins, making them look my way and struggle to free themselves.

That they do after a few seconds. Whoops, comparative strength, right.

Well, remove the friction.. leverage.. whatever, I'm too hungover to think in the right term right now.

"You just made a big mistake, freak." "Yeah, a really big one."

"Yeah, you two... Oh, forget it. I can't find any banter right now."

Snap.

Dling!

And the two teenagers are now floating mid-air, circled by purple smoke, with no surface where anywhere near them.

"Ow, my head"

"Hey, You al..right? Look like it" "Yeah, sorry to interrupt your villain fight, but these two are awfully loud and my head is starting to kill me."

"Are you okay?" Oh, question mark!

"Yeah, my headache just doubled a couple of time. Nothing to worry about."

Both of them nod and I note, with a small pleasure, that Kon have a black domino mask on his eyes. And both of them have that bandana on their face.
"Did you create that mask?" "I wanted him to have a secret identity, Wally the Kid" "Ouch, right in the pride"

But both of them are smiling, so I count this as a victory.

An elegant solution to a pair of thieves. I approve
Me, Wally and Superboy(Kon) walk out of the mall, the gravel caused by the two twins when they shattered my first attempt at stopping them crunches under our shoes. Well, under the shoes of Wally and Kon. Mine were too thin and soft to do so.

I could've repaired the damage the twins caused, but... Well, I forgot. It happens.

The two blond teenagers were still floating over me, encircled by the smoke I always created when I use magic.

A thread of said smoke formed a gag in each of their mouths, silencing them.

The two of them cursed waaay too much for me.

Strangely, the smoke smelt purple. To be more precise, smelt like things that were purple, like Lavender, some kind of Incenses, Violets...

Default setting apparently, no change included.

My thoughts abruptly came to a screeching halt when, in the parking lot, we found Flash and Superman talking to the police, Flash gesticulating towards us.

And suddenly he was right in front of us.

"Three days. You couldn't stay away from troubles for three days!"

"Well, if we want to get technical, trouble came looking for us..." I murmured, low enough to make myself heard only by the two Kryptonians.

That didn't have the effect I wanted. I was hoping that Kon would chuckle, laugh a little.... and nothing. He continued staring at Superman who, in turn, was looking at me. Awkward.

"What should I do with the Wonder Twins here?"

"I'll take care of them." And the Man of Steel flew up, took the two would-be thieves, and went away.

I dissipated the magic still around and turned to look at Kon. His expression looked too much like longing for my tastes. My bottle appeared in my hand, the smooth glass feeling fresh under my - still purple - skin.

"Here." I said as I passed what was now the most important item of my life to him.

"What?" Thankfully he lost the yearning look in favor of confusion. "Didn't you leave that thing near the bed this morning?" said Wally, looking to me.

"It's my bottle. I can summon it anywhere I am or vice-versa. I'm kind of tied to it, you know"

"Like in Aladdin?" Wally asked.
"Aladdin?"

"It's a Disney film."

"If you have finished..." Flash interrupts. Right, the Flash was still here. "Go home, to Wally's. Get a good night of sleep and I'll take you three to Mount Justice in the morning. Batman will announce his decision then." And he sped away.

"We need to take your clothes."

I started walking away, shifting again to the more human-looking appearance, leaving Wally and Kon to talk. Or rather, leaving Wally to talk and Kon to listen. I'm left to wonder...

Am I doing the right thing?

********************************************

After returning to Wally's home, he insisted on watching Aladdin, claiming that was a must if you have a magic lamp. Bottle. Same thing.

It went... Okay, I think.

There wasn't many sound from Kon during the movie. On the other hand, Wally spent the entire movie snacking.

"Ehy, why you didn't appear like that?" Wally asked, slowing the stream of food to his mouth.

"I couldn't. I was still new to this Djinn thing. I am still new"

"What do you mean new? In this..." and he gesticulated towards the TV screen with a spoon half-filled with Ice Cream "...genies Should be thousands of years old."

"Ok, first: Don't talk with your mouth full. Second, now I want Ice cream. Third: I'm not thousands of years old. I appeared around the moon less than three days ago."

"What?" They asked in chorus. Wally peered at me curiously, while Kon was looking at me like I was someone he never saw before.

"Oh, right, I never explained..."

I propped myself on the chair better, a cup of cherry flavored ice cream, with two scoop of chocolate and whipped cream on top, appearing in my left hand. In my right, a spoon.

I pointed the spoon at Kon, Dling!-ing another cup of ice cream (chocolate and vanilla, with crushed almonds) for him and took a spoonful of my own ice cream before continuing. It's really good.

You came at my request

"It's a bit difficult to explain, but the gist is this: I come, for what I can tell, from a different universe, dimension or plane of existence - not really sure about which one - and appeared around the Earth, near the Moon."

I paused for a second spoonful of ice cream and looked at the two teenagers, that were looking at me who were attentively listening.

"I was human before and couldn't breath in space, but when the panic attack or, you know, death
didn't take, I looked at myself and, well..." I gestured to myself, indicating the skin, eyes, hair and everything else "...I looked like this, with that..." I pointed at the bottle that was currently residing in Kon's lap, prompting him to cover it with a hand. Good or Bad sign? "...floating Near my head. I rubbed it, went inside it automatically and found a message announcing that I was now a Djinn."

By now, if Kon was a pure Kryptonian, he would have made a hole in my head with laser vision with how focused he was staring at me.
"Then I slept inside it for a bit, found a way to send the bottle, and me it it, to Earth and here I am."

Silence hung in the air for a bit. Then Wally finished his ice cream and went for Kon's, which was starting to melt.

"And you said that you don't have the rules?" Apparently Kon isn't interested in the Ice Cream right now. Too bad. He would have enjoyed it.

"As far I can tell. I can kill, I can return someone to life, I can do pretty much everything. Well, except for interfering with the Free Will of others."

Wally abruptly straightens up. "Wait, wait, wait! Are you saying that we-" Now Kon is glaring at him. Why? "-can ask for more wishes?"

"Yes? Why?"

"Awesome!" Wally grins.

"I wish you were free." Kon immediately declares.

Another long silence.

"I can't do that, sorry." I give him an apologetic look. He looks really distressed by this.

"What?!" "Supey, why?"

And this is the moment where everything is thrown into chaos.

Kon turns fully towards Wally, a furious expression on his face. "Why? WHY? Are you telling me that you would be willing to keep someone enslaved to you only because he can grant any wish you want? Would you do this to another person? Would you..."

I float behind Kon and hug him, making him stop.

Still a child, this one. But this could be for the best... Or the worst.

"Relax, okay? The reason you can't wish me free is because I am already free."

"What do you mean?" Kon asks. Wally is looking from behind the couch, peering over the edge from where he dived when Kon started yelling. Superspeed or not, an angry Kryptonian is no joke.

"I'm tied to the bottle, true, but I'm not bound at it. I can come and go as I prefer and, if I really didn't want anyone to have it, I could hide it somewhere, like the moon." I start to stroke his air, feeling his shoulder relax slightly and he turns to look at me

"I can refuse to grant wishes, too, unless someone has the bottle in their hands. And, even if someone takes that bottle, I can always trick them into releasing me or twisting their wishes, but thank you." I smile at him, taking my bottle from him and cupping it between my two hands. "That you just wished me free, even if you only used one wish, speaks a lot of your character."
Purple light shines between my hands and my bottle shrinks, with silver gleaming around it.

"I'm glad I met you."

And then, the light fades to nothing.

I'm holding a necklace in my hand, a small chain made of silver, with a pendant with the iconic shield of Superman, but without the famous S. In its place a small purple bottle, raised against the metal, shining at the artificial light of the house.

"Here"

And I open the clasp, offering it to him.

Kon takes the jewelry with a hesitant expression on his face, fumbling a bit.

"Let me..." I take the necklace and clasp it around his neck, with a small smile on my face.

"With this around your neck, you aren't at risk to lose to bottle to someone else." I'm feeling both glad that I met him and really bad at the same time. With everything that happened... it feels too much like I'm manipulating him.

Well, I am manipulating him, but this makes it seem a lot worse.

But I don't know what else to do now.

Yes. Soon You will be like me.

"Well, I'm going to bed. Night guys." And Wally zips away, leaving me and Kon alone in the living room.

"We better go to bed. Tomorrow is an important day and I don't want to be fall asleep in front of Batman."

"...alright." Kon says, still fingering the necklace.

*******************************

July 8, Mount Justice

Around Eight in the morning.

The Zeta Tube system was really strange.

For simplicity, I traveled in the bottle, still around Kon's neck, the wall of which were conveniently see through, allowing me to see what was happening.

The room where we found ourselves was a big, circular room, with the floor tiled grey and some kind of cylinder in the roof.

Smoking out from the bottle, I took place at the side of Kon, in my (new)natural form, looking around. I almost missed Batman narrowing his eyes at me, before resuming a more neutral expression, turning to face all five of us.

With him there were other superheroes, like Aquaman, Captain Marvel, Hawkwoman and Flash.

King of Atlantis, Child-Hero, Alien, Speed Lord
But the most relevant people for us were Red Tornado and Black Canary, who were side by side, observing us.

Red Tornado is a robot, completely red, with slits for eyes and mouth, a yellow arrow downward pointing on his head and three yellow symbols on the chest, making it looking like he had a T on it. The appearance was completed by a blue cloak with yellow details around the borders.

Black Canary was a petite woman, with fishnet, a black body and a blue jacket. Her face was framed by blonde hair and her blue eyes were looking at us.

Red Tornado volunteered to be our supervisor and Black Canary was to be our trainer. There were two glaring errors in this setup, but I held my tongue. I could speak my thoughts when Batman took me to be interrog.. Interviewed about my intentions and whatnot.

Honestly, I was a bit surprised that he didn't do it already. Must be because I was always with Kon and Wally.

Or, maybe, he was waiting for the right moment.

Like tonight. Or this afternoon

I missed almost his entire speech, but I already knew a bit of what he would say, so it wasn't a big problem.

"...Batman needs a team that can operate on the sly."

"The five of you will be that team."

"Cool!" Robin's face was happy, at least it looked that way. I narrowed my eyes.

It looked like I would be interrogated now.

"Recognized A Zero-Six Martian Manhunter. Recognized B Zero-Five Miss Martian" I felt my body growing hot, something bubbling in my guts and making me feel strange. That snapped me from my line of thought, making me return to the here and now.

"She is the Martian Manhunter niece, Miss Martian"

"Hi. I'm honored to be included" She have a nice smile. The green skin and the red hair were a good contrast and her human figure was pretty good. And yet...

Kon had on his face a look that said 'don't compute', Robin was looking at Batman, Kaldur'ahm was confused and Wally was already trying to flirt.

I put a hand on Kon's shoulder and squeezed, making him look at me, puzzled, before I walked to Miss Martian, a smile on my face.

"Honored to meet you, Miss. I am Djinn"

And bowed to her slightly, right arm across my torso and the left on my back.

"O-oh. Honored to meet you, too"

"My pleasure." I would've gone for a kiss on her knuckles, but I knew the limits. Sometimes. Once every blue moon.
After all, once everything is said and done, I am Italian. Romance is in our blood.

This, obviously, didn't make anything different than make me looking more suspicious, but this would force the start of the discussion that Batman wanted to have.

And so we were an impasse.

Wally looking shocked, Robin and Kaldur calculating, Kon looked... hurt?, Miss Martian was slightly blushing and Batman and the other heroes were looking at me.

I sauntered back, leaning against Kon's side, arms crossed on my chest and a satisfied smirk on my face.

"I think we need to have a chat"

"But of course. Where?"

"Follow me" And, with a flourish of his cape - very Severus Snape, really Wizard-y - he stalks down a hallway, the other heroes with him.

I follow, my hand clasped on Kon's wrist, tugging a couple of times to see if he have any objection to me dragging him. Looks like a no.

Okay, then.

Wally is trying to calm Miss Martian, who seems to think that was her fault this his happening and Robin is explaining the events. Or at least that's what it looked like. Kaldur'ahm is following us. He will be a good team leader.

We reach the kitchen. Nice place, high cabinets, gas stove, oven, refrigerator, all nine yard.

I sit on one side of the table, Kon sitting at my left, Kaldur'ahm propped against the wall behind us.

In front of us sit Batman, Aquaman and Hakwoman. Flash is against the counter and Captain Marvel is studying me.

Right, he possess the Wisdom of Solomon. Solomon, the King that had at his service Ten-Thousand Djinn. But he also is a ten-year old kid, so I'm pretty sure that he saw Aladdin. He must be conflicted.

"Who are you?" Batman demands, breaking the tension and the silence.

"I am Djinn"

"Djinni." Captain Marvel corrects.

"Eh?"

"Djinn is the plural word to indicate a race of spirits that live in another dimension. Djinni is the singular"

Oh, Embarrassing.

"Well, then I am Djinni. Thanks for the information, Captain Marvel."

"Well, I am Djinni, the spirit that live in the Bottle and, currently, is staying with Superboy."

"No, you're not" Captain Marvel interrupts again.

"What?" This came from the others teenagers, in various tone. Oh, Robin, Wally and M'gann arrived.

"Uhmmm.. I'm pretty sure that I am. I mean, I can grant wishes, it's pretty much the only requisite."

"Djinn aren't human beings. They don't understand us in the way you do. They simply can't. And, above all, they aren't so happy to grant the wishes of they would-be masters" He explains.

Solomon. A great King. Not so great man.

"And isn't this a good thing? I mean, if I was a typical Djinni I could have made Superman flightless. Instead, I jus activated his dormant Kryptonian genes."

Honestly, I'm wondering why I simply don't tell them the truth. It would be easier. I think.

Batman is looking at me like he know I'm hiding something, the other JLA members are all looking at me with various degree of irritation. M'gann looks confused, Robin calculating, Kaldur'ahm deep in thought, Kon is simply looking at me and Wally is thinking something.

"You are hiding something. And until I know if it's dangerous or not, I won't let you near Robin and the others."

"Okay, Batman, you win. You want the truth? Then the truth you will have" I adjust myself on the chair. "But before I start saying anything, could you bring Wonder Woman here? If the rumors about her Lasso are true, it would make everything easier, no?"

"How do you know..."

"Even if I told you how, you wouldn't believe it. So i won't say anything else until Wonder Woman came here."

It's official. I'm an idiot. Teasing Batman like this must be my suicidal tendencies resurfacing. The time spent waiting for Diana to arrive here slowed tricked by, full of tension. I was keeping a blank face, copied by Batman. He didn't move his gaze from me from before he called Diana with the comm.

Captain Marvel was looking between me and Batman, fidgeting a bit. Shayera was filing her nails, but I could see her keeping her eyes on me. Flash and Aquaman were the most relaxed somehow, but still in silence. M'gann was fidgeting, too, but she calmed pretty soon, J'onn near her. I guess they were in telepathic contact.

Wally was eating - no surprise, if what With This Ring said was true about his formula... - and Robin was tapping at his wrist computer, searching for something. Kaldur'ahm was looking at me, then at his king, then at me. Again and again. I wonder what was searching.

Kon was the most problematic: he had taken my left wrist in his hand, squeezing and relaxing at regular intervals, glaring towards everyone on the side of the adult. If he had asked for the Heat Vision when he expressed his first Wish, they would be ashes.

After ten minutes of agonizing wait, the Amazonian Princess entered in the kitchen followed by Superman.
Better and better, yeah?

"Batman, aren't you exaggerating a bit?"

"I prefer exaggerating and safe than not exaggerating and dead."

"This time, I concur with him."

Superman is on the side of Batman? That was new to me.

Well, not that I have an encyclopedic knowledge of all that is DC, so I couldn't really say that was unheard or even uncommon. But this was really tiring and I really wanted to take this to an end. So I spoke.

"It's okay, it was my idea. In this way he would be sure that I wouldn't lie. The truth and nothing else, right?" I smiled. "And, as I said, the truth he will have." I stood, arms straight down my sides, nodding at Diana. "I want to finish this."

She sighed and tied the lasso around me. It started shining gold and something touched me, not physically, but in some other way.

"Who are you?" The question was the same, but this time the answer would have a lot more weight behind.

So I told the truth. Well, one

"I am the Djinni of the Bottle"

"Where are you from?"

"Near the moon."

"...What?"

"I woke up in the Earth's orbit around four days ago, in this body and with the bottle floating right near me. I rubbed it and went inside, where I confirmed the suspicion that I was a Djinni when I found the bottle."

"Why were you near the moon?"

"I don't know, I was sleeping"

He looked frustrated. Well, more like he looked a tiny bit frustrated.

"Why were you sleeping near the moon?"

"I wasn't. I was sleeping in my bed, then I woke up near the moon."

"Oh, right. You explained it yesterday." Wally recalls.

"What?"

"I explained that I, as far as I can tell, I came from a different dimension, universe and/or plane of existence."

Remarkably, Batman didn't look too put off. The others were treating it a bit less better.
"How can you tell?"

"In my world there aren't Superheroes, Supervillains, Mad Scientists and every other things that here exist. Except for Aliens and that because we didn't reach other planets with life on it."

A dull world.

"How did you know about the Lasso of Truth?"

Misdirection, misdirection, what is the truth?

"I had some knowledge in my head. It feels natural, like it's something I had for long time, but I don't know how it ended there."

All true. Please, let it work...

"Why you came to our partners?"

Wow, he is focused.

"I didn't. I threw the bottle towards the Earth and hoped that someone would find it. That Superboy was the first person to rub it was a coincidence."

Well, he looks a bit convinced. Just a smidgen.

"What are your plans now?"

"Remain with Superboy. See if I can create a life for myself. If not, find another customer to give the bottle and live that way."

Listening to my plans like this is depressing. I really need to be more positive in the future.

"Why remaining with Superboy?"

"I consider him a friend and he hold my bottle"

"Why aren't you trying to return home?"

"Because I don't know if it's possible and I'm actively trying to not think about it"

"Why?"

"Because if I let myself thinking that I won't be able to see my father, my mother, my brother again I could break there and then and with the power that I possess now I can't permit it. Because it would be all too simple to make my bottle fall in the hand of a genocidal nuts if I stop and think about the fact that I could be forever away from home and wanting to destroy this world in revenge."

"W-" "ENOUGH!" Diana yells.

The lasso went loose and Diana took it again, glaring at Batman.

I felt the influence of the magic lifting, removing itself from my thought and felt my cheeks burning in embarrassment.

I fix my eyes on the floor, refusing to look anyone in the eyes, just glancing at the boy at my left when Kon touch my shoulder. I manage a small smile, that seems hearten him a bit.
The simple feeling of tiredness hit me like a freight train.

Apparently the rumor that the telling emotive truth was quite right. I feel like I need a nap.

Ignoring what Diana and Batman are saying, I tip to my left side, ending up leaning against Kon. Mhhhhhh, hugs.

When was the last time that someone hugged me instead of the other way around?
The true tales of the Djinni. Also called: Lies no more.

Chapter Notes

This chapter was written with the hep of a co-author over at SufficientVelocity. Thank you very much, StoryJumper.

Also: This chapter contains mention of heavy injuries. Please be warned.

After the... 'conversation' with Batman, I ignored the other heroes and remained exactly where I was, drowsiness overcoming me. I was asleep before I realized it.

I woke up after some time, not exactly sure what hour it was. I don't have either a watch or a cellphone and I should really try to... Duh, magic.

"Time?" A wisp of smoke forms numbers in mid-air. It appears that I have only slept for a couple of hours. Everyone else must have left by now.

Taking in my surroundings, I realize I was in a queen size bed, in a room with the door closed. There were a couple of shelves on the walls and a closet opposite of them. Next to the bed, the window’s curtains were closed, keeping all but a few rays of sunlight from entering the room. I must have been left here after I fell asleep.

Rubbing my eyes, I sit up, looking around and trying to see if anyone else was in here with me. Nobody. Or, at least, nobody I could see anyways. Invisibility is a cheat. I opened the curtains to a view of the sea and Happy Harbor.

*Thud-thump. Clatter.*

My head turns toward the sound, which seems to come from . It sounded like someone fell, but there shouldn't be anyone else in Mount Justice. It's just me and ...

"Superboy!"

I flew out of the bed - the blanket landing on the floor - and propelled myself out the door, nearly slamming against the wall in front of the room in my haste. Luckily, my reflexes kicked in and I stopped myself with my limbs just in time. They stung a little but I ignored it as I flew towards where I could feel my bottle and the presence that I was learning to associate with Kon.

It didn't take me long to find Kon laying on the floor in a heap, mumbling something. His movements, what little he had, were sluggish. He nearly looked like he had a concussion or drugged or-or... something like that!

"Superboy. Superboy! Can you hear me? Hey!"

I shake him, trying to get him to open his eyes. Checking him for wounds or anything that could
have been the cause of his lethargy yielded nothing. Panic rose in my chest and I looked around frantically, trying to find someone who could help. The growing urge to find whoever did this to him and break them was not helping.

Nothing. The room was devoid of anyone other than the two of us. Kon gave off a slight groan and my focus snapped back to him. I needed to get him out of here and on a bed. At the very least I could make sure he could properly rest.

Lifting Kon's body, I was unable to properly bear his weight and nearly sent both of us sprawling on the floor. Fortunately, I managed to balance myself and shift my hold on Kon in time before I hurt him more.

"Amor celeste, you're heavy! Why can't you lose some muscle mass?" I complain before focusing. I never did this before and I certainly didn't want to mess up now.

"I hope this works..." I mutter under my breath as I shut my eyes.

Mentally reaching inside myself for the Magic that defined my very being, I searched for the core of it. And I found it.

My Magic was a kaleidoscope of colors. Wave after wave of light shifting and changing with every moment, each combining, melding together to create colors human vision couldn't perceive and taking forms that shouldn't be possible in 3D. I could have lost myself exploring the Magic I was given, but now was not the time.

Instead, I focused on the room I was in. I visualized the walls, the window, and everything in it. Then, I imagined the two of us being there. We shouldn't be here. We should be there. This is how I demanded things should be.

We disappeared from the room with a Dling.

When I opened my eyes, we were outside, floating just above the very top of Mount Justice. Looking out to the horizon, the entirety of Happy Harbor lay before my eyes. Well, it looks like I'll have to practice that to make sure I get where I want to next time.

"Nghhh..." Kon grunted.

"Superboy!" I exclaim in concern.

He slowly started to stir and regain consciousness. His eyes blinked slowly before snapping wide open in alarm. He thrashed, making me lose the hold I had on him, and falling the short drop to hard stone.

Kon threw a punch at me that I just barely dodged. I shout, "Superboy! It's me!" before he attempts to attack again.

Recognizing my voice, Kon manages to pull back his next strike before it hit me. I let out a breath of relief. I did not want to find out if he could hurt me.

Kon looks around carefully, clearly confused as to how he got outside. "What... where are we?"

"We're on the top of Mount Justice. I heard noise coming from downstairs and I worried that you got hurt since there's nobody else here. When I found you, you were collapsed and unresponsive. I tried to shake you awake, but when it didn't work I... uhm..." Oh, just tell him. "... I teleported us out."
"You can teleport?"

"Sort...of?" I shake a hand, as I sit down, gesturing for Kon to take a seat next to me. "I never tried to do it before. I was aiming for one of the rooms inside, but we ended up here instead. Nevermind that though, what happened to you?"

A sour look crossed Kon's face. "I discovered that I hate monkeys." What?

"What?" I vocalize.

"I saw the Joker inside the base and... well he attacked some kid and unleashed dozens of monkeys with jetpacks on the members of the Justice League. That was when I understood that it was only an illusion."

"...Okay." The illusion made no sense, but it did explain why monkeys.

"It's true!" Kon adds defensively, hunching his shoulders ever so slightly.

"No, no. I believe you. It's just... The Joker using monkeys - even if they had jetpacks! - on the Justice League is just a little bit crazy." My placations seemed to have calmed him down because he relaxed..

"Well, he's the Joker."

"Point."

We remained there in companionable silence, watching the clouds float through the sky and simply relishing the fact we could do something like this. I catch a glimpse of Kon's peaceful face from the corner of my eyes and the guilt from manipulating him earlier hits me all over again.

I sighed. I knew I would crack and tell Kon the truth sooner or later, but less than a week? I thought I could give myself more credit than that. I don't know if it's pathetic or commendable that I can't keep a secret from him. Well, better to get this over with sooner than later, right? Right.

"Superboy, there's something I need to tell you."

******************************************************************************

"What?" Kon looks over at me, questioning.

I hesitated, then forced the words out before I could stop myself. "It's about my origins. I wasn't entirely honest earlier. There's something I didn't say to anyone, mainly because I didn't know how to say it. I still don't really know how to tell you, but I really can't lie to you."

I stand up, stretching my arms over my head, and float up into the air. When I met Kon's gaze, it held nothing but trust and curiosity. My heart twisted a little in my chest at what I was about to tell him, but he deserved the truth more than anybody.

"Let's go further up, I'd rather we talk with more privacy. I don't trust that Batman hasn't put listening devices on the top of the mountain. Nothing against Batman, but, well, he's Batman, so... yeah, I can't believe he would have us live here without every inch of the mountain being covered in surveillance of some sort."

Kon turns his head around, squinting slightly as if he could see the various bugs that Batman would have planted. "Okay. If you think it's important..."
"Extremely."

As we flew up, I felt my heart pound in my chest and my stomach was tying itself in knots. I started taking in short and superficial breaths in my anxiety. Unlike the human body though, my back started to itch all over and my mouth started salivating as I grew more nervous instead of sweating or shaking.

This could ruin our entire friendship. And yet. I couldn't keep it from him. When he finds out, and he would find out sooner or later, he'll hate me for not telling him sooner. But if I don't tell him and he finds out by himself, he'll hate me more for hiding it in the first place.

Either way, I lose.

At least this way, there was a chance that he would forgive me and then I would make sure never to do anything like this again. The other option I might be able to pull off for a while, but then everything would fall apart and I would have lost any chance of making up for my mistakes.

This was the best choice. As far as there could be a best choice in this situation anyways.

"Hey," Kon says, "you don't look too good. Are you sure you want to-?"

"Yes." I cut him off before he convinces me to back down. "This is something I need to do." I took a deep breath and steeled myself. Kon was watching me with an unreadable expression on his face, his brow slightly bunched together.

"I told you that I come from a different dimension, right?" A nod of confirmation. "Well, remember how Batman asked me how I knew about things I shouldn't know if I come from a place so different from here? Like the Lasso and the fact that it forces people in its grasp to tell the truth when questioned?" Another, more guarded, nod.

I pause, absentmindedly grabbing a stray piece of cloud that drifted to my side. With a minor application of my magic, it turned into a solid, squishy mass of white, which I started kneading with my fingers to give my hands something to do. I don't look up from it.

"I told Batman that I didn't know how I knew - that the information was just in my head - but that isn't entirely true. I don't really know when or where I learned information about this world, however, that's because where I come from, it's mostly common knowledge."

I peeked at him and rushed to finish speaking before he interrupted when it looked like he wanted to say something. "And it's common knowledge because... Because everything about this world is shown as cartoons, comics and movies. Everything about Superheros and Supervillains. Everything about the others. Everything about you."

Kon was stunned. My throat threatened to close up, but I pushed myself to finish. "What I'm trying to say is, I know a lot about everyone here. Before I even met any of you because you were just fictional characters, I know the origins of most of the heroes, the secret identities of each, and what their personality is like. That's not even counting what I know can happen..." I nearly cried right then and there at the look on his face. He grew more and more horrified at what I was saying and it quickly turned into hurt and rage.

"This is how I knew what to say to persuade you to make a wish when we first met. I know what you'll choose to name-"

Like earlier, Kon threw a punch at my jaw, cutting me off. This time, however, I let him. I was tossed a few feet through the air before I managed to stop myself. It looked like Kon's super strength
could hurt me after all. My eyes teared up, but I refused to let them fall. I deserved this.

He followed up on it with another strike to my chest, throwing me down back to the ground. I hit the side of Mount Justice at full speed, my left arm shattering on impact as well as my right leg and almost all my ribs. I think that my spine cracked as well. It was nothing short of a miracle that my vital organs weren't ruptured with internal bleeding.

Or perhaps not? My jaw and neck were still intact and working. Maybe there's more than just magic to this whole Djinn thing.

Kon flew straight at me, an arm pulled back, muscles coiled and ready to slam down and crush my skull. I didn't look away. I couldn't look away.

**Boom!**

As the dust settled, I belatedly realized that he changed the angle of his strike at the last minute and hit just next to my head instead of directly on it. I didn't dare look away from his glare, but I could see that there was a miniature crater where his hand is. I could only imagine what would have happened if he had hit me.

Emotions rapidly flickered over his face, as if he couldn't decide on what to feel, though it seemed the most frequent emotions were fury, hurt and something I couldn't identify.

My mouth opens before I know I'm speaking. "I do know this isn't a cartoon, a movie, or anything like that. You, and everyone else, are real, living, breathing people. And of everyone that I've met in the short time I've been here, I know that you are much more than I thought you were. You are someone who deserved to know the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

**Crack. Crack-Snap.**

My bones started to shift back into place, the sound very audible in the tension between us. Kon stared at me. I stared back with a sinking heart.

"Go away."

My poor host. I am here for you.

"Alright... But, for what it's worth..." I float away, my arm and leg held stiffly by my magic. Kon didn't turn to watch me, staring at the crater he made instead. "...everything I did as your friend? I meant all of it. It wasn't just pretend. You have the right to not believe me, but it's true."

I look at him sadly. "I hope this is a 'See you later' and not a 'Goodbye'. Just rub the bottle if you want to see me again."

I flew straight up, faster and faster, losing myself in the flight. When I reached the end of the Earth's atmosphere, I teleported to the Moon, leaving Kon- leaving the Earth behind.

After I land, I start walking until I reach the spot where this entire experience started, my feet leaving faint footprints on the dusty surface. I sit cross-legged, staring up at the Earth above me. And I finally let my tears fall.

I feel like the scum of the Earth- no the multiverse. My injuries were nothing compared to how I felt from- from that. My mind starts thinking of a way to fix all this. To make it so that Kon would...

Wasn't this what put me in trouble from the start? Manipulating people with the knowledge I had and
saying just the right things to get them to do what I want?

"I'm an idiot." I whisper as tears stream down my face. It was the last coherent thing I said.

The dam broke. The stress, the emotional damage that our confrontation caused burst forth with no restraint. I sobbed and wailed and blubbered my sorrow. My tears crystallizing from the cold of outer space once they left my skin and hit the surface of the moon. I was a mess, both inside and out.

My magic was rolling, like the sea during a maelstrom. My emotions causing my magic to go out of control. Great clouds of smoke emerge from my form, swirling around me like a whirlpool. Purple lightning discharges from them, striking the moon's surface and turning the white moondust into violet crystals.

My ribs were finally fully repaired, as well as my arm and leg. Physically, my condition was perfect.

Emotionally, I was a complete wreck.
Interlude: Kon-El

Chapter Notes

This is an interlude written by my coauthor. Hope you like it.

Interlude: Kon-El

Kon was confused.

Well, no. That didn’t really make much sense, he was confused a lot. He had been since Robin, Wally and Kaldur infiltrated Cadmus and turned his world on its head. His entire (short) life only contained the Labs and the Doctors. He had never stepped foot outside, never saw the world with his own two eyes.

Not until those three came.

They kept their promise too. They led him outside of Cadmus, fighting to show him the Moon. And it was…

Kon didn’t think he could describe it. The light was so soft, nothing like the dry dull lights inside. It glowed and something in him grew warmer and warmer with every second standing in its presence. The moon was large and full and bright. He could have stood there and basked for days.

And then Superman flew towards them.

Kon’s throat clogged up and he couldn’t find anything to say the one time he needed to speak, only able to display the symbol on his chest. Before him was the man who was his entire world. The perfect hero. The Kryptonian he was to become.

“Is that what I think it is?”

Batman’s voice prompted Kon to speak, so he stepped up and blurted out, “I’m Superman’s clone.” before he really knew what he was doing.

Kon’s heart sunk at Superman’s reaction, a frown appearing when Superman wouldn’t meet his eyes.

Look at me! He thought. I’m here! I’m real! Do something- anything! … Am I not enough? Tell me, am I not good enough? What am I doing wrong?! *Am I a failure after all?*

Superboy vaguely remembered listening to the reports that the others were giving. He remembered glaring at anyone who stared at him for too long. And he remembered the second life-changing event that occurred not five minutes later.

Djinni.

The bottle streaked through the sky and, on instinct, Kon jumped to catch it. When he looked at it he was surprised that it didn’t break earlier. A purple, opaque glass bottle should not have been able to withstand atmospheric reentry.
Kon blinked and scowled. The genomorphs. Right. He gripped the bottle tighter reflexively and loosened his hold just as fast. He brushed a hand over it to check if he damaged it accidentally only for the top to pop off and smoke to fill the air. Reflexively, he tried to break the bottle and held it away from him, but it held up under the pressure of his grasp.

The heroes, who had previously gathered around Kon when he first landed, scattered when the smoke appeared. However, the smoke wasn’t acting like any normal gas. It was taking form. It rapidly settled into a vaguely human shape, sans legs, and floated in the air.

He had a face with European features and long black wavy hair that seemed to float. Dressed in an Arabian style that somehow managed to not be at odds with his appearance, he would have looked a lot like any other human on Earth save for the smokey blue tattoos and varying shades of purple that colored his form.

And the first thing he does is tell Kon that he has three wishes.

When Kon asked, “What can I ask for?” in confusion, the Djinn even corrected Kon and said that he could wish for anything, suggesting several things in the process.

Kon didn’t know what to do. The first decision he made for himself wasn’t even an hour ago and he’s told he has wishes now? He didn’t even want anything. There was nothing that he could want, but…

For the first time ever, something belonged to him.

Then the Djinn said he could make him fly. Kon could fly like Superman. He wouldn’t fall like he had in the elevator! Maybe Superman would even look at him now! So Kon made his (tentatively hopeful) wish and it came true!

Kon didn’t know what joy felt like before, but he could certainly understand why people smiled now. Flying for the first time, especially since he couldn’t before, was exhilarating.

"Don't worry, my friend. You have plenty of time to explore your new power later."

And as Kon looked at the Djinn who gave him a part of his greatest dream, all he could say was, “...Thanks.” before the Djinn disappeared.

Later, when was going to leave the bedroom to fly some more, the Djinn appeared from the bottle again. After Kon told the Djinn he was having trouble sleeping, the Djinn read a story to him and stroked his hair. He fell asleep with a faintly wondering if this was what a parent felt like.

It was the best night he ever had.

Being around Wally, Kaldur and Robin was comfortable, though they were very curious about the Djinn. It was nice. Kon kept the second meeting to himself when they asked if the Djinn appeared again. It wasn’t that important anyways.

After Wally and Kon returned to Wally’s house, the Djinn reappeared again. Dinner was fun even if the morning after was a surprise. The Djinn read another story to Kon that night too, Wally as well. *Kon wished it was just the two of them so the Djinn could stroke his hair again.* The next day all of them went to the mall. Kon couldn’t understand why anyone liked those places. It was noisy, crowded and there were so many different lights and smells. He just wanted to get some clothes and go, so he chose one shirt and a pair pants and got several pairs of them. Done.

Of course, before they were finished shopping, the Terror Twins - And seriously? What a stupid
name. - started robbing the mall. He and Wally could only grab bandanas to cover their faces before running to stop them.

Kon didn’t notice the domino mask on his face until Wally pointed it out to him when they noticed the hostages, but after the Djinn stopped the Twins he gave a small smile and tucked it away carefully. It was the first piece of clothing he got. He would definitely be wearing it as part of his costume.

The peace he felt didn’t last long. With the Twins captured, Superman and the Flash came to take them away. Superman didn’t even look at him, instead watching the Djinn.

*I’m here! Look at me! He’s not the only new hero!*

The Djinn distracted Kon from thinking about Superman by giving Kon his bottle. Kon was confused. Why did he give it to Kon? Wasn’t it his? Kon didn’t have time to ask about it before they left for Wally’s house.

Wally lounged in the armchair while Kon and the Djinn took over the couch. Aladdin was a fun movie to watch, but Kon couldn’t help but frown as he thought about being forced to grant wishes for eternity, a foreign feeling taking over him when he remembered making a wish for himself.

Learning that the Djinn was so new at his job was a surprise, but Kon had brushed it aside. He could understand having to learn how to use superpowers. He didn’t have much experience with his own abilities after all.

Instead, he had focused on interrogating the Djinn on his abilities. When the Djinn confirmed that he didn’t know of any rules to his power, Kon immediately wished for the Djinn to be free. He was forced to do things for far too long. As if he would make the Djinn listen to his every order.

After the Djinn apologized and he heard Wally question his wish to free him, he tore into Wally for thinking of keeping someone under his control. He nearly started a fight right then and there. Anyone who was so selfish for a few stupid wishes deserved a punch in the face. It was only thanks to the Djinn that Wally wasn’t going to bed with a black eye.

*It helped that the Djinn stroked his hair again.*

And then the Djinn nearly floored him by giving Kon his bottle. It was the single most important object to a Djinn (or at least that’s what Aladdin showed) and the Djinn was trusting HIM with it.

Kon couldn’t keep his hands from wandering to the necklace every five minutes. He never would have thought that anyone would trust him so much. He felt happy with the comforting weight on his chest.

The next day, Kon was smug when the team - his team was told they were going to do missions that the Justice League members couldn’t handle. Superman would have to acknowledge him after their first mission. Only… someone entirely new was joining them.

Kon pushed aside the stinging feeling that overcame him when he saw how special the Djinn was treating the martian girl. The Djinn trusted Kon the most, he told himself. That’s why he gave Kon his bottle. The feeling became a lot easier to ignore when the Djinn returned and stayed by his side afterwards.

*Kon wished he was special to the Djinn. The Djinn was the only one who made him feel wanted.*

The interrogation between the Justice League and Djinni infuriated Kon. What right did they have to question Djinni like that? What right did they have to not treat him like a human?

What did Djinni do to deserve this?

Kon was relieved when Djinni was released from the lasso and calmed down a bit. At least one of
the League was being reasonable about the questioning.

Kon placed a hand on Djinni’s shoulder, relaxing when he managed a weak smile in return. As Djinni leaned on him, Kon made sure to support his weight so that he wouldn’t fall. In his exhaustion, Djinni didn’t notice a thing.

Fortunately the meeting didn’t last much longer, so Kon carried Djinni to one of the rooms in the base and laid him on the bed as he slept.

Kon couldn’t remember the next bit clearly. All he could recall was that one moment sitting in the main room on the couch and the next thing he knew, he was seeing the Joker with jetpack monkeys attacking the mountain. Kon fought them the best he could only to realize that they weren’t real. When he woke up he nearly attacked Djinn because he thought he was still fighting.

It might have been disorienting waking up in so many different places, but Kon experienced worse when the Genomorphs were teaching him about world history. He was placed in a different location nearly every ten minutes. Well, in his mind, but it didn’t make it any less headache inducing.

Sitting outside with Djinni was nice. Peaceful. Kon would never get over being outside. It was so different from the simulations even though it looked exactly the same. He could only guess that it was because no simulation could ever feel as soothing as the real thing.

Kon was curious when Djinni interrupted the comfortable silence they were in. His curiosity only grew when Djinni mentioned hiding something from everyone earlier and wanting to talk privately to keep his secrets hidden.

At the time, Kon didn’t have any problems with following Djinni. He was the first person to do anything for Kon even if he didn’t have to. The thought of not trusting Djinni never even crossed his mind.

And now…

Maybe, Kon thought bitterly, it would have been better if he never learned that he was just another character in a story to the Djinn. He bet that the Djinn had fun reading stories to someone who wasn’t even real.

It had hurt. It still hurt. He couldn’t think. All he knew was that it was painful and he wanted it to go away. The Djinn caused him to feel this way, fighting him should make the pain go away. Or so he thought at the time.

It didn’t make any sense. The Djinn was gone now, disappeared to who know’s where.

So why did it hurt so much more?

The Djinn’s parting words rang in his mind, but Kon refused to believe in them. Who’s to say they weren’t just another attempt to control him? But… if there was anything he wanted right now, it was to trust that the Djinn was telling the truth.

But how could he?

Kon shook, fists clenching so tight that his nails nearly drew blood. He twisted around and screamed as he threw an earth shattering punch at the mountain. And again. And again.

He made to throw a fourth strike only to be stopped by bright green restraints surrounding him. He struggled with all his might, eager for a new target for his aggression, but it was futile. As he was
taken away and watched by more than one wary face amongst the Justice League members, he sullenly asked himself what else could go wrong.
Chapter 5: Fisherman's dilemma, or: How do I put the Djinni back in the bottle?

I awake with a soul searing weariness making my movements clumsy as I sit up. As I look around and the previous day’s events dawn on me, the ache grows impossibly larger, causing me to curl up in hope of repressing those memories. Telling the truth. Kon, furiously attacking me. Running to the moon.

The moon.

I gaze upon the Earth and note that I can clearly view East Asia. Before I cr- fell asleep, I could only view North America’s longitude. It must be some 8-12 hours since I-

Since I lost control!

I burst into motion, flying high enough to get a clear view of the moon. And boy, it was a mess.

With my previous location the epicenter, violet crystals spread in a, and there really was no other way to say this, splattered circle, with a radius of ten meters. The border appeared warped, for all that it created a perfect circle within it.

And the crystals themselves were another matter entirely. Despite the violet coloring, within the crystals were shards of of light, illuminating it from the inside. There was no pattern for the sizes either. Randomly interspersed between the smaller crystals were ginormous ones, roughly two hundred times their size.

It’s a fascinating sight because it all came together to look like the physical representation of ethereal energy. Or what I think energy would look like anyways. I couldn’t say the same for everyone.

“I did this.” I say in awe. “I wonder… What else can I do?”

I know that materialization - of anything, organic or inorganic - wasn’t very difficult. I know that I have unlimited power to grant wishes, though the same could not be said if no wish was made. I know that I cannot interfere in the Free Will of others, though I could manipulate events around them so long as they make their own decisions. I know that there were rules that I still need to discover about my powers.

And it’s about time to see what I’m actually capable of.
I think I should start with something simple. The vexing matter of my appearance. I could change my size with little to no trouble at all, but changing anything about how I look took hours of managing and even then it would fade if I didn’t maintain it constantly.

“How do shapeshifters do it!” I complain to space. “Miss Martian-”

I cut myself off from that line of thought. It would inevitable lead me to thinking of Kon by proxy. I couldn’t let myself fall into old, depressing habits again.

So. A safer topic. I analyze the crystal below me, already regretful that I have to remove it. It just wouldn’t be right to change the moon just because I want to. Now, how to start…? Simple commands should be fine.

I wave my arms in mystic-y motions and say, “Disappear!”

Nothing.

“Revert!”

Silence. I twitch in irritation. Was this crystal magic resistant or someth- Oh. Wait. I smack myself in the forehead. My magic didn’t move at all. How the hell did I not notice that?

Maybe I should start with trying to control my magic first.

I settle down into a meditation pose and close my eyes. Feet on top of my legs, hands palm up on my knees, and a straight back. Hopefully, I’m doing this right. I slow my breathing, taking longer and larger breaths of- actually what am I breathing? I’m on the moon so there isn’t an atmosphere around me. Does that mean I don’t need to breath? I wonder-

I shake my head. Right. Finding my magic. I got to focus here.

This time I ignore keeping the correct form. Instead, I try to find my core again. I reach deep inside myself, searching for that mass of color I know is there.

Unfortunately, it’s much more difficult to find it this time. I am so close with every attempt I make at grasping it, only for it to slip through my fingers.

“Agh!” I flop backwards and stare into space. I don’t know if it’s the new body or what, but it is surprisingly easy to keep my legs crossed at the same time. I sigh and sit up again. “Okay, one more time.”

I mentally snatch my hand out to grab my magic as fast as I can and only just manage to get a hold of it before it ran away again. I don’t dare let myself be distracted and secure my control over it.

So. Simple. Keep it simple.


My magic explodes.

It reforms, but not before I shake off the effects of the backlash. The ringing in my ears lasts quite a bit longer before I can hear myself again too. Or, at least, I think I can.

...
“It too quiet!” I blurt out. “I want some of my music!”

Miracle of miracles, the first notes of Il Cielo d’Irlanda come to life around me. I try to detect its origin, but it appears to be inserted directly in my head, with no clear origin that I can discern. That doesn’t make any sense! I just want music to play and one of my favorite songs start playing? There has to be more to it than that!

I get up and start pacing in a circle, my hands moving with the rhythm of the music causing small sparks to come out of my fingertips. The need to move as I thought didn’t hit me very often, but I’m frustrated and it always did help me clear my head more while thinking.

The sparks form small clouds in the air and I unconsciously write words in the air with them. Then I do a double take as I realize what I’m doing.

I try to figure out what I’m doing right, but as soon as I take a closer look, the lines become blurry and vanish near instantly.

“AGH!” I scream, clenching my hands into fists. “It doesn’t make any sense! Why does it just stop working the moment I focus on it?” It couldn’t be that I’m focusing too much. That would mean my magic would just do whatever it wanted without me using it. Am I focusing on the wrong things? Maybe expecting a certain outcome automatically means failure?

“What does Innate Magic even mean?” I ask space.

That Magic is Yours to control as You see fit. No Rituals, no Formulae, no Spells. Just You.

“Like a Sorcerer in D&D? Is Magic in my blood and I just have to use it? Or is it more like a Warlock? No, wait. Warlocks have Pact magic…”

I shake my head again and try to think about anything that could possibly be classified as Innate Magic.

“Right. Let’s take a scientific approach this time. Step one. What do I know?” I ponder for a few minutes. “Magic is pretty self-explanatory. It’s Magic and can pretty much do everything and anything.” That’s my eternal belief and nothing will ever change that. “And that’s pretty much the case when I grant wishes, so case closed. Now, Innate. It means inborn, natural, inherent. So it should mean that this Magic is Mine. But that doesn’t tell me how to use it.”

I just might go insane driving myself in circles like this. No, no. Wait. Think this through. Step two. Trial test.

I focus on the image of a red apple. I add in as many details as I can. The slight shine it has in the light. The crunch it would have if I bit down. The cider-y taste and smell. The bright red, unlike any normal apple. The size of the palm of my hand, which I hold out.

A puff of smoke manifests itself just above my hand and what appeared could only - generously - be called a nightmare of an eldritch abomination of an apple. I dismissed it as soon as it touches me.

This time, I don’t think about it. I just want an apple and will my magic. The apple that appears is flawless and just as I imagined.

I glare as it and nearly throw it, but I stop myself. I take a bite. I have been getting hungry. This figuring out my magic is hard work.

Results? It appears that the more I focus on the details, the worse the result and the more vague, the
“That’s absurd!” I shout and throw away the core of the finished apple. It becomes another star in space. I stare before choosing to ignore it. What apple-star? That’s ridiculous. Like becoming drunk on water.

Or milk.

“Wait, wait, wait. I’m onto something here.” Think. What could this mean? What’s the common factor is all of this? Food? No, it was the same with the crystals. Is it a concept? No, it’s… Aaaand nothing. Darn it, I lost my train of thought.

“I’ll come back to this later. I know how to use my Magic and that’s all I need to train.” I declare. No matter how much I want to figure out how it actually works.

My Magic seems to be extremely versatile, but the main problem is that there’s little to no precision. I can’t do fine details with my magic and attempting will probably make things worse before any better. It’s lucky that when I tried to teleport into my room I ended up on top of the mountain. Hell, I’m lucky that Kon and I had all our limbs.

I pause.

NO. No. Don’t think about Kon. Don’t think about trying to see him. I was doing fine with distracting myself before, I can do it now.

NOW, I want to say I made an incredible breakthrough with my Magic and gained the ability to say “FU” to reality, but that’s clearly not what happened. In fact, I spend hours trying to think as simply as possible to work with my magic.

SO. I do the best thing when people don’t want to think. Grunt work.

It’s the cure all of everything. Something labor-intensive that takes focus and energy so you don’t have anything to spare on thinking. As there is little physical labor on the moon. I do the next best thing and start cleaning the moon with magic.

Piece by piece I return the moon to its natural state. The crystals become rock. Then moon rock. Then flat moon rock. Of course, changing your thought process doesn’t always work out. More often than not, I mess up.

“Come on! Stupid #%&$#!”

After a couple of hours of work, I discover a few things.

One: I can only maintain a limited number of what can best be put as ongoing spells before losing my concentration. Usually, this results in everything the spess did failing and the effects disappearing. This includes my new shield, so it doesn’t have a continuous effect. I’m still trying to figure this rule out. Strangely, the music isn’t included in this rule. Maybe because it’s internal?

Two: My magic can’t hurt me. Period. My tests were small and escalated. Try to make tiny cut on my palm, and my magic dissipates before it can do anything. Try to drop a rock on my shield and the rock won’t drop.

Three: This one I already knew. I can shift my size really easily. Once I grasped this, I tried to shapeshift like in Aladdin. Well, I could do it. To a limit. Apparently, I could shrink or grow and...
change to human form and back, but changing the color of my skin took two hours. And when I tried again, it was easy and I could do it at will! It's like I have a sort of unlock system! Well now that I think about it, I need to look into what RPGs are around here… Off topic, focus.

Four: My creations are permanent. The apple-star? Yeah, it didn’t go away. I was still full too, so I knew it was real and not just my imagination. Even making repairs to existing things was easy. However, there is a limitation. When I tried to create a gun, it either didn’t work or it was like something in The Mask. Something straight from a cartoon.

And Five: I can’t create living things. I can create constructs that acted like living things under my control, but they couldn’t think for themselves. They didn’t bleed, eat or drink and there was something strange about them. Something eerie. It didn’t take me long to dismiss them. Incidentally, each construct acted as separate spells, even if I created several at once.

And after all of this, what did I conclude?

“There is no rhyme or reason to this nonsense.”

My tests only let me figure out the basics of my Magic, not it’s full abilities. I bounce a purple ball of magic up and down and try to change its shape mid-flight. With mixed success.

That’s one of the three major issues I have at the moment. As I don’t want to think about Kon just yet, I think about something that’s weighed on my mind whenever I tried to relax.

“It’s time to see if I exist here.” And with a thought, I’m in Italy.

The sun shines brightly as it hangs high in the sky. Judging by its position, it’s around mid-morning. Fortunately my Magic seems to be cooperating with me so I easily recognize my surroundings. I’m in a park fairly close to my house I remember going to when I was younger. Miraculously, it seems like it’s nearly the same. I’m not sure how to feel.

I disguise myself as a human and change my clothes to something more modern european than ancient middle-eastern. My first stop is this little cafe by the park that I just love. With any luck, their classic tart with cream and apricot jam survived dimensions.

Materializing the money I need is easy. After all the practice I went through I just had to reach into my pocket and expected my wallet to be there. Simple.

With my order in hand, I walk leisurely to my house. Faintly, I register familiar details the closer I get. The street that runs next to the small river. Going past the much smaller park. Following the familiar turns I don’t need to think about.

And lo and behold. It was still here. And inhabited. I loiter around until I see a women exiting the house. I poof away to the moon before getting a clear view, nearly hyperventilating. My heart feels like a overpowered jackhammer pounding my chest. It takes me nearly twenty minutes to calm myself. I take another thirty to tell myself I don’t want to go back and see.

“Oh who am I kidding…” If the choice is between ignorance and the truth, I will always pick truth. I’m too curious to do otherwise. Even when it is for my own good.

I reappear in my previous location, my nerves helping me and preventing myself from thinking too much about what it looks like. I look around. No one, good. Now, let’s see if my practice pays off.

I close my eyes. “Mini, mini, mini, mini.” I snap my fingers.
Dling!

I crack open one eyelid, and open the other more easily when I see how much larger the world seems now. With a shard of glass, I can guestimate that I’m about the size of a dragonfly. It worked.

With a shrug, I fly off, circling the house before entering from the living room window. My skin was still purple, so I make sure to stick to the darkest areas of the house near the ceiling. No one ever looks up.

I fly to the top of a bookshelf and get the first clear view I had of the inside since I found it. Nostalgia hits me, tears prickling at my eyes and a multitude of emotions clogging up my throat. It takes me a few minutes to compose myself enough to continue exploring. There’s only one room I really want to see anyways.

I fly into my old bedroom to find my younger brother sleeping. Only, he wasn’t sleeping on a bunk bed, he was sleeping on an unfamiliar single bed. The computer was there, but there were half as many posters on the walls. There’s also a new - to me anyways - TV and Playstation in the corner. The picture frames on the walls were also new.

Oh. A family photo. Without me.

“So I don’t exist, good to know.” I chuckle to myself, feeling strangely empty. I fly over to my brother. If I was a fairy, I could probably bless him with something. Maybe when I get more control over my magic, I can do that.

“I hope you live a good life.” And with this last adieu, I return to the moon.

Well. That’s it. I discovered I don’t exist here. Maybe it’s universal law? Two different versions of the same being not able to live in the same world or something? I’m neither a scientist or a philosopher, so I can only speculate about my situation. I still don’t even know who or what brought me here.


I don’t even know if I was brought here for a purpose.

No. I just wanted You.

“I can’t continue to dilly-dally like this. First things first, I…” I trail off. What should I do with myself now? I don’t need to worry about surviving. If I want something I could just make it happen. I’m pretty sure I could forge documents too. I can do whatever I want. But what do I want?

Being part of The Team, making friends, maybe becoming a real superhero is what I want. Finding love, if possible, but that’s pretty low on the ‘want’ list. Not being a hermit is another one. I spent most of my time in from of a computer before, true, but that was because I was in a different situation.

I expel a humorless breath of air. What Irony. The Djinni that can grant wishes but can’t figure out his own. Perhaps it’s time I do what I wanted to since the fight with Kon.

I concentrate for a moment and wave my hand. A large oval mirror with a bronze frame and minute detailing materializes in thin air. Huh. It resembles the mirror from Snow White.

“Mirror, mirror on the wall, who’s the fairest of them all?” I joke while chuckling at the glass, my mind already focused on Kon. Only to stop. The reflective surface is cloudy. A closer look reveals
it’s because a series of images flash through the glass. Hair of every color. Skin tones changing in the
blink of an eye. Eyes with different hues and inflections. Bodies that were every form in the
universe. And much more I didn’t understand. It’s an entire catalogue of beauty.

They were all the most beautiful forms of people conceived. I should have known this would have
happened. The standard of beautiful is different to everyone, so my power is showing me the ‘fairest
of them all’ for everyone.

“Riiight. Don’t let your thoughts wander. If you do…” I recall my first attempt at creating a dog.
Nothing should exist with that many eye-tentacles on them. I shudder.

The fog over the mirror shifts, rapidly moving through colors and shapes until it stops on Happy
Harbor. Despite how hard I tried, it took practically all of my concentration to find it. Even when I
tried to keep my thoughts vague, I didn’t make any more progress. I need to search manually.

Now, if I’m right, Mr. Twister should attack fairly early. I want to see if my presence changed
anything in the timeline.

...

Okay, I found another problem with scrying. Namely, it only has two modes: A bird’s eye view of
the city, or street level, no inbetween. And, because why not add more complications to a magic
system I know nothing about, when I'm looking at street level I can move the point of view around,
but not 360 degrees around that point. I need to zoom out to bird level and then zoom in again to a
different point on the street.

Someone is messing with me. I swear it.

“Fuck it.”

I create some money - around five hundred - and a wallet - with magicked up documents for ‘Albari,
Jin’ - and teleport into a dark alley in Happy Harbor.

Now… Where is an electronics store? I’m in tremendous need of a working phone and I have no
idea what people use here. I’m already in my human disguise, this time with a purple shirt, black
jeans and black combat boots. Just to practice my magic a bit, I exaggeratedly have eyeliner around
my eyes and my hair is in a braid down my back. My nails are black, completing the make-shift goth
look.

“Excuse me, could you point me to the nearest electronics store?” I ask a random, slightly nervous
looking, passerby.

After asking four different people, wandering the city lost for two hours, and stopping to a bite to eat,
I finally find a damn store. Mmm, It looks like it’s a popular one, what with all the various consoles,
phones, computers and other electronics it has. At least something has gone right.

I buy a just a cell phone for now. The Sim card and anything else can be bought later. Also, this
makes it harder to trace. I think. I’m not a spy or Batman. Or Robin.

I immediately make my way to the place I really wanted to go on this little trip: The Bookstore!
Curse the fact I couldn’t make a card, but until I get a mail account and everything else I need, this is
a big no-no.
Aaand I need to sleep soon if I start talking like a series-z supervillain. Oh wait. Isn’t this a cartoon world?

Fuck, I’m tired.

I take my new books, just a couple of fiction novels, and go to the bay at the harbor to relax. And maybe catch a couple minutes of shuteye. But first, I send my new goods to my lamp, an instinctive and simple task. While taking things out without getting it myself is difficult, it’s no problem at all to send things in. I sit on a bench and let myself relax to the sound of soothing waves, dozing in a half-asleep state.

I wake up to a gently hand shaking me. Said hand was attached to an arm, but the the owner of both was a surprise. The Green Arrow woke me up. Never thought I’d think that.

“We need you to come back to Mount Justice.”

What? “How did you know I was here?” I ask instead.

“You’re purple and dressed like an arabic stripper. It wasn’t really that hard to find you.”

I furrow my brows. “But I’m not…” And then I look down to find out that I reverted in my sleep. The damn pathetic excuse for a jacket was on me, revealing far more skin than I’m comfortable with.

I have a problem with my body, damn it! You would whine too if you used to be fat and used to covering up! I might not be fat anymore, but it’s not like mental issues go away as soon as the physical causes are gone.

“Green Arrow to Batman,” I hear, “I found him. He appears unharmed.” Wait unharmed?

I don’t get a chance to ask before Green Arrow is tugging me to my feet. “Let’s go. Batman’s waiting.”

“I think I can teleport us, if you want. Um, sir?” He blinks and shakes his head.

“While that would be faster, we need to use the Zeta Tube. You don’t know where we need to end up.”

“Am I even registered in it?”

“You are. Batman entered you into the system the other day.” Okay then.

I gesture with an arm in front of us. “Lead the way.”

“We’re lucky. There’s a Zeta Tube close by.” Five minutes later and I experience my first Tube transport. It was really strange, like being pulled in all directions for a couple of seconds before everything turned back to normal.

Black Canary appears to have been waiting for us to arrive. Her attention snaps from her phone to us the moment our presence is announced, a frown on her face.

“Good, you’re here. We need to go to the meeting room. Batman is waiting for us.” Uh-oh. Her face is pretty serious. What did I do to gather this many members of the Justice League? Don’t tell me they saw the Moon Crystals!
As we approach our destination, I can make out voices. Once voice was particularly loud. Superman.

“...let him! You saw what he did! What if he loses control again and attacks the others?”

“We don’t know-”

“It’s clear what happened! Superboy…” Kon? Is he here too? Why?

“We’re here.” Black Canary announces, cutting through the argument like swiss cheese. “So act like the adult heros you’re supposed to be.” So unimpressed, I can’t even...

“Djinni, welcome back. Could you please tell us where you’ve been for the last 24 hours?” Batman asks. Superman is standing at his right, red in the face, while Superboy is across from them near the door. Coincidentally - or maybe not so - putting him right in front of me. The others took their seats around the metal rectangular table.

Superman faces me, looking me over and analyzing me so closely I wouldn’t be surprised if he told me he was using x-ray vision. An act that makes me uncomfortable if I was honest. I wonder for a moment if he could pick up on the increase in heartbeat.

“Are you okay, Djinni?” Superman asks.

“Yes?” I reply, confused. Why would they call me here if they didn’t think I was fine?

“You aren’t hurt anywhere? No injuries?”

“No, I’m in perfect health. Why?”

“Sit. It has to do with what we need to discuss.” Batman orders me. What could I do? I slip into the only empty seat left, a couple chairs from Batman, himself. I sneak a glance at Kon. He has his head bowed down and arms crossed, eyes fixed on the table before him.

Well, it makes sense that he doesn’t want to look at me after yesterday. About the only thing that makes sense right now. But I think I can fix this. Maybe. He still is wearing my bottle-pendant after all.

“Would you answer my question?” Batman asks, snapping me out of my thoughts. He sounds irritated… Better pay attention.

“Um. Sorry, what was it?”

“Where were you for the last 24 hours?”

“Ah, right. I was on the moon.”

“Why?” I’m tempted to say something just as short back, but that’s probably not a good idea right now.

“I needed time to think. And also a place where I could experiment with my Magic, so I could understand it better.”

“Think about what?” Dang. Batman could compete with Black Canary in a ‘Who is the most unimpressed person alive’ contest.

“That’s private and besides the point. Why is the whole League here? If it was because of my absence, I had planned to come back by tomorrow.”
“While your sudden disappearance will be discussed at a later date, we are here because of the altercation between you and Superboy.”

“Oh.” Oh. So Kon told them what I said. Well, in retrospect it’s obvious. Knowledge is power and I certainly have a lot to share. Not to mention how valuable the information is to the members of the League…

“So you understand. Is there anything you have to add before we determine Superboy’s punishment?”

“Well, I… “ Wait. What? I repeat. “Wait, what? Superboy’s punishment? Uh., I’m sorry, but why is Superboy being punished. It’s my fault.” Keeping secrets would definitely be a crime to Batman, if not the League, when I was already questioned. That shouldn’t involve Superboy though.

Diana interrupts. “What do you mean ‘It’s my fault’? Superboy hit you without cause in the security footage we recovered from the surroundings of Mount Justice. You weren’t fighting back and received several serious injuries from his attacks.”

“And I didn’t fight back because I had no reason to.” I argue. Everyone stares at me, a good amount of them incredulous, including Superman. Awkward.

“What do you mean?” At least Diana is not shocked to silence, though my response seemed to have surprised her for a moment. Maybe there’s hope that the League will see reason after all.

“As I said, that’s private. The only ones who need to know are me and Superboy.”

“If your private reasons involve Superboy attacking a member of the team, it’s something that concerns everyone here.” Batman glowers. I can’t decide to feel elated at having the BatGlareTM directed at me or terrified that it’s directed at me. I settle on ignoring it for now. I can’t risk Kon being unjustly punished. Superman still looks stunned by my revelation.

“Actually, no it’s not. It involved extenuating circumstances and it will not happen again, I can assure you. There is no need to worry.” I glare right back. I am not going down without a fight. A minute passes before Batman seems to scowl harder.

“Fine. If you’re so sure the fight was your fault, then you will be punished with Superboy.”

“Wait! Why is Superboy still being punished? I already said that I caused him to-”

“What made him angry is irrelevant.” Batman cuts me off. “He needs to be punished for his actions. Hitting a teammate out of anger is not acceptable and will not be condoned by the League. Not everything can or should be solved with violence. This is final.” I can nearly hear the death toll at Batman’s decision. The image of a guillotine flashes past my eyes. I gulp and try to speak anyways, but a final glare from the Dark Knight causes all my protests to die in my throat.

“Until further notice, both of you are restricted to Mount Justice. You will not be permitted to interact with your teammates or each other. Your only points of contact will be either me, Red Tornado, or Black Canary and your meals will be brought to your rooms. Am I clear?”

“...Yes.” Kon sounds so hurt that I nearly rise up to fight again, but a head shake from Diana makes me back down. “Yes.” I say tersely.

“Dismissed.” The five members of the League exit the room, leaving me and Kon alone. Probably
assuming we’re about to follow considering the punishment they just gave out.

Now what do I do? I mean, I should say something before we’re separated. He might take it as if I blame him for this otherwise. But if I say anything to personal, I’ll just be manipulating him again and that was the start of all this. The most innocuous thing I can say is… Oh!

“You probably don’t want to talk to me and you have all the reason you need for that…” I very carefully don’t look at him. “...I want to say I don’t blame you for this and, to reiterate what I said … before I left; if you decide to talk to me, just rub the bottle or knock on my door. I will answer any questions you have to the best of my ability.”

I stop here, forcefully cutting off my babbling. Follow the, admittedly hastily improvised, plan Get up, leave the room, walk down the hallway and enter a random, empty room to be alone. Don’t look back.

"Why?"
Prince in a bed, or: The rule and the punishment.

Chapter Notes

Ok, remember when I said that there were mentions of injuries? In this chapters there are injuries again.

If this is a problem, please be careful.

Chapter 6: Prince in a bed, or: The rule and the punishment.

"Why?"


Kon glowers at me. “Don’t play dumb.” He snaps. “Why did you cover for me like that?”

“Cover for you?” My brows furrow. What is Kon talking about? “All I did was tell the truth.” My answers don’t placate him and instead make him scowl harder.

Now that I think about it… Wasn’t there something about his constant anger caused by the imbalance between his Kryptonian and Human genes? It might have been fandom, but who’s to say that fandom is reality here? My presence certainly indicates that this world is different, so the question is: is it true? Because if it is, then it-

He’s looking at me. Staring, more like. Should I just leave or does he still want to talk? I fidget underneath his gaze. Now that I’ve noticed, I can’t stop noticing.

I cave first. “Do I have something on my face?” NO! Wait! That was not what I wanted to say!

Kon ignores me. Instead, he somehow scrutinizes me harder. “I don’t understand you. Why?”

Annnd, we’re back to square one. Maybe it’s just me, but I feel like I’m fumbling in the dark here. It’s just… what else is there to explain?

“What more do you want me to say?” I throw my hands in the air. “I caused the fight so I took responsibility for it. I don’t know what else to tell you.”

Kon gives me a funny look. Great. The first real expression he shows me since the fight and I have no idea what to make of it. “I hit you.”

“Yeah.” So? My face all but screams.

“I beat you into the side of a mountain.” Kon pauses, but continues when I don’t respond. “I broke you so thoroughly that if you were anyone else, you would be dead.”

“I’m not though.” Kon stares at me again, though this time it’s more incredulous than angry for some reason.

“You’re not mad.” No. No, I’m not. Isn’t that obvious? Why should I be?
He starts looking irritated. “Did you not hear what they said? Broken arm, leg, at least most of your ribs. Possibly fractured spine and cracked skull. I did that!” Understanding dawns on me.

“Have you ever heard the saying ‘sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me’?” I ask rhetorically. “I think it’s bull. Physical damage can always heal, but emotional and mental damage can fester for much longer. Sometimes, people can never recover. In my eyes, you got the short end of the stick.”

Perhaps now he’ll- Nope, he only looks angrier. I squash the frustration building up in me as well. Okay, okay. Think. There is something I’m not grasping, some line of thought that’s slipping away from me. But…

Looking at Kon’s face, maybe we should just talk later. When we’re not so upset and confused.

“Let’s talk about this some other time.” I suggest. “We’re running around in circles and neither of us is in the best of moods nor mindsets for this conversation.” For a second, it looks like he’ll protest, but after a few moments, he nods stiffly. I flash a small smile at him and with a final glance over my shoulder, I leave.

I wander a few - identical! How does anyone get around in here! - hallways down before finding a random, impersonal room. That needs to change. I snap my fingers and a bright purple, glittering sign of an ancient oil lamp with clouds of smoke spelling out ‘Djinni’ in neon blue letters appears on the door. Did I mention the glitter? (Shiny! And tacky, but who cares? Shiny!)

I enter the room. Let’s see… Bed, closet, shelves. All exactly the same as the other rooms I glanced at. Well, not for much longer.

With a grin, I snap my fingers - promptly creating music in the air - and start working.

***************

It appears that working in time with the music yields better results. Though why that is eludes me.

***************

I cough and bat away the bits of fabric falling on to me. My magic can be somewhat unstable, as my exploding sheets have demonstrated.

***************

I tug frantically at the pink cloth that just won’t disappear, yelling triumphantly when they finally rip as the song putters out. I don’t hesitate to tear the rest of the getup off. Lesson learned. Working in time with the Work Song gives me very good results, but it’s not worth it when a pink princess gown appears on me while it plays. Especially since it’s resistant to being vanished.

***************

I burst out of the room heaving for air. Okay, not using fire again anytime soon. If I have to, but otherwise no. Doesn’t matter what the reason is. The cloth is barely burning and it already filled the room with smoke. At least it’s not spreading very far. I sit in the hall to wait it out.

***************

I look at my finished room with pride. It took me five hours, but the room is finally perfect. The sheets are now a nice teal, with fluffy pillows, a purple quilt and soft mattress. My closet has black
and blue clothes, and the books I bought earlier are on the shelves. I’ll fill them eventually.

I sit on my (new) bed, brush a hand against the (new) sheets, and it is fresh. It is just as I like it. It is…

Not right.

I glance at the sheets (Teal! Just like back home!), the shelves (Empty! Where are all my books?!), the ceiling (It should be nearer! I sleep in a bunk bed!), the walls (Where are my brother’s posters?! Where’s my little brother?!), and no matter how hard I strain my hearing, I can’t find the comforting noises of home.

I snap.

Fat, ugly tears fall from my eyes as I cry into my (unfamiliar) pillow. My wails of sorrow make my throat feel like sandpaper even as they are absorbed into the fluffy depths.

I miss my Mom. I miss my Brother. I miss Dad, my friends, my life! I wasn’t rich, famous, or even happy all the time, but it was My Life! I was starting to finally make something of myself! To start something good! To make my own future!

And now I don’t have anything. I already destroyed the little I made for myself here.

For the second time in this world, I cried myself to sleep. I’m tired of crying, even if it is better to cry it out.

****************

July 10th.

I spend the day in my room, reading my (new) books and listening to music. I eat whatever I want to: apples, strawberries, chocolate, ice-cream. Comfort food, mostly. There are some benefits to being able to create anything I want.

Kon doesn’t call me. I could still feel my lamp on him though. He can’t hear me, but I read Sleeping Beauty aloud before going to bed all the same. It’s a classic and I could pretend that we were friends again as I focused on his presence in my mind.

****************

July 11th.

This was the morning were the grounding from Batman ended. Red Tornado told me - and presumably Kon - that we could go out from our room again.

I leave my room today to bake. I was going to become a baker if none of this had happened. I may not be able to now, but that’s not going to stop me from baking what I want.

I make a chocolate cake with orange frosting and cream, almond cookies, white chocolate chip cookies, and pistachio muffins with dark chocolate. I even made some bat shaped cookies just for fun. They are dark chocolate with chocolate icing. Anything I didn’t eat, I leave covered on the table by a dome of glass. I don’t remember the name, dammit. Whatever. I do take a few things to eat later though.

After eating, I explore the mountain a bit more. I float near the ceiling instead of walking. I flip
upside down for the hell of it. I don’t see anyone as I explore; I do manage to find the training room and the infirmary. I find a few other rooms too, but I don’t know what to call them.

I read Cinderella tonight. I just wish that someone was listening.

****************

July 12th.

During breakfast (leftover cookies, hot chocolate, and grapefruit juice) I go to the Rec Room to eat. I look for a console or something like that, but I suppose that no one brought in anything to make this place a bit more comforting. I try to use the computer, but the only one in there is the big one for the League’s official business and I can’t figure out the controls. Come on! It’s completely unmarked and four times larger than any computer I’ve seen! How in the world anyone can use it is beyond me.

Whatever, I’m bored and need something new to do! I can’t wallow in depression forever! I was ready to go out and but something that I never did before!

…If I could leave the mountain. Something I can’t do due to the punishment Batman gave me.

“But I don’t need to leave Mount Justice, do I?” I murmur as a smile creeps on my face, my mind whirling as I run through my options. I immediately discard making stuff myself. Even if I could do it without them exploding, they need to be compatible to this world and I don’t have enough familiarity with the tech here yet.

“Doll it is.” I go back to my room lie on the bed, concentrating.

Slowly, smoke pours from my body and coalesces into a human figure at the center of my room.

“Almost… Almost…” I nearly finish the eyes when the entire form destabilizes and explodes. I rapidly sit upright in a coughing fit and wave the smoke away. I suppose I should be lucky that my magic doesn’t damage anything when it explodes.

I lay back down and close my eyes again. This time i start making it from the head down rather than trying to do everything at once. I get halfway down the torso when it explodes again.

“Fuck!” I take a deep breath when the smoke disappears. Try, try and try again, right? This time I start from the bottom.

I try again, and again, and again.

It’s around four in the afternoon when I finally manage to form a construct. It looks like a human version of my current appearance, with the exception of different clothing.

Now for the hard part…

I close my eyes and focus on my doppleganger. When I open my eyes again, it’s to the sight of my original body laying in the bed.

Literally seeing myself is strange. I apparently have a swimmer’s build, not bulky like Batman or Superman. My hair still floats a bit, even when laying down, and it reminds me of smoke. I’m also smaller than I thought, though I suppose that floating most of the time didn’t help my perception there. This form, however…
It feels normal, but fragile. It’s almost like a pebble could destroy it. Even the bits of magic I can detect feels shaky and brittle.

“Testing, testing.” My voice sounds strange. A bit lower than usual, like hearing myself on a recorder. Well, at least it’s not that important.

I recall the location of the electronics store and snap my fingers.

Teleporting into the alleyway next to the store, I stumble and clutch my head. God, what a time to get a headache.

I brush it off and walk into the store. I stride in with the express intent of buying a Wii, controllers, a TV and a copy of Mario Kart.

I never played it, but now that I can I will, dammit! In every fanfiction site in America there was that game and I want to know what’s so special about it!

The only thing I could find out is that it apparently has an ability to ruin friendships that could rival Monopoly.

With the help of a friendly store clerk, I manage to head to the checkout within an hour. One Wii console, eight controllers, a comfortable sized flat screen, and an assorted selection of multiplayer and single player games later, and I’m told the price to be around 600 dollars.

Sticking a hand into a pocket, I intend to get money out and pay. My magic moves to respond-

-but instead of handing the money over I clutch my head with both hands as my headache worsens into a migraine. I nearly whimper at the pain.

“Are you okay?” The concerned cashier asks. I wave her off.

“Yeah, just a headache. Thanks anyways.”

She doesn’t press, and just rings up my bill. Five minutes later, I’m ready to go.

“Have a nice day.”

“You too.” I wave goodbye and speed back into the alley, where nobody can see me.

I gather my bags in a small pile to send them back to my room and then dispel this body.

I snap-

**DON’T DO IT!**

Wait. What?

“Hello?” I look around. “Is there someone here?” Nothing. “...Maybe it was my imagination.” I snap my fingers.

The bags disappear.

My mouth (do I have one?) opens in a shriek of agony as I’m torn apart and deprived of all my senses. Gaining my original body is anything but a relief as I feel-
PAIN. PAIN. PAIN.

WHYISMYARMSHAPEDLIKETHAT. OHMYGODISTHATBONE. PAINPAINPAIN. MYLEG.MYLEG. ICAN’TFEELMYLEG. WHATHAPPENEDTOMYLEG. DON’TMOVEDON’TMOVEDON’TMOVE. PAINAGONY. MOMIWANTMOM. REDREDRED. ISTHATBLOOD. FUCKBLOOD. ICAN’TBREATHEICAN’TBREATHEICAN’TBREATHE.

-excruciating pain. My right arm is bent out of shape, my elbow bend backwards and the bone of my forearm jutting out of my flesh.

My left leg is crushed, the bones are completely shattered. The shards dig into nerves and tendons and muscles, and god how can I still feel that?

My lungs try to function, but my injuries only make it harder and harder. My mouth is open, but I can’t hear myself scream. My vision is a blurry red. It feels like a thousand needles are in each of my organs.

I’MNOTHEALING. WHYAMINOTHEALING!!!

I never notice when I pass out.

****************

I gain foggy awareness and realize I’m moving. I could feel my legs bound together and my arm wrapped to my chest. A steady hand on my back and behind my knees is carrying me.

PainPainPain.

The pain was still there, but it was bearable compared to the everlasting agony it was before.

Blue eyes.

“...ehi…” I force out. I try and fail to smile. Kon only looks more terrified. Why? Oh, right. He has never seen anything like this yet.

I might really die. The thought strikes me suddenly from the fog that clutters my brain. “...sry..” I whisper, barely anything coming out.

Kon shouts something - “Stop saying that! What are you apologizing for?!” - but I can’t make it out. I can’t hear my next words, but I say them anyways before blacking out again. “…d’nt ’een t’orry oo…” Unseen to me, Kon flies faster straight towards the infirmary, making sure not to jostle me.

****************

I’m on fire. Purple flame licks at my skin, which is now my original pale hue. I’m in my human form, completely naked and healed. Not a mark is left on my skin. I feel strangely calm.

Looking around, I can see that I’m on a circular platform of a metallic material. Not gold. I just know that it’s not gold.

I look at what I know is South and see more fire. Lilac fire. It has a temperature so high that wood becomes smoke in an instant. Large obsidian shards jutt from the soil and strange crystals are scattered, glowing white. Behind all of that is an enormous city made of those shards.

"The City of Brass, where Efreet dwells. Governor over the Fire and the South."
I can hear the voice. It wasn’t my imagination back in the alley. I can hear it to the right of me, but I can’t turn to see it.

My body turns to the East. A gigantic iridescent cloud is floating with a city on its surface in the distance. I can see no ground below it. The city has spires of blue crystals rising high up, rainbows are used as walkways and golems made of ice can be seen traversing them. Anything else is too small for me to make out, but I know that the cloud is also used to make cloth and silk.

"The Duchy of Clouds, home of the Djinn. Governors over the Air and the East."

Again, I turn, this time toward the North. A citadel made of stone, on a foundation of emeralds. The walls are made of ruby, and the castle is made of diamond. It’s built on the side of a mountain. The mountain has mines scattered everywhere on the surface. I know that those mines are where the beautiful jewels making up the city come from.

"The Citadel of Stones, birthplace of the Dao. Governors over the Earth and the North."

I turn for a final time, to the West, and I finally get a view of what was talking to me. Its skin is blue and black. It is thrice my height and twice my width. Its hair flows like waves and I can’t see the ends. Its incredibly purple eyes are sparked with pure power. I nearly can’t tear my eyes away from it to see the city behind it.

The city is magnificent, made of reef and ice. Aquatic creatures swim around the base of the city, the foundations disappearing into the deep sea. I know that the people living there are wearing fine clothes, exquisite jewelry and enjoying the finest goods.

"The Town of Reef, where Marid was born. Governors over the Water and the West."

It is clear to me what it is now. As if to confirm my suspicions, ribbons of blue smokeless flames link us both, creating a veritable gordian knot between us. My skin turns purple, my hair starts floating and I rise up to its eye level.

“You broke one of the Rules that We All must Obey. You may alter the Material only when Your original, physical body is present, with the exception of a Wish. For Your ignorance, You were notified. Twice You were Warned. Twice You ignored it. With the Third Infraction, Your punishment was decreed. For Twenty and One hours, You will suffer the wounds that Our healing removed. The punishment will only be carried out while You are awake. No other kind of healing will work. No potion will repair You. No Magic or Science will dull the pain."

I can’t speak. My lips won’t move. My questions won’t form. I am left utterly helpless before this being.

“It is time for You to Return to the Material. The Dark One is near You. The Divine Golem and the Weak One is with him. Your Treasure Child is scared.”

I rose higher into the air, tendrils of pain wrapping around me, connecting me to my physical body once more. They drag me up and down and left and right and forward and back and I could barely think. The connection also allowed me some motion of control and I force out one question before I disappear.

“Who are you?”

"I am Marid! The Glorious One! Primordial Water! The Last Drop! First between all!"

Everything goes purple and I know no more.

***************
Beep...Beep...Beep...Beep...

“What’s with the beeping?” I rasp out. Alright, not exactly the best question to ask at the moment.

“He’s awake!” Superman exclaims.

Diana smiles. “Welcome back to the conscious world.”

“Eh...Thanks…” I mutter.

“Djinni. Nice to see that you’re awake.” Batman! How do you do that? You weren’t there a second ago! “What happened.” It wasn’t a question. It’s a demand.

“Batman, I don’t think that this is the best time…”

“You can’t possibly expect that he…”

I cut both Diana and Superman off. “I found out what happens when I break the Rules.”


“There are-” I struggle to clear the fog in my mind again. It’s back stronger than before. “There are Rules that I Absolutely cannot break. Obviously, I didn’t- didn’t… I didn’t know that before I broke it.”

“What rule is that?” His focus is practically drilling into me, but I can’t make myself care enough over the pain.

“Dunno… Dunno the number, just- I can’t… can’t use magic if I’m not physically there. Wish excluded.”

“So your wounds weren’t caused by Superboy?”

Well sorta, but- “It’s my- my punishment for breaking the Rules. I need to withstand them for 21 hours awake…. Nothing- nothing will help it so don’t bother. I’ll live.”

Diana clenches her fists. “That’s inhumane!”

“Rules- Rules from non-human creatures. Blue and- and Orange morality. I won’t even try to understand it.”

“Then we’ll leave you to rest.”

“Wait. I- I remember Superboy. He- he carried me here. He didn’t do anything except help me.”

Batman looks over his shoulder at me. “While your fidelity to your teammate is admirable, in this case, your concern is unnecessary. None of us thought that this was his fault.”

“That’s- That’s good.” But the dark look that flashed over Superman’s face tells me otherwise. Whatever, What did Marid call him again? Ah, the Weak One. Fitting. He is weak to magic so it would seem that way to someone like Marid.

***************

I am left alone with the pain of my punishment. I try to ignore it or adapt to it. I use every manga style option to make it even the slightest bit more bearable. In the end, I could do nothing but
withstand it, my mind focused on the clock ticking down in the back of my head. Seconds and Minutes fly by, time passing without any real thought in the haze of pain.

After Ten Hours, Twenty-Four Minutes and 56-57 Seconds, the door to my room opens again. My eyes are mostly closed, barely a sliver open to see who is at the door. Kon. Why is he here? I really doubt he is willing to forgive me. Maybe it’s different for him? He has practically no emotional experience, but wouldn’t that make it longer?

He remains there for half an hour, staring at me. His face is blank as his hands fiddle with the pendant I gave him.

My fingers twitch and my magic responds before I think about it to create a series of glowing, colored bubbles in the air around him. Each softly emits a low sound, creating a simple lullaby combined together. When he bats one away, it bounces around the room like a rubber ball, scattering the others.

I can barely make out the puzzled look on his face, and I chuckle softly. It makes him tense and flee from the room. Pity, I didn’t mind his company. I wonder what he was thinking. Is he feeling vindicated, now that his strikes didn’t disappear? Is he without any particular emotion?

I spend the rest of the night playing a bit with the bubbles. I send streams of color around the room, arrange them into shapes and simply enjoy the reeling of having magic at my fingertips. It’s a far better way of passing the time and the magic is a pleasant sensation. The pain is still there, but my attitude got just a little brighter after the bubbles appeared.

Before I know it it’s morning. Only six hours remaining.

“Hey, we heard what happened. How’ve you been?” Wally? Did Batman lift the punishment already?

“I’m managing, I guess.”

“It shouldn’t last much longer though, right?”

“Five hours, twenty-three minutes and sixteen seconds left to go.”

“That’s oddly specific of you.” Oh, good. It’s time to imitate the snarkiest asshole I know of. Fanfiction and Canon Tony Stark, I summon thee! Give me your blessing of snark, sass and your ability to be endearing and an asshole at the same time!

“Mini-Bat.” I greet him.

“Mini-Bat.” Robin deadpans.

“Mini-Bat.” I affirm.

“Mini-Bat?” Wally laughs.

“Mini-Bat.” I smirk as best I can, despite the pain.

“Robin.” He narrows his eyes, or I guess he does. He’s wearing those stupid sunglasses.

“Of course, Mini-Bat.”

“Mini-Bat.” Wally snickers.
“Dude, not whelmed. Not whelmed at all.” He scowls.

“Mini-Bat Bat-Scowl.” I mock. Wally’s laughter starts again.


“As if you can talk.” Robin retorts.

Wally opens his mouth only to close it and blush when his stomach grumbles.

"There should be some baked sweets in the kitchen. I made them two days ago, so they should be still fresh enough."

"Sweet!” And away he goes. And now he's back. With an armful of cookies and muffins.

"Th’re goo’!”

Robin rolls his eyes, I think. "Don't talk with your mouth full!”

"Yeah, it's really disgusting."

Wally turns a little. "Oh, Superboy! Try some of these, they're really good!"

I blink a couple of times, then shift my head slightly, dealing with the pain that follows. Kon is standing in the door, looking specifically at Wally. He’s still angry then, huh?

At least it’s better than him being worried over me.

Kon’s face gains a surprised look. “...Good.” It seems he likes my cookies. It’s something. I wonder what they taste like to him. These are probably the first cookies he tasted.

Robin pushes his sunglasses further up his face, drawing my attention to them. “Mini-Bat, you do know that sunglasses don’t really mask your identity, right. It’d be easy to find you if people really searched. All you have to do is go out is public with sunglasses sometime in your civilian guise.”

“You’d be surprised. Oh wait. You wouldn’t, sticking out like a sore thumb all the time can’t be conducive to hiding.” Robin snarks.

“If that’s how you want to play it, fine.” I grumble. Then suddenly grin evilly. Wally gulps down his mouthful and doesn’t reach for any more food in favor of inching away. “Here, let me help you out a bit... “ I twitch my left fingers.

With a poof of smoke, Robin is wearing a rainbow colored afro, a clown suit with the bat symbol on it, a couple of really ridiculous sunglasses on top on the ones he’s already wearing and an inch of makeup, with cherry-red lips and chalk white foundation. And we can’t forget the bright red faux-blush on his cheeks. Just to be funny, some bat shaped cookies flew from Wally’s pile and started fluttering around his head, making him appear more ridiculous.

Wally and I burst out laughing - or, well, I tried. I was soon sent into a coughing fit instead. The kind of fit where I covered the front of my sheets in blood while pain courses through my body from moving. It doesn’t help that my ribs are still pulverized and poking a good part of my organs either.

Once my coughing calms down, I look around to see that the relaxed atmosphere we had going disappeared. Robin watched me carefully, though it looked funny with all the makeup. Wally seems pretty worried, what with his teeth chewing his lower lip. Kon…
Kon’s a white as paper, all the blood having seemingly vanished from his face. His eyes were blown open in fear. One fist is clenched by his side, but the other is clutching at something near his chest—my lamp? Before I can say anything, he turns and runs, leaving nothing behind but crumbs.

Fuck.

I ignore it all. I can’t deal with this right now. I twitch my fingers and turn Robin back to normal. It’s not funny anymore. “Anyways, what happened while I was confined?”

Robin and Wally exchange looks. “Djinni, are you-?”

“Don’t worry. It’s painful but that’s normal. Not like you can do anything about that, nothing will help. Just try and distract me.”

They speak hesitantly at first, but eventually, the mood lifts a bit. The entire time, I grit my teeth behind a smile and listen as best as I can. The fog settles a bit more thickly after I aggravated my injuries, but I only need to last another three hours.

They left at some point. I don’t catch it in the haze. It’s incredible how determined you can become when you can see the end of what feels like endless pain. One thing’s for sure, the endorphins released after I’m healed will feel fantastic.

“Agh… hah…” Fuck. “I just need… to hold out… for a bit more…” I tell myself. I’m not very good with pain, I don’t think many people are, but these past 20 hours pushed me to my limit again and again and again. Just thirty more minutes. I can resist the sweet, sweet call of oblivion for a little longer. I just need to distract myself a little longer, that’s it. Just a little longer…

****************

The last thirty minutes of my punishment are tense and seem like they’re being dragged out. My pain seems to only grow greater than before and for a fleeting moment I wonder if the countdown was some sort of cruel trick on me. A false hope that it would all end.

But then, it stops.

My ribs snap back into place, bruising disappears, my organs heal. The bones in my limbs also come together with clear snaps, like a puzzle fitting itself together. All of this in one single, excruciatingly pain-filled moment.

Then bliss.

No more pain, no more agony.

I slump on the bed, a goofy smile on my face, too relaxed to do anything except to lay there and enjoy being healthy again. I almost forgot what it felt like. I ignore the sounds of footsteps rushing down the hall.

I close my eyes and fall asleep, exhausted.
Chapter 7: Castle building in one morning, or: The start of reconciliation.

July 14th, Morning.

You know, it didn’t hit me how difficult it could be not to drink milk when you’re used to drinking milk with cereal every morning for breakfast.

"The wonderful thing about Tiggers is Tiggers are wonderful things." I hum in the kitchen, rifling through the cabinets for something vaguely appetizing for breakfast. I don’t sound very different when I sing, it’s just an octave lower and softer, but at least when I hum I don’t sound as tone deaf. Then again, the point is moot since I’m not singing out loud.

Not even magic can help me there.

As the last notes fade in the air, I closed the cabinet a bit more forcefully than I should have. There was nothing in there and I really don’t want to look around any longer. My new body is definitely healthy enough to let me indulge and I have a craving for pastries and maybe a bit of coffee. There must be a Starbucks nearby, this is America. I never been there before.

"Well, it’s time to see if they live up to the hype, I guess. Now I just need to see if..." I mutter to myself only to stop short at the sight of Kon in the hall with a neutral look on his face.

Hopefully he’s not angry anymore.

"Want to go out and eat some breakfast with me? My treat." I offer, unsure what he would do. Either way, it couldn’t hurt to extend an olive branch and this stalemate is killing me. It would be different if he wasn’t my friend, but... even if I’m not his anymore, he’s mine.

Silence. Akward silence, the worst kind. I need to break this. “I know you still have questions for me~”

“More of your ‘knowledge’?” He retorts scathingly, a bitter tinge to his voice. Something flashes over his face, but it was gone before I could figure out what he was feeling.

“No!” I clear my voice and speak softer. “No, but it’s reasonable for you to still have questions for me after being told something so... life changing. I...” The words stick in my throat, but I force them out anyways. This needs to be said. “I only meant to be honest. I was taking advantage of what I knew without telling why I knew and I just- I never meant to hurt you, I hate lying and you- you’re my friend. I’m sorry I did at all- Really! It’s just... “ I look down and rub my arms, my voice growing more quiet the longer I talk. “... I’m not good with people. And- well, I did it because... I was scared.”

As I glance at him, I miss his aborted motion to reach out at me. He shifts on his feet and frowns in confusion. “You were scared? Of what?”

I shrug. “Everything. I woke up floating near the moon when my last memory was going to bed. I look like this,” I gesture at myself, “and I have Magic! I didn’t know where I was and I was half convinced that everything was a dream. Then I reach Earth only to find out that my bottle’s in the hands of someone I thought was a fictional character of a show I’ve only seen five episodes of! Everything went downhill from there. I just kept lying- to you, to myself, to everyone! And I couldn’t- can’t-!”

I release a harsh breath. The strange feeling of being disconnected with the world suddenly hits me. It feels like I am the fictional character. Like I’m a dream brought to life, one that could easily disappear as fast as I came. Reality crashes back down around me.

I shake my head to get rid of the lingering confusion. “Look, come have breakfast with me. I’ll answer as many of your questions as I can. If you don’t believe something I say, you can Wish for me to tell the truth and then Wish for more Wishes.”

Kon slowly nods. “Fine.”

“Thank you.” I say whole heartedly. “Oh! Um. Is it okay if I teleport us or would you prefer taking the Zeta Tube?”

“Teleport’s fine.”

“Alright then.” I snap my fingers.

Dling!

In an instant we appear in an alley somewhere in Happy Harbor. I don my human disguise and the two of us set off for a Starbucks. I’m of half a mind to go for the diner on the corner, but I think that’s more of a lunch or dinner thing. Maybe we can go there with all the others. I hope.

***********

We find a Starbucks after five minutes of walking, but it felt like at least fifteen with how awkward it was. Or it was for me. For whatever reason Kon was silent the entire way there and I wasn’t able to drag up my courage to speak first, though the silence was fraying my nerves.

Walking through the doors, I look around curiously. It appears very differently to how I imagined it. Definitely different compared to an Italian café.

“I’m going to have the Molten Chocolate Frappuccino® Blended Beverage and a few pastries. You?”

Kon’s eyes scan the menu. “A grande black coffee for me, I guess. And a couple of Blueberry muffins.”

The salesgirl looks at me. “Yes?”

“Ah, hello. Could we get a grande black coffee and a Molten Mocha Cappuccino? Also a couple Blueberry muffins and a cranberry scone, blueberry scone and a raspberry pound cake.”

“... Your total is $25.42.” I pay and she gives me the food which I give Kon.

“Grab us a table. I’ll be there after I get the drinks.” Kon nods and walks away. It takes seven minutes before both our drinks are ready, though most of that time is my fault I got Kon’s drink pretty quickly.

I sit across from him and take a deep breath. “Okay. Do you want to talk here while we eat, talk after we eat, go somewhere else - like a park - to talk after we eat, or something else?”

Kon opens his mouth, then closes it. His brows furrow as he scowls. “I guess it’s better if we talk at a park. Less chance of being overheard.”

We eat is a mostly comfortable silence. Certainly the best our relationship’s been since the fight. It’s
funny to watch Kon though. He took one sip of his drink and scrunched up his face. I suppress the urge to laugh while sipping my own, sweet, drink.

“There’s a station over there that you could use if you don’t like it, you know.” I point out. “I’m pretty sure it has the usual things people add to coffee.” Coincidentally, someone is using it as Kon looks over, giving a clear example as to how it’s used.

Kon walks over and dumps a lot of sugar in his coffee. I think it’s nearly half sugar now. He does add some cream and milk though, just not nearly as much. It looks like Kon has a sweet tooth. Good to know I can bribe him with my baking if everything else fails. I have a sudden urge to snap a shirt saying “Come to the dark side… We have cookies!” on the front and back. I hold myself back though. It’s not the time to tease him.

We finish our breakfast quickly. I grab Kon in the alley by the building and snap us to a park.

Dling!

I look around see trees, grass and.. Nothing else. Well, at least I know we won’t be overheard here. There’s no one to hear us. Though we could use some seats.

Dling!

A couple of plush armchairs appear. Kon raises an eyebrow at them, but refrains from commenting. We settle in our seats and he levels me with an intense stare. “So, why did you tell me the truth?”

I stare down at my hands. “...I can’t keep secrets from people I care about and in the short time I’ve known you, I’ve grown to care about you a lot. You’re a good person Superboy and you don’t deserve being treated like that.”

Kon scoffs. “That’s it?”

“What do you mean ‘that’s it’?”

“It seem like a pretty flimsy reason to me.”

“Does it really matter? It’s the reason that drove me to tell you everything. It’s not a decision that decided the fate of the world or anything, it was a matter of what I could live with.”

“It’s not good enough.” Kon narrows his eyes.

I throw my hands in the air. “Sorry that I don’t have an earth shattering reason to give you. I revealed the truth because it made me feel sick to lie and I think you deserve it for what happened to you.”

He looks confused. “What happened to me?”

“You know, the Cadmus thing. How you’re a half-Kryptonian Clone. The problems with Superman. All of that.” I list off my fingers.

“Half.” He says, voice monotone. Is it...

“You didn’t know?”

“No.” He grounds out.

“Oh. Well, you’re half-human. I thought the League knew.”
Kon leans on his knees and glares at the ground. “If they knew, they didn’t tell me.”

“Ah, you’re human half comes from—”

Why am I on the ground?

“Hey, you okay?” Kon peers at my face.

I rub my head. “Yeah, I… What was I doing?”

Kon blanks out his expression. “You were telling me who gave me the other half of my DNA.”

Wow, it’s strange hearing him talk like that.

“Oh. Sorry, I don’t know what happened.” I push myself to my feet and shake my head. “The other donor is—”

What? I was… I was telling Kon about Luthor! Or trying to. “This. Is. Annoying.”

“You sure you feel okay?”

“Yeah, it’s just strange.” I sit in my chair again. “I mean, I’m not breaking any rules that I know of, but admittedly, that’s a small list. Oh, whatever.”

“You don’t need to—” Kon starts. I cut him off.

“I do. This is important. He’s—”

Fuck! Why can’t I tell him?

"It's the price you paid for coming here"

What? But-!

"It was the knowledge of the future and the almost complete inability to reveal it or the loss of self. I chose the first for you.”


After a few minutes, Kon speaks. “Lex Luthor.” His voice is flat. And I don’t mean controlled, I mean flat.

I nod and my head starts to pound. I force myself to speak. “He installed telepathic…” I’m feeling dizzy, but I ignore it and grit my teeth. “…compulsion to control…” Blood starts to come out of my nose and ears. I must look awful. “…of you. I know you don’t like telepaths, but you should ask Martian Manhunter to…” Just a little more…! “…remove them!” I drop to the ground, feeling hollow.

Kon’s eyes widen in horror, but breathes a sigh of relief when he can feel my pulse. The worry doesn’t disappear completely though.

“I can’t feel my legs…” I complain, sounding like a drunkard. My voice is fluctuating wildly. I close my eyes and lay there for a moment, resting.

When I open them again, I see a hand in my face. I follow it to Kon and I smile weakly. He helps me up and I attempt to regain my ability to stand on solid ground. I fail. I end up leaning on Kon and he
puts me in the human crutch hold with a hand around my waist and my arm around his shoulders.

“ ‘ank you.” The world was still spinning a bit, but I felt much better. I look down on myself to see that I’m covered in dirt. I gesture at myself, but only a squawk sound came out. “Wha?” Oh. Terrific. So this is the punishment for breaking this Rule.

I bend down - almost braining myself on a tree - and pick up the Kiwi bird squeaky toy I created. My Magic’s on the fritz then. I stare at it. “What a Kiwi?” I mutter to myself.

“Kiwi?” Kon asks.

“Kiwi bird. It’s from New Zealand.” I explain.

“Ah. Shouldn’t it have wings?”

“Nah, the Kiwi doesn’t… I think. Not really sure. I don’t care either, I just think they’re funny looking.”

Kon stares at it dubiously. “I guess.”

I squeeze the toy and a loud kwiii-ahu comes out. “I give up.” I try to let go of Kon, but I nearly fall.

“That was random.”

“No kidding.” I say sarcastically. I was grumbling, but come on! Who wouldn’t grumble about this?

I try again and move a little further and I stumble. I regain my footing, only to trip on an exposed root and end up hugging a tree. I try to move away, but I slip on a pebble and end up with my back on the ground. I get up again and manage to stand for a second before a trio of birds fly out from the bushes and makes me faceplant into the grass. My face burns. A glance at Kon shows he’s amused. Wonderful.

“I’m starting to suspect this is part of the punishment…” I think about trying to fly, but the cape scene from The Incredibles stops me. Yeah, no thanks. There aren’t any airplanes above us now, but I don’t put it past Magic to make one appear the moment I attempt to do anything of the sort.

Kon snickers, then laughs softly. “Nice to see that someone’s getting something from my misfortune.” He laughs a little louder and I smile. It’s nice to see him happy again. Better yet, it’s nice that he’s comfortable enough to laugh at me.

I sigh and force myself to my feet and slip on the Kiwi bird that I dropped when I fell the first time. I fall into a thorn bush. “Ow!” I drop back to the grass and just stare at the sky. “That’s it. I’m not moving until this wears off. Fly back to the Mountain and let everyone know not to worry about me, okay Superboy?”

Kon snorts. “I’m not leaving you here.” What? He bends down and- oh hell no!

“Put me down!” I screech. I refuse to be manhandled like this! I have my pride! Sure, i could probably use the help and there’s no way I’m going to make it to any sort of shelter for the night and I’m- Wait! That doesn’t matter! I have it, end of story.

“You’re ridiculous.” He smiles and I fold like wet paper. I guess I could ignore it this time.

Kon takes flight and I narrow my eyes against the wind instinctively. A flash of light catches my eye and I stare at my lamp. Oh! That’s right! “I was sidetracked earlier, when we first saw each other
today, but I wanted to tell you something.”

“What?”

“I was thinking that the name I’ll be using for my civilian life from now on should be Jin Albari. My family still exists here, but not me. I checked. My old name would risk attracting attention to them so I won’t use it anymore.”

Kon is silent for a moment. “Your old name?”

I think about it. “If you want to know I can tell you it. I think that if anyone deserves to know it, it’s you.” He nods.

“Okay.” I gesture for him to lend me his ear. I know he had super hearing, but this feels more familiar. Very, very quietly, I whisper my old name.

Goodbye past. It was good to know you, but it’s time for me to look to close that chapter of my life and look to the future.

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The next few days were pretty normal. Kon and I fell into a routine of getting breakfast together. Every morning, we went out to eat and, after my magic returned, I brought him sweets from my home country, Italy later in the day. Some he liked and some he didn’t.

We usually stop by Starbucks too to grab coffee. Each time, we try something different, but Kon usually ends up putting a bunch of add-ons to his drink. Sometimes, especially when he gets normal coffee, he ends up with something completely different from what he originally got. I was just fine with trying something new every time we went there. I like food a lot so almost every new experience is welcome.

These mornings were good. We talk a lot during them. Kon mainly asks questions about certain things and we let the conversation spiral into a discussion about something completely different. But.

Our relationship looks good on the surface, but it’s still nowhere near the closeness we had before the Incident.

Kon looks tense sometimes when talking to me. Sometimes he asks something that makes me reel back in confusion and nothing we talk about was really important. Most importantly, We leave each other alone save for these moments. I suspect that he’s in the gym, but I don’t even try to go near that room. Especially not while he’s in there.

I continue to read the fairy tales aloud to myself. It’s habit now and it lets me remember the first few days more clearly. I managed to get through the Classic Disney tales, so I moved on to stories like Little Red Riding Hood, The Three Little Pigs, and The Seven Lambs. I didn’t touch Pinocchio at all. I refused to let my magic even think about materializing that story. If there’s any story that Kon would be triggered by, it’s that one.

M’gann moved into Mount Justice like she said too. Sometimes, Robin, Wally, and Kaldur would come and hang out. Or try to anyways.

For some reason, Kon appears to be angry and upset with them. The three of them caught onto this fast and it’s clear that they’re asking each other what happened, but they couldn’t get the reason out of him. I didn’t ignore it because it’s not my place to be meddling in their business.
Kaldur doesn’t trust me though, and his attempts at hiding it are subpar. I still don’t have any idea why, but I try to be open and friendly around him. Hope is eternal and all that.

M’gann seems to be the only one ignorant to the awkward atmosphere in the tower, haplessly chattering about the training that Martian Manhunter was putting her through. Or at least that’s the impression I got. I could be wrong. I should probably ask her if she knows how to read human body language at some point though. Sometime after all this blows over.

It was working, but not even a week like this passed before the lack of any missions started to grate on their sense of… adventure? Self? Self-esteem? I couldn’t figure it out, but I could nearly see the tension that grew with every passing day. The entire group was getting agitated and the non-residents shortened the time they visited when it was clear that there was nothing assigned yet. Until today.
Chapter Notes

Uh...description of injury, but not in too much details? Still, it could be triggering if you have problems regarding your eyes. Like me.

Chapter 8: On the Flying carpet we go, or: Tornado alert.

July 18th, Morning

Kon and I returned from our morning breakfast to the sight of M’gann cooking in the kitchen.

“Good morning!” M’gann beamed. “I wanted to try making cookies from a show I watched before coming to Earth.”

“Great!” I grin back. “What kind?”

“Chocolate chip!” M’gann glances at Kon, only for smile to falter when he doesn’t react. Kon never reaches out to M’gann for some reason. Maybe he just doesn’t know how to react to girls?

I clap my hands, causing them to look at me. “So how’s it going?”

M’gann brightens up and starts telling us about the recipe and what she did so far. I look at the things she had out; there’s something missing… Ah!

“Do you have a timer?” I cut her off.

“For what?”

“The oven.” I smile. “It’s easy to forget to check on your baking, especially if you’re absorbed in doing something else. Here.” I snap my fingers and with a dling, an apple shaped timer appears in my hand.

A weird look briefly appears on my face at the shape. At least this time, it wasn’t some sort of four-dimensional abomination. I didn’t even know that space could bend that way…

“It’s so cute!” M’gann’s voice breaks through my traumatizing memories as she snatches it out of my hand.

“If you want it you can have it.” I offer. “Consider it a gift. Besides, if you’re going to be cooking more often, you’re going to need it.”

“Thanks, Jin!”

“I’m going to the gym.” Kon turns and leaves, not seeing M’gann’s face fall. Her previous enthusiasm fades as Kon disappears around the corner.

“Hey, come on!” I nudge her shoulder with my own. “He’ll warm up to you eventually. These things take time.”
She straightens up and smiles at me. “Right. I just need to be patient.”

“That’s the spirit.” I smile back. “So… What’s it like on Mars? I bet the culture’s pretty different there. I must admit I’m pretty curious. Are all of you shapeshifters?”

“Well, every Martian has the ability to shapeshift, but the extent of their skill varies. It’s a lot like…”

We spent the next half hour talking about her home planet. I offered some of my experiences in Italy for her to compare with her knowledge of Earth. We were discussing the differences in regional foods when Kon and Kaldur walked in.

“Hey, Superboy. Aqualad.” I wave.

“Djinni. You are free to call me Kaldur.” He says.

“I didn’t want to presume anything.”

His eyes sharpen, regarding me with a wary gaze. “What do you mean?”

“I am aware that there are less than flattering views of my species and from your reaction when we met, I gather that you have at least heard of them. I didn’t want to presume anything other than professional familiarity between the two of us.” I know I can be clueless, but I like to think I’m not an idiot.

He nods. “Fair. I should not have assumed who you were before getting to know you.” He steps closer and extends a hand. “May we start anew?”

I smile and close the distance. “Nice to meet you. My code name is now Djinni. My new name is Jin Albari. Call me Jin.”

He smiles back. “Pleasure to meet you too. My code name is Aqualad and my secret identity is Kaldur’Ahm. Please, call me Kaldur.”

It may take a whole before the tension of our previous encounters fade away, but the it already was easier to breathe with Kaldur in the room.

I float a bit. “I’ll be counting on you all. Especially while playing catch up considering I’ve never seriously fought in my life.” I smile sheepishly.

Their faces were amusing. M’gann’s eyes were wide, Kaldur has his eyebrows near his hairline and although Kon’s was carefully blank, I could feel his judgement. I chuckle a bit, smile growing just a little bit wider.

**********

Kaldur is doing something with the big computer in the central room. Somehow he knows what each key does. It’s more magic than my Magic, in my opinion. Kon is glancing at all of us, glowering on the floor and repeat. M’gann is floating, mumbling something as she has the apple timer floating near her in her telekinetic grip.

**Recognized Robin B-Zero-One, Kid Flash B-Zero-Three**

We look up at the computer voice of the Zeta tube. Kid Flash zips on over to us, already excited about something.

“Did you ask him? What did he say?”
Kaldur walks over. “He’s arriving now.”

“Then what are we waiting for?” Kid Flash lives up to his name and creates a yellow streak out of the room. Robin and Kaldur rush after him. Kon, M’gann and I glance at each other and follow at a slightly more leisurely pace.

All of us exit Mount Justice in time to see Red Tornado’s arrival, a red vortex underneath him.

“How does he do that? Tint the wind red, I mean.” I whisper to my companions. They shrug.

“Red Tornado!” Wally waves.

“Greetings. Is there a reason you intercept me outside the Cave?”

“We hoped you had a mission for us.” Kaldur says.

“Mission assignments are Batman’s responsibility.”

“But it was over a week and nothing-”

The cyborg cuts Robin’s complaints off. “You’ll be tested soon enough. For the time being simply enjoy each other’s company.”

“This team is not a social club.” Kaldur frowns.

“No, but I am told, social interaction is an important team building exercise. Perhaps you can keep busy by familiarizing yourselves with the cave.” Red Tornado walks past us.

No one looks too happy with that, particularly Robin and Kid Flash.

“Keep busy.” Kid Flash mocks after Red Tornado has left.

“Does he think we’re falling for this?” Wow, sour much Robin? Why is everyone so eager for a fight?

Oh, right. Superpowered teenagers and the exceedingly prepared ‘normal’ counterpart.

“I can read his mind to find out!” M’gann narrows her eyes in concentration.

“M’gann, Red Tornado is mechanical.” I remind her.

**Recognized Red Tornado One-Six**

“Hello Megan!” She hits herself with the palm of her hand. “He’s inorganic. I cannot read his mind.”

“Nice try though.” Wally leans in close to M’gann. “So, uh… you know what I’m thinking right now?”

“We all know what you’re thinking now.” Robin elbows Wally in the back. “Ow!”

“And now we tour the clubhouse.” Kaldur says flatly.

“Well, Superboy, Jin and I live here. We can play tour guides.”

“Who’s Jin?” Wally asks.

“That would be me.” I smile. “I decided it would be my secret identity.”
“Oh right! You can do the whole color change thing.” Wally recalls.

“I can do a bit more than that. Now you see me…” I conjure a puff of smoke to hide me as I shrink to the size of a fly and hide behind Kon. I snap my fingers again to make my voice surround them. “Now you don’t.”

“Dude! You can become invisible!” Wally exclaims.

“No, he just hid behind me.” Kon, if you delivered that line any more flatly, I’m sure a sheet of paper would be jealous.

Wally zips behind him. “No he isn’t.”

I smirk and fly away behind M’gann. I snap my fingers and return to my normal size, creating another puff of smoke. “Surprise!”

“Ah!” A telekinetic push sends me flying into the side of the mountain. I only just stop myself from hitting the rock while rubbing my chest. It doesn’t ache in a specific area, more like a sting to the entire front of my body. It makes me feel better though.

“Oh, I’m sorry! I didn’t-” I wave her off.

“Don’t worry. It’s my bad. I shouldn’t have surprised you like that. No harm, no foul.”

“Still.” She insists.

“It’s fine. Why don’t me-”

Riiiiing.

M’gann straightens. “My cookies!”

“I’ll go. You show the others around the base, okay?” I wink and teleport.

To my room. “Really.” I ask aloud. I teleport again. This time, I appear in the kitchen and I take out the cookies without a problem. I leave them on the counter to cool off and wait for the others to come. Wally, of course, was the first to arrive.

“Thanks Jin.” M’gann smiles. “For this and giving me the timer.”

“Always have a timer when you cook.” I say. “It’s easy to lose track of ti-”

Crunch. Crunch.

Wally’s munching at the cookies already, with more in each hand. “They’re great!”

I laugh. “You look like a chipmunk when you talk with your mouth full, you know?”

“Thank you Kid Flash.” M’gann beams.

“You can call me Wally.” He leans on the counter. “See, I already trust you with my secret ID, unlike Mr. Dark Glasses over here.” He points at Robin, who frowns and puts his hand on his hips. “Batman has forbidden Boy Wonder from telling anyone his real name.”

“Mine’s no secret! It’s M’gann M’orzz. But, you can call me Megan. It’s an Earth name and I’m on Earth now.” She says cheerfully.
Kon turns and starts to leave. Her smile shrinks a little.

“Hrr! GET OUT OF MY HEAD!” She turns to face the others, trying to contact us telepathically. And then another quirk of my situation hits me.

While everyone else just clutches their heads, the moment she touches my mind.. I was drowning.

I could practically feel the water entering my lungs, stealing my breath and freezing me to the bone. Megan was my mirror image, but struggling more.

Then it disappeared. We were back at Mount Justice.

The two of us are on our knees, coughing out sea water with the others helping us breathe. Robin scrutinizes the water, smelling the salt in it. “That’s seawater.”

I cough again. “Yes. It seems that whatever governs my powers have a strong opinion on telepaths. It looks like it’ll try to drown me and whoever attempts telepathy on me.” This is not good. Telepathic communication is practically a staple on this team. This means being… cut out. Yet another reminder that I don’t belong here. Another reminder that no matter how much I wish, I don’t really have a place in this world.

I breathe in deeply and get up, pushing aside my feelings for later. My hair sticks to by back, soaked, like the rest of me. “Terrific.” I say dryly. I wave a hand and the water that appeared vanishes. At least there wasn’t a rule for this, so… maybe it’s an automatic defense?

“What was that?” Wally explodes. “Why did you-”

“It wasn’t me, Wally.” I turn and inspect the hair I could see.

“Who else could-”

“It wasn’t him.” Megan says seriously. We give her our full attention. “I saw it. A giant behind him, with skin as black as space and sea waves dancing on it. It’s eyes were an otherworldly violet, like twin stars on it’s face. It was staring at me and I couldn’t breathe, couldn’t think, couldn’t…” She shuddered, wet and cold. I sigh and wave my hand at her to dissipate the water on and around her.

“Yeah. That’s a good description of Marid.”

“Marid?” Robin asks.

“The entity that brought me here and gave me my power. I met it when I broke the rule that landed me in the infirmary. Honestly, I think that both of us were pretty lucky.”

“Oh? And how do you define being drowned as lucky.” Robin, sarcasm is the lowest form of wit.

I give Robin a flat look. “It has no particular reason to care for my life, and even less for Megan’s. It left us in relatively okay condition. I call that lucky.”

Everyone winces. “Good point. Let’s not anger the nice… uh… whatever it is.”

I like him. I could use a new pet.

Yeah, no. My teammates are off-limits. I turn towards Megan.

“Are you okay?”
“I’ll be fine. “ She smiles weakly. “Guess I shouldn’t ever try to read your mind.”

“Megan.” Kaldur interrupts. “Now that this is over, don’t use your telepathy on us like that again.”

Megan blinks. “But on Mars everyone communicates like this.”

“On Earth, it’s an extreme violation of privacy.” Kaldur admonishes.

“I- I didn’t mean to-”

“Don’t do it again.” Kon scowls and stalks off to the couch. Harsh, but I can understand. Luckily, Megan rebounds quickly.

“Hello Megan! I know what we can do!” She flies away and the rest of us soon follow. When Megan flies back past me, but motions for us to head towards the elevator, I quirk a small smile and turn back with her.

I nod at her when she looks at me.

"Superboy, please?"

"Don't talk to me." His voice is low and bitter. I remain as silent as a mouse, not moving from my position. He looks at her, then at me, but in the end, he gets up and follows us to the others. I smile.

It doesn’t take long for the elevator to reach our stop.

"It's my martian Bioship!" Megan proudly says.

"..." It was an egg. A red egg with black stripes. Taller than all of us and big enough to be a room by itself, but still... An egg. If I didn't know of its transformative capacity I would be really disappointed.

"Cute. Not aerodynamic, but cute."

‘Wally, you charmer.’ I think sarcastically.

"It's in rest, silly. I'll wake it." And here’s the magic. Technology. Alien-thingamajig.

The bioship warps, expanding and twisting to form something straight out of spacecraft. It has two wings on the side of the central body. In front of us is the front of the ship, that turns with a wave of Megan’s hand. The back was flat, instead of ovoidal, and a ramp melts from the wall, showing us the door.

Megan walks towards it a little before looking back at us. “Well, Are you coming?”

What kind of question was that? Of course we are.

The insides are tinted in this strange violet/indigo color, with an altar in the center of the room. From it came out six seats, one in front of the center and the others around that, on the floor. Also, the centreline of command came out from the wall.

"Strap in." Megan instructs.

"Oh."

"Cool.” Wally says. From the seats two belts came out, crossing in the middle as an X, locking us in the seats. Megan sat at the controls.
"Red Tornado, please open the Bay doors." She says.

The big doors in front of us start to slide open. Megan moves her hands in the air at the side of her seats, where two glowing blue spheres, supported by two... things..., come out.

Then we went for a joy ride.

I must admit, the bioship was really maneuverable.

"Incredible!" Robin says.

Wally sighs dreamily. "She sure is."

Megan looks at him. "I mean-the ship. Which, like all ship, is a she."

"Fast with his feet, not so much with his mouth." Rebin teases.

"Dude!" Wally yelps. A ride and a show. Well, if the hero business doesn’t work out for them, they have a career as comic relief.

On Kon’s other side, I can hear Kaldur whisper to him. "I may not have psychic powers, but I can guess what you're thinking: You overreacted and you don't know how to apologize. Just say sorry." Kaldur, once again you show why you’re the most level-headed of the team.

Kon remains silent at that and simply looks out the window. I simply pat his arm, prompting him to turn to me. I try to smile supportively at him. Sadly, it doesn’t seem to help much.

I spent the time looking out the window, dismissing the conversation behind me.

"Hey! How about showing us a little martian shapeshifting."

At Robin’s suggestion, Megan gets up. Fabric rises from her shoes and reaches her head, shifting to red, yellow and black again, until a female Robin, though a little older, appears in her place. Then she does a pirouette and a female Wally is there, posing with her right arm up.

"It it wrong that I think I'm hot?" Wally smiles.

"Impressive!" Robin claps.

"Try me, try me." I wave my hand, sincerely curious to see what I would look like. She grins and colors race on her skin and her clothes, until she looks like a female me. Though… I blinked. Something isn't...

Wrong. It's like this...

I exhale, a small pain hitting me in the head, going away in the same instant it appears, and purple smoke covering my form. I feel myself turn into smoke, shifting and changing me.

I'm two inches smaller, with blue skin, purple tattoos and very much female. My clothes changed to look like Jasmine’s outfit from Aladin, only with a veil on my face.

"This is new." Even my voice is different, more lyrical and with a higher pitch. It feels really strange and the looks that others are giving me aren't helping. One in particular...

"Wally, if you even think to whistle, I'll show you exactly what 'Rule-Free' means." I smiled dangerously. He, carefully, returns his lips to their normal position. I frown and close my eyes,
concentrating.

Snap.

Dling!

And back to my fully male form, in all my purple-ness. Much better. Now to distract them…

"How do you change your clothes?" Megan perks up, returning to her normal form and sitting down.

"They're organic, like the ship! They responds my mental commands."

"That must be useful." I comment.

"They are!"

"Can you do the ghosting through walls thing that Manhunter does?" Wally asks.

"Density shifting... No, it's a very advanced technique." Megan shakes her head.

"Flash can vibrate his molecules through walls." Robin snickers. "When he tries it, bloody nose."

"Dude!" Wally says sharply.

"Here's something I can do." The ship’s outside fades from view. "Camouflage mode."

"Red Tornado to Miss Martian. An emergency alert has been triggered at the Happy Harbor Power Plant. I suggest you investigate it. Covertly. I'm sending coordinates." The computer announces.

"Received. Adjusting course."

Mister Twister. I would like to say that I’m ready for this, but the truth is... I’m scared. Only the fact that my face isn’t very expressive unless I try to make it expressive saves me from showing my true feelings.

Robin scoffs. "Red Tornado is keeping us busy again." If only Robin, If only…

**********

We reach the power plant, a big factory with three great cylinder connected to the main body and a gigantic car park around it. The ship slows down and lowers, still camouflaged.

"Well, a simple fire led you to Superboy. We should find out what caused the alert." I remain stiff while looking at the tornado, not really believing what I’m seeing.

"I think I know the cause." Kon, thank you. His words jolt me out of my reverie but not fast enough to do anything about it. We get caught in the winds, tossing the ship, and us, around the air.

Various shout of distress came from around us, until Megan - right, we're on the field - Miss Martian takes us out of it. I can only grip my seat and try not to throw up.

She manages to fly us out of the twister and take us to the other side of the Power Plant, bring the ship down to land in the car park, between two rows of cars. The floor opens and we are drop through it. I would have landed on my face if it wasn’t for the fact that I could fly, though.

The workers were shouting in fear, running from nature’s wrath.
“Robin? Are tornados common in New England? Robin?!” Aqualad shouts, only to find empty air where Robin once was.

Right. His damn habit of going off alone. Fuck. His laughter echoes in the air.

“He was just here!” Miss Martian exclaims.

“He’s trained by Batman!” I yell in lieu of explanation, taking flight and looking around. I notice the way that the building windows explode. From the inside out. All of us ran or fly towards it.

We reach it just in time to see Robin fall from one of the concrete pillars that support the entire building, having been slammed against it.

Superboy lands near him and I land right behind them, keeping my eyes on the unknown robot.

"Who's your new friend?" Superboy asks.

" Didn't catch his name but he plays kinda rough." The others manage to reach us, but Superboy launches himself toward the villain before we can organize ourselves.

The robot is a dark red, a shade or two darker than Red Tornado, with a black stripe that goes across his body from his neck to his groin. His feet and hands are oversized and covered with some kind of back armor. The same armor covers the upper part of his arms and his sides. From the black gauntlets that cover his hands, blue tubes protrude out of them. The same goes for the two cylinder-shaped add-ons that he has on the underside of his wrists. A ragged scarf is wrapped around his neck and floats in the air while wind curls around him.

“My apologies.” His insincere synthetic voice says. “You may address me as Mister Twister.” With a mechanical whirr, two new tornados appear from his hands and stop Superboy, before slamming him into a wall.

“Superboy!” I yell, and scowl at Mister Twister. I really don't like it when my friends are hurt. “Wrong move.” I wave my hand at him and send series of crystal shards straight at him. He easily deflects them. In hindsight, I should have thought about how to attack him earlier.

Kid Flash puts on his goggles and attempts to run at Mister Twister, only for him to be launched outside, through the open doors behind the robot.

Aqualad and Miss Martian try to attack him next, only to be slammed against a pillar and a wall respectively. Leaving me and Robin as the only ones still standing. I feel the hairs on my back raise, a sure sign of my nerves.

"I was prepared to be challenged by a superhero. I was not, however, expecting children."

"We're not children!" Robin throws explosives at Mister Twister in an attempt to attack him in anger.

"Robin, frontal attacks clearly don’t work on him!" I shout. Too late. The two explosive get neutralized, one detonating too early, the other too late.

"Objectively, you are. Have you not adult supervision? I find your presence here quite... disturbing."

"Let's see if you like this more." I narrow my eyes, floating in the air with my magic twisting around me for a moment before arching down like lightning on the floor and creating sharp crystal spikes that grew rapidly at him.
Mister Twister breaks them with violent currents of air, the crystal turning into shattered bits. I try to replace them as rapidly as he destroys the, but it seems like he’s a little faster.

The team is recovered and on their feet while I distract him, though I wish my attacks were more effective.

"I didn't know you could do that." Megan says.

"Neither did I! But I'm scared enough that it was worth a try!" I say falsely cheerful.

"So, what do you..."

"I don't know, so could you think of something Robin, please?"

Robin looks around and points. "Miss Martian, the steam duct over him."

She reaches out and snaps her arms back. The metal vent over the mech breaks and directs a column of superheated steam down on him. When the cloud dissipates, Superboy is in a clear position to hit him. Unfortunately, I let my guard down when Miss Martian attacked, so Mister Twister had his hands free to send Superboy flying into a steel traverse on the roof. He bangs off it and hits us.

Both Miss Martian and I race to catch him, but though I’m slightly faster, it only meant that I got the honor to be slammed against the ground with him. MM crashes to the ground near us, and I see Robin and Aqualad get their skulls cracked together from the corner of my eye.

"Disturbing, as I said. Thank you." He flies out of the building.

************

We manage to recover fast enough to save Wally from being splattered against the building. Mister Twister floats over the lawn in front of us.

"I would have though you have all learned your limitations by now." Mister Twister says scornfully.

"WHAT DO YOU WANT!?!" Kaldur yells.

"Isn't it obvious? I'm waiting for a real hero." He says smugly.

"Read his mind, find a weakness." Kaldur orders.

"I thought I wasn't supposed to do that." Megan says.

Robin yells, "It's okay with the bad guys!" Fuck. I ready myself, trying to think. What would...

Yeah, this might work.

It's lucky that I’m already behind Miss Martian. I prepare myself. I will not risk them, but I can risk myself.

"Nothing, I'm getting nothing. Hello Megan!" I can understand how she could make this mistake. Hindsight is 20/20.

"Mister Twister is Red Tornado in disguise." Now, this is always something I wondered. Why has nobody noticed that his wind isn't red?

"He's inorganic. An android! And how many android do you know that can generates tornadoes!"
"Red Tornado send us here!" Kaldur realizes, clenching his hands in fists.

"After saying that we'll be tested soon enough? This is his test! Something to keep us busy!" Robin says disdainfully.

"Speedy called it. We're a joke." Wally, you should have more confidence in yourself than that.

Why yes, I do know the irony in me saying that.

"This game? So over." Dismissing everything like that is not a good idea, Wally. Superboy and Miss Martian remain in back, while the other three stop practically underneath Mister Twister.

"We know who you are and what you want." Robin yells.

"So let's end this!" Kaldur declares. Kaldur, you should know better than to let your anger control you like this.

"Consider it ended." The android raises his arms towards the sky. Having seen this episode didn’t prepare me for the sheer malice that fill his voice when he spoke. It gives me chills across my spine.

The sky turns black with clouds, while strong winds start buffeting us all. I use the cover to teleport high behind the darkness. Then I close my eyes and concentrate.

Layers of crystals surround me, shaped just like my bottle, just human sized. The flat part is directly in front of me, clear enough to see that the lightning strike came too fast. No more time!

I prepare to strike, not fast enough to block Mister Twister from hitting Superboy by just a couple of seconds. I’m forced to adjust the trajectory, using the electric discharge the android is emitting to aim. Then I breathe and teleport everything down, launching my strike immediately after.

The bottle shaped mass of crystals hit him in the back, sending him flying and shattering on impact, launching him in a ballistic arc towards Happy Harbor. I follow him soon after, just stopping to talk to Miss Martian on the way. Fortunately she is the closest to me.

"I'm going to keep him busy. You think of a plan to beat him!" And I fly off, hot on his trail. Maybe I can reduce the damage he does.

Oh, who I am kidding? I will, maybe, be a minor annoyance until the others come to help, but I'll try and do my best.

************

Sunset appeared fast, that’s for sure. The pink and gold of the sun shines on the sea while I descend near the docks. Mister Twister rises up, only slightly damaged from the hit I gave him. The crystal was too fragile, huh?

"I do not know you." He states with the barest hint of confusion in his voice.

"I'm sorry. You can call me Djinni. I'm part of the team."

"Do you think you can do better than the other children?"

"Maybe not, but I definitely can delay you until my team comes to help me kick your ass."

"Big words from someone like you. Why don't we test your resolve?" I steady myself, but I should have expected what Mister Twister did next. Damn it!
Twin tornadoes spiral amongst the various boats, using them as projectiles against the town.

“Fu…!” I wave my hands, bolts of magic hitting boat after boat, shrinking them, letting them grow larger after they hit the ground. Noting breaks so I seem to have protected them from damage too. What I can’t stop, I try to deflect back with mixed success.

Although I only managed to deflect roughly half of the ships I couldn’t stop back, I did manage to give the civilians roughly ten more seconds to escape.

Worth it.

"Useless." Twister repeats his previous attack, only this time, he adds a few additional tornados as well. How the hell do I stop winds like that?!

I gain altitude, trying to think of a way to stop the various tornadoes from reaching the town. I resort to simply creating some crystal walls in their paths to stop their movement, with mixed success. I manage to stop the tornadoes by anchoring the walls in the ground, half the boats smash through the walls.

At least the most damaging parts were stopped?

Mister Twister rises to fly even with me. “You’re not much better than the others, though I applaud you for managing to stop some of my attacks.”

“This is my first real fight, so sue me.” I fire back, panting. I’m already out of breath. It’s more the exhaustion of keeping up than any real physical strain though.

"Oh? Then let me put an end to it." And here's the direct tornado. Awesome. I screw my eyes shut and thrust my right hand forward, Magic surging through it.

A purple shield flashes into existence around me, blocking the winds for a seconds or two, only to flicker out and leaving me at the (nonexistent) mercy of the android that promptly tosses me against a house.

I hiss in pain. “Goddamn that hurts.”

Thankfully the pain goes away after a second, my wounds mending and my pain disappearing with them. I shoot up again, magic crackling like lightning and dart forward headon.

I wait until Twister tries to use his wind to send me flying and teleport behind him, magically created lightning directed at him.

Missed.

"Amor celeste in croce, vuoi stare fermo?!” I yell, boats around me flying against him in my anger, only to have him divert them and blow them away.

With a low growl I wave my hands again and crystal spears form from the concrete to rocket at the android.

"The definition of madness is doing the same things again and again waiting for a different results. Are you mad?"

"Probably, yes." He stops for a second. A second that I cannot capitalize on because I'm not trained for this! Another low growl and a snap of my fingers herald the conjuration of a puddle of acid over
him.

You know what? On the hindsight that was a really stupid move!

"Aaaargh!" My eyes!

My hands shoot for my face, feeling the ruined flesh that now covered my torso and face. I can feel my eye sockets are empty where the acid dissolved my body. I can feel a panic attack creeping up on my and can here the whipping of winds heading straight for me.

Luckily, my flesh knits back together fast enough to keep me from do more that breath faster and by the sounds I can hear, someone managed to stop my execution.

I adjust to vision again just in time to see a boat being launched from the sea after Superboy and Aqualad, who seemed to have been tossed at a house.

“NO.” I send a streak of magic lightning after the boat, which turns into bubbles in the wind. I transmute the bubbles again into sharp crystal daggers that fly at the android. The edges on the crystals are more effective, but still not much more than a distraction for the android. I’ll take it.

“What did we tell you!!?” Superboy’s voice is distant, but I can hear him well enough. Good. Now it’s time to be a nuisance to the big bad of the episode.

"Piece of scrap metal! I'm not out yet!” I create more crystal daggers to shoot at him.

"Useless..." He says disdainfully.

"Not this time." I murmur in answer, two chakram made of the same material shooting right after the daggers, their shape and movement cutting the wind away and creating deeper slices in his surface.

It's improvement. I can feel proud of myself now, I guess.

Red Tornado flies into the scene from the outskirts of the city, making me release a breath of relief. I can leave the rest to the Team now. I did what I could.

"Hit the showers boys. I was hoping you could handle this. Clearly, you cannot."

"But we got a plan now!"

"The subject is not up for debate."

I teleport away from the city, high in the air. I can see the others prepare for their plan, each playing their part. The tornado match is much more epic in real life, but the lightning was cheating. Well, if you’re not the one who’s using it anyways.

Fake Tornado hits the earth and I’m just waiting for the trap to spring. The surprise in Mister Twister’s voice was amusing.

On a more sore point. I can’t see any opening for me to act. The others really planned this out well. I did think that Superboy was angrier than he seemed to be in the show, but that shows just how much more real this can be.

With the battle over, I look over the town. It’s damaged from our fight. Although it probably would have been more damaged in the show, that doesn’t change the fact that here, I sent Mister Twister in this direction. I close my eyes and focus.
I snap my fingers.

Dling.

The town is fully repaired and the debris gone. I breathe a sigh of relief. I tried not to focus too much on what it looked like and more on the idea of it being fixed to its normal state. Looks like it worked.

I float back down, landing gently behind them and offering a grin to them all. The hiss of air catches all our attention and we look in time to see the chest compartment opening up to reveal the small robot that falls out of his chest.

He attempts to get up. "Foul. I c-call foul."

Megan shows us all how cold she can be when she really wants to. Like dropping a boulder on the small android.

“MEGAN, NO!” Kaldur tries to stop her. Too late.

In the resulting shocked silence, Robin speaks first. I don’t bother to change my expression, feeling Kon’s stare on me.

"Don't know how things are done of Mars, but on Earth we don't execute our captives!"

Megan smiles. "You said you'd trust me." She lifts the rock is lifted away, showing the rest of the android. "That's why I couldn't read his mind."

Wally walks up to the wreckage and picks up an eyeball. "Cool! Souvenir."

‘I can make a plaque if you want.’ I almost say, before biting my tongue.

Kaldur puts a hand on Megan’s shoulder. "We should have more faith in you."

"Yeah, you rocked this mission! Get it? Rocked? Heh." Wally jokes.

"Ignore him." Robin says. “We’re all just turbed you’re on the team.”

Megan beams. "Thanks. Me too."

I smile at the camaraderie between them. This really built who they are as a team. I ignore the feeling of being left out. ‘It’s fine, I was never meant to be here anyways.’ I tell myself.

***********

After the report to Red Tornado, Kon corners me in the kitchen while I’m making myself some tea.

We stare at each other. “...Want some tea?” I offer.

“You knew.” Kon states.

“Yes.” Obviously, I don’t add. There’s no point denying it when I said I knew what was coming.

“Why didn’t you do anything about it?”

I turn around and pour a new cup. He didn’t say no. “You’re confusing the knowledge of something happening and the ability to do something about it.”

"What do you mean?” He asks.
I sigh. "I don't know how to fight."

"What?" Annd now he's frowning. Well, more than usual anyways.

"I don't know how to fight. I told you, Megan, and Kaldur earlier that I’m playing catch up with you guys. I was terrified during the battle with Mister Twister. And I was worried that my presence here would change something."

"We won."

"Yes, and you would have won without me there. The only thing I did was keeping his attention for a bit and kept the city from needing repairs."

He stared at me for a bit, looking for something. "You're serious." He says.

Did he think I wasn’t? “Of course.” I say, slightly offended. “I’m not exactly sure what you think of me, but I’m not… some kind of all-powerful, omniscient malignant deity. I’m not here by choice and I’m certainly not directing your every action.

I took a moment to breath and organize my thoughts. Kon looks unsure.

"Everything I told you was the truth. The fact that I know something what could happen doesn't make me the one who causes it to happen. To be honest, I'm scared to ruin everything. I could get someone killed, get killed myself or, hell, lead to the end of the world by changing something. Like causing someone to get a permanent injury."

My eyes. God, I won’t be able to sleep for weeks. Definitely not without a light on. Perhaps even longer than that. Being blind is one of my deepest fears. The thought of not being able to read anymore… And what if someone else was hit?! They wouldn’t be able to recover like I can.

A shiver racks my body, fear striking me for a moment before subsiding.

"Are you okay?" Kon asks, concerned.

“I just reminded myself that I would be dead or in intensive care by now if it wasn’t for my regeneration. And that I really shouldn’t break rule number two ever again in case all healing will be reversed.” I tack on at the end after a moment’s thought.

"Rule number two?"

"The one that landed me in the infirmary. Seeing as how they don't come with a number, I'm giving them one. I'm a little obsessive over the smallest things, don't worry." I wave him off.

Kon rubs a hand behind his head and looks to the side. "Listen, I wanted..."

"Why are you still up at this time of the night?" We look to see who interrupted us.

"Red Tornado." Kon states.

"Sir. I have a slight problem sleeping. Flashbacks." I gesture at the tea to support this.

"I understand. Perhaps scheduling time with Black Canary to talk would be a wise idea." Red Tornado suggests.

"I'll think about it." I smile weakly.
"Do that. In the meantime, try and sleep as much you can. Goodnight."

“Goodnight.” He turns and leaves.

Why was he here in the first place? Well, whatever. For some reason my mind recalls Megan shapeshifting into Red Tornado, but I dismiss it instantly. Why would she do that?

I look at Kon. “You were saying Superboy?”

He opens his mouth, closes it, then shakes his head. “Nothing. Good night.” He leaves before I can continue to press him for answers.

Well. Isn’t everyone just a ball of sunshine tonight. I grimace while sipping my tea.

Well, time to see if I can sleep and not wake up screaming from my nightmares. Honestly, a lot of the time I don’t dream, so maybe I’m lucky.

Yeah, right.
The Marketplace Discussion, or: Socializing for Loners.

Chapter Notes

Remember how I had a co-author? Yeah, I don't have one anymore.

Also, kind of a disturbing sequence at the start... I think.

Chapter 9: The Marketplace Discussion, or: Socializing for Loners.

The morning after I floated in the kitchen, eyes practically closed, the toes of my feet dragging to the floor, head dropped down. I almost bumped into someone, but he moved away at the last moment.

"Dude, are you okay?" "S'ep'y..."

I took cereal and milk from the fridge, almost missing the bowl entirely, but correcting it soon enough that only a bit of milk ended on the table. But, before I was able to eat even a bite, my breakfast disappeared from me.

"Whoa, now. You don't want to repeat what happened when you ate at my home, do you?" "W'ly, give me foooood...." "Why don't you eat something else? I dunno, uh..." he zipped around the kitchen, searching for something breakfasty to eat, but there wasn't anything.

Must be time to do grocery shopping.

I brought up my head, looking at him with bleary eyes, blinking a couple of times, trying to focus and effectively see him and not a blob in his shape.

Wally was looking at me, eyebrows raised, as if he was trying to understand something, and with some tears on his face.

"Dude are you okay?" and the tears weren't tears, but chunks of flesh that dripped off from his eyes, the two eyeballs melting and running down his face, soon followed by the rest of his upper face, while he continued talking, continued asking if I was okay. I screamed.

**********

I woke up screaming, the room completely black and without light, like I was in a grave or I was blind.

"Light!" And the whole room lighted with white, every detail delineated neatly. I moved my hands on my face, trying to feel if there was something wrong but nothing.

My eyes were fine, my head was completely fine.

I could still see. Thank God I could still see.

My door opened, slamming on the wall, and Megan and Kon were on the other side, Megan with green pajamas, while Kon was with a simple shirt and shorts.
"Are you okay?" "What's happened?" "Nightmare, nothing big, just a nightmare...." I trailed off, still a bit shocked from my dream.

"Would you like something warm to drink? It's how it's done on Earth, right?" Megan was anxious, looking at Kon for confirmation but he could only shrug helplessly, not sure on what to do.

"Yeah Meg, it's how it's done. I'm pretty sure that I will not be able to sleep again, so something warm to drink would be perfect. Thank you. Both of you." I tried to smile but was pretty fragile.

"I'll go and warm something up." She was so easy to brighten up that made me feeling a bit better. Kon, on the other hand...

"Are you sure that everything is okay?" "It's not okay right now. I will be after working through the trauma. It was my first fight and I got my eyes melted off. It will take a while." I confessed, tugging at my sheets and draping them over my body like a toga. Kon looked uncomfortable with the situation.

"Well, let's go and see what Megan prepared. I'm feeling like something sweet and hot to drink." No answers, but a tight smile. I smiled back, a bit less fragile than before, a bit more relaxed, even when the fear was still gripping at my insides.

I ignored it with a resolution.

************

I didn't close eyes again that night. And neither the night after that. So, when Wally suggested to go and do some camping, I was really grateful for the distraction that granted.

Well, I knew that he suggested to simply made a campfire with M'gann, but I also knew that she misunderstood. And I couldn't do anything but snickering silently at his expression when he came into the Tube Room - My name for the place where all the strange equipment used for the Team business - packed like a mule and found us all there. He was too fun to torment.

Noo, I'm not sadistic, why do you ask?

I floated behind them, don't even disturbing to bring anything. I would sleep inside my bottle this night. Who knows, maybe it would make me more relaxed or something. Or, at least, be soundproof enough that I wouldn't wake the others up.

A guy could hope.

Well, I discovered that the place where they went camping in the comic wasn't a long way away and was simply in the woods near the Mount. Easy access. If someone had bought the base and transformed it into a Hotel it would make a fortune, offering woods and beach in summer and skiing in winter. I wonder...

"Earth to Jin! Are you with us?" "If you don't want to be here, you could always go away. And you can bring the others with you...." "Wally, don't sulk."

"I was just thinking about how much I could make pay the customer if I turned Mount Justice in a high-class hotel." Cue stares.

"...what?" "Well, it has beach and woods, so Summer is covered. During Winter it could be used for skiing, so..." "Your head must be a strange place."
Seeing as that was Robin to say that, I couldn't be anything but offended at that, honestly. He was trained by Batman, gods.

Not that Batman wasn't competent, no. He was almost too competent. And paranoid. But, well, they WERE out to find him, so it was really paranoia? Well, a certain measure of...

A heavy hand landed on my back, almost sending me tumbling down. I jumped three feet in the air and stayed them, looking back, seeing the face of Kon behind me.

"You spaced again." "Thanks. Oh, right, the fire. Want me to take care of it?" "Already done." Oh. So it was already everything done. Good. I went camping exactly once in all my lifetime and that was when I was... eight? Ten? Around that age, if I remember correctly.

Which, hey, I could be wrong. I only know that I was young and I was with my family and some friends of my parents. Stop.

A stick with a marshmallow was placed in my hands by an amused Kaldur, that went sit in his chair right after. "Thanks." "No problem Jin. Try to not burn it, okay?" "Yeah."

S'mores. Never, ever, tried one of that. I focused on my marshmallow, eyes a bit narrowed to gauge better the grade of cooking of my treat.

I admit that, when I was still at my home, I searched on how to make an S'more on google. I was curious. And all that it did was making me hungry, so I closed it right after. But now that came to my help, as I focused on achieving the perfect golden color I could.

When I judged that it was ready, I placed it on the cracker and chocolate, then topped it with another cracker and pressed down gently, careful to not break the cracker. I achieved success after a near break.

With a smug smile, and ignoring the looks that the others were giving me, I took a bite of my just dessert. It tasted like victory.

I floated near Kon, relishing in the almost exceeding sweetness of the treat, just barely hearing the dramatic tale of how Kaldur became Aqualad. That was a bit sad because I liked listening stories. But that meant that I missed all the other discussions that went on that night.

It was time to pay more attention, I think.

So, I refocused at the sound of Wally's laugh.

"Are you kidding me? Bats won't even let him tell you his real name!" Didn't he know what was his name? Or was it fandom?

"I mean, you'll probably get a better origin story out of Supey over here." "But you already told me his story, didn't you? You said that three of you rescued him from Cadmus." "Yeah, we did." "Yes. Chronologically, Superboy is only sixteen weeks old." "... and you have no memory of things before being rescued?"

Loaded question. And pointed, too. I hid my shudder while munching on my third S'more.

"I have some memories... from the G-Gnome. It would teach me about the world outside while I was in the containment pod." His voice was... somber, maybe?

Heavy with something. And he had a look on his face that spoke of something heavy. I floated a bit
nearer, sending a smile in his direction when he turned to look at me before Megan continued.

"So you can remember things? When you were in the containment pod they would feed you information and you could remember it, right?" She looked almost relieved. Like that was a good thing. I winced again.

"I guess so."

"Well if you can remember what they taught you, you must've been thinking about things as they fed you information. What did you think about?" "When I was in the containment pod, I was fed... information." He could really inject menace in his voice, I'm giving him this.

"I really didn't start thinking for myself until after I got out."

"Well, what kind of things do you think about now?" I took a sudden, silent, breath, preparing myself to defuse the situation.

I know that I can't solve everything, but I can try, dammit!

After a heavy silence, Kon talked again.

"The one thing that is always on my mind is..." The suspension was started to get to me. I fight that with another S'more.

"... Destroying Superman."

Aaaand that was it. I waited for two heartbeats, then I spoke just before Wally.

"Makes sense." "What?! Did you hear what he said?!” "Wally, I'm right next to him, I can hear him loud and clear. And I can say that it makes sense." "You're thinking..." "...that whoever made him grow in a tank wanted to use him as a weapon. Yes." I was serious as I could, looking directly in the eyes of Robin.

Kon was looking at me, with the knowledge that this was more of my meta-knowledge. I simply flashed him a small smile.

"It's obvious that they wanted to control him in any way they could. Then, seeing as they were feeding him information, isn't too much of a stretch to think that they programmed him with some sort of unconscious behavior. And, if we hypothesize that whoever did that wanted him to defeat Superman..." I trailed off, staring into the face of the others, a mix of horrified, thoughtful and blank.

"You're saying that they wanted a weapon." It was a declaration, not a question. And it came from Kon. I nodded.

"Yes." A beat of silence. Then I smiled.

"It's good that they couldn't accomplish their objective, isn't it?" "What?" "Well, it's obvious that you aren't a weapon. Or, to better put it, you aren't a weapon more than any other of us." "What?"

This time it was from the others. I leveled them a flat look.

"Obviously. I mean, anyone of us has the possibilities to become a weapon of mass destruction in seconds. Kaldur, you could drown someone on dry land. Wally, you could achieve a death count reaching the millions in three seconds flat, depending on when you start." A breath, to recover and I went on.
"Robin, you could crash the stock market, plant explosives in factories, buildings, anywhere and no one would find them until the explosion. And that was only by the top of my head. Megan, you could literally brainwash people to do your bidding or simply crush them with telekinesis."

I gestured at me.

"Me, well, it only takes a poorly worded wish from some good Samaritan to literally wipe all the life from the face of the Earth, so I'm not even mentioning it. Honestly, if we are talking about danger..."

"Wait, wait, wait! Could you wipe all life from the face of Earth? How?" "Two words Wally: Global. Peace. No more life, no more wars, global peace achieved." I waved a hand, marking my point.

"My point is, every person is a weapon but not every weapon is a person. They tried to create an easily controlled weapon and they created a person. You think for yourself, you can decide what you want to do, you can discern what information believe or not believe, accept or not accept. You think for yourself, so you are. Cogito, ergo sum."

Everyone turned silent after my speech, only the crackling of the fire resounded in the clearing. After a couple of minutes, I spoke again.

"Megan, your story?" "Eh? Oh... Well, I came from Mars..." We all looked at her. "Ugh, Hello Megan! You already know that..." and it followed with her tale of becoming the next Martian to reach our Blue Planet. Nice knowing that racism is a constant.

Not.

After her tale, the night ended soon, with everyone retiring to their tent. Only Kon, Kaldur and me remaining awake, the fire crackling softly in front of us.

"This was a fun evening, but I think I will be turning in as well... unless you would like some company, Superboy" "No, that's okay. I'll turn in soon... I just want to sit here with the fire a bit longer." "You, Jin?" "I will go to bed shortly, just one last S'more."

"Well, if you need anything, you know we all here for you." And Kaldur went to bed.

I floated away, silent like a shadow, leaving Kon to think.

Until he got up. And saw me. He didn't ask anything, but in his eyes, there was the doubt, the uncertainty.

I could answer in a lot of ways, but the right way... Truth was, he was created for that exact purpose, but it wasn't his purpose, but the one that they tried to create him. Could I tell him this? Without destroying everything that he was?

"I can't read minds, you know. If you want to ask something, you need to speak." I joked lightly, trying to lighten the mood. He frowned.

"You know my question." "I think I know your question. Do you want my opinion?" "Yes." "Very well. The person that... commissioned... your creation had the intention to use you to fight Superman, that is undeniable. BUT!" I stopped his train of thought before it started "It doesn't matter anymore, does it? As I said before, you are your own person and you, and only you, decide what you will do."

"You said that I had... compulsion..." "Yes." The tone was low and we were talking with both of our voices down low, the lightly snoring of Wally coming out from his tent.
"You also suggested that I need to go to Martian Manhunter to remove them." "Well, it's the first person that came to mind. You could ask M'gann if you trust her more." "Couldn't you do it?" "I cannot even connect telepathically with Megan, what makes you think that I..." I trailed off.

Kon had his index and thumb around the chain that kept my bottle around his neck, the pendant rotating slowly, the fire making it shining under the light.

I facepalmed. I facepalmed so hard that effectively hurt.

"... I didn't think of it." Kon had a satisfied smile on his face, almost smug. I waved my hand at him.

"Make your second wish, oh Clever One." "I wish to remove any and every compulsion I have on my mind and/or brain." "As you wish."

Snap.

Dling!

Time stopped. In front of me was some kind of... of... I didn't have words to describe it. It was a paint, a photograph, a movie and a flower, a carcass, and a living being. It was beautiful and terrible in equal measure.

My hands were shackled together, my neck bound with a cast iron collar with thorns on the inside that pricked at my neck every second, at my feet weight ready to drag me into the core of the planet, around my chest twenty and one sword ready to spear me in the case I did something that I shouldn't do.

"It is forbidden to meddle with the Free Will of Others. Explain to me why I shouldn't Unmade You in this moment"

"Because I am trying to remove the shackles that someone else put on him and not to put mine. He Wished so."

"It is so? And You didn't engineer events to bring to this moment?"

"I didn't!"

It looked at Me. Not my appearance, but my mind, my soul, my very being and showed me that I was using a power that I barely understood. I was just scraping the surface of it. Maybe not even that.

"Then You can proceed. But I will be watching You."


Moved my hands and snipped away, carefully, one of the strings of the Tapestry.

Erased one of the figures of the Paint.

Corrected one of the Bug of the Game.

Edited one of the Word of the Book.

And when I finished, I felt the slow drip of my blood down my neck, where one of the thorns had pricked me as a reminder of what I risked here if I did something that wasn't my duty.
And then I was in front of him again, joining my body again.

"Done." My smile was a bit trembling, a bit nauseated, but it was real. Kon wasn't convinced.

"Are you okay?" "Yeah, it was... harder than I thought, but now you are free from compulsion."
"Thank you." "It was nothing." It wasn't anything, but I will never let anyone know how near the erasing of my existence I came to.

"Now you just need to ask for more Wishes." "Can I really do that?" "Yeah, no worry. Wish away."
"Uuhhh... I wish for more wishes?" "As you wish." Snap.

Dling.

"Three more Wish, freshly baked. Now, I'm going to sleep. If you need me, you know where I am."
I winked at him, turned on myself and entered my lamp.

I fell on my bed, cold sweat clinging to my body and a single drop of blood in the back of my neck. And a console and a collection of games for said consoles by my side.

I blinked, momentarily distracted from my plight by that sight.

"I forgot about that. Curious."

************

21th of June

We didn't do much, except playing with the games I bought.

It was peaceful.

I still didn't sleep more than four hours that night.

It was one of the good nights, after everything that happened.
Chapter 10: The Far Away Land, or: Santa Prisca.

22th of June

Batman called us in the Tube Room, apparently ready to send us to our first assignment. It was also obvious that he still didn't trust me, judging by the way he kept looking at me but, well, the mask go a long way to mask his expression.

On the big computer in the middle of the room, there was a series of data and images, mostly of an island covered with vegetation and what looked like a factory. I, obviously, already knew what mission was this, but I couldn't say anything under penalty of Magic on Fritz for, at least, twenty-four hour.

Yeah, the penalty isn't fixed at twenty-one hours.

With a shiver at remembering the pain, I focused again on what Batman was saying.

"Isla Santa Prisca. This island nation is the primary source of a dangerous and illegal neo-steroid. A strength enhancing drug, sold under street name Venom. Info and heat signatures indicate that their factory is still operating at full capacity, but all shipments of Venom have been inexplicably cut off. That's when the Team comes in."

He turned towards us, Red Tornado still looking at the screen of the computer.

"This is a covert recon mission only. Observe and report. If the Justice League needs to intervene, it will."

Well, he is menacing, I'm giving this to him. Changing what the screen is displaying, he turns towards it and continues with his speech.

"The plan requires two drop-on."

"So who's in charge?" Silence from the two 'grownups'. This is necessary for the development of the team, but damn if it isn't tempting to simply take the rein of the operation. Sadly, I know that they wouldn't listen to me. Or, at least, not everyone.

"Work that between you."

Batman, we are teenagers! We cannot work that out between us without a large amount of drama!

Robin simply smiles and nod. The others do the same thing, someway without complaining. Was I this dense as a teenager? God, I'm feeling too adult.
The rest of the time until the start of the mission is busy but soon we are on the Bio-ship for the Caribbean Sea. And my first true mission.

-Caribbean Sea, June 22, 20:08 ECT -

The flight was silent and Kon didn't even object to my reducing to pixie-size (as I dubbed it) and sitting on his shoulder. Like the famous cricket. Or a bug.

Either work, really.

But the fact that he is wearing the domino mask that I made for him that day at the mall make me smile a bit.

"Drops A in thirty." Miss Martian voice shock me out of my reverie and Aqualad stands up, turning his clothes into the stealth mode.

"Ready." "Bioship in camouflage mode."

Thirty seconds later Aqualad is diving down, entering the ocean under us in a neat splash. We continue towards the island, I'm feeling nervous and suppressing the flashback of what happened to me during the last fight I was into.

After a few seconds more, Miss Martian call again.

"Drops B."

Safety ropes slide down from the roof and Robin hook one to his belt, while Kid Flash turn his really noticeable yellow costumes in black.

"How cool is this?" And he showboats it, obviously. Peacock.

...Ok, ok I would have done the same thing, stop judging me, mind!

"Very impressive." Miss Martian doesn't look impressed. At all.

Then she turns her costumes in a black bodysuit that cover everything under her mid neck. That clothes must be really comfortable, they can do practically every clothes available.

"Uh... That works too. Hey, Supey! Not too late to put on the new stealth tech!" "No capes, no tights. No offense."

Kon... well, he is wearing his clothes. Shirt, cargo pants, boots. And domino mask, the only difference that he has from canon. And me, but I'm not exactly a fashion accessory, even if I'm downsized. And on that note...

I fly upward and try to steel myself. Even if, mentally, I know that practically nothing on this island can hurt me, I'm still nervous.

"Hey Djinii, you?" "I'm already purple. And do I look like I need more revealing clothes?"

I ask, returning to my normal size and showing the jacket that left most of my torso exposed and refuses. To. Change.

At least I succeeded in changing the shoes in boots. Fitting and comfortable. And less risk of sore feet if someone stomps on mine.
"It totally works for you. In that, you can totally do good works in those clothes."

M'gann, now it's not really the time for you to look at... Me? And Kon? At both? What? How? When? Why? This shouldn't be happening. There wasn't any signal of this. I mean, I guess that a couple of my gesture could be interpreted that way, but... Dammit, I' manipulating her unconsciously? No, it can't be, I behaved normally. For me.

And, witnessing in person the look that Kon send to her is even more awkward.

Miss Martian don the hood, before becoming invisible. Then the floor open and we go down.

This time Kon doesn't make a crater when he lands, but simply float down with the others. More stealth, this I like.

"Aqualad, Drop B’s go."

Right, the earpieces. I have one myself. I must admit when they gave me one I totally felt like a spy. But I hid my excitement at the fact. Mostly.

"Head for the factory. I'll track your GPS and rendezvous ASAP." "Roger that!" And the holographic computer disappear. Then we start moving.

The night is dark and doesn't seem like I have enhanced night vision, but there is a full moon, so that's help. There is also a lot of humidity and a lot of bugs around. Ugh, bugs. I hate bugs. Bordering on a phobia, really.

Robin and Kid Flash are the only one who can't fly, so they proceed on foot and we keep their pace. Superboy every now and then walk and then fly near me for a bit, then walk again. He mustn't be habituated to the flying.

We descend the slope near the waterfall, the fragor that comes from the water is nearly deafening, but it mask our movement, so I count as an asset. We have reached the forest path towards the factory. Wasn't there that they met the first enemies?

Superboy stops abruptly. "Did you hear that?"

"Uhh, no? Wait! Is this the super-hearing thing?" No Kid Flash is the super-paranoia thing.

"You-" "Shhh!" I shush them before they continue talking. Doesn't work on Kid Flash, obviously. Did he have some form of ADHD in canon or I'm simply annoyed?

"Ok Rob, now what?" Aaaaaand Robin's disappeared. Of course.

"Man, I hate when he does that" "I'm starting to hate it as well."

From our earpiece come Aqualad's voice. "Superboy, Kid, switch to infra-red. See if you've been tracked."

"Got a squad of armed bozos incoming." And he point towards the end of the path, before the intersection. All of us that can't go invisible got a cover behind some rocks, while Superboy crouch behind a log and concentrate.

Honestly, I'm starting to feel nervous. I crouch near Superboy, hiding behind the same log and trying to discern the exact position of the goons.

"Two squads. But they meet each other before they find us."
Gunshot rang. Right, I forgot this part.

"No superhearing required now." "Swing wide, steer clear!" "Yeah yeah, we've just to find Rob" and he speeds away. Right towards the two armed squads. Tactical genius, he isn't.

Mainly because he trips and starts to slide down towards the gunfight down.

"Miss Martian! Block him!" "I'm trying, but... I can't... get a grip..." Too late.

He lands directly in front of them. "Ahhh...Ugh.. Ah." "I swear, I will tie him to a steel ball!" And I fly towards him, followed from Miss Martian and Superboy.

He is directly in the middle of the two squads of goons, the one on my left side dressed in red tunics and black domino masks, while the one on the right is with a simple t-shirt and jacket combo. A big dude with a black mask with a white shape on his face was leading the jacket squad. Bane.

"So much for the stealthy."

The guns stop for a second, following the apparition of Kid Flash, but soon they all try to make KF into swiss cheese. Superboy launches himself against Bane, while Robin appears from the canopy of the trees and simply knock out two guys without a single problem. I admit that guy worries me a bit.

"What is wrong with you guys?! Remember covert?! Why didn't you follow my lead, vanish into the jungle?!" Okay, that's it.

"Shut up a second, will ya?!" I tell him, eyes alit with power and hands open to my side, around waist height. Every dude in a red tunic suddenly found himself in a crystal coffin that leaves only the head free. Well, the ones that Miss Martian isn't bashing against the trees.

Aqualad land from a tree and walk towards us, Robin is looking at me with irritation, Kid Flash is tying the bad guys while Superboy is keeping Bane under control.

After we finished tying the villains to the trees, Robin starts to talk again, this time with information. How the hell this kid can stomach still going to school, I will not understand.

"I recognize this uniforms. They belong to the Cult of the Cobra." "I'm sure that Batman would mention it if he knew a dangerous extremist was running Santa Prisca Venom operation." "Agreed. Ad since there is no love lost between the cultist and those goons I'm betting Kobra came and tossed them out. That's why normal supply lines have been cut off."

Logic, a nice superpower. I keep an eye on Bane, now remembering what was his plan.

"We get it. Kobra wants super-cultist. Mystery resolved. Radio Bats and we'll be home in time for-" "These cultists are not on Venom. Kobra's hoarding this stuff. We don't leave. Not until I know why." "Until YOU know why?" "This teams needs a leader!" "And it's you! You are a thirt-" "Okay, stop!"

I clap my hands, stopping the two of them. They turn and glare at me.

"Okay, first of all? Arguing in the middle of a mission in front of the enemies we just captured? Yeah, bad move." "So what, you wanna be the leader?" "Not even if you paid me."

My sudden refusal throws off Robin a bit.

"First of all, I am the less experienced member of the team. Second, I don't want to lead. I think I
could do it if it was the only possibility left but in other cases? No, thank you. I don't want a death on my conscience if I screw up."

This sober everyone up. Kon comes beside me and put a hand on my shoulder. I smile gratefully, before turning towards the other. "Before we go on with this mission, we need to establish a clear chain of command. We can't go in and get separated because everyone did whatever thought it was best."

They appear to start reasoning. Then Bane laugh. I look at Kon, cocking my head a bit in he direction of Muscle-Man. He nods.

"Such clever ninos. But you only know half the story. Let me show you the rest, get you into the factory via my secret entrance."

Miss Martian kneel in front of him, two fingers to her temple and starting to concentrate. Her eyes go white.

"There is a secret entrance, but he is also hiding something." "Ah, ah, ah, chica! Bane is not that easy."

"Oof. He's mentally reciting football scores. En espanol. This could take a while." "Is not complicated. The enemy of my enemy is my friend." He watch us, a smile on his lips. We end watching each other, until Kaldur nod.

So this is it.

***********************

We followed Bane into the forest until we reached a hill with the factory under it. Sirens cut through the night air while cultist starts to come out from the buildings.

"Look at all that product! A buy is going down but Kobra is not selling to the usual suspects." Now, I'm having a slight memory lapse. Beyond Luthor and Klarion, what were the names of the other member of the Light? Did I knew it or did I simply forgot?

"We need to identify that buyer." "Just what I was thinking." "Yeah! You're the thinker." "Sarcasm? Dude-" "What did I say not ten minutes ago?" I block both of them, with a raised eyebrow. Then a rather loud sound makes all of us turn. Bane just moved a big boulder from what look like a mine entrance.

"Answers are this way." and he starts to walk towards the tunnel, but I stop him with my hand on his elbow. He turns, staring at me with an eyebrow raised. How he can move his mask that way, I don't know.

"Si?" "I just want to express my gratitude for what are you doing right now." "You're welcome." "And to say that I'm really sorry, but I don't trust you in the slightest." And, with a rather bright smile on my face, I let my magic flow towards him, slamming him against the rock wall beside the entrance of the mine and enveloping him in crystal, this time covering his mouth and leaving only enough space to breathe.

"What the hell?!" "Djinni, why did you...?" Kid Flash and Robin asked, surprised by my actions. Kaldur stopped them both. Then he looked at me with a stern expression.

"What was that for?" "I don't trust him, so I decided to remove a risk. And I had proof. Superboy?" "Before they were talking. He said something about giving him what he wanted." "Ok. Seeing as
this was the case, it was a good call. However, you acted without informing us. Try to not to do it again, unless it's absolutely necessary."

Wow. He will make a terrific stern parent if he ever got children. I'm feeling like a kid caught with my hands in the cookie jar.

"It won't happen again." "Good. Now let's go."

And in the silence that followed we continued inside the tunnel, leaving a fruitlessly struggling Bane behind.

We soon reached the door inside the tunnel, a giant, circular metal door that blocked our way. At the side, there was some kind of scanner.

"I can..." but I don't end the sentence that Superboy step ahead, grip the door and, with a grunt of effort, he rip the door away.

"Wow." "Way to go Supey!" "Good job."

Between the encouragement of our teammates, I simply smile and a wink. He smiles in answer to that.

We continue into the dark tunnel, towards the factory full of cultist. I should be worried, but while walking side by side with them, I couldn't be feeling safer.
Chapter Notes

A short one today. Please, comment and tell me what you like.

Chapter 11: Flying Carpet Trick, or: Helicopter doesn't work.

After a few minutes of walking (or, for someone of us, like me, flying), we reached a door that brought us in a locker room, with a door to the inside of the factory. Robin peeked out, checking the place.

"All clear."

And started to walk out the door. My hands shot up and grabbed his cape, bringing him back with a yank.

"Ack!" "No. You don't get to go and disappear again." "Huff... what do you mean?" "The forest, remember?" "Djinn is right Robin. We need a plan." "A plan? It's easy! We enter, kick the bad guys' asses and we go home!"

Kaldur shook his head at that, an unreadable expression on his face. "Kid Flash, that is not a plan."

"I'm with Kaldur."

Miss Martian took our part, surprisingly, so we ended with me and Kaldur looking at Robin and Kid Flash, Miss Martian on our side looking preoccupied and Kon watching us with his usual deadpan expression.

"So what do you propose to do?" Robin glared at me, rubbing his throat. I admit that I felt a little guilt on that. I didn't want to hurt him.

"Not disappearing on us would be a nice first step. After that, we need to know the layout of the factory. Can you find out?" "Not without the access to the central computer." "I can find the room fast..." "Not a good idea Kid Flash. You could be captured."

He scoffed at that. "Pfff, I'm too fast for them!"

"Kid Flash..." and gone. I should have stayed in front of the door.

Kaldur just gritted his jaw, Miss Martian had her face in her palm and Robin was Shrugging his shoulders. I sighed, waving a bit of the spot, the tension of the mission getting to me. Kon's hand stabilized me.

"Let's go behind him. And Robin, if you can, go and find the computer." "Roger."

In the end, we followed Kaldur outside, with Robin disappearing in seconds of us walking on the floor of the factory, surrounded by pipes of various sizes, some bigger than my entire body and some
smaller, maybe a hand or so in a span.

We found ourselves hiding behind some crates, looking the various acolytes of the Kobra moving crates of (presumably) Venom on the outside of the factory, with what looked like hurry.

"It's a massive shipment. But they only taking the new product out the lane, they're not taking this Venom." "Maybe... freshness counts?"

I never thought of it, but... Miss Martian do have a point. Do drugs rot? Go bad?

"Helicopters coming." Superboy's words snap me ou of my musings, making all of us turn towards where he is looking at. I cannot see anything yet, but I know, more or less, what is going to happen, so I just need to prepare myself.

Right, the others. Shouldn't they have contacted us by now?

I put my hands to the earpiece and try to contact Robin. "Djinn to Robin. Robin? Uh..." A sound of static fills my ears.

"Guys, communications are jammed." "Great." The helicopter landed, prompting the Kobra cultist to start moving. "Miss Martian... "On it."

And she vanished into invisibility.

After a few minutes, with us hiding into a walkway inside the factory, Aqualad turns to us.

"Sportsmaster is here. And he is the buyer." "And with the communications jammed..." "We need a plan, now."

I have an idea.

But will Kaldur accept it? I hope so.

"I have an idea." Both Superboy and Kaldur turns towards me, looking at me.

"I can enter the helicopter and sabotage it from the inside, capturing Sportsmaster at the same time."

Kaldur doesn't look convinced of it.

"I'm not sure of it." Called it.

"Aqualad, I can do it." "They could see you." "We just need to distract them, then."

Both of us turn towards Superboy. He simply smirks.

********************

Waiting high in the air, pixie size again, I'm waiting for the signal. After a couple of minutes, sounds of gunfire came from the inside of the building, catching the attention of the various goons outside and bringing all of them inside. And away from the helicopter. I breathe deep and crack my knuckles, before flying inside the copter.

Sounds of destruction come out from the factory and, after a minute, from the outside of the helicopter. looks like Robin is fighting the female assistant. Shimmer, if I recall correctly.

Then, silence. I lay in wait, trying to keep my breath in check and hide when the various Kobra
cultist come and check the helicopter. Rotors are sabotaged and they need to be repaired. Or something like that. I don't know anything about helicopters. Or... vehicles in general, really.

Hope the others are okay. At least, this time around there isn't Bane waiting for them at the end of the tunnel with charges of explosives. I hope.

Oh God, did I make the crystal strong enough? It should, I made sure to not let him have any leverage whatsoever. So he could free himself if he had the strength of... Superman? Or Superboy, I think.

The smell of oil is making me sick. I'm starting to getting the urge to puke. Not now Djinn.

Not now.

*******************************

After an uncertain amount of time, I hear the rotors starting again and then, after a few seconds, gunfire. They came. They are alright. Thank God.

I wait again, withstanding the sound of water, the exclamation of pain from Kon just outside my hiding spot and then I see, more or less, Miss Martian enter the cargo area of the helicopter. I blink a small purple light for a second in a signal, then hide again. She nods, I think, and then fly out, just to be caught by Sportsmaster.

And then, rage. It floods my veins and clouds my eyes. Sportsmaster is pelting Kon with the ammunition from his gun-thing, red bolts of something - plasma? Laser? I don't know - and holding Miss Martian hostage at the same time.

"Thanks for the workout, but I gotta fly."

And then he launches my female companion against Superboy, sending both of them to the ground. The helicopter take flight right after, with the two still looking up from the ground.

I have a sudden urge to try the 'acid puddle' trick again. Maybe this time will work better. But I need to follow the plan. Damn it all.

I take a deep breath and focus on what I need to do. I focus and reach inside me, where my magic resides, and wrap it around me.

"Let me lend a hand..."

"Sportsmaster, I think we need to have a little chat."

Should I be worried that Marid is helping? Yes, absolutely. Do I care right now? Not a bit.

"Who are..."

And then, everything is crystal. The crates, the metal of this part of the helicopter. The air around Sportsmaster.

And then...

Everything is falling down, right towards the factory. I float down towards the ground, Sportsmaster near me (and not falling to his possible death), the factory burning and no Kobra around.

Dammit, I hoped to catch him, but I was too slow.
"We picked the right guy to lead." Robin is smiling to Aqualad, meaning that the leadership isn't changed. Good.

"Automatically making you the right guy to explain this mess to Batman. Ahahahah!"

Little shit.

"At least we have a consolation prize?" I ask, dropping Sportsmaster to the ground. He doesn't look overly happy. I wonder why.

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Mount Justice
August 04; 01:06 EDT

"A simple recon mission, observe and report."

Batman stalk, because there isn't any other word right enough to explain what he is doing right now, in front of us, while we stand straight in parades, looking at him.

"You each will receive a written evaluation detailing your many mistakes. Until then..." and he sounds softer now, almost... yeah, no, just softer "... good job."

All of us turn towards him with surprise on our faces, not exactly sure on what to think. Then he speaks again.

"No battle plans survive first contacts with the enemy. How you adjust to the unforeseen is what determines success."

He is vanishing from our sight while continuing talking.

"And how you choose who leads determines character."

All of us smile at each other, with me being the brightest of them all. Then Batman adds one last thing to his speech.

"And good job capturing Sportsmaster."
Interlude: Robin, Superboy

Chapter Notes

Short interlude.

Interlude: Robin.

"Report."

"Well, he didn't show any suspect behavior. No cackling, no malicious insinuation, no bullying..."

Robin waited to see if Batman would rise to his bait, but, much to his disappointment, his mentor simply remained silent, prompting a huff from the boy.

"He didn't show any sign of harmful, malicious or detrimental intentions. He actually goes to various lengths to make sure that he DOESN'T come out as ill-willed. Like what he did with Kid Flash the other day..."

And what scene it was: Wally sitting at the table, a full nine course lunch in front of him and more food at his request. Jin smiling amused while eating cotton candy, for some reason, Megan giggling at the faces that Wally was making and Supery, who had been trying to hide (not well) a glare towards Wally from the start. Actually... he glared anytime, anyone on the team expressed a wish or said something about wanting something.

"Robin." Batman was glaring. More than normal.

Robin stopped smiling and got serious again.

"Yeah, right, where was I..."

"What are your assessment on him?" Loaded question.

"He is powerful, magically, but in hand to hand he is a complete disaster. He only know the most basic of the basic, he is not habituated to his reflexes and keep overthinking what he is doing. On the magic part..."

A brief pause was needed to collect his thoughts and put them in a coherent order.

"He is still clumsy every now and then, but only when he isn't granting a wish. He tends to stick to the crystals he used to capture Sportsmaster, but we discovered that they vanish after an hour or two. For the rest of the time he didn't more than helping out and experimenting, honestly."

"Continue to keep an eye on him. Dismissed."

"Yeah, yeah..."

Interlude: Superboy

I didn't understand what he was doing. Why he was keeping away from me?
Even now, when we were playing this videogame, he was careful enough to only touch me for the briefest instant and, even then, only after making sure that I knew he was about to do so. It was strange, different. Even more when we were in company of the others, like now.

I didn't like it.

Even during the Santa Prisca mission he touched me more than now and I was starting to feel like I had done something wrong. I didn't like that, either.

At the end of my rope (a figure of speech that I heard Jin say to Wally), I decided to talk directly to him. Right now.

I paused the game and turned towards my teammates. "I need to speak with Jin."

At that, Wally whined."Oh man, I was about to win! You can't do this to me!"

On the other hand, Jin looked a bit surprised. "You need to talk with me?"

"Wally." "Yeah, yeah... Just try to be fast." "...Thank you." "Nah, it's nothing. Later."

And he sped away with a crackling of lightning. I turned towards Jin. He was fidgeting, playing with a soft purple substance. He explained to me that he needed to keep his hands occupied with something.

"Is there something wrong?" "Yes."

Silence. I was still. So was he.

"I'm sorry..." And he apologized again. For what? "For what?" "For... whatever I did to make you angry at me."

Angry? My thoughts must've been showed on my face, because he was cocking his head to the side. I had enough of this.

"I am not angry. But I want to know why you are avoiding me." "I'm not av-" I pin him with my glare and Jin's sentence fade into silence. He now looks like he is searching for a escape route. To prevent this, I grab his wrist and retract my hand, making him stumble forward to the couch a bit.

"Answer me." "I didn't want to make everything more problematic, seeing as you still have not forgiven me about... you know."

What he is talking about?

"What are you talking about? I have not forgiven you for what?" "The.. the revelation."

My mind flash back to that moment for a second, bringing back all the emotion that I felt in that specific moment. Then I effectively register what he just said. And he is still talking, something about promising to not do it again?

"I have forgiven you." This brings him to a full stop.

"What?" "I have forgiven you." "Are you sure?"

Why is everyone ask me if I am sure of what I just said? It's annoying!

"Yes, I am sure."
And now Jin is hugging me. Pretty strongly, at that.

I reciprocate the hug, feeling the same warmth that I felt the first night I met him.

After a minute he breaks the hug from me and look down, apparently embarrassed.

"Sorry. I didn't want to make you uncomfortable." "You didn't." "Even with the surprise hug?"

Why is he so frustrating?

"Even with the surprise hug." He now looks relieved.

"Still, I'll try and not hug you without your permission." What? This is getting ridiculous. It seems that I need to explain everything in the most simple way.

"Jin, you are allowed to touch me whenever you want." There. That should be clear enough.

Why is he getting purple-red in the face?
Mount Justice
August 3; 13:06 EDT

It was interesting seeing the various technologies that were available on this Earth, like the hard-light air hockey table where Wally and I were playing. I was losing, obviously. He just managed to put the puck in the side of my table when the Zeta Tube system chimed in.

"Recognized: Superboy, B-Zero-Four."

The glare that he was sporting was, if possible, worse than canon. He wasn't only hurt and angry, no, he was frustrated, furious and sad.

What the hell did Superman do to him this time?

I mean, I knew that the fact that he needed to jump to move fast was the reason why he got 'scolded' in the canon timeline, but this time he could fly as well as Superman... further enhancing his similiarities. And making Superman ever more uncomfortable. Making him harsher as well, everything leading to this.

I snapped my face up from my scowl, only to see Robin and Wally snickering, Kaldur watching me and Kon with a small smile and M'gann giggling. Why? Simple.

When we had that little discussion a couple of days ago (and the incredibly embarrassing yet innocent sentence he said to me) I made the... well, not mistake, but something... to say that he could touch me whenever he wanted, too. I should've simply hugged him again, damn my mouth.

Because now he had the habit to hug me, sling an arm around my shoulder, or even lifting me up and moving me however he wanted, sometimes even carrying me around with him for a bit. Only with me, though.
With the others he was still the same grumpy guy.

The first time he did this, Wally and Robin crashed to the floor laughing like hyenas, Kaldur was asking what was happening and M'gann blushed so much that her entire head became red. That didn't make me less embarrassed. And now it was happening again.

I found myself lifted up and with Kon's arm around my waist, keeping me at shoulder level without any sign of strain. Stupid super-strength.

Let's be clear, I wasn't exactly against it. I understood that he used this as a method to reassure himself, especially after everything that happened. In hindsight, if you thought about what happened with me after the revelation - the punishment from Marid, the acid against Mr. Twister, the
misunderstanding between us... - it kind of made sense that he wanted to know that I was safe.

Or maybe it's just wishful thinking. I wasn't exactly sure.

I'm pretty sure that he was in the middle of the 'MINE!' phase.

Still, the laugh that came from Wally and Robin was annoying. I just knew that this was their vengeance for when I called them Mini-Bat and Dumpster. It was a joke!

"Ready for training everyone?"

Ah, yes. Black Canary and Martian Manhunter. It's that time, uh? Let's be prepared to end on the ground again.

"Black Canary! Uncle J'onn!" She sounded happy. It must be hard being on different planets from all your relatives. And not being able to see the other one on the same planet as you. And, judging by the smile on Canary's face, the League knew about Kon's habit. Good to know that I was a laughingstock for everyone.

"M'gann, I was in the neighborhood, so I thought I'll come and see how you are adjusting." "A few bumps, but... I'm learning." "That's all I can ask."

The grip on my waist tightened and I put my hand on his head, starting to petting him. Strangely it seemed to calm him. He still turned to go away.

Yes, with me still in his grip. No need to laugh at me, mind!

"Stick around. Class is in session." Busted.

She walked forward and stopped, a sheet of light forming under her feet and spreading to cover the entire platform where the hard-light could spread. Right under that cylindrical construction over us. I really needed to find out if Magic: The Gathering existed here and get some cards. With this technology I could create something similar to the Yu-Gi-Oh holographic projectors. It would be awesome!

"I consider it an honor to be your teacher. I'll throw a lot at you... Everything I learned from my own mentors... ouch! And my own bruises." During her speech she was removing her jacket, showing a bandaged arm. I frowned, trying to remember which episode this was. Before Artemis, after Santa Prisca... Amazo? Yeah, I don't think there was anything else.

"What happened?!" M'gann is so considerated. Good for her.

"The job." Sensing a pause in the speech, I tried to speak, but she continued with her lesson.

"Now, combat is about controlling the conflict. Putting the battle on your terms. You should always be acting, never RE-acting. I need a sparring partner."

Aaaaaaand... "Right here! Yah!" Yes, the dumbass came. And he didn't learn how to speak with his mouth closed, it seems.

"After this - Swish! - I'll show you my moves." I blinked a couple of times. Does he think that that is somewhat flirting? I admit that being able to hit the trashcan with a banana peel is amusing, but not sexy. Not for me, at least. Maybe for someone else?

The follow up was corny as hell, though.
The only answer from Canary was a grin, followed by a right punch, a left hook blocked by Wally's forearm and a rapid sweep of her legs, sending the boy to the ground in less than two seconds. And making all of us wince in sympathy. At least me. Not Kon, though.

"Ugh! Ow... It hurts so good." Was he a masochist?

No, I meant it seriously. That would explain a lot. There was nothing wrong about that and I would support him as much as I could, but he should know what made his engine go, so to speak. And practice it safely.

"Good block. But did anyone see what he did wrong?"

"Uh, uh! He hit on a teacher and got served?" Robin was still a mischievous little...

"Dude." Right, Wally. The subject of this discussion.

"He allowed me to dictate the terms of-" "Oh please."

Even when he wasn't crossing his arms, Kon could be condescending. Not a good trait to have. A dangerous one, actually.

"With my powers, the battle's always on my terms." And he even pointed at his chest. At certain times he could be a bit stereotypical. I tried to open my mouth to speak, but he went on without letting me talk.

"I'm a living weapon and this is a waste of... Ouch!" "Don't!" I rap my knuckles against his forehead, lacing them with a teeeny tiny bit of my magic, just enough to make them hurt a little bit.

"Don't talk about yourself in those terms. You are not a living weapon and you are not an object. You are a person, with all that it entails." Honestly, sometimes he sounded even more self-deprecating than me. And it's a bit sad. I was trying to break that habit, but it was a slow thing.

He glared at me for a second, I smiled back with my eyes closed and the moment got interrupted by Canary.

"While this is nice to see, I think that it's time to continue our sparring. Jin, why don't you come here and take Wally's place?"

I opened my mouth and then closed it. I didn't expect this. But I should've expected it. Why the fuck didn't I? Because I was an idiot.

Kon put me down, reluctantly, and I walked towards the ring.

"So, this is a spar to prepare ourselves to the dangers of the outside world, right?" "Yes. Weren't you paying... Where are you going?"

I moved in front of her and continued going, stopping at the edge of the ring and then turning towards her. She was frowning, good.

"Right here. I may be inexperienced, but I'm not completely stupid. I'm not going to let you have the advantage of the close quarter."

Now, I had a confession to make. This was not, strictly speaking, my idea. I simply read a lot of Naruto fanfic, some Bleach fanfic and assorted others. And, while I wasn't experienced in combat, I could recognize a good idea when I saw one.
And I guess I must have made a good choice, seeing that Canary was eyeing me with some more attention than before. I simply smiled back. Then, the fight started.

I jumped up and flew outside of her reach before she could take three steps. Flying was awesome and I'm grateful every day for having it. Then, I brought my right hand over my head and a spear made of crystals appeared slowly, mimicking a certain character from one of my favourite video games.

Another thing I learned from fanfiction is misdirection. So, while I was preparing the spear, attracting the attention of everyone to it, I was also trying to split my attention to create manacles of crystal from behind her. Then...

Yeah, this was the moment where experience raised its head and I was blasted away with a sonic scream. I managed to not go splat against the wall with a hasty teleport behind Canary, only to be greeted by an axe kick that sent me to the ground.

"Ouch."

"Nice try, but you need to be faster. And less grandstanding." "Understood. Ouch."

Thank Marid for the regeneration! I would have had a severe concussion if it wasn't for that particular power of mine.

Kon still looked angry, but less than before. I smiled a bit to him, while I heard the muffled laugh of Robin behind me. I felt my eyebrow tick at that, but I managed to calm down. Then a hard-light screen appeared and Batman's face started to talk to us. Superboy's arms ended on my shoulders, like a reflex.

"Batman to the cave. Five hours ago a new menace attacked Green Arrow and Black Canary." The image of what was evidently an android with slicked back orange hair and pointy ears appeared on a small screen in the upper left corner.

"The attacker was capable of studying, then duplicating the powers and the abilities of its opponents. Arrow called in reinforcements, which really proved disastrous as our foe gained more and more power with each new combatant."

"Wow. One guy with the powers of the entire League?" Kid Flash was as surprised as us all. Them, because they have never seen anything like that, me because the level of technology in this world still surprised me. A lot.

"In the end it took eight Leaguers and four hours to defeat and dismantle the android."

"An android?" Robin looked surprised by the notion. I mean, there were the lines on the picture and... right, armor. He must have thought it was armor. "Who-made it, T.O. Morrow?"

"Good guess Robin." Batman looked proud of his protegé, while Kon tightened his grip on me and looked down, clearly distressed.

"But Red Tornado doesn't think so." The Black Knight continued his briefing, dismissing the first suspect right away. And, if the resident android told you that another android was not made by someone, I guess you believed him, no? Wait, was T.O.Morrow the creator of Tornado or was someone else?

"The technology bears the signature of Professor Ivo," Martian Manhunter interjected, shaking the others with a more comprehensive background in technology.
"Ivo? But Ivo's dead." Why would Kaldur know that? I mean, wasn't he Atlantean? And aren't Atlanteans insulated? Not that it meant that he couldn't know it, it just struck me as strange.

And now it's the turn of Black Canary to speak. "So we all thought. Or hoped." Darker than I remembered.

Batman continued. "To ensure that this threat is permanently neutralized we are sending two trucks carrying the android's parts to two separate S.T.A.R. labs facilities in Boston and New York for immediate analysis."

While he spoke, a map with the trajectory of the two trucks appeared on the screen, on the upper right corner. Oh, so that's where Gotham was. Well, not that I cared, if I had to be truthful. I was a disaster at Geography. And Maths, but that was more because I had a teacher that couldn't teach.

"Every precaution is being taken." Oh, Batman wasn't finished. Oops.

"We'll have four additional decoy trucks to create confusion in case Ivo or anyone tries to recover the remains. You will split into undercover teams to safeguard the two real trucks." Sensible decision, Batman. Not that it will work, but sensible decision nonetheless.

"Yes! Road trip." Wally was the same excitable child, I see. Or...

Okay, I needed to take a quick look at my opinions. I was starting to become judgmental towards him and it's not good. Was he a child or was he trying to lift the mood a bit, being the jokester of the squad? It could be either. I needed to stop this bad habit of mine to be an hypocritical asshole that judged the others in his mind and never tell them what he really thought.

I needed to stop judging people and observe more. Wally, sorry for everything bad I ever thought about you. Except for the one that you really earned.

Like Dumpster, because you eat a lot.

Okay, sorry for that, too. I know that you have your metabolism because the formula you used was cobbled together with a high-school kit.

"So now we are taking out your trash." And the more things change, the more the remains the same, I see. Or is it Superman's fault?

Let's go with that, it's easier.

"You had something better to do?" And Batman showed his diplomatic abilities again with this dry remark. Not exactly the best way to connect with an emotional teenager half-clone of the most powerful man on Earth. I barely managed to not roll my eyes, just squeezing Kon's hand a bit. The tightening of the grip that he had on my shoulders said that he received my message. Good.

"Coordinates received. On our way." Kaldur lifted his... palmtop-thing and we started to walk (or fly) towards the Zeta Tube.

"One last thing." Batman's voice stopped us cold, making us turn towards the screen.

"The method the android used to copy the Leaguers powers is still unknown. So, until its remains are secured inside the labs, Djinn is forbidden to go near it."

"WHAT?!" I'm not sure of which of us was the loudest, but everyone, me included, shouted in protest. Batman looked completely unperturbed by this and continued.
"I invite you to think to what would happen if a supervillain was to get his hands on the power that Djinn has demonstrated in the past. And what he could do with it."

"With all due respect, Djinn is an important member of the team and leaving him behind doesn't sit well with me. And his help could be invaluable in stopping the android." Kaldur was growing quite nicely into the role of team leader, but this time I couldn't do anything but agree with Batman.

Because the thought of the powers to grant wishes in the hand of any supervillain made my blood freeze in my veins.

But all of this was secondary to calming Kon, who was on the verge of unlocking the laser vision, just by the look that he was giving to the screen, one hand tight around me, another tight around the pendant I made him.

"Guys, Batman's right. And.... I couldn't forgive myself if one the villains got hold of my powers. I will be here waiting for your return, with the channel to your comms wide open and listening to you."

"Are you sure?" M'gann, sweet girl that you are, thank you for your concern.

I smiled to her and to the rest of the Team.

"Yeah, I'm sure. Now go and save the world."

"We'll bring back a souvenir!" Wally, don't change. Ever.

***************

It was kind of jarring listening to the comms while I was so distant. There wasn't lag or something like that, it was just strange not being there with them. And I didn't have a visual line, so only audio.

I admit, I focused primarily on Kon's comms.

"If dislike is the opposite of like, is disaster the opposite of aster?" No, Aster is the name of the species of a flower. Which I knew thanks to various Rise of the Guardian fanfics where the Easter Bunny's first name was mentioned. And I got curious, so I went looking.

More importantly, how does Robin come up with these questions? Is it his age? Or simply want to be annoying? It could be both from what I witnessed until now.

"See, instead of going wrong, they go right."

A pregnant pause where I kept my breath, trying to see... hear if there are any differences from what I remembered. Not much, by this point, this was the last episode that I watched and I forgot almost everything about the fanfic, beyond something about Artemis, the true form of M'gann and the original Burning Martian, but that's it.

"Uh, clearly you're not feeling the aster. What's wrong?"

Apparently not.

"Superman. He refuses to even talk to me! He even said that I couldn't be trusted to stay near one of you, seeing what I did to Djinn!"

I stand corrected. Things changes, it seemed.
"He is wrong. You shouldn't listen to him."

"Yeah, well, doesn't make it easier."

And followed by the sound of a motorbike accelerate. I remained frozen in midair, so shocked from what I heard that I didn't even hear what the other squad was saying.

At least until I got an abrupt wake-up call from our fearless leader.

"Robin! Superboy! Our truck is under attack!" "Kind of figured!"

"I hate monkeys." This time Kon's voice was even colder than in the show. Or maybe it was because I was here in person instead of seeing it on a screen?

"Robot monkeys! Ahah! Totally Ivo's tweak style!" Robin sounded excited by the events. Me, on the other hand, not.

I started biting my nails, trying to maintain my focus on what is happening and trying to not teleport there. Black Canary was still in the room, as well as Martian Manhunter, they were talking about something, not exactly sure what. I didn't care either.

I was too preoccupied by worrying over the others.

"Hey hey, switch your ride to battle mode!" Robin. It would happen, what happened in the show...

"No point!" Yes.

After that last phrase, the only thing I heard were the sounds of battles, the shout of Superboy and Robin (mainly Superboy) and the incessant sounds that the damned monkeys were making. It sounded like a lot of laughing, high pitched and grating. I already hated it.

I materialized a lollipop, biting into it in two seconds when I heard the sound of a truck derailing. I created a second one when Robin shouted.

"Superboy!"

"Aquaman to Robin, we lost our cargo. Did you-" "Ehh. It's gone. And so's my partner."

I scrambled to see if I could turn the comm they gave me to a two way mode, to talk to them and try to change what is about to happen. My unfamiliarity with the technology proved to be my Achilles' Heel.

"Aqualad to Superboy, radio audioposition. We'll help." No.

"I don't need help! Don't want any!" Then static.

I froze.

"Jin? Are you okay?" Black Canary put a hand on my shoulder, trying to see what was happening. I couldn't answer for a second, before shrugging and trying to recover my composure.

I'm shamed to admit that took me more than a few minutes to regain my intellect and start thinking again. And with that I remembered a little trick that would be useful.

I closed my eyes, concentrated a bit, reached inside myself to grasp at the magic that was inside
before I projected a purple beam that hit the floor of the room, creating a big, circular, bronze mirror and taking both Martian Manhunter and Black Canary by surprise.

"Jin, what are you-"

"Mirror, mirror, standing there, show me whom I care!"

And, after this original rhyme, I waved at the mirror, willing it to work like I want. Black clouded over the glass for a second, before clearing and showing me - and the others in the room - the image of Superboy fighting against the android, now fully awakened.

They seemed to be on the outside of a train and Superboy was losing. Badly.

I felt my teeth grinding against one another.

Want to know what the worst part of this was? I could finally see what was happening, but I couldn't hear anything.

When I saw the others arrive, I breathed a sigh of relief. Then I felt something prickling at my palms.

When I looked, there were small wounds closing, inflicted by my own nails.

"What?"

I never wounded myself like this. Never lost control like this, either. Not entirely.

I was usually a pretty calm guy, but now I just wanted to teleport there and...

"Jin, calm yourself!"

"What!?"

"You are producing smoke." Black Canary's voice cut through my haze of fury, bringing me back to the present and letting me see what was happening in the mirror. The visual was centered on Superboy, so I couldn't see everything that was going on, but still a fair part.

It seemed that they managed to destroy Amazo all the same with... Did Superboy launch a steel beam at the face of the android? Making it explode?

**************************

So, I missed all the fights, I couldn't help my teammates and I couldn't even win a spar against Black Canary. Some 'hero' I was.

At least the others were back, intact and without missing pieces. That's good.

Once the group was back, I drifted back towards Kon, leaning against him, my other hand patting all the others on the arms to be sure that they were back again. Only after that I managed to calm down.

Then, the debriefing.

Aqualad, as our brave leader, was in front of the League (specifically Batman, Black Canary, Red Tornado, Martian Manhunter and Green Arrow) giving his report.

"The Amazo android is in pieces again, safely being analyzed in the two separate S.T.A.R. Labs. But Ivo escaped and since he created the tech, he is arguably more dangerous than the android."
"Capturing the Professor will be a League priority," Black Canary interjected, followed right after by Martian Manhunter.

"But we understand your mission encountered other... complications." We all exchanged a look between us, even me.

Batman stepped up. "Complications come with the job. Your ability to handle them has impressed the League."

And now.... nothing. Shouldn't this have been the moment where Kon speaks? Instead silence reigns. And the hand on my shoulders was getting tighter. I had the vague impression that he was using me like a security blanket.

"Of course there's no shame in asking for help, that's why the League exists. Because there are some problems even we can't handle individually." Ok, I had to admit that Batman could make great motivational speeches.

"Please! If we needed help, we never got the chance to ask!" Wow, you sounded like an offended cat, Robin. Mnhhh, there's an idea...

"Look familiar?" And, from somewhere in his belt he brought out an arrow. How? Did he have a Tardis-like pouch? Magic?

Batman?

Let's go with the last one.

"You were following us! Babysitting! You still don't trust us!" The cat comparison was more and more apt. Was I like that at thirteen years old?

Both Batman and Green Arrow came closer, the latter inspecting the arrow, only to take out one of his own arrows.

"We didn't follow you," Batman replied, while Green Arrow simply held both arrow towards us, letting us see the difference for ourselves.

"And that's not your arrow. But that means..." Yeah, a cat. I wonder if he would like one for his birthday.

"Speedy!" Kid Flash looked like Christmas came earlier and all the others looked relieved. I simply smiled, hiding the fact that I knew that he wasn't Speedy. Or was he? Well, a clone. Whatever.

"He has our backs," Kaldur said, bringing a smile to the others' faces of the others.

Kid Flash then flashed forwards and took the arrow, with a grin on his face.

"Souvenir!" The others barged past the League, while I was literally lifted by Kon and carried along. I tapped his shoulder to stop him, looking at Black Canary.

"If I wanted more training?"

"I'm here for you. All of you." And she looked intently towards Kon as well. He simply looked mutinously for a bit, Before giving a silent nod. Success!
The Arrow against the Moon, or: Artemis and a cat.

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the lateness, I wasn't at home (I went to an holiday family in London) and then I had to recover from a rather annoying cold.

Thanks to Pietersielie on SV, who betaed this chapter.

Chapter 13: The Arrow against the Moon, or: Artemis and a cat.

Mount Justice
August 8, 09:58 EDT

The last couple of days after the missed mission were...

*******Flashback*********

"Again. And don't fly."

*****

"Another ten repetitions. You need to learn it with your muscles, not with your head."

*****

"Your feet are too far apart, pull them in a bit... more... no, too much now. Stop! Like this. Keep the position."

*****

"Dude, you are a disaster!"

"Robin, I swear that if you don't shut up I WILL give you cat ears and a tail and teleport you to an otaku convention in Japan!"

*****

"Okay, for the first day this will be enough. You have a lot to learn."

*******End Flashback*******

...interesting. On another note, Black Canary missed her calling as an army instructor. But, finally, after two days of training hell, I got to go to the beach with the others. The fact that the beach was right under our doorwas a plus, I admit.

"Hello, Megan! We should hit the beach every day!" A full on exclamation with gestures and enthusiasm. She was wearing a yellow two-piece while our boys were decked in swimming shorts. Yes, even me. And no, I didn't have the jacket on.

"First, a moment of silence for our absent comrade." Robin was that melodramatic. But I could
understand.

"Poor Wally."

"You are right M'gann. Poor Wally."

If my tone was slightly more sarcastic than hers, nobody said anything. My threat about animal ears and an impromptu trip to Japan was still fresh in the minds of everyone. Especially in the hilarious duo's minds (Wally and Robin, if it wasn't clear).

I leaned against Kon, who was still keeping me near him, like some sort of favorite plush toy or person or something like that.

It was funny seeing the difference in tonality, though. He was powered by the sun and was white as milk. Me, I hates being directly in the sun (it caused me a headache) and I'm purple. Well, let's leave the chromatic considerations for another day. For now, Beach!

After hastily putting down what we had in hands (our beach equipment), the first thing all of us did was to take a jump in the sea. The water was cool and refreshing, reminding me of the last time I went to the sea. A couple of years back, if I recalled correctly.

While the others were splashing around in a water-war, I put my need to breathe to the test underwater. I didn't need to breathe and the salt didn't sting my eyes, so I slipped near the bottom and flew underwater, simply taking pleasure in the sensation of being in the water again.

Then a bomb went off in front of me. Well, more like Superboy went off in front of me. From up above. I retaliated with a wave manipulated with magic while grinning like an idiot.

Then Kaldur hit me from behind, making me freeze. I smiled and turned back, sparking a superpowered water duel. It ended with me and Kaldur trying to create more and more complex forms before splashing the other one, while Kon, Robin, and M'gann cheered from the sidelines.

After that we stopped to eat something, setting up the grill in no time at all and, with a touch of magic, igniting the coal without a hassle.

"You know, you're pretty useful to have around."

"I aim to please, Robin!" I made a faux bow between bites, making M'gann giggle and Kaldur laugh low.

"Hey Jin, how is your magic coming? Anything new?"

"Why, M'gann, thank you for asking! I was dying for a chance to flaunt it a bit!" With a wink, I waved my hand towards a spot in the sand, making a mini-sandstorm that resolved itself in a sandcastle.

"I improved my finesse, working small and precise, plus a little something I was working on for a while now. I can still sustain only five ongoing spells at most, but..."

"Wait, I saw you reshelve an entire bookcase of books in one move," Robin stopped me, talking in-between munching his hot dog.

"One of the things I learned, actually. To program, so to speak, a spell to do many little things with the various parameters."
"That's great!"

"Congratulations!"

"Thank you, thank you."

The rest of the lunch was spent on small talk, with Robin complaining about school and Batman, Kaldur telling us something about Atlantis, M'gann speaking about what her uncle was teaching her and me and Kon talking - well, I was complaining - about the training that Black Canary made us do.

After an hour of a lull in the activities, they decided to play volleyball, and, seeing that we were odd, I opted out, choosing to cheer for both teams with magical effects to enhance the experience.

We ended the day building a sandcastle on top of Superboy when he dozed off in the sun. We even managed to get a picture before he woke up and started to chase us. The whole thing ended with us in a pile laughing out loud.

It was a good day.

********************

We came back from the beach only a couple hours before the twilight, still laughing and smiling from the day. A smiling Black Canary greeted us in the base.

"Well, it's nice to see that you had fun. But now you need to go change. Batman and Green Arrow are coming and they want to talk to the whole team."

We watched one another, before Kaldur stepped forward, a serious look descending on his face.

"Do we need to gear up for a mission?"

"Don't worry Kaldur, it's nothing like that. But Batman wants to talk to you."

"Understood. We'll go and get prepared." With a nod, we all went to shower and change into our costumes.

Well, I had it easy. I simply snapped my fingers and was magically cleaned and suited. Yes, with the jacket. Then I spent my time floating there, reclined in midair, waiting for the others to arrive. I was trying to remember at which point in the series we were and I couldn't recall.

I remembered something about Klarion but beyond that... Zatanna? Maybe?

"Why I can't remember?"

"Because you had to pay a price for my help, genieling. Your memory was the least I could claim. The others...."

My blood ran cold. In that moment I understood the meaning of the saying 'ice in the veins'.

"You took my memories?"

"Yes genieling. You asked for help, but my help comes at a cost. But you knew this, didn't you?"

I knew. Yes, I knew. I knew that when I asked its help, I would paid the price. Well, it appears that I paid the piper even before I knew that I did it. After a couple of deep breaths, I regained some semblance of calm and landed again, purple smoke twirling around my hands, keeping my hands
occupied while I thought about this development.

"I can't really do anything about it, can I?"

"Did something happen?" M'gann was the first to appear, flying back from the showers.

"No M'gann, only thinking about something."

"Nothing bad, I hope?"

"No, no, just... idle thoughts."

She didn't seem convinced by my words, but the arrival of the others made her drop the argument... for now. The glint in her eyes said that I wasn't out of the hot water yet.

"Did something happen?" Kaldur asked, looking between me and M'gann. I simply smiled.

"Nothing, nothing. Just thinking idle thoughts." Robin snickered at that.

"What will be your next magic fail?"

"Cat ears and tail Robin, cat ears and tail." I smirked at his blanching.

"Everything okay?" Kon was right behind me, whispering low enough to allow only me to hear what he was saying. I shivered a bit, thinking back to what Marid said and my relationship with the others. Honestly, my secrecy about my true origins was starting to grate on me. I am not good with keeping secrets from my friends. Never was. Unless the secrets were something important, obviously, but not the point.

Well, this was important, but it regarded me directly, so it was less important than if it was about someone else. Ahh, it seems that my self-worth wasn't high as I thought.

"I'm thinking of telling them what I told you. But I'm not sure yet." Then I shook my head, self-deprecatingly. "Ok, not true. I'm sure, I'm just scared. And if they don't want to see me again? I mean, I know that they would be right, but..."

"It's your choice. It's your past. You are not under any kind of obligation to tell them."

"But if I don't tell them and they discover it later, they will never trust me again."

"Then tell them." Kon shrugged, before guiding me towards the others, where Batman and Green Arrow just came out from the Zeta-Tube, with Red Tornado joining them right after.

"Everyone, I'm glad to see you," Green Arrow started, with Batman standing at his side, Red Tornado near him.

"I would like to present you with my new protégé and your new teammate, Artemis."

A girl with a green mask that covered the upper part of her face, leaving her blonde hair free in a ponytail behind her stepped out from behind the man. Two diamond-like slits left the eyes open, while mouth, nose, and chin were free from the costume. She wore a dark green sleeveless top with a light green stylized upward arrowhead in the center, leaving the abdomen uncovered. Long fingerless gloves covered the back of the hand up to the elbow, while a quiver full of arrows - green fletchings, obviously - was slung on her shoulder.

Completing the outfit, skintight pants of the same hue of the top with metal knee pads and thick
boots, with a pouch strapped to her left thigh.

"Heya." She greeted us with a nonchalant wave of her hand, a smile in place on her face. All in all, incredibly casual, like she didn't just meet superheroes. Seeing as she just stunned Robin and Kaldur in silence, M'gann was looking at her and Kon was using my shoulder as a support for his arms that were currently crossed on his chest.

"But Speedy..."

"Robin, while I understand your loyalty to Speedy, we are not replacing him." Green Arrow sounded like a father talking to his younger child, something that irked Robin and, strangely, Batman, quite a bit. Oh, right, the Robins were his family. I forgot for an instant. Well, better go and try to defuse the situation a bit.

"Well, it's nice to meet you. While on the field you can call me Djinni," I greeted, attracting the attention of Artemis to me.

"Well, hello there. I must say, I love the purple skin you have. Together with the whole..." she replied as she gestured to my torso, that was, thanks to the damn jacket, on display. And, thanks to Marid, quite well formed.

"It came with the job."

"Stripper?"

Ok. Really?

"I'm the resident Wish-Granter."

"What, like a genie or something?"

"Or something."

This caused her to laugh. "Bullshit! Genies don't exist!" If I was a fairy, I would be dead right this moment. Thankfully, I was a Djinn, so I wasn't vulnerable to the missing belief.

"Try. Or are you scared?" I said while crossing my arms and reclining back, ending against Kon again. Lately, I've begun to be able to sense his presence. Or better, the presence of someone who registers to me as 'One who bears the lamp'. Bit strange.

Artemis bristled at the implicit challenge, assuming a hard expression and crossing her arms.

"Scared? I'm not scared." My only answer was to raise an eyebrow.

"Very well. I wish for a bow that is perfect for me!" I felt my magic rising in answer to the words. It was exhilarating, a bit like the anticipation of the fall when you are on a roller coaster. The sensation of freedom when you were flying and the simple joy of a child when he saw a magic show for the first time.

"As you wish." I snapped my fingers.

Dling!

I had absolutely no clue of what kind of bow it was. Shortbow, longbow, composite, I didn't know. I only knew it looked impressive. And a little villainous. It was sleek and sharp at the end, made of a dark silver and inlaid with dark red decorations. The string looked like it was made of metal and a
It floated in mid-air in front of Artemis, who was looking at it like she just saw a cow get upright and tap dance away. It was a little funny.

"Ahem."

The moment was interrupted by Batman, who was watching us with a judgmental stare.

"If you had let me explain, I could've informed you that Djinni is most assuredly the real deal. This said, his ability to grant wishes is not to be used during missions unless there is absolutely no other way. Did I made myself clear?" The hard look he sent our way made the temperature in the room fall by several degrees. He stopped to take the bow.

"And if you ask for any item that is to be used in combat, it needs to undergo several rounds of testing before being allowed to be taken in the field. This is to be sure that there aren't any unpleasant surprises." And he shot me a glare. Why? I didn't do anything!

"Do you all understand?" The only answer from us was a murmured agreement. The bow and arrows were swiftly sent to laboratories to be analyzed, studied and whatnot.

The meeting continued with the various presentations of the others, a happy M'gann and a possessive Kon who didn't leave my side for the entire evening, gaining me a curious look from Artemis and a shake of the head from the others. It seems that they were resigned over the possessiveness that Superboy showed towards me. Okay then. If I continued with telling them everything, this would get problematic. Very problematic.

Who was I kidding? It would be a disaster.

"Recognized Kid Flash: B-Zero-Three."

Carrying a fairly impressive arsenal of beach equipment, Wally presented himself, while in flip-flop and trunks, to the whole room... "The Wall-man is here! Now let's get this party star..." before face planting to the ground. "...ted?"

"Wall-man uh? I love the uniform." Yep, Artemis could be a bit scathing. But funny. "What exactly are your powers?" And assume an air of superiority who made herself look like a princess looking at a peasant.

"Errr... Who is this?"

"Artemis, at your service. Your new teammate."

And now there should be fireworks if I was correct. "Kid Flash. Never heard of you." I wasn't correct. He sounded like a passive-aggressive guy. Which he was, under the whole overreaction facade.

"Ah, she's my new protégé."

"What happened to your old one?" Wally was really attached to Speedy. I wonder what their past was.

"Recognized: Speedy B-Zero-Seven."

"Well, for starters, he doesn't go by Speedy anymore." Taller than I thought. Wait, did I see him
before? While I was in this reality, I mean. No, I didn't think so. But there was something about him? About... GAH. I fought to hide a wince of pain, failing to notice the way Kon and M'gann exchanged a look over my head.

"Call me Red Arrow." And if that didn't scream 'Daddy Issues!' to the world, I didn't know what does. Okay, the pain was making me sour and grumpy for some reason. I needed to stop and focus on what was happening.

"Roy, you look..." Green Arrow sounded unsure of himself, but Red Arrow was apparently hurt about Artemis being brought into the team.

"...replaceable."

"It's not like that. You told me you were going solo."

"So why waste time finding a sub?! Can she even use that bow?" This is starting to get personal.

"Yes, she can." But it doesn't seem like Artemis is intimidated by the older hero. Good, right? Well, if I remember right, her father is Sportsmaster, so it's not exactly a surprise.

"Who are you?!" It looked like Wally had reached the point of exasperation.

"She's my niece."

"I'm his niece." Well, they do look a bit alike. A bit.

"Another niece?" Robin, on the other hand, was not convinced.

And then Kaldur intervened, being the voice of reason that we all loved. Also showing why he was our leader. "But she is not your replacement. We always wanted you on the team and we have no quota on archers."

"And if we did, you know who we'd pick." Harsh Wally, harsh. Especially in front of the new teammate. I wonder how she felt at that. Nothing showed on her face. She's good at that.

"Whatever Baywatch. I am here to stay." And at retorts. Got to remember that.

"You came to us for a reason." And, once again, Kaldur showed that he was the most stable of the team. Good.

Thank whatever deity was up there that I wasn't the leader.

Red Arrow, prompted by that, started to talk again. "Yeah, a reason named Dr. Serling Roquette."

Robin started from there, with a smile on his face, while various screens appeared around us.

"Nanorobotic genius and claytronics expert at Royal University in Star City. Vanished two weeks ago."

"Abducted two weeks ago, by the League of Shadows."

"Whoa. You want us to rescue her from the Shadows?" I didn't know why Robin thought that us going against a League of professional assassins was a good thing. Maybe the others would be more...

"Hard-core!" Aaaand Wally just exchanged a fist bump with Robin. I was setting my expectations too high. Maybe I could expect for them to not fall on themselves. That sounded more realistic. A small chuckle escaped from me when I remembered that Wally fell right in this room no more than
three minutes ago. It gained me strange looks from M'gann, Kaldur, and Kon.

I shrugged, mouthing 'later'.

"I already rescued her." And Red Arrow activated a device that projected another image, showing some kind of nanorobot.


Ok, that's really ominous. And worrying. My expression must have shown, because I found Superboy's arms around my shoulders.

"But its true purpose isn't mere destruction. It's theft. The info traders steal and load data from any computer system and deliver this stolen intel to the Shadows." If Red Arrow was trying to scare us, he was successful, at least with me.

"Providing them with access to weapons, strategic defense, cutting edge science and tech...!"

"Perfect for extortion, manipulation, power brokering... Yeah, sounds like the Shadows." And the whole doom and gloom atmosphere was broken by the utterly unimpressed Artemis.

"Like you know anything about the Shadows." And Wally antagonized Artemis once again. If I didn't know for sure that he was straight, I would've guessed he had a crush for Red Arrow. Well, I could always use it as ammunition. Even if I know it's not true.

However, Artemis looked like she had everything under control because she only smiled in his direction. That prompted a rather excessive answer from Wally.

"WHO ARE YOU?"

The whole sketch was broken by Red Arrow again, who dropped the narrator's voice and was talking normally again.

"Roquette's working on a virus to send The Fog inert."

And Robin now sounded appropriately worried. "But if the Shadows knows she can do that..."

"They'll target her," Red Arrow finished from his place.

"Right now she's off the grid." And he replaced the image on the screen with another, some kind of school. A big one. Maybe a university?

"I stashed her in the local high school computer lab." Okay, not a university. Man, how much money did they have to build a high school that big?

"You left her alone?" Green Arrow didn't sound incredulous, more like preoccupied. Red Arrow waved away that preoccupation instantly.

"She's safe enough for now." Didn't seem like it convinced the older archer.

"Perhaps you and I can keep her that way."

"You and I? Don't you wanna take your new protégé?" Wow, he took the new archer thing really bad. It seemed that Green Arrow wanted to say something, but the fact that Batman walked a little
closer him shut him up instantly.

"You brought this to the team..." and he gestured to us with his right arm, before putting it on his hips. "... It's their mission. Which means it's hers now, too." Got a new party member.

"Tsk. Then my job's done." And Red Arrow simply... walked away. Why? Shouldn't he stick with us and protect the Doctor as well?

"Recognized, Speedy-"

"That's Red Arrow B-Zero-Seven. Update," he rattled off before he vanished in a flash of light. If this was the start of the evening, I didn't want to see the continuation.

************

Happy Harbor
August 8, 21:53 EDT

The inside of the school was a bit different from an Italian one, but it's clear that it's a school and not some kind of alien building that was totally unrecognizable to me.

They divided us into two teams: one to stay with Dr. Roquette and another to patrol the perimeter.

Aqualad, Kid Flash, Robin, Artemis and me were with the protection team, while Superboy and Miss Martian were patrolling. Not without grumbling from Superboy.

Aqualad told me to stick with Dr. Roquette at all times and to never stray away from her. It was the logical thing to do, seeing as I was the weak link in the chain. No telepathic link for me.

That meant relying on the comms, but I gave them the ok to link without me. Just because I was incapable, didn't mean that they shouldn't do it.

I recognized the signs that they were linked from the movement of Artemis, the one who was doing this for the first time, so the most recognizable.

When Artemis and Kid Flash started arguing silently, I chuckled from my position near the ceiling. I chose that spot because humans didn't look up often, so it was the perfect spot to stay hidden.

"Right, why you aren't linked to us?" she asked, almost accusingly, pointing a finger at me. I gave her a lopsided smile.

"Can't do that, I'm afraid. Whoever tries to enter my mind will drown."

The incredulous look she shot at me was clear enough. I answered with a shrug of my shoulders and returned my attention to the door, readying my magic.

"Lucky you..." Dr. Roquette said while working.

It appeared that Artemis decided to go patrol outside, leaving the room in a snit. Uh, so that happened. I really wanted to be able to connect with the team, dammit.

"Aaargh!" It seems that Kid Flash is as much of a motormouth inside his head as outside. Good to know, I guess?

Then some kind of exchange happened between Aqualad and Dr. Roquette, because he changed expressions to a more somber one, placing a hand on her shoulder. She sighed and activated
something on the computer. I couldn't understand it because, well, I was upside down, so...

However, everything remained calm for some minutes, but Robin went out the door running and, after thirty seconds I felt my bottle getting further away from me. I kept my focus on the door. After Robin ran out and Kid Flash decided to stay outside the room, I closed the door again, instead of leaving it half-open.

That was what gave me the time to react when the door opened slightly, but nobody came in. Then a shuriken was launched towards the doctor, but Aqualad reacted and blocked it with his arms. I sent a wave of energy against the door, slamming it shut and cracking the wood against the frame.

Then I dropped from the ceiling and positioned myself between the door and my teammate, arms extended to the side. A purple, opaque bubble shield appeared around us three, a little something that I had trained since the encounter with Mr. Twister.

"Interesting..." a voice, female and young, was heard from the outside of the shield, right before something struck it and sent ripples across the surface. It didn't damage it in any way, but it was a way to see from where the hit was coming.

After a little time, someone else entered the room and everything started sounding like a battlefield. Which it was, I suppose.

"This shield is the strongest defense that I can create right now, so there is no need to be worried," I tried to reassure the doctor, who looked like she was going to hyperventilate.

"Oh, really? That is reassuring!" I guess that it didn't reassure her. Oh well, I couldn't make everyone happy.

After a moment two more figures appeared from the door, making one of the figures that I could vaguely see beyond the shield vanish. I dropped the shield, remaining on high alert, seeing Artemis, Kid Flash and Miss Martian looking around.

"Gone!" Kid Flash looked quite wet. Why?

"She's getting away! You're letting her getting away!" Oh, looks like the good doctor recovered her courage. What I didn't understand was why she must yell at me.

"This is all your fault! You were on the perimeter! How did that Shadow get in?!" And now Kid Flash was yelling at Artemis, blatantly ignoring the fact that Miss Martian was on the perimeter as well. I felt sick in the stomach. I couldn't restrain myself from thinking about what their reaction would be to my story.

I missed the byplay between Miss Martian, Artemis and Kid Flash, until his exclamation and the discussion between Miss Martian and Artemis.

"I didn't do half as well during my first battle and I know that you couldn't have been Green Arrow's sidekick for very long." She was sweet as ever. Then Aqualad interrupted the moment, with good reason.

"Focus everyone. The Shadows will be back."

"Robin to Aqualad! We're over Philadelphia. We located the Shadows' next target: S.T.A.R. Labs. We're too late." That didn't sound good. At all.

"It's destroyed. Totally destroyed. The Fog disassembled it." He sounded shocked. Like he couldn't
believe what he was seeing.

"This is bad. S.T.A.R. Labs has cutting edge science and all their secrets are in the hands of the enemies. What's our next move?"

I never heard Robin sound like that. It made me speechless.

"Re-scan for that Fog. Find it. We're moving the doctor."

*******************

We moved to an internet café. More precisely, I moved to an internet café after pretending to go help Robin and Superboy. Instead I got the job to protect the real Dr. Roquette while the others put themselves in danger. And all because Aqualad sounded so reasonable when he was in team-leader mode. I was glaring at him right now.

"I almost got it!"

"Good."

Almost done. Almost done.

"We have company!"

Fantastic. A bomb rolled out from the door and I turned towards it, but something struck me in the back of the head and everything went black for a while.

*******************

I woke up to the sound of an explosion outside, Aqualad on the floor and Dr. Roquette scared shitless. She was alive, so that was good. Someone was fighting outside and that was bad.

I got up, fighting against the vertigo, and flew outside, where I saw Artemis talking to the female assassin from the school, if I went with what I heard of her voice. The poison must've moved something, because I now remembered a couple of things that I didn't remember before.

Like who the father of Artemis was. And the father of Cheshire Cat. Awesome name, but not if a villain was using it.

"...let Cheshire Cat disappear."

"How about no?" Both of the girls turned towards me, just a moment before I imprisoned Jade Nguyen in a box made of crystal. Semi-transparent crystal.

"Nice work keeping her busy until I recovered, Artemis. You will fit into the team just right." I smiled at her, at which she looked down, like she was ready to walk to her execution.

In the meantime I was walking around the box, under the rather heavy glare from the prisoner inside. I smirked to her. Petty? Who, me? Noooooo.

It's not like she shot me with a poisoned dart, after all.

"..." Artemis was, most noticeably, not saying anything, while Cheshire Cat was radiating smugness like another character I knew. It was a real pity that her secret wasn't a secret to me, right?

"Artemis. I already know."
Now there were the shocked faces I expected. And Aqualad looking at me with a serious expression on his face from the door of the internet café.

Oops. Now I couldn't get out of the whole truth, only the truth and the truth alone, I guess.

"How do...?"

"Artemis asks a good question. How do you know..." he trailed off, not exactly sure of what I knew. It was kind of funny seeing the normally stoic leader trying to come out with something and finding a blank. If I wasn't in the middle of everything, obviously. Sadly for me, I was.

And I didn't find any of this funny in the slightest.

***************

After dropping Cheshire Cat off to Batman to get her in jail and the debriefing was all done, the whole team was reunited in the break room, with everyone sitting comfortably. To give the impression that this wasn't an interrogation, even if it was.

I was on the couch with Kon at my side as moral support. Everyone else was looking at me, waiting for my explanation. I didn't want to do this. I didn't want to lose everything. I didn't have a choice in that, I feared.

I had two choices in front of me: not say anything, refuse to talk and lose them to keep my secrets; or reveal everything I knew - the fact that they were a TV show in my universe, the whole franchise thing - and lose them for that.

I made my decision.
Chapter 14: The Long Night of Dreams, or: Deep discussion and heavy arguments.

Mount Justice
August 9; 03:31

I was sitting at the kitchen table, idly munching my own breakfast, while Aqualad, Robin, Kid Flash and Miss Martian were sitting in front of me, watching me with a dark expression on their faces. Kon was on my side of the table, taking his side in this mini-war between use, while Artemis was in between us. Carefully neutral.

"... repeat again. One more time."

Aqualad, who was the one that conducted the interrogation, asked. I swallowed the food that I bit and drank a bit of water. Then started my story for the third time.

"As I already said, I come from a universe or plane or something like that where this world is a cartoon. And a comic, I suppose. I don't know why I ended here, because from where I come there is not superpowers, no aliens, at least that we know, no metas, no magic. It's everything in comics, cartoons, fantasy books and similar. I knew a bit of this world, like I said to Superboy, and a bit of the future, but that knowledge is gone, mostly. I remember some secrets, but that's it."

"What kind of secrets?" Robin asked, voice low and nowhere near the playfulness he usually had when talking with me or one of the others.

"Well, the secret identity of Batman and you and a couple of major player in the league. And your hospital problem." I pointed towards him. Then shifted to Artemis and Miss Martian.

"Who your family is and your secret about your martian form."

I pointed to Aqualad and Kid Flash. "Your heart's problem and your disbelieving in magic."

"Wait, that's it? All of us, you know important secrets and Wally is... that he doesn't believe in magic?" Artemis exploded, planting her hands on the table and looking at me, promptly triggering an answer from Kon, that passed a hand on my shoulder and brought me against him.

"It's not my fault. I have only limited information, that are exhausted, by the way, and Kid Flash is simply..." and there I stopped because I couldn't think of a way to phrase my sentence that wasn't offensive to someone.

"See, even in other dimension recognize you have a empty head." "Dude! That's..." "Robin. Kid Flash. Now it's not the time."

Aqualad shutted both of them up, still looking at me with hard eyes. I felt myself shrinking a bit, moving unconsciously against Kon.
"And you knew about this?" His question was pointed to Kon, that looked at him for the longest second of my life, before nodding.

"Why you didn't tell us?"

Kon gritted his teeth, before relaxing again. "It wasn't my decision. And I learned the price myself."

It's clear that he is thinking about our confrontation on the top of Mount Justice. And the damage that was used in my punishment.

"It involved all of us. The information he could have would be proved..." Aqualad tried to point out, with a reasonable tone in his voice. I felt a shiver run on my back run on my back at his tone and, mostly, at his words.

"Useless, because he can't tell that information to anyone."

"What do you mean with that?" Miss Martian say, catching everyone by surprise. She didn't even look like she was listening, only watching me with a hurt look on her face that hurt more than having my bones breaking.

"What I said. He can't tell what he know about the future to anyone. If he try, he faint."

"And how do you know that?" Aqualad was still that neutral tone of voice that didn't reassure me in the slightest.

"He told me who is the other genetic donor for my Dna."

A lightning bolt hitting the room would be less noticeable and cause less reaction of this statement.

"What do you mean with other genetic donor of your Dna? I... We thought you were a clone of Superman." Robin said, now looking preoccupied. Artemis, in the meantime, was looking at Miss Martian and mouthing 'clone?'. She received a 'later' in answer.

"Yes. Superman..." Was he going to... 
"... and Lex Luthor." Yes. He did.

Remember the lightning bolt comparison I made before? Yeah, now it could have been a whole thunderstorm in here and nobody would've cared.

"He fainted an half dozen times before I managed to puzzle out what he was trying to say. And even then, he couldn't use magic for a day or so. Everytime he tried, he would make Kiwis, instead."

"Like the fruit?" Kid Flash asked, puzzlement written all over his face. I shaked my head.

"Like the bird." I summoned that toy I created the first time. I kept it as a memorial of the consequences. Not that I needed it, but it's good to have a reminder. Plus, it was soft.

"We are derailing the discussion. While this is important information, still doesn't answer the main question." Aqualad then looked directly at me, more serious than he was in the entire conversation.

"Why you didn't tell us?"

The million dollar question. There were different reasons: I didn't want to cause too many butterflies (stupid reason), I didn't want to be alone (selfish reason), I didn't want to be seen as someone external to them (again, selfish reason), I didn't...

The simple truth was that I was "...scared."
"What?" Aqualad asked, not understanding fully what I said, due to my voice being too low.

"I was scared."

This caused a lot of strange stares toward me. Some were calculating, other incredulous.

"Of what?" Aqualad continued, relentless, his eyes still fixated on mine.

"Of everything. Of remaining alone, of being imprisoned, of being called crazy. How many people go around and tell everyone: Hey, you are a protagonist in a cartoon named Young Justice and I know the plot! And I don't even know that much, because I was more of Marvel fan than DC and..."

"Wait, wait, wait! What does the Marvel have anything to do with this?!" Kid Flash interrupted me, waving his hands and shaking his head.

"In my world is another publishing house that is rival to DC Comics, the publishing house that produced Batman, Wonder Woman, Superman, Green Lantern and Young Justice, just to nominate some."

"And Young Justice is..." "This world. As far as I know. Sure I wasn't in there." I answered to Aqualad question, waving my hand around.

"But you are here now." Artemis statement was straight to point, like an arrow. Everyone looked around, unsure about what to say or do to continue the discussion.

Aqualad took a deep breath, before relaxing his shoulders and pinching the bridge of his nose.

"We need to discuss this. Djinni... he didn't call me by my name. "... go into your room and stay there for a bit. You aren't confined into Mount Justice, but you are suspended from the Team until we reach a conclusion."

This hurt more than what I thought. My throat was closed and I could feel the tears swelling into my eyes, but I simply nodded, got up and walked in my room. Kon got up to walk with me, but Aqualad blocked him.

"Superboy. We need to talk with you, too."

He stopped to look at me for a moment, until I nodded to indicate that he should remain here with the others. Then I went straight away to my room, closed the door and, finally, fell onto my bed and let the tears flow.

**********Kid Flash**********

Even with what I said before, what Jin said was... a big thing to consider. A really big thing. How do you deal with the fact that you are a fictional character?

"Wally?" Megan asked, turned towards me.

"Yeah."

"It's true that you don't believe in magic?" Why this question? Now of all the moments?

"Yeah." If this was any other moment I would be more cheerful, but for now, I wasn't in the mood to be the jokester that everyone knew.

"Kaldur, what did Djinni meant with hearts problems?" Artemis asked, voice and eyes hard as ice.
"Whoa, Artemis, aren't you a bit too forceful? Why do you get to ask something this personal?"

"Robin, it's fine." Kaldur interrupted, shaking his head.

"It's simple. During my stay at the Conservatory of Sorcery in Atlantis I had two best friends: Garth and Tula." His face was lost in thought, evidently reminiscing times long past.

"To make things short, I had... have a crush on Tula, but... I decided to become the helpers of my King and then come on the surface. She stayed behind with Garth and I miss her. Nothing more."

It was clear to everyone that there was a lot more than that, but everyone understood that it wasn't neither the moment or the argument.

"Seeing as you are so curious, you can tell us what Djinni meant with family problem, right?" Wally asked with a sneer on his face, still rattled from the events.

I wonder what Bruce would say about this...

When Wally asked his question, I took a couple of seconds to focus myself. What Jin said... it was something that cut deep inside me. Knowing that an entire world knew my more innermost secrets... it was terrifying.

"Oh well, with Cheshire Cat captured, it would have come out anyway." Artemis plopped down into her seat, hands tight on her bow. She assumed an indifferent look, but it didn't fool anyone.

"My father's Sportsmaster." And this caused utter silence, catching all of us by surprise. I was surprised, but from Wally, Kaldur and Robin came out a feeling of shock that was difficult to ignore.

I missed Mars, however flawed it could be.

And I guessed it was my turn, seeing as the shock was starting to become wariness and mistrust.

"On Mars there are three kind of martian..."

All of this discussion was getting heavy.

After my revelation everyone looked at me like I was ready to pull out the bow and start using them for target practice. Well, a couple of them would be target-worthy.

Kaldur was a nice guy, if a bit... of the straight and narrow type. Superboy was... mmmmm... but he was apparently a clone? Of Superman?

Well, that would explain the muscles. Out of this world.

But he was a bit strange, with all the hugging he did to our... dimensional displaced? Is it a word?

"So, it's like the racism here, isn't it?" Superboy said, in relation of what the redhead said- Something about colors?

"Well, I guess..." She looked a bit frazzled, tired from everything.
"We don't care Megan. White, Red or Green, you will always be our teammate and friend." Robin said, putting a hand on her shoulder and smiling, making her crack a smile in return.

Oh, so that's why they were talking about colors. There was still one thing to ask, though.

"Robin? What did he meant with Hospital problems?"

It seems that this day is my turn to be the bitch. It's not like I wasn't accustomed to it.

********Superboy********

Robin stiffened like a piece of steel, body completely frozen. He then turned towards the cabinets, giving us his back.

"I don't want to talk about it, but I guess that I don't have a choice, uh?"

"Robin, that's..." M'gann started, but Artemis blocked her before she could say more than two words.

"If I managed to tell all of you who my father is, you can manage this." She said with an absolute certainness in her voice.

Robin slumped a bit in this, but turned and waved down Wally, who was looking like he was going to rant again.

"Wall, it's okay. Simply... I have an uncle from before I was Robin. And he is still alive, but in Intensive Care at the hospital. That's it."

Everyone then calmed again, evidently lost in thoughts. I was getting anxious, I wanted to go check on Jin and make sure he was okay.

"What do we do now?" Megan asked, looking around, an air of uncertainty on her face.

"Djinni did lie to us and kept secrets from the Team. This isn't a behavior we can overlook easily. Especially at the secrets he kept."

Kaldur was downcast, eyes closed and voice heavy with emotion.

This was ridiculous. They wanted to kick out Jin just because he knew secrets that he learned when the idea of being here was nothing more than a fantasy?

"So you want to kick him out?" It came out from me with a snarl underlining the words. This caught the attention of everyone, surprising them.


"Hey Superboy, we get it that you want to go check on your boyfriend, but now it's not the moment for exploding. Let's talk like rational people, uhm?"

Utter silence. Wally was choking on his tongue, Megan was apple red. Robin on the verge of breaking a rib by keeping his laughter inside. Kaldur was looking at a smug Artemis, that was looking me.

"Boyfriend?" Jin was a boy and a friend, so I didn't understand why she put so much emphasis on that word.
"Yeah, boyfriend."

"Artemis, now it's not the time." Kaldur shut her up immediately, before turning towards me.

"Superboy, I'm sorry if you thought that we wanted to kick him out, but that wasn't what I was trying
to say. What I was saying is that secrets like that, when they come out, hurts. And aren't easily put
behind."

Oh. Well, that made sense. I remember what was my reaction when I discovered the truth.

Didn't made the way they treated him less infuriating.

"Left leg completely pulverized, no bone shard was bigger than two inches. Right arm bent
backwards, the joint destroyed, multiple lacerations where the bones ripped the skin on the surface.
Lower ribs shattered, lungs almost perforated. On a normal medical care, a complete recovery of the
functionality of the left leg would be impossible and the right arm would need to be amputated. High
risk of death for the ribs, an intervention would be a must and still with a low chance of success."

I looked at them, blank face and inexpressive. Everyone is looking more or less ill, except for
Artemis, who doesn't know.

"If it wasn't for the fact that he regenerates, Jind would be dead right now. And it would be my fault.
This was how I reacted when he told me."

Now they look like a lightning hit them in the face.

"And when the League came calling, with Superman at the helm, asking for an explanation and with
threats of stopping me before I became the menace that I evidently was..." Superman was particularly
vocal that day "... they called Jin to talk about what happened, to understand why I attacked a
teammate."

"What did he say?" Artemis ask, the only one able to talk, but curious as well. I smile bitterly, almost
spitting the next words.

"He asked why I was being punished and, once Batman told him it was because I attacked him, he
said that it wasn't right for them to punish me because it was his fault that I attacked him."

Silence. Utter silence. Even with my hearing, I couldn't even hear their breath.

"...what?" Megan is the first to recover, but Robin is a close second.

"Are you kidding?" It doesn't seem like he believes it, either.

"And the worst part is, after the whole discussion and the punishment that Batman gave him, I asked
why he said it was his fault. He then apologized to me because, in his points of view, I was the one
who suffered more."

My lips thin in a line. They all look stunned enough.

"I'm going to say this only once. You kick Jin out of the Team? I go with him. And it's not a threat,
either. It's a promise."

I then pushed the seat away from the table and got up, turning and walking towards his bedroom.

"Superboy..." I didn't know who was that called me, but I didn't care.
"He gave me the sky. I will not stay idle and watch while he loses his."

And, with this last warning, I flew towards Jin's bedroom.

His door was closed but not locked, so entering wasn't exactly difficult, but moving past the frame was. He was asleep on his bed, over his sheets, face buried in his pillow, still stained with tears.

I floated silently towards him, just stopping for closing and locking the door, before taking him in my arms and tucking him under the cover. I imitated him from the first night, stroking his hair and seeing that this made him more relaxed.

Tired from the whole day, I simply floated down and sat on the floor, my back against the frame of the bed, eyes on the door. If someone wanted to enter, I would know instantly.

Unknown to me, my eyes shined red for a second, before being closed. I fell into a light sleep, plagued by nightmares that I forgot the morning after.

**********Jin**********

When I woke up I was under my cover, with my hand on someone's head. When I got up to see who I was petting, I found Kon looking at me, sitting on the floor, back to the bed.

"Why you were sleeping on the floor?"

My question was enough to shake him from his still sleep-addled state, because he blinked a couple of times before answering.

"I wanted to be sure that you were still here."

Oh.

"Well, don't worry. I have no intention to go anywhere as long as you all want me here."

Apparently this didn't reassure him too much, seeing as he scoffed right after I finished talking. This makes me think that the talk that they had the last night didn't go exactly well.

"Superboy, I can understand why they reacted that way. Secrets hurt people, even when it's best keep them under control. The others will need a bit of time to come to term with what I said to them, but they will come around, at the end. They are our friends."

"This is what Kaldur said to me last night, as well. And he didn't said that he wouldn't kick you out off the Team." That hurt, if I was completely truthful. I didn't want to be alone and being told by some of the most important people (to me) that they could not want me around, well...

"Also, Artemis called you my 'Boyfriend'. With an emphasis on that word. Why?"

I choked on nothing, giving me an attack of coughing, prompting Kon to look at me worried.

"Is a bad thing?"

Still coughing, I shook my head, being able to catch my breath after a couple of seconds.

"I take that you don't know what she meant with boyfriend, then?"

The look that he gave me was one of uncertainty.
"A friend that is also a boy?"

Suddenly, a quote I read in a fanfiction somewhere came to mind: Oh sweet summer child, let this old winter oak teach you something you don't know.

Ok, maybe I adjusted the quote a bit, but it's the spirit that matter, not the letter.

"Not... exactly. I can explain, but I need to eat something before." "Starbucks?" "Sure, why not. We prepare and we go by Z-Tube?"

Doesn't look like he likes this option.

"I would prefer if you simply..." and he wiggle his fingers in the way he started doing to mean my magic. I simply shrug and let a wave of magic wash over us, cleaning our clothes, ourselves and washing us at the same time.

It's useful, but not exactly the same as a shower or a bath. Still, it's good for the moment.

I then don my human disguise, conjure a note on the outside of the door and teleport me and Kon to the alley I use to teleport to the city.

We take a few minutes to get our breakfast to go, but the walk to the park where we usually eat is silent, me trying to phrase the whole sex and sexuality thing to an adolescent clone of an alien, while he is lost in who know what thoughts.

At the end we reach our bench and, after pastries are consumed and drinks are slowly sipped, he turns towards me with the face that he does when he is waiting for me to explain something. Some kind of weird focus thing couples with his brows furrowed just inbetween his eyes.

"Well?"

I took a deep breath, trying to put my thoughts in order and not simply spill them all over.

"Boyfriend is a word used to refer to a guy who is in a romantic relationship with another person, male or female."

There, nice and neutral. This should be enough to answer his question.

"Male or female? It is possible for people to be in a relationship with someone that is not of the opposite sex?"

Fuck.

Can I have a list of everything the G-Gnomes teached him on the subject? I really don't want to explain to a teenage clone of an alien the nuisance of the sexuality, I really don't.

But it looks that I don't have much choice, judging by the way Kon set his face. Ok, then.

"What do you know about sexuality and reproduction?"

Let's assess the basic.

"When a man and a woman are in a relationship, they can engage in the sexual intercourse that, usually, results in the egg being fecundated by the sperm. The resulting egg will then develop in a fetus that, during the months, develop into a fully formed human."
Very...clinical. Much medical. Definitely something that the G-Gnomes taught him.

"All correct. The only missing part is that the... uh... sexual intercourse is supposed to be pleasurable, which is one of the reason why people engage in it. Especially teenagers, mainly because of hormones."

I'm not exactly a scientific type, so let's keep everything vague, ok?

"...on which I don't know much. But, regarding your question, this isn't the sum of the whole sexuality spectrum." Which is why is called a spectrum and not something else, independently of what someone say.

"First thing to say is that sexuality is complicated. There is no right or wrong regarding that, like there is no right or wrong in liking a certain color or taste or scent. It's simply something that Is. With me til here?" He nods.

"Good. Now, the three most 'famous'..." and I make air quotes with my hands to underline the word "... sexual orientation are: Heterosexual, which is the attraction that one feel for the member of the opposite sex; Homosexual, the attraction for member of the same sex; and Bisexual, attraction for member of both sexes."

Ok, and this is the simple part. Thank god I spent a lot of time on Pinterest and some thing stayed with me.

"There are less known orientation, which at first weren't recognized, but as the time went by were classified. Just to name a couple: Asexual, when someone doesn't feel attraction to anyone; Pansexual, which is similar to Bisexuality..." not exactly, but I'm already sweating with this much and I really don't want to prolong this discussion more "... and Demisexual, which is sexual attraction with someone to whom you feel a deep emotional connection."

Done. In the most simplicistic term I could find, mainly because I'm uncomfortable with this argument and I don't really want to continue it.

It seems that Kon is deep in thought, so I materialize an ice cream and start relax. This could've go so much worse. So, so much worse.

"And love?"

My ice cream end on the ground and I whip my head towards him, eyes wide.

"What about love?"

He looks like he is trying to understand some difficult math problem. No, don't think about math now, it's not the time.

"What does love have to do with sex?"

If I ever had any doubt that he was a clone and not a 'natural' teenager, this question would have incinerated them so fast that the Sun would be envious. A male teenager willingly talking about sex and love? Yeah, no.

"Love is an emotion that you feel for someone?"

"Yes, I know that. I asked what love have to do with sex."
I have absolute no idea on how to answer this question. Zero. Zip. Nada. Nisba. Nyet. I can try, but I know that it will not be enough to answer.

"I can assure you that my answer will not be satisfactory for the minimum. Do you still want to ear it?"

A simple nod. Honestly, his intensity is starting to scare me a bit, he never was this focused before.

"Love is one of the most complicated emotion that someone can feel. Sex and love are, in fact, two separate things, but they are closely related because of the mythos that surround them. It's a combination of history, behavior, indoctrination, fantasy and expectation. And no, I don't know how to explain better than this."

I preempt his question, blocking his questions. It's not fair of me to do this, but I really don't know how to answer. And honesty is better than trying to deviate, at least in this regard. Then a thought strike me.

"Right, I almost forgot. About love, there isn't only the romantic kind, there are others: for the family, the friends, the animals, the others, the Earth and so on. It's not something static, it's something that change and evolve and, yes, sometimes it stop."

Doesn't look like my answer were enough to quell his thirst for answers, but it's all I got.

"And how do you distinguish between the different types of love?"

"Living them. I have no clue, honestly. It's something that is different for everyone."

Now I have a wicked idea. I wonder if Kon will return to Mount Justice and tell to the others that he loves them. M'gann will become red, Artemis... no idea. Kaldur will probably look like someone slapped him with a fish and Robin and Wally will be exhilarating to see. I just know.

Kon nod, seemingly reassured. I wonder how he feel sometimes, with all the things that he knows, but doesn't understand because they were taught to him by the G-Gnomes. Or maybe I'm patronizing him. Hope I'm not doing that.

"Want to go for a walk? I wanted to see if there was a DS and what pokèmon game there was."

"Pokèmon?"

I barely manage to restrain my (false) gasp of horror, before smiling and start walking towards the store where I bought the Console.

******************

The answer to my question was Pokèmon Black and White. I got Snivy as a starter, while Kon got Oshawott. I expected him to get Tepig, honestly, but he chose the Water Type.

Ok, then.

I played with calm, accustomed on how the games worked, seeing as I have played, both by emulator or from console, all of the previous games. Kon played his with a focus that honestly scared me a bit. But he didn't said anything about not liking it, so I guess it was because it was the first time that he played a similar game?

"Djinni." Kaldur spoke from the hallway, looking at me. Kon stiffened, closing the DS and staring at our team leader. He didn't acknowledge the rather pointed stare that was directed against him and
focused only on me.

"Yeah?"

He looks supremely uncomfortable, but he is going to it anyway because he is the leader and it's his duty.

"You are still part of the team. However, you are suspended from the mission for a week." Rather cut and dry, it seems. This is... practically the better outcome I could've thought of.

"I understand. Thank you." I nod to him, maybe taking him by surprise, judging by his face. He smiles a self-deprecating smile before answering.

"Thank Superboy. It was his words that made all of us think about what we were doing."

Oh. I smile to Kon, which is still glaring, even if much less than before, at the back of Kaldur.

"Let's go and see if there are something on TV, ok?"
Mount Justice
August 10, 08:26

I was just returning to Mount Justice finishing my breakfast, with Kon at my side. I explained to him what exactly was Dungeons & Dragons and why he should totally help me convince the others to play at least once. I practically knew what classes would be perfect for them.

Rogue for Robin, obviously. Fighter for Wally or Paladin, because he wanted to be the White Knight to impress the ladies. Kaldur... probably Sorcerer or Wizard. Or Monk.

Artemis... I wanted to say Ranger because of bows, but she could surprise me and choose Barbarian. Or Fighter.

Kon probably Fighter, because it's the most straightforward class, or maybe Barbarian? Naah, Barbarian doesn't apply to him. He hates being thought as stupid.

M'gann... Druid, maybe, or Wizard. I bet she could munchkin with the best of them. Oh, or Cleric. Yep, definitely Cleric.

"Hey, M'gann. I was just thinking about you." I greeted her cheerfully, ignoring the discomfort she was displaying at seeing me and Kon in the kitchen.

"You.. you were?" She said, stuttering a bit, probably because she was embarrassing. That, or she wanted to fling the table against me.
I choose to think that is the first option.

"Yup, I was talking about D&D with Superboy and I was trying to think how to convince the others to play. Do you want to help?"

"D&D...?" She asks, rather confused. Oops, I guess they don't have that game on Mars.

"Is a tabletop game where you create a character in a fantasy setting, you know, sword-and-sorcery, monsters, demons and so on, and then you roleplay that character. Acting like you were in the situation your character is, what are her reactions and so on."

She shakes her head.

"Sorry, but I don't know that game. And I wouldn't know where to start from, either." She sounds vaguely apologetic.

"Well, yeah, if you never played it's obvious that you don't know it. No problem, I can teach you. If you want, that's it."

I hide my grimace at the last part of my words, remembering that not everyone is capable of putting things behind. Not forgetting them, but just... let it slide over you. In hindsight, that was a big source of my problems, now that I don't have to treat with them anymore.

I need to grow up.

"However, yes, I thought it would be a good idea to... repair the bonds of the Team. I didn't want to let too much time pass without at least trying to reconnect with you all."

"And you think that this game could help?" She asked, somewhat skeptical. Mhhh, I've never seen her skeptical of somewhat. A new expression.

"Well, it's worth a try? And it could be fun. I played with my old friends back at home and I miss it a bit." I explain, not managing to keep a bit of melancholy out of my voice.
"So, what do you..." And M'gann is crying. Why?!

"M'gann, what..." "I-I have to go!" And she flies away in a hurry, almost without looking where she's going.

"Hey, guys. How're things going?" Artemis came from the Zeta-Tube, in costume and smiling. She immediately frowns when see me and my expression.

"Why the long face?"

I watch her, unable to say anything, when Kon, who was still at my side, intervene.

"M'gann just flew away crying."

"Did you told her something?" She immediately asks, inquisitive.

I shake my head negatively.

"No, but... aren't you angry? About yesterday?"

She simply shrugs, an unimpressed look on her face. "Meh, I've known you for less than 48 hours, so your revelation doesn't touch me very much. Plus, even if you made me reveal who my family is, you also captured my father, so the two things tend to balance one another. But don't do anything like that again, capiche?" She finishes, with a glare that is obviously taken from Batman.

"Yes, ma'am!" I salute, which makes her giggle and Kon look at me with a small smirk.

"Now stop trying to distract me and tell me why M'gann was crying." She ask, arms crossed and looking at me.

"I don't know. We were talking about D&D and how I wanted to see if you all were interested in
trying to play. Then I mentioned that I played with my old friends and that I missed it and then she fly away crying."

I explain, with a frown, until what I exactly said hit me.

"Damn it. I didn't want to make her sad." "You got it, uh?" "Yeah, yeah, I talk too much. Ugh, and it even comes out as me trying to manipulate her. I need to go and apologize."

She stops me rather abruptly.

"Whoa, WHOA! Stop right there. You need to go apologize? For what? Because you had friends before you were brought here? I don't think so, unless you really want to make her feel bad. Now, you stay here and I go to talk to her. Ok?"

I nod wordlessly, watching her turning and walk away. Ok, then.

*************

After going a separate way from Kon, I found Wally in front of the TV, with a bowl of chips in his lap. He simply... flop there, not even waving, looking like death warmed over.

"It's everything okay?" I ask, a bit dubious of his reaction, but willing to try. He simply looks at me with empty eyes.

"I... hate school." He whispers, like he was just barely able to muster the strength to talk.

I step away, leaving the zombie at his contemplation. I think I will talk about my idea later. Yeah, later sounds good.

*************

"Do you have a minute?" Is the way Kaldur open his conversation with me, looking every bit of the fearless leader he is.
"Sure. Did you want to ask something?" I ask him back, putting down the handbook I was reading. I managed to get the pdf of every manual of D&D 3.5 and then magicking them in physical format. It was easier than I expected.

"Not exactly. I just wanted to explain one thing." He seems unflapped, even when he sits in front of me and put his hands on the table.

"Ok. What, exactly?" "About your suspension." I wince at that, still a bit sore from that.

He continues relentlessly. "I didn't do it to be cruel. I did it because we all needed to distance ourselves from the situation and, as much as it displeases me..." and he doesn't look happy in the slightest "...your revelation do have a certain weight to them. A weight on which us all we need to think on. Your suspension from missions is symbolic, nothing more." He looks at me, eyes heavy with something.

"I understand. Thank you." And I do. Being distracted from things like that is heavy enough. If you go on a mission with whom said that to you, it would be even worse. It soothed my aching soul more than a bit.

"Very well. I will leave you to whatever you were doing." "About that..." I call him, stopping him from leaving, with a glint in my eyes "...have you ever played a game called Dungeons&Dragons?"

**************************

I managed to convince him somehow. Not sure if it was the fact that it would be a bond exercise, a way to work through our issue without snapping at each other or I was starting to almost beg at the end.

Not like I wanted to do, but I can end like that sometimes. And without me realizing it. Hope it was the first cause.

Now, I just need to convince the others. I can do that tomorrow. Before I need to try and see if I can do what I wanted to do: holographic images. How many, how complex and how long I can't keep here.
If I can do it, then it wold be the best session of Dungeons&Dragons ever!

I giggled a bit, closing behind me the door of my room. I didn't come out until the next day.

***************

Mount Justice
August 11

After long and extensive tries, I managed to do what I wanted to do. A small scale illusion, the size that could be kept on a table, of multiple things. I needed to use one spell to create the background and one to create the NPC, so a third would need to be used to create their Characters, but it still left me other two for something else. Good enough.

"Are you free?"

"SANTO...!!" I jumped into the air and stays there, heart beating so fast that could challenge a Ferrari. Robin just appeared from nothing while I was in my room, scaring me half to death.

He wasn't laughing at my distress. This was worrying.

"Robin? Is everything okay?" I asked, quite worried about his behavior. He has the habit of finding a lot of things funny, especially surprising his teammates.

"...can you heal my relative?"

I didn't expected this. I can't say no, either, because it would be absolutely heartless from me doing something like that.

"Yeah, you just need to wish it and it will be done. But wouldn't Batman be angry with you?"

He smirk bitterly, a razors' edge hidden in the corner of his mouth. It remind me of Peter Pan a bit.
"Oh, he will be furious. But I find that I don't care very much right now." At risk of sounding repetitive, I didn't expect this. But okay.

"Okay, if you are sure. You can always blame me, if you think it would help." "Don't treat me like a child. I'm not so little to not be able to withstand my responsibilities." Ok. There is steel in him and I knew there was, but I never truly saw it until now.

"Ok, sorry. Well, go on."

He takes a couple of deep breaths and then speak, voice clear and without esitation.

"I wish for my family member to be healed."

There is only one way I can answer this wish.

"As you wish." Snap.

Dling!

Magic flows, the weave of the existence shudder and twist and I feel the various way I could twist the wish.

It would be so easy, but I go the other way around, making sure that everything goes exactly as he want to. His relative will heal in the span of a week, slowly and with a bit of fanfare, but nothing exceedingly rare like a miracle recover.

"Done. In a week you relative will be completely healed."

He look relieved, while he smile at me.

"Thank you Jin."
And he disappears without waiting for me to say anything.

Okay. That happened. Let's hope that this is a good sign.

"Back to work. Let's see if I can create sounds to go with the illusions."

I put my thoughts for my relationship with Robin behind me and start work again. I don't want to raise my own hopes just to see them crash down.

***************

Someone knocked on my door, just as I was finishing my last try of the spell. It kind of fizzled into nothing.

"Oh well. If twenty-six is not enough, let's go with the twenty-seventh attempt." O said to myself, before floating to the door and opening it. Kon was in front of it, still drenched in sweat from his training in the gym. I still need to go to it, but I really don't want to.

"It's everything okay?" "Yes. Black Canary is waiting for you. She says that is training day."

Damn, it was today? And I must go. I hate training.

I'm lazy at heart, what do you want?

"Thanks for the reminder Superboy. I'm gonna go now." I then proceed to float towards the room where most of the training is done, the Z-Tube room.

Superboy followed me until we reached halfway to the hallway, where Black Canary was walking towards us.

"Oh, Jin. Nice to see that you are in time for the training. Well, let's start." She smiled at me, but
looked strangely at Superboy for a second, before returning the focused superheroine I knew.

And so another day of cruel physical punishment started.

I hate training.

**************

Happy Harbor
August 12, 08:46

I was walking on the street, ignoring the heat of the summer sun to enjoy a stroll. Something that I couldn't do before, because the direct sunlight always caused me a rather nasty case of headache.

It abated a bit when I grew up, but was still deeply unpleasant.

I was watching the various window of various shops, when I saw an old woman, seated on an old rug, with a deck of cards that she shuffled with easy, practiced motion.

Wait, they weren't normal cards.

"Reading your future, for a dollar?"

I've gotten in front of her without realizing it. Her old eyes - brown with speckle of green - watched me with the knowledge that only time and years can give you.

"Yes, please. Just one request." "Oh? Want to be granted luck in love? In business?" She asked, a bitter edge in her voice, eyes glinting at me.

"Nothing like that." I denied, shaking my head and making her perk with interest. "Just tell me the truth and nothing else. No sugarcoating."
An arched eyebrow was the answer that I got for that. Then she laughed, a short, raspy laugh that had a world of meaning in it.

"Another one who knows about the Rules, mh? Then what are you offering to this old biddy for your true future?"

A price for a price. I was asking truth and could only offer something that was of the same value for it. Well, I did have something.

"A third wish. Without malicious twist or wicked subterfuge, offered with honesty."

At that, she looked at me like I was some two-cent scammer trying to con her out of what little she had.

"And ten dollars." I added, with a smile.

Another short laugh was her answer, but she shuffled her deck - old, worn cards, but still in a good condition - and with curt movement put the deck in front of me.

"Cut the deck boy, with your left hand. Three or five?" Her question was easy to answer.

"Three is good." I said, while I slid my left hand on the deck and cut it, putting one half on the side of it.

She smiled, taking the cards and shuffling again, putting the deck down again. Again I cut the deck and again she shuffled and presented me with it. After the third time, she simply put the lower half of the deck on the other and took three cards, putting them one beside the other.

"Let's see what brought you here, mhhh?" She turned the first card at my left.

The image of an ornate wheel, with a roman X on the low side greeted me.

"The Wheel of Fortune, upright. A great change in your past, something that wasn't easy to adapt,
but brought many good things. You transferred here recently?"

She asked, while studying the card in front of her.

"Kind of." I answered, while thinking back about everything happened until now. It surely was a big change.

"Well, let's see what is your situation now, mhh?"

And so she turned the card in the middle. The base of the card greeted me, five cups on a table, full of water.

"Five of cup, inverted. Interpersonal struggles, generally. Something didn't go as planned and your relationship paid the price. Friendship problems?"

"Something like that, yes."

She hummed a bit, but didn't comment and turned the last card. The top of a tower stricken by a lightning was the first thing that I saw. The number XVI greeted me and made me sigh.

"The tower, upright. Judging by your expression, you already know what is meaning is, but I never leave a reading unfinished. A great tragedy is in your future, boy, and only if you resolve the situation in which you are now you will escape it."

Her words were rather cutting, but not unkind. I smiled and took fifteen dollars from my pocket, dropping them into the bowl at her side.

"Your wish?" I asked, getting up and patting the dust from my jeans.

"Ah!" She barked another laughter, shaking her head in amusement "If you really want to know it, boy, I'll let you know it. I'm now old and alone. If I really had a wish, it would be to spend what remains of my days with someone who love me."
She blinked away her tears, shaking her head to hide them from me.

"Look at what you've done, made an old woman cry. Go, boy, go and think about your life instead of mine!"

She shooed me away. I turned and snapped, quietly, the fingers of my left hand.

With a small skip in my steps, I walked towards the base, dodging a girl that was on the sidewalk and hearing the soft gasp of a woman behind me.

I wished her the best of luck.

***************

Mount Justice
August 12, 14: 43

Well, I planned on playing D&D, but I expected it to take much more time.

"Well? Where do we start?" Robin asks, almost excited to play for some reason. Wally is faking indifference, Artemis is smirking at me. Kaldur have a small smile while M'gann a fragile one while he look at me. Kon is, as he often is in this period, at my side.

"Ok, first of all, let's rearrange a bit the table. Something that have enough space for everyone, I think."

A wave of my hand and the normal table becomes ettagonal, with a side for everyone. And matching chairs, obviously. Another wave and characters sheets appear in front of each chairs, except mine, where a DM shield appear.

"Nice setup." Artemis whistle, taking a seat around the table. Kon takes one at my side, Robin at my other side, with Wally at his side. Then M'gann, Artemis and Kaldur.
"Okay, here's the handbooks, pencils, eraser and snacks." The snacks are extremely important. Especially with Wally at the table. "We're playing the the Pathfinder Edition."

We take a couple of hours to explain how Ability Scores, skills and the various part of the sheet, then I gave them the usual point buy I used before. 80 points, one to one. Powerful character, but I managed to always kill them. Almost always accidentally.

Almost.

In the end, some of my guesses were right, others were wrong. Where to start...

Kon chose to play a Fighter. Two handed weapons, full plate (well, half. I don't give full plate at the start), Half-Orc. Yeah, that part surprised me, too.

Kaldur almost played the Monk, but Robin convinced him to swap characters and so he was now the Rogue. A rather tired-looking half-elf rogue.

Artemis surprise me and choose to play the Bard. I honestly didn't expected that choice and warned her that a bard was difficult to play right. She ignored me with a particularly strong focus on how to minmax his character. She choose to be an halfling, for some reason.

M'gann didn't defy my expectations and became the Cleric. So the Elf Cleric of Mitra was born.

Wally wanted to play a Paladin, but I managed to dissuade him to try that specific class as his first class. At the end he choose to play a Human Fighter, focusing on defense. At first I thought it a bit strange, but when he smiled towards M'gann, everything was clearer.

Robin, as said before, conned Kaldur off of his role and appropriated of the Monk, even if I said that they could use a class that was already been chosen. Nope, he insisted. And, just to be a little shit, he choose to be a Gnome. A Gnome Monk.

At that I managed to not throw my hands in the air in pure exasperation. I simply smiled gracefullly and returned to Artemis to explain how Bardic Music worked.
After all this we were ready to start, except for one thing.

"Dice for everyone." And a set of dice appeared in front of them, with their specific icon on them. Hey, if you can do it...

"Anyone have last questions? Doubts?" Headshakes all around the table, so it was good to go. I made space at the center of the table and waved my hand on it.

"Our story start in the most clichèd fashion possible, with six adventurers meeting in a tavern..." I created the illusion of the place, with their characters and the various npc moving around, somethings that caused some flattering exclamation from their part.

We spent the rest of the day playing, me guiding them against their first horde of Goblins, the rescue of the kidnapped childrens and the discover of a mysterious message that was founded in the corpse of a passing traveler.

It was a good day.

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Mount Justice
August 13, 15:28 EDT

"...when your mission relies on subterfuge, resist the urge to go on the offensive..." God this is boring "...the last thing you want is to risk exposing yourself and the team..." Wally still eating his banana, wilhe Artemis "...because a covert operation means keeping to the shadows..." is playing with her chewing-gum. I didn't think perople did it for real "...concealing your identities, infiltrating your targets..." Kaldur is the only one that is keeping notes "...and that means advance research. Study and long hours on stakeout..." M'gann is looking at Capitan Atom with a glassy look in her eyes, like she isn't paying attention "...and, of course, you must always remain alert.." "YAWWWWN." And Superboy just yawned. Me?

I'm not even faking attention, doodling pentacles and other simbols on my notepad.

"This is boring, isn't it?" Captain Atom ask, his face hidden by his mask.
"Oh no, captain, is quite..." M'gann try to save face, but Kon interrupt saying what everyone is thinking.

"Yeah, boring." Now that I think of it, everything he learned - academically speaking, I mean - was by the G-Gnomes. Does he know how to learn from other sources? There was a fic I read a bit back, Muddling through Grey, if I recall correctly, which had some good points.

If it ever become relevant, I'll help how I can.

"All right, let's learn in the field." And, with a gesture, Captain Atom change the hard light whiteboard on a file, with the words classified neatly written under it.

"This is a cold case. Vietnam era." The file then display the photo of a man, with the file naming him Nathaniel C. Adams, apparently captain of the U.S.A.F.

"Captain Nathaniel Adams, United States Air Force. Convicted in 1968 of murdering Air Force General Clement Lemar. Adams died in prison, but I've received a reliable tip that he was framed."

Dramatic pause to let us all absorb the information, then he continues.

"Your assignment: Investigate. Prove Adams innocence or reconfirm his guilt and report back to me." He say, pointing a fingers towards us.

Kon look skeptic of that. "Really? you need super-powered operatives for this?"

The Captain smirk, before speaking again. "Right. Then, I'll continue the lecture."

"NO!" The voices of the others are strong enough to make my ears ring.

Everyone got up to escape from the room the faster they could, with me remaining back because of that stupid ban.
Kon stay behind for a second, to squeeze my shoulder, before flying away from the room - and Captain Atom's lecture - as fast as possible.

"Right, they said to the League that you were suspended by the service until the 16th. Well then, let's continue with the lecture."

This elicit a groan of horror from me.

"Oh god."

***************

Four hours. Four hours of a really boring, really exhausting lesson. And I retained at most ten percent of what he said, with my head aching like someone took a jackhammer at it.

I stumbled in my room, falling onto my bed and closing my eyes, just for few minutes. Blessed silence and darkness...

***************

I woke up at the sound of my cellphone ringing, a text alert. From Kon.

If I remember correctly... Wait, no. When did he get a cellphone? Think Jin, think.

"And when I've finished playing Winnie the Pooh, maybe I could focus a bit. I don't remember exactly when he got a cellphone, so I can only fault one person: Robin."

It was a fairly sure bet, after all.

"Well, let's see what he sent me... a photo?"
To be precise an old black-and-white photo of a group of Army Officers. With a bunch of notes in the margins. I sent back a string of "??????" to all of them.

Artemis answered with a brief, yet incredibly smug text.

'Our investigation. Had fun with the lecture? XD'

I sent back a simple message, exposing my answer in a concise and calm manner, as befitting of my role: 'FU'.

Then, a much more informative text came from Robin and Kaldur, with a bit more substance to it.

So, there was a smuggling ring going on? Interesting. And now they decided to kill everyone involved because the whole thing got reopened. Talking about shrewd.

But, as interesting all of this was, I didn't really care for all ff that. Yeah, I admit it, I'm really selfish. I cared for the wellbeing of my friends and not more than that.

'Is everyone okay?' I sent to Kon, then sending it to everyone else, just to be sure that everyone was really okay.

'All okay.' Was Kon short reply. The others... well, they were short. Not reassuring.

'You got hurt!!!' Was my reply to the resident Boy of Steel, with no avail. He didn't answer my sms or the only time I tried to call him. I relented after one try, I didn't want to distract him if he was in danger.

I remained awake until their returns, but everyone went to bed before saying anything to me, except for some fast waving, so I resigned to return to my bed and ask them all in the morning. Kon wasn't with them, but they said that he split from them and went to bed, so I guess he didn't want to talk with me.
I didn't sleep well.

Kon was now present at the reunion. I didn't hear a single thing of whoever was telling the whole thing was and I didn't really care. Me and him were going to have words...
Wishing For Dummies, or: A Magical Meeting.

Chapter Notes

This chapter was beat by Pietersielie on SV.

And for the song, you can find it here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEZ1qL1r_-k

Chapter 16: Wishing For Dummies, or: A Magical Meeting.

Mount Justice
August 14, 12:03

"Superboy," I called to him, a worried expression on my face, just to see him look at me with a puzzled expression.

"Yes?" He cocked his head a bit, coming closer and looming a bit over me, arms crossed on his chest, eyes fixed on mine.

"Uh..." I blinked a couple of time, before returning to my previous thoughts.

"Your chest. I know that you were hurt during the mission. Something about a sword?" I asked, my arms equally crossed on my chest, looking hard at him. He kept his look for a couple of seconds, before dipping his head in a nod.

"Yes. But I'm okay." Of course you were.

After an eyeroll from me, I arched an eyebrow. "Really? You're okay? Did the doctor say so?"

"I don't need to see a doctor. It's just a scratch." Please, you were cut by something the villains said was a weapon good enough to wound even Superman. There was no way that it's only a scratch.

"A X-Ionized weapon doesn't leave only a scratch. If you really don't want to go to the infirmary, could you at least wish to be healed?"

My question seemed to catch him by surprise, before a mulish look appeared on his face. I simply looked at him, noticing how the others were staring at us. Wow, I didn't realize that he was so close to me.

"Fine. I wish for you to resolve the problem." His words hit me like a lightning and I answer reflexively.

"As you wish." Snap.

Dli...
our sun was powering him up. I was never very good with science, but this was fascinating. Now, the problem is... ah-ha!

The wound was there, but it looked like something made by obsidian - which, I read somewhere, didn't cut the cells, but separated them. I could be wrong, however - seeing as the cell was simply divided from the adjacent one. It's slowing the healing too.

I could simply heal him, but... Well, he did ask me to resolve the problem, didn't he?

No, doing so would be a massive breach of his rights. Unless I asked him before. Can I do that?

"Hey, Superboy..." Whoa. My voice sounded like I was underwater. Strange, but kind of cool. Now that I thought about it, I kind of wanted a lava lamp.

"Jin! Is everything alright?!" He sounded panicked. Why? I was... ohh, right.

"Everything's fine, I just wanted to ask you something. I could simply heal you, but I could also resolve the problem to enhance your regeneration. What would you prefer?" Nice and simple. Hopefully that would stave off some of the panic.

"The second, please." Oh, now he was calmer. Good.

"Working on it." I wondered what I looked like from the outside when I'm doing this.

I again fell inside his genetic code, swimming between strands of energy and going around their conjunctions with the matter, seeing fractal-like creations where the two met, with an hidden layer around and inside them. I stopped for a moment, contemplating what it was. Then I simply continued, accepting their beauty without trying to divine their exact function. I wasn't a scientist.

At the end, I reached the point where the wish was centered. The part that regulated his regeneration. Now, I knew that changing the DNA of someone like this would be disastrous, but I had reality warping on my side, so I just needed to work on the conceptual level, instead of the material. After I did so, I simply watched how the rest of the DNA start adjusting: food intakes, processing, energy storage, etc.

...ing!

I returned to my body, seeing everyone looking at me with a strange look in their eyes. "Is everything okay?" I asked a bit bewildered. Why were they looking at me like they were seeing me for the first time?

"You didn't tell us you could do that!" Artemis accused, pointing a finger towards me.

"Doing what, exactly?" What did I do this time?

"Becoming smoke." Wait, what?

"Wait, what?"

"It's true." The voice of M'gann reached me from my side, making me turn towards her.

"You snapped your fingers and then... you became like a figure of smoke. Twirling and twisting on itself, sparkling in the light. It was so pretty!" Wow. She seemed to like... whatever I did a lot.

"Thanks M'gann. I honestly don't know, I just wanted to-hey!" I felt an arm around my waist, then getting picked up like a football.
"We're getting lunch." Kon was rather no-nonsense. He was carrying me like you would do to a ball of some kind, without even thinking about it. Robin and Wally started snickering, of course. They were going to grate on my nerves one time too many, one of these days.

"Superboy, wait for us." Kaldur called to us, jogging to reach us, with Artemis and M'gann following just behind him, both giggling like schoolgirls. Which Artemis actually was, now that I thought about it.

"Do you have to carry me like this?" I asked Kon, both amused and irked by his behavior. At least like how he was now.

"No." Well, that was informative.

Do you intend to continue to carry me like this?" I asked, seeing that he didn't exactly stop and the way he was carrying me was making me feel a bit like a scolded child.

He suddenly stopped, causing Wally to bump into him rather abruptly.

"What gives, man?" He was rubbing his nose, already a bit red from the impact. Kon didn't even answer, he simply changed my position to a more conventional carry - for him, at least - and started walking again towards the kitchen.

What got into him? I mean, it's not like I did something different... oooohhhhhh. He must be worried. Okay, then.

*****************

A relaxing afternoon. Couldn't ask for more. Well, no, I could. But why would I?

We're back on the beach, Wally in the sea playing with Robin and Kaldur, Artemis was basking in the sun while M'gann, Kon and myself were building a sandcastle. Without using our powers.

Strangely, or maybe not, Kon was the best of us three at doing that. He must be able to control his strength very precisely. Good for him.

"Superboy, you're very good at this!" M'gann was applauding him, with me in tow. Honestly, he was really good at this.

"Thanks." He had a look of focus on his face that put bomb squads to shame, while M'gann and I simply stayed there, ending up as assistants to him, bringing water or more sand as needed. It's unexpectedly fun. He was putting the final touches to the castle - the last part of the upper tower - when Wally came running towards us, still dripping with water.

"Hey, do you want to come and play? We were thinking of Volleyball -ooof."

I saw the whole thing in slow motion: Wally was running towards us, tripping on the bag that Artemis left beside her, falling and starting to roll towards us. To be more precise, towards the castle. I opened my mouth to shout, Kon started moving and M'gann launched herself in between Wally and us.

"Agh-"

"Ouch!"
Both of them went down in a tangle of limbs, between sounds of pain. Nothing looked serious, fortunately.

At the end M'gann was splayed on the beach with Wally on top of her, forming a X with their bodies. He was the first to get up, looking at her a bit sheepishly.

"Eh eh... Oops?"

At that we end up laughing, M'gann and Wally included.

It was a nice way to dissolve the remaining tension between us. Oh, things were still a bit strained, my secret-keeping wasn't forgiven, but Wally and Robin were laughing more genuinely, M'gann didn't look like she would cry every time she looked at me and Kaldur was shaking his head with a small smile on his face. A good day.

***************

Metropolis
August 16, 10:43

Metropolis was an interesting city. Being the original city of the Man of Steel lent it a certain amount of... credibility, I would say, or perhaps mystique. Surely looked like crime wasn't a problem.

Key word: looked.

Crime was there, but it came mainly in two forms: the grandstanding supervillains, and the petty thief. One destroyed the city on a surprisingly frequent basis, while the other generally lurked in the dark alleys of the city.

Yes, even in the shining Metropolis there were dark alleys where the various criminals, hobos and assorted lowlifes dwelled.

Well, there was the white collar crime, but that didn't exactly work for my analogies, so I was going to ignore it. After all, not even Superman could catch all of them.

However, I was walking - alone - in a dark alley, dressed as the most stereotypical 'rich kid' I could imagine: Tight jeans with artistically placed cuts, a tight t-shirt with a jacket on it, converse and three different bags from various shops.

All brand new. And brand, as well. I hated this outfit, but it was for a good cause.

Playing bait.

It didn't take much time before three guys covered in dirt got in front of me. One with a pipe, the others with knives. They had ugly smiles on their face.

"Hey pretty boy. Why don't you empty those pockets and then you can go on with your day?"

I cocked an eyebrow, then simply shrugged. A shark's smile on my face.

"Wrong target."

Then Kon fell from the sky, domino mask firmly on his face and S shield on his shirt. The thieves didn't last long after that.

***************
"Are you feeling better?" I asked, after finishing tying the criminals to a lamppost and alerting the cops.

"A bit." He unclenched his fists, still looking tense, but definitely better than before. It seemed that he had pretty strong feelings for this city. Or, to be more precise, for Superman. And not kind ones either.

"Wanna hunt some more criminals?" I asked, but he shook his head, forcing a deep breath and then simply taking me by the hand, removing his mask and dragging me towards a bar.

"Let's eat something." He was clearly straining to maintain composure, teeth grinding together. He was worse than before, but he seemed to relax, so why was he...

"Look! It's Superman!" Ah.

"Now that you mention it, I could eat something. Maybe chocolate. I know just the place." I smiled, tugging at his hands to make him turn to me.

"Teleport in three... two.. one..." and we disappeared from the city to reappear on the other side of the world, in Italy.

At 2'o clock in the morning. But there was a reason.

"Come with me." I smiled, bringing him towards a certain specific bakery, that sold croissants freshly baked. Really good croissants.

It was the right thing to ease my nerves and looked like it worked for him, too. His increased regeneration demanded more energy and materials from him, so that meant more food. And also more activity because he had more energy to burn.

He started spending more hours in the gym, working out with Kaldur. He also trained more with Black Canary, getting better at fighting without using his strength.

On my part, I was still not really good at fighting hand-to-hand, but my magic was getting better, now being able to do more than simply momentarily transmuting matter and creating crystals. I was now able to send lightning bolts towards people, as well as icicles or flames reliably.

I was getting better. It would take time, but that's how things go.

Unless I asked Marid, but I had a talk with him yesterday. Apparently, he was able to sense my subconscious desires and acting on it. I put a stop on that rather quickly, because having something like the memory loss was something that I didn't want to repeat.

"Wanna go back flying?" Kon asked me, slowly going up. I shrugged and followed him. We didn't go as fast as we could, obviously, but we made it to Mount Justice in around two and a half hours. That was pretty fast, admittedly, but neither of us were tired. I loved flying. Even if it was my only superpower, I would be happy with just that.

"Guys! Mario Kart tournament! Come on, we're waiting you!"

"Coming!" I smiled to Kon and flew towards the TV room, ready to beat Wally.

***************

Mount Justice
The whole team agreed that August 17 didn't exist in any form, shape or way.

So, no.

Mount Justice
August 18, 15:00

"Okay, who wants to make a summary of what happened during the last session?" I asked the others, sitting at the table with sheets, dice and snacks. I was busy creating the illusion and wanted to see how much they remembered.

"We kicked goblin's butts and saved the children!" Wally high-fived Robin, while laughing. Kaldur was looking disheartened by everything. Probably because he was remembering the whole string of ridiculous things that Robin wanted his character to make.

"And we found a letter on the corpse of a dead traveler, who was a knight of an order in service of the king. The letter was a message for a mysterious figure, saying that the chest had reached the destination. The only clue that we got was a name 'The Porcelain Queen'," Artemis summed up, waving the notes that she took during the last session.

"Exactly. Now, you were on your way back to the village, escorting the children, when...."

They managed to foil the agent of the Queen that I sent against them with some good Diplomacy and Bluff rolls, and got the reward for saving the children along with a map.

During the night at the inn they got attacked by a rogue that, despite not managing to kill any of them, escaped from them swearing vengeance in name of the Porcelain Queen. That prompted all of them to get everything they had and follow the map that, before, they dismissed as fake. Exactly as I planned.

They reached the Giant Hill, a nearby mountain pass where, you get it, a rather hostile giant that appeared casually to demand tribute from the travelers lived. I made one of them (Kaldur) roll to see if they were lucky or not.

They were.

And with that, I meant that they got to fight the Giant. It was a difficult fight, but they won the fight. After I fumbled the dice a couple of times. But their happy expressions at managing the fight was exactly what I was aiming for.

Mount Justice
August 19, 16:30

Another day of training. I hated training.

I stopped during my exercises with a perplexed look on my face, that prompted Black Canary to stop and look at me.
"What is the problem Djinni?" she asked, relaxing her guard slightly. I shook my head to stop staring the wall and blinked a couple of times to be sure that everything was okay again.

"Nothing, I just got the strangest sensation of déjà vu. Like I was saying something that I already said a lot of times before."

Judging by the way she was staring me, I was thinking that she didn't get it. Her expression morphed into a sly smile.

"Nice try, but you're not getting out of the training. Now, resume the position."

I didn't care if I was repeating myself, I... oh, what the hell. Let's focus on training. We trained for the afternoon, some light exercise to maintain the shape and perfect our fighting, mainly. It was easier than other days, except for the fact that Robin wasn't here with us. Bat-things to do, I imagine.

All in all, it was a normal day of exercise. Not many high point, but less low point, so that was good.

During the course of the day, Kon managed to lose his shirt after Black Canary had to leave to do League things, leaving our training unsupervised, right before he proceeded to enter a series of fights against Kaldur. Why did he have to lose his shirt?

"Initiate Combat Training. Three... Two... One..."

And, for the third time this evening, the two started fighting. I was simply looking at them bored out of my mind, while Artemis and M'gann were talking to one another, just to end up laughing a minute later. I returned my attention to the two currently fighting in the middle of the room, trying my best to keep my look of boredom off my face. I hated training.

"Fail: Aqualad." Oh, Kon won.

I politely clapped, my smile turning more real, secretly hoping that the training would end already.

"Black Canary taught me that," he remarked, smiling and dusting his hands.

The roof access opened and Red Tornado flew down, landing in front of all of us. Wally, as he almost always did, sped up to him, already talking.

"Do you have a mission for us?" He sounded cheerful. I imagined that he was a naturally joyful person. But I already knew what Red Tornado's answer would be.

"Mission assignments are the Batman's responsibility."

Old news. But Wally didn't look deterred.

"Yeah, but the Batman is with the Robin doing the dynamic duo thing in Gotham. But you're headed somewhere right? Hot date or a - a mission?"

Like a dog with a bone. Then was Kaldur's turn. Hmm, their dynamics is strangely fixed. I wonder if they planned it. Nah, that would be ridiculous.

"If we can be of help?" Kaldur could look responsible and affable in every situation. I wonder if he could maintain that look when covered in tar and feathers.

I almost fell down laughing, but I managed to restrain myself and keep my focus on what Red Tornado was showing us on the screen. It was the picture of an old man, with grey hair and a distinguished look to him.
"This is Kent Nelson. A friend. He is a hundred and six years old." Well, he doesn't look a day over... seventy? I wasn't good with ages.

"Guy doesn't look a day over ninety." Wally 'whispered', but all of us returned our attention to the screen. Kon ended at my side, like I was starting to expect from him. And... yes, here came the arms on the shoulders.

"And he has been missing for twenty-three days." That was worrying. Everyone was now looking more attentive. Kidnapping was never a good thing. And, more often than not, was rather complicated to deal with.

"Kent was a charter member of the Justice Society. The precursor to your mentors' Justice League." Justice Society? There was something like that?

"Of course! Nelson was Earth's sorcerer supreme. He was Doctor Fate!" Uh, this was the most excited I've seen Kaldur in days. Now that I thought about it, I should ask him about the Conservatory of Sorcery...

"Him..."

"Hng..." A wave of dizziness hit me and I sway on my feet for a second, followed instantly by a blinding headache that almost send me to my knees. I ended up falling on Kon, who immediately turned to me and... asked something? I couldn't hear things too well.

"Vermins that plagues the Earth..."

I could see the others around me, but I couldn't understand what they were saying. I held up a hand and everyone fell silent. Then, I closed my eyes and...

My ears popped and my mind cleared, even if some headache remained. I shook my head tentatively, but the lance of pain that speared through it stopped my movement instantly.

"Jin, are you okay?" Kaldur asked, while Kon was looking at me with a panicked look in his eyes.

"Just... just an sudden headache. It's gone now, but I'm okay."

"You don't look okay. You look like you didn't have a moment of rest for three days straight," Artemis commented, arms crossed, while M'gann was biting her lips and Wally was looking worried.

"Maybe you should stay here for this mission..." Yeah, that was not happening. Sorry M'gann.

"Not happening. Just because I had a little headache doesn't mean that you get to ditch me again. It would be the third mission where I don't get to come and that is not happening."

"Jin, this isn't about the number of missions you do. It's about your health," Kaldur scolded me, like you would a child.

"I'm still going." Yeah, I can be hardheaded. What gave you the impression that I wouldn't be?

"Don't make me order you to stay here." That was a low blow, Aqua-boy. Yeah, I maim the codenames of my teammates when I'm feeling irritated with them.

"Let's compromise. I come, but I stay in my bottle. Does this sounds good enough?" I asked, with the full intention of going either way. Kaldur knew this too, because he simply sighed and shook his head. Both of us ignored the question that Artemis was asking in the background.
"Fine. Let's go." I smirked at his defeat. Then smoke enveloped me and I was back in my bottle. Hmm, it'd been a while, but it's exactly how it was the last time.

Then I fell on the bed, head pounding. Gah, I forgot how much headaches hurt! I needed to sleep a bit. Falling on the bed, I closed my eyes and let my head relax. Sleep grabbed me and dragged me down, to the depths of the abyss.

**************************

I saw two great stars, one gold and one red, fighting one another without respite. In the middle of their battle, a blue and green gem sat. And, despite the tremendous energy that the two stars wielded, the gem was intact and without a scratch. Then, I looked deeper. Ellipses of energies intersected in the gem, expanding bigger than the two stars. The White and the Black fought, grey skittered across them and other colors were splattering around in the painting. From beyond purple came like a wave and let everything untouched and yet different. Then...

I woke up.

**************************

I woke up when I heard Kon scream of pain and, without waiting, I got out of the bottle, not bothering to check what was outside, and found myself immediately dragged down from some kind of gravity. Towards a pit full of lava.

"GAH!" I extended my will in a bubble around the others, prompting them to let go of their hold.

"Where the hell are we?" I asked, rather worried, especially when I saw gold beams starting to hit my bubble. And starting to consume it. Slowly, sure, but they were consuming it all the same.

"In the tower of Fate. Where Wally opened his mouth!" Artemis answered, glaring at Wally, who had a mulish expression on his face.

"It's not my fault if the hologram can't take a bit of criticism," he said, crossing his arms and glaring at Artemis.

"You said that it was a two bit piece of code that ran on Vista!" Wow. That was...

Okay, if I was an A.I. I would've take that pretty seriously.

"What kind of question did the hologram ask to be answered that way?" was my only question, because damn! I mean, now that I was here it was pretty obvious that magic existed. I was the living proof! But there weren't any proof that mages and other practitioners existed. Fuck, I had the vague sensation that he was reevaluating his entire worldview after his last rag of self-certainty was torn away.

"It was... We never answered!" M'gann shouted, suddenly brightening. "Hello Megan! Red Tornado sent us to see if Mr. Nelson and the Helmet were safe!"

Two sheets of stone slid from the side of the pit and covered the lava, prompting me to release the spell - thus ending the continuous assault on my shield - and landing on the now-present floor. Kon looked down at his feet.

"Those were my favourite boots!" His words were more of a growl than speech, coming from the back of his throat like something from an animal.
"I can remake them, if you want," I offered, kind of embarrassed that I wasn't there to help before that happened.

"You can talk about clothes after we get out of this tower. Now let's see how we can get out of here!" Wally looked a bit ragged, like he didn't know what to believe anymore.

He sped up to the point of the floor where a handle stuck out and grabbed it, before looking at us.

"If under this door there is the lava, the backdraft will roast us alive. I wanted all of you to know."

A flurry of snow escaped the open trapdoor, just making Wally set his mouth in a thin line.

"A pocket dimension?" I asked to no-one, flying inside of it. I had some kind of sensation that felt like a tickle to my mind. Kind of strange, but it kept on distracting me, so I ignored the two teenagers bickering - Artemis and Wally, in the case it wasn't obvious - and started walking on, with Kon practically glued to my side, while Kaldur and Megan were talking about something. Maybe about their respective experience about magic?

I was too distracted to stop when the others stopped. So I walked directly into Wally and Artemis, who had grabbed a wooden cane with a golden head.

"Djinni!"

Golden magic enveloped us three and we were somewhere else. Somewhere that didn't follow the rules of the normal euclidean geometry, it seemed.

"Abra Kadabra!" Wally's shout brought me back to the present, making me follow the direction of his look and making me see something that made my skin crawl with disgust, just before another crippling headache hit me.

"Lord of Chaos.... More vermins...

Marid was talking again. And judging by its tone, it wasn't happy about the grey-white skinned boy with the orange cat.

Then a flying old man reached us, grabbed the (presumably his) cane and ushered all of us into an elevator that wasn't there a moment ago.

The boy threw a tantrum that looked more like an infant's, but the doors closed before I could see more than that.

"I'm Kent Nelson, by the way," Mr. Nelson greeted us, with an air of sophistication that was kind of hard to fake. This was a man who knew what he could do, what his limits were and was prepared to reach them. A dangerous man, in short.

Sadly, Wally wasn't really cowed by him, but Artemis's elbow worked twice as well.

"I'm Artemis. Miss manners here, is Wally. And he is Jin."

"Hello." I waved, smiling even when he looked at me with a glint of suspicion, and of recognition, in his eyes.

"Well, I must warn you. We are up against an opponent of tremendous mystical power." The boy, I guessed.

"Who, Abra Kadabra? Tsk. Flash proved he uses futuristic technology to simulate magic, he is all
show and no biz." Wait, really? Hmm.

Artemis looked quite unconvinced, but the next words of Mr. Nelson stopped her.

"Right you are."

"He is?"

"Abra is indeed a showman, but Klarion the Witchboy, the one with the cat, is an actual Lord of Chaos, the ultimate enemy of a Lord of Order like Dr. Fate."

At that I lost the track of the conversation, because I was trying to block another wave of disgust from Marid.

I barely managed to notice the door in the air to the snow-covered mountain peak where we were before that Mr. Nelson opened, before returning to my internal struggle.

I returned to my senses only when a rather frantic Kon caught me by the shoulders and started checking me over.

"I'm fine," I stated, but before I could say anything more than that, a bolt of electric energy divided us, Abra Kadabra starting to try to blast us, while me and Wally brought Mr. Nelson towards the huge golden bell in front of us.

How distracted was I to miss all of this?

Well, Mr. Nelson hit the bell with the cane, making it sound and start to glow gold, before entering inside it. Only that wasn't inside the bell, but on the top of the tower.

"Non-euclidean geometry. Nice."

"Not the moment Jin!" Wally said, reacting faster than I ever could and dragging Mr. Nelson away from the red bolt of energy that almost hit him.

I turned towards the source of the bolt and found Klarion there.

My only response was to bring up a shield that covered us three and the golden helmet stationed in the air.

His answer was to start flinging more red bolts against us.

"Not many Djinn still around, eh?" Mr. Nelson asked, with a playful smile on his face. "And even less that wouldn't share the rather particular views of Klarion."

Why would he... right, generally Djinn are on the side of Chaos in the struggle between Order and Chaos.

"I'm... complicated. I was a human from a different plane of existence and then I appeared here. Like this." There. Explanation done. I reinforced the shield in the various points that were starting to disappear.

"Interesting. This reminds me of a young practitioner that I met in my younger years. You see, he..."

It actually sounded interesting, but Wally stopped both of us.

"Not to be the party pooper, but we have an angry Lord of Chaos trying to kill us. Could you please
concentrate on the enemy!?” He finished on a high note (Ehe), but then got a look on his face. The one who said that M'gann was talking to him.

"The others are in trouble!" Awesome. Because... nope, not going to tempt Murphy.

"Well, I guess there us only one thing to do." Mr. Nelson started to reach for the Helmet, before I stopped him.

"Now, let's not be hasty. I actually have a better idea. Wally?" I smiled, to the sudden confusion of Mr. Nelson.

"Yeah?" He looked close to hyperventilation.

"Would you be so kind to express a wish?" I smiled. I smiled with all the hate of an alien (in the literal sense of the word) creature that was pounding into my skull.

"What?" Mr. Nelson's reaction was kind of understandable, but Wally took on much faster.

"I wish for you to save all of us!" Nice and open. Perfect.

"As you wish." I smiled the most devious smile I could manage. Then space broke and I had Kadabra in front of me. Then Wally punched him thirty times in the space of two seconds.

"Now I'm going to take care of Klarion. If you would be so kind as to keep the Helmet with you until I have finished?" I asked Mr. Nelson, who suddenly looked much more giddy than a second ago.

"Why, my boy, this will be something that is not seen everyday."

*************

I closed the space warp, returning my attention to Klarion, only to notice that he had almost managed to destroy my shield. Well, no point in keeping it.

I dismissed it and got revealed to the child in all my glory. I went for the full stock: flowing hair, arms crossed, smirk in place. And taunt ready.

"And you would be a Lord of Chaos? Please, you couldn't bring Chaos to a bunch of babies!"

Not my best work, I admit it. Still, it worked, and that was the important part. A red bolt hit me in the chest, obscuring my form for a second. Then, the music started.

"I must admit, your parlor tricks are amusing."

Another bolt of energy was his answer at this, but I contrasted with a negligent wave of my hand. Then, I retaliated with a bolt of my own.

"I bet you've got a bunny under your hat!"

And the cat was suddenly in a bunny costume. Klarion looked even more angry at this.

"Now here's your chance to get the best of me, hope your hands are hot!"

I capitalized on his moment of distraction to envelope him in a circle of flames that hungrily jumped towards him, threatening to burn him to a crisp. He managed to shield himself.
"C'mon, clown, let's see what you've got!"

At this he started retaliating, with rays of energy that looked like they could hurt a lot. Still, they weren't a problem. Mainly because they were targeting an illusion, but that's a small detail.

"You can try to slam me with your hardest stuff, but your double whammy isn't up to snuff."

What could only be compared to a magical grenade went off right at his side, making him turn towards the real me was. Well, used to be. Illusions are all the rage this season, eh?

"I'll set the record straight, you're simply out of date, you're only second rate!"

An entropy spell hit him in the back and made him grow old in seconds, before he managed to dispel the effect and turn around again, spraying waves of red energy around trying to hit me.

"Where are you!!"

"You think your cat's a meanie, but your tiger's tame."

I forced him on the defensive, sending lances of lightning against the cat, forcing him to protect his conduit. Right, I knew that. How?

"You've got a lot to learn about the Djinn game."

Again, arcs of energy arched towards him in a perfect sphere, forcing him to erect a stone wall in the nick of time.

"You will pay for this!"

"So for your education, I'll reiterate: You're only second rate!!"

A ten ton anvil dropped on him. And got blasted to dust, but it served its duty: distraction.

"Men cower at the power in my pinky..."

I showed up from my illusion, only to wave my pinky at him. Then I continued while he was looking rather red in the face from rage.

"... my thumb is number one on every list!"

I made a thumbs-up, only to put my hand horizontal before pointing my thumb to the ground, in a mimic of the Romans. That made him splutter, apoplectic. And send forth a rather big beam of red energy. Almost got me there.

"But if you're not convinced that I'm invincible, put me to the test!"

This was the most dangerous part of my plan. I stepped up to the middle of the tower, leaving myself open at all attacks. Klarion smiled the smile of the deranged.

"I'd love to lay this rivalry to rest!"

Just to hastily sidestep the rock coffin that tried to catch him.

"Go ahead and zap with the big surprise, snap me in a trap, cut me down to size!"

I managed to shield myself from the volley of attacks that he sent my way, teleporting out of the way
from a ray from the sky and managed a smile towards him.

"I'll make a great escape, it's just a piece of cake, you're only second rate!!"

At this, I threw a cake towards him. It missed, but it was the gesture that counted.

"Shut up, shut UP, SHUT UP!!"

"You know, your hocus pocus isn't tough enough."

The floor stopped existing under his feet. Stones rained from the sky and two or three lightning bolts aimed directly at him.

"And your mumbo-jumbo doesn't measure up."

Klarion grabbed Teekl right before he became a pancake, only to shield from a whip made of fire.

"Let me pontificate upon your sorry state, you're only second rate!!"

My voice was getting angrier, a growl hidden under the words, while my attacks were getting faster.

"Zaba-caba-dabra!"

A water stream that cut through the stone almost got him in the chest, but his otherworldly nature and his shield saved his life.

"Granny's gonna grab ya!!"

Skeletons manifested from thin air, starting to advance towards him, making it difficult for him to dodge my attacks and destroying the skeletons at the same time.

"Alakazam-da-mus, this things bigger than the both of us!" Because I knew that I wasn't all-powerful. But I was powerful enough, for now.

"So spare me your tremendous scare! You look horrendous in your underwear."

No, I didn't really vanish his pants, I simply tied his ankles together, making him fall. Well, not fall, because he could fly, but blocking him for the second I needed.

"And I can hardly wait to discombobulate, I'll send ya back and packing in a shipping crate!" A cube of energy manifested around him, starting to glow with purple magic and resisting any attack that he tried to use.

"You'll make a better living with a spinning plate, you're only second rate!!"

I morphed the cube to a sphere and started to shrink it. He panicked and teleported away. I won the fight against a Lord of Chaos.

That made my face split in a smile so big that my cheeks hurts.
"... and he was all zap and then there was fire everywhere, I swear. It circled around Klarion, before jumping towards him, which he shielded against..."

All of us were meeting with Robin in Gotham for a joint patrol and to see how he was after he bailed on us yesterday. He wasn't happy that we managed to meet a Lord of Chaos when he wasn't with us, and it showed on his face, being both scowling and happy at the narration that Wally was giving.

Apparently Mr. Nelson had managed to get a view of my battle on the top of the tower, so everyone saw me fighting on par with a heavy hitter of the magic world.

I was backed by a wish, so I had absolutely no problem with admitting to myself that, if I was alone yesterday, I would've lost. Without a doubt.

But I won and managed to understand how my magic worked a bit better, so I was chalking this up as a victory. Now, if someone would explain to me why we were in Gotham...

"It sounds like you had a lot of fun." Robin was pouting. Oh, precious child. I will treasure this to tease you mercilessly.

"My definition of fun doesn't involve being electrocuted," was the reply from Kaldur, who was looking down the roof to the street, to see if there was something in this part of the city. Apparently not.

"And I would like to know why we are here," Wait, that was my voice. Did I say that out loud?

"To admire the view, obviously." Artemis replied sarcastically, waving her hand towards the city. It was dark and dirty, with too many gargoyles and a lot of smoke.

"Well, we're here to check on Robin, that much was obvious. But why are we all here in Gotham and Robin isn't at the HQ?" My question should be a bit more clear now. Let's hope that someone would answer me.

"There are rumors that Bane is in town and I wanted to see if we could discover something ourselves." Robin changed from normal kid to superhero with an uncanny ease.

"He's back?" M'gann asked, looking a bit shocked by this notion, like all of us.

"I thought that after the beating that we gave him in Santa Prisca, he would be more cautious," Kaldur said, a
level-headed look on his face, already performing the role of leader.

"Well, apparently not, because there are reports of Venom on the streets again," was the only answer Robin gave before shushing all of us. Then he pointed towards a warehouse that had its door just slightly open, a goon getting out with a crate full of something.

"What's the plan, fearless leader?" Artemis had an arrow already cocked in her bow and aiming at the goon. A net arrow or something like that, probably.

"We need to know what they are doing here. Can you bind him without anyone hearing us?" Hmm... good plan. How... and Artemis shot her arrow, hitting the man right in the middle of his chest, the crate falling to the ground and splintering, revealing vials of a green liquid that rolled towards the street.

The upside was that the foam that came out from the arrow covered his mouth and he didn't have time to scream.

"Miss Martian." At Kaldur's command, our resident Martian took to the sky and brought up the mass of foam without leaving evidence behind, except for the broken crate.

After a few seconds, a group of other minions came out of the warehouse and, upon seeing their Venom on the ground, whipped out guns and other assorted weaponry as they started searching for the culprit. Sadly for them we were already on the roof, well hidden from whoever was at ground level.

"Can you find out what they are doing here and where their bases are?"

Miss Martian nodded at Robin before focusing on the captured man and concentrating. Her eyes went white and some beads of sweat started to form on her forehead. Kon snaked an arm around my shoulders by reflex. He still wasn't very comfortable with forcibly mind reading someone. In this, he was a better man than me.

I knew that, without a shadow of doubt, if I had telepathy I would abuse it like there was no tomorrow. Good thing that I didn't have it.

"Anything?" Robin was a bit impatient, looking around the roof and periodically checking the ground, to be sure that no one managed to sneak on us.

"It's... difficult. He can... resist a bit, but I'm almost..." she focused even more, eyes squinting. I could practically see an aura around her. Then, she relaxed and the man started to curse, luckily muffled by the foam.

"Found it. It's a warehouse in that direction, three streets. But..." She looked uncertain of something, glancing to the others, before looking at me.

"Bane is angry. And wants to take revenge on you."

Well. That's perfect.

The way Kon tightened his hold made me realize that he thought the same.

**********
The others weren't happy with my idea. Kon, especially, vetoed it rather emphatically. Kaldur listened to him. So I wouldn't using myself as bait entering in the warehouse by the front door, but I would stay in the back with Miss Martian and Artemis to keep an eye on the situation. And to intervene if it was necessary.

"Sooo, Djinni..." Artemis started, looking at me with a mischievous smirk on her face.

"Yes?" I managed to mutter, my eyes glued to the binoculars I manifested to keep a closer eye on the situation. Man, not having the glasses anymore was weird, but I adapted surprisingly quickly.

"What's the deal with the jacket?" Ah.

"Dunno. It just appears every time that I lose focus, so I consigned it as a loss and stopped trying to change it."

I could practically feel both of them blink at this, their incredulity obvious. I smirked under the binoculars, secretly happy that I managed to make Artemis stop for a second. I swear, that girl had nerves made of ice.

"And with Superboy?" Of course she wouldn't stop at that. So she was now trying to embarrass me bringing up the fact that I'm his personal plushy? She would need to try harder.

"He's Superboy." Why, yes, my answer was completely nonsensical and only vaguely related to your question. No, I'm not being difficult, why do you think that?

"Artemis..."

"What's the deal between you two?"

M'gann, you are a sweet, sweet girl, even if you have a crush the size of Mount Justice. But trying to stop Artemis now was only putting you in her sights.

"Apparently he prefers me to the others. No idea why, honestly." I was lying like a rug. Also, Artemis was starting to getting frustrated by my lack of responses to her needling.

Sister, I am Italian. We practically created the needling you were trying to use against me. My grandma could win a war just by showing up and lecturing the enemy. What in the world made you think that you would be able to get a rise from me?

I was rolling my eyes behind the lenses of my binoculars, readying myself for the next fake-question that she was going to send my way, when something went wrong.

Very wrong.

Kon was screaming. From the inside of the warehouse. All of us started to move at our top speed towards the buildings, a trail of purple smoke behind me while rage and fear were mixing in me. I was terrified that Kon was badly hurt.

And, I swore to myself, I was ready to rip whoever made Kon scream into confetti.

****************

"Amore celeste in croce..."

My whisper was barely audible, my eyes locked on the scene in front of me.
Robin and Kid Flash were fighting against a group of minions that managed to keep them somewhat at bay, while Kaldur was keeping three others armed in insulated suits back.

At the center of the room there was Kon, on his back and with a grey tint to his skin, the boots of Bane on his stomach. Both of them were washed in a pale green light that came from the rock that the villain held in his hand.

Kryptonite.

"Ah, nino! I was waiting for you!" quel figlio di una pu- Bane said to me while grinding his boot on Kon, making him grunt in pain and turn even greyer.

I didn't hear what he said after that. I didn't hear what Artemis and Miss Martian were saying to me. I came back to my senses only when a tear fell on my hand and shocked me out of my reverie.

Then I turned towards Bane, who was looking at me like he'd never seen me before.

"Ora, figlio di una cagna, listen to me and listen well, because I will not say it more than once."

My voice made the air drop at least ten degrees. Celsius.

"You have five... no, three seconds to put the green rock away and run out from here, or I will be even angrier than I am now and I will find a way to vent all my anger on you in the most horrible and painful way I can imagine."

I raised my right hand, index, middle and ring finger extended, my pinkie under my thumb. The other sounds in the warehouse stopped, everyone looking at me like I was something that none had ever seen before.

"You can bark all you want, nino, but.."

"Two," I interrupted his monologue, bringing down my ring finger. I was floating, a cloud of smoke around me, slowly getting closer to him.

"You come closer and I will shoot the brains out of your boy here." He stopped me cold, a gun now pointed towards Kon's skull, who was looking at it and then at me, a pained expression on his face.

I stopped, but I lowered my index finger, leaving my hand in a very obvious gesture and making Kid Flash snicker a bit, even if the situation wasn't really the right one.

"One."

"Cute. Now, you will..."

"Zero."

I raised my left hand and a stream of lightning came out, hitting Bane right in the chest and slamming him against the wall at the back of the building, but not before being smashed through several crates of Venom in the process.

I was at Kon's side in the second right after, taking the kryptonite and covering it with a layer of magic that blocked its rays. Already Kon was looking better and better, his normal scowl on his face, his head turned toward me.

"You're okay, you're okay, you just need a bit of sun and everything will be okay..."
I was panicking. In a rather calm manner, but I was panicking. More power was pumped around and inside the green rock, my fear of even a single ray escaping enough that I was losing control of my magic.

Kon's hand on my arm made me relax a bit, but not enough to making me stop fretting over him.

The sound of fighting was more background noise than anything else, really.

And that was the reason why I didn't hear Bane getting up, raising his gun and shooting me. The first hit went awry, not even coming close to hitting me or Kon, but in my panic I launched myself on top of him, trying to cover his still recovering body with mine.

I could take a bullet. He, right now, I wasn't too sure.

Sadly, the next bullet didn't hit me. It hit the damned green rock, that was now a more purple-black-mud color, from my magic intermingling with the rock.

The explosion robbed me of both my hearing and my sight. I felt Kon's hand drift away and I grabbed him with all my strength.

Then, what I could only described as a vacuum sucked me and Kon away from here.
Hickory Dickory Dock, or: Stranded.

Chapter Notes

Another short chapter. This was betaed by BurningSayian on SB.

Hickory Dickory Dock, or: Stranded.

I slowly woke up, my regeneration dissipating the last vestiges of headache from my head. I was laying on something warm and solid, but slightly pliable … aaand it was moving up and down rhythmically.

I sprung up with a scream lodged in my throat, looking frantically around me, searching for Kon, until I found him acting as my pillow. He looked okay, healthy skin, no visible wounds, and breathing was normal.

"Superboy, are you okay?"

I shook him a couple of time, bringing him back to the world of the waking. He woke up with a gasp, almost like he was emerging from a nightmare.

"What... what happened?"

His voice was harsh, like someone had replaced his throat with sandpaper. He coughed a couple of time, before watching me in the red penumbra of the place.

"Bane. He had some Kryptonite. I haven’t the foggiest idea on how he managed to get one, but he had a piece."

"You saved me." He was looking at me with an intense look on his face, and maybe it was because of the light, but his eyes looked darker than the normal blue.

"Well, yes. But I also created whatever brought us here." And I gestured to our surroundings, some kind of hallway where the walls were made of... flesh? I think? Certainly a red substance that looked like flesh.

"I know this place."
Kon's words brought my attention back to him, noticing only now the way he was looking around with a haunted look in his eyes. Then he got up, his hand automatically circling my wrist, and started walking towards one end of the hallway.

I would've asked him about, but he didn't look like was in the mood to talk, so I followed, floating behind him, a bit spooked by the – well everything here. Honestly, it looked like something out of a horror film. There was a heavy silence in the whole place and his steps were muffled by the walls. Which might have been closing in on us!? Oh, let's just ignore it and move on.

We reached a door, one of the circular ones, made of metal and with a console on the side.

He got near it and typed something on it, making the door open without a sound. Behind it the room was even more dark, with the insides almost completely obscured.

Both of us entered the room, disregarding the door that closed behind us. In front of us a pale blue light started to shine on the content of the place.

A cylindrical pod, with three white small creatures with glowing red horns inside it, at the top, sitting on what looked like a metal divider.

Under them there was a body with pale skin and black, short hair. His eyes were closed, like he was sleeping.

A white bodysuit with a red S shield was his only garment, somewhat obscured by the logo on the glass, a simple Kr inside a circle.

"The Cadmus Lab."

The only sentence that I didn't think I would hear. Kon was looking at Superboy... at himself... with the eyes of a spectator and he was shocked by what he was seeing.

"Hey, are you okay?"
My voice was low, soft and caring, not wanting to trouble him more than he already was.

"That's... me."

It was the only thing that he managed to say, before flying near the glass and putting his hand on it, his gaze transfixed by the clone inside.

"How is this possible?"

I had no answer to give him. No idea. It could a parallel world (god knows that they are a dime a dozen in the DC or Marvel), it could be the past, it could be an illusion...

There were a lot of possibilities. And just *assuming* we knew what was the right one was asking to be killed. Or worse, probably worse.

The hiss of the door was what shook me from my indecision.

Someone was entering the room and I didn't want them to find another Superboy in here.

I tackled Kon, veiling both of us with my magic, a simple *Not Here* hastily brought up, making us seemingly disappear from reality.

Or at least I hoped.

A woman dressed with a lab coat walked inside holding and examining a packet of papers she brought with her, all the while silently muttering something to herself. The whole thing didn't last more than few minutes, but that was when everything went wrong. Or right, depending on the viewpoint.

The door was closing behind the doctor, when someone jammed it open with a tank, long enough to make three figures enter in the room. Robin, Kid Flash and Aqualad.

I stared. Kon stared. What the hell is going on?!
They didn't notice us, but, in the spirit of better safe than sorry, I floated with Kon towards the ceiling, all the while my magic keeping us hidden. The G-Gnomes didn't register us, either.

We watched in a daze how the trio managed to persuade Superboy to their side. How he discovered that he couldn't fly and how that discovery broke his heart and mine.

And Kon, if the way he was gripping at me and my bottle was an indication.

Jin, do you think that you could...?"

I blinked a couple of time, before completing the question in my head. well, of course I could give him the ability to fly, but the question was: should I?

In the end, I will always follow my instincts. Because I learned that when I don't, I end worse than how I was.

"You just need to wish for it. You know this, no?"

I smiled good-naturedly at Kon, which cracked a small smile himself, before gripping my bottle tighter.

"I wish for that Superboy to be able to fly."

And so, as I've done many times now, I answered the pull of the wish.

"As you wish."

Snap.

Dling!
And, without anybody finding us, I made the Superboy of here able to fly. He would only discover this when he jumped the next time, but at least he would have the sky.

As long this wasn't the past, because if it was I just screwed things up and divided the timeline in a parallel world where who knows where I would end.

Well, seeing as me and Superboy were still here, I'm guessing that I didn't erase our meeting. Good.

"You need to ask for more wishes. I really don't want to risk it."

He looked at me and rolled his eyes exasperatedly, before speaking.

"If you are so sure, fine. I wish for a dozen wishes."

"As you wish."

Snap.

Dling!

Well, this would coast us over for a bit. We hurried behind the group, watching their actions.

We watched the group as they escaped the lab, the fight against Blockbuster in the hall of the Labs and the way the won hat fight. And the first view of the moon that Superboy experienced.

The arrival of the Justice League, their rank closing against the adults. The way Superman treated Superboy.

I was biting my nails, while Kon was silent as a grave, watching intently towards his other self. Superman turned his back to him.
No bottle came from space.

And I deflated like a popped balloon. So, this was canon or, at least, very similar to it. Well, it was.

"Can you wish for us to return home? I have no idea on how I bring us here and I really don't think this is the right moment to experiment."

Kon looked at me, before stretching his arms on my shoulders and squeezing a bit, like he was trying to comfort me.

"I wish for us to return home."

"As you wish."

Snap.

Dling!

We started to vanish, slowly, while I took my time to sort all the various alternate realities that were out there and found the right one. It was easier than I thought, but I must've dropped the concealing magic, because Superboy was looking straight at us. Well, at Kon.

Kon was saying something, but it was too low for me to understand. It seemed unimportant, so I returned to my duty and finally found the right place. Our Mount Justice.

We vanished into thin air.

Just to reappear in the middle of a serious meeting between our Team and the League.
The questions that Batman asked us were more of an interrogation than anything else. Question after question, relentless in his pursuit of the truth, like a dog with a bone.

In the end I told him everything that happened, why it happened, what my hypothesis was and a solemn promise of not doing it again. Kon passed on something similar, not that it convinced him to move away from me.

Batman agreed on my opinion of the place, that it was a parallel dimension (or something like that), and made me promise to not go there again.

He gave me good reasons for that prohibition, though: the fact that someone of one dimension messing with another was grounds for interdimensional wars. And I didn't want to be the Helen of the situation, thank you very much.

"Djinni. Given what happened, I think that it would be wiser if you had some formal training in magic, instead of relying on your instincts."

I was ready to start complaining, but the Dark Knight continued before I could voice my - admittedly childish - objections.

"Giovanni Zatara agreed to teach you the basics, starting from tomorrow."

That was a good offer. A really good offer. Mainly because I would get to know more about magic from a veritable master of the art. It was a golden opportunity.
"And you would be excused from Black Canary's training sessions for the length of your magic training."

"I accept."

I would've accepted even without the training concession, but this was the icing on the cake, so to speak. And, as I've already said ad nauseam, I hate training.

Okay, let's make a concession. I didn't hate training. I simply disliked it. I liked to complain, that's all.

"Zatara will come to take you to his house tomorrow morning. Be prepared."

Then he turned towards the others.

"You will have a session with Black Canary at the same time, so you won't be able to go and watch. Zatara was very clear that this lesson could be dangerous and he didn't want anyone to get hurt." And, moving silently, Batman vanished in the shadows.

**************

Mount Justice

August 22, 09:49

Kon was sulking. I bet that he would protest my words, but he was on the couch, playing a random fighting game that Wally brought from home and that I hadn't tried yet, with a murderous expression on his face. He was mashing the buttons hard enough to be heard, but not hard enough to break the controller.

He also didn't say a word to me the entire morning, stayed away from me without dragging me somewhere even once and barely looked in my direction.
I was a bit conflicted. I knew that this was nothing and that he would be over it by tomorrow morning, but that didn't mean that I liked seeing Kon in this mood.

The fact that I didn't know how long the lesson would last was another point that made us both a bit uncertain.

"What's with the long face?"

That was the only thing Robin asked, obnoxiously slurping his juice box, balancing on the chair across me while I was eating my breakfast.

There were a lot of answers that I could have given the Boy Wonder, but I didn't know which to choose, so I simply continued munching my cookies and ignored him. Robin didn't say anything, but his smile got wider, while, in the background, the sound of the game got louder.

"Djinni."

Batman appeared from nowhere right behind me, making me almost choke on my cookie, making Robin laugh, a short, high sound, before I glared at him and made the chair disappear, sending him sprawling on the ground.

"Ouch! Dude."

Batman reminded us of his presence with a sharp cough, making me stiffen a bit, before I got up from the chair and turned towards him.

"I'm ready."

"This way."

The last thing I heard from the room was the sound of a controller breaking into smaller pieces, before the light of the Zeta-Tube enveloped me and I was gone.
I met Mr. Zatara at the exit of the Zeta-Tube, he was a tall man with a pale complexion and a thin mustache on his upper lip. He wore a black tux with a white shirt and a red bowtie, a shiny black top hat and white gloves the last details of his work uniform.

I wondered who thought that a stage magician could moonlight as a superhero. Not that he did a bad job, he just...

Well, to be fair, I didn't know anything about him or his work, only a bit on his daughter. And even that was only tangential, barely related to that one comic I read on John Constantine. Did Constantine exist in this universe?

"Zatara will take you from here. Listen to him and do not cause any other problems."

I guess he was still pissed on the whole dimensional travel and the missing day, hm? Well, it's not like I could exactly fault him for that...

"You are Jin, right? Or do you prefer Djinni?" Mr. Zatara asked me, his words a little accented, but carrying well and with a warm smile.

"Oh, uh... Jin is fine. Sir."

Mine, compared, were not.

"Giovanni is fine. Or Mr. Zatara, if you want to be formal."

I didn't expect this. Stupid, stupid habit of mine...

"Mr. Zatara would be better. I've had this problem with pronouns since my first year of school..."

Yeah, I spoke to my elementary teacher in third person. And I kept the habit. Not funny to explain it again and again to everyone who asked me about it.
"Well, don't worry about it. Now, let's go to my house. Stay near me and don't wander, the defenses on the house are dangerous. *Tropelet.*" 

And with a flash, we were gone. 

******************* 

We reappeared in front of a big mansion on top of a hill, with a grey stone stairwell that lead directly to the front door. The landscape was extremely green around us and I couldn't see other houses behind the trees. The air was... electric, if I needed a word to use, with a pressure that weighed on me. 

Marid was fortunately silent. 

"Welcome to Shadowcrest, Jin. Keep this on you at all times, unless you want to test the defenses of our home."

It was a medallion, made of some kind of greyish metal, that was really strange. It prickled at my skin with the complexities of the spellwork on it. 

"Now, let's start right away. What do you know about magic?"

He was kind, but he was also evidently a no-nonsense kind of person. Right to the point. I could work with that. 

"That it is a type of energy that can be used to shape reality."

At least, that was that I thought. Probably wrong, but, eh. 

"Partially right, partially wrong. Magic is..."
"Dad? Can I come in?"

A young voice, female, came from the door barely a second before it opened. The classic tactic of asking to enter, then enter before the adult said no. Typical.

In the frame of the door stood Zatanna Zatara, pale, long black hair, white t-shirt and soft pajama pants. On her feet she wore fluffy bunny slippers. White bunny slippers.

"Yoh," I greeted with a two finger salute, my face posed in a neutral visage. What did I know of this Zatanna?

Nothing, so let's treat her like a person instead of a comic character, eh, me?

"What are you?" she asked, voice immediately hard and on guard, face settled into grim determination, clearly ready to spout some backward words to send me into a world of hurt. She was this fierce at thirteen?

She and Robin would be perfect together. Or kill each other. Or both.

And I needed to answer to the mini-mage in fluffy slippers before she tried to curse me.

"A new superhero. A pleasure to make your acquaintance, miss. You can call me Jin."

I took a bow, sweeping my right hand in a wide arc in front of me, while the left went at the small of my back, eyes up towards her, a light smile on my face.

"And who do I have the pleasure to address, milady?" I asked, returning to a standing position and letting the jacket flap open and my hands at my sides, non-threateningly as possible.

"... Zatanna. Zatanna Zatara."

The poor dear looked a bit red in the face. I wondered why.
I blinked once, before smiling slightly. Did I drink milk without noticing it? This behavior wasn't normal in the slightest.

I was treating this like a fight. One where I was trying to keep my opponent off balance.

"The daughter of Mr. Zatara, I assume? Well, it's an greater pleasure to meet you then. I have the utmost privilege to be his student for now, in the hope that I could work my magic better than I can now."

She looked relaxed and less on edge, even with the same red on her face. I overdid it a lot, but she was far too sheltered and far too young to notice it.

"You are a mage?"

She was now curious, the sensation that she was ready to set me on fire vanishing, soon replaced by a more inquisitive one.

"In a manner of speaking. I can use magic and, if this makes me a mage, you are indeed correct." She wasn't. I smiled lopsided at her, cocking my head slightly to the left, letting her puzzling over my words for a second.

"Zatanna, what are you doing here?"

The voice of Mr. Zatara surprised us from the door. He looked refreshed from my latest accident, less on fire. Unsurprisingly, my magic and his were totally different, if not in substance, in application. He couldn't create real food, for example, while I managed to do that almost effortlessly. The crystals I made when I was manifesting magic without direction were extremely conducive to enchantment. A bit too conducive, seeing as one with a harmless light spell on it caught fire.

"Dad! I was... uhm... looking for you. I wanted to know when we could eat."

Translation: she was snooping under the cover of a believable lie. But good try.
"Oh, it's already this late? I didn't notice it. In a minute sweetie, I just need to see Jin out and I will be with you."

He sent me a look from over her head, at which I simply smiled back and nodded.

"It's no problem, Mr. Zatara. We can start another day, when it's better for you."

He nodded at that, gesturing with a hand and muttering something.

"You can teleport now, if you want."

"It was a pleasure learning from you, Mr. Zatara. And a pleasure meeting you, Zatanna. Hope to see you later."

I smiled at him, nodded at Zatanna, and made a curtsy-like bow, purple smoke flowing from my hands, engulfing my form and obscuring me. I vanished at the sound of the gasp of the girl, my smile a bit too amused.

**************

Mount Justice

August 22, 20:37

I reappeared in my room, before flying straight to the kitchen, where no one else was. They had already eaten, it seemed. Well, more time for me.

I snapped four different sandwiches into existence, along with some hot tea and a couple of desserts.

Then I fell on them like a pack of wolves, having eaten very little at lunch, too curious about magic to stop practicing it.

The fact that I tried different spells again and again in the span of twelve hours without feeling tired
said a lot about my love for magic.

I didn’t meet anyone else and went to bed straight away, still blissfully happy.
Interlude: Batman, Wally

Chapter Notes

Betaed by Pietersielie on SV.

Interlude: Batman

August 23, 01:32

Batcave

"This is bad."

Bruce Wayne, dressed in his Batman's costume, was analyzing a series of datasets that the various sensors hidden inside Mount Justice collected, cross-referencing them with the data that he already had on the matter. And everything pointed at a rather grim picture.

When Robin came to him, to report what was happening at the Cave, he was worried. And he acted to investigate on the problem. What he found was some slight deviation from the norm, but nothing that would create an insurmountable problem.

He gave Robin some experimental sensors that would be able to collect the data needed, without alerting the target subject. This allowed him to collect enough information to start compiling a toxicology report that would be able to shed some light on his behavior.

The results were... bad.

And the latest information that he got from the security system in the Mount was proving that what he feared was coming true.

Batman looked at another monitor, a live transmission from the gym in the Team base, where Superboy was still exercising without rest, no shirt and his training shorts were drenched in sweat, an expression of anger that was fixed on his face since morning.
Luckily no one got hurt. Yet.

"Any news, Master Bruce?"

Alfred appeared on Batman's side, a mug of hot coffee already extended towards him, his expression as calm and collected as always.

"Yes Alfred. Bad news. And I'm not sure on how to solve it."

"Maybe talking about it would shed some light?"

Bruce Wayne sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose, his headache getting worse.

"I'm afraid that this particular problem has only one solution."

On the screen there was an outline of Superboy's body, with a report on how neurotransmitters and chemical regulators were acting in his body.

As long as he was near Djinni, his body produced the normal amount of hormones for his age and body mass, even accounting for his Kryptonian physiology, plus slight amounts of endorphins and serotonin at regular intervals, the amounts increasing when in physical contact with one another.

When separated from each other, though...

Excessive amounts of testosterone, adrenaline and noradrenaline were being pumped into his system, along with others that explained why he stayed in the gym all day when Djinni was with Zatara.

And the fact that he was still in the gym, even at this hour of the night.

Batman spent the night working on a possible solution, his options dwindling slowly as the hours went by.
Interlude: Wally

August 23, 08:54
Mount Justice

I was stretching my legs, still sore from the fight of yesterday. Captain Cold, even if he didn't went all out against me, was still a supervillain. And a good one, sadly.

"Wally."

Jin floated languidly... was it a word applicable to him? Well, he was half reclined, so I guess it would work. Whatever, he floated into the kitchen to eat.

"Hello. Uh..." I scratched the back of my head, not knowing how to say that I had already ate almost everything in the kitchen, except for the raw ingredients that Megan used to make cookies, but he simply waved at me distractedly, before sitting at the table where a whole chocolate cake appeared on it.

It was a sacher that smelled wonderful, making my mouth water, especially when Jin cut a slice and the inside was revealed, glistening dark brown and apricot, with a subtle smell of something that was used to wet the inside...

"Want one?"

Yes! "Yeah, thanks! I'm still sore from yesterday night. Freaking Cold Gun..."

Another cake appeared in front of me, taking me by surprise, before I grabbed a knife and started on it. It was gone a minute later.

"It was delicious."
"Glad to be of service. Are you okay?"

Uh? "Why the question?"

Jin was looking at me with a somber look in his eyes, like he was trying to imitate Batman and look through me in someway. It was making me a little uncomfortable, actually.

"Well, I know that you are sensitive about how fast you can go and I didn't want to be... indelicate."

Oh.

"Ahahah. Don't worry, I'm getting there..." 'No, I wasn't...' "...and soon I will be even faster than the Flash-"

"Wally."

That blocked me like a brick wall. He was looking sad, now, and with a face that was accurately expressionless. I guess he didn't want to make me feel bad by showing pity.

"Ahhhh..."

I sighed, sitting back down (when did I get up?) on the chair and ruffling my hair.

"Why are you asking me this?"

My voice lost any trace of mirth, remaining serious and on point. Jin wasn't cruel, but he could be a bit socially blind, especially looking at how he behaved with Supey.

And how he didn't notice that Megan wasn't here now, when normally she was the first to come to prepare breakfast. She simply muttered something about internet and research and vanished yesterday evening.
"Well, I wanted to see if I could help in some way."

This was what I feared.

"So you got tired of me not being fast enough, like all the others, huh?"

I almost didn't look at him, but I could at least face this face on. Uh, he didn't look like I imagined it.

"Wha... No! I was simply worried that you could get hurt or something like that!"

Oh. This...

"Thank you for your concern."

Why was I blushing? WHY WAS I BLUSHING!?

"Wally, you are my friend and I would do anything for my friends. Please, let me help you."

Ugh.

"Ok, ok. I wish I could be as fast as the Flash."

He smiled, showing some of his right teeth, in that half smile he had when he felt that he had accomplished something.

"As you wish."

Snap.
He bounced back a bit, like someone pushed him onto the chair, the sound of chimes strangely echoing around us for some moments, before he squinted his eyes and purple, crystalline smoke started to coalesce around him.

...ing!

Then something clicked inside me and the world slowed for the longest moment of my life, before returning to the normal speed.

"Done. But..."

"But? But what? Did I become ugly? The world can't cope with the loss of my beautiful face!"

I tried to lift the mood a bit, seeing that Jin looked worried suddenly.

"No, no you are as handsome as ever Wally. It's just... well, how much do you know of the source of your uncle speed?"

I got the feeling that this discussion would be more interesting than I thought.
Character Development, or; Talking Day. Again.

Chapter Summary

Thanks to Pietersielie from SV for betaing this chapter.

Character Development, or; Talking Day. Again.

Mount Justice

August 23, 10:00

"Wally, will you be okay?"

The talk we had was... difficult, to say the least. I was trying to explain, in the simplest terms possible, what happened at a metaphysical level, using terminology belonging to magic, to a fifteen year-old scientist-at-heart who was looking at me like an experiment.

"Yeah, I just need to get used to my powers again. I already did that once and now I actually know what I am doing. No biggie."

He sent a charming smile my way, before speeding away, followed a second after by the Zeta Tube's mechanical voice.

"Let's just hope that everything will go well."

I wasn't sure about the addition to his powers, but he looked so happy at the possibility of being as fast as Flash. I couldn't rob him of that, even if that meant giving him...

"Are you free now?"

The voice from the door shook me from my reverie, drawing my eyes towards the speaker.
"Oh, Kaldur. Yeah, sure. Did you wanna talk with me?"

He looked a bit uncomfortable, taking a deep breath before sitting and steeling himself for what looked like it would be a difficult conversation.

"Yes. I wanted to know your opinion on a matter in which your... outsider opinion... would be valuable."

I was assuming that he meant the fact that I knew this universe in the shape of a comic and not my excellent abilities as a baker.

"Sure. Shoot."

He looked a bit taken aback at my easy acceptance, but he regained his ground fairly quickly.

"I am finding it more and more difficult to stop thinking of Tula, now that your revelation has brought her to mind. I am worried that this will impact my abilities as a leader."

Oh.

"Well, I can only offer my advice, if it's enough."

He look at me, fully focused. I was forced to realize that he was a trained military boy, with the ability to control water and electricity.

Also quite hot.

"It would be appreciated."

Curse my attraction to bad boys! This was not the moment.
"My own opinion would be to take three or four days to think about it. You are a good team leader and you know your limits. If a mission comes up, you could simply appoint someone as a temporary leader to not threaten the results of the mission. Thinking about that, it would be wise to do it anyway."

I rambled a bit at the end, but I managed to get back on track fairly easily.

"I mean, if you are confused, it makes sense to clear your mind a bit, no? Maybe try to do something that is not tied to Atlantis. You could go sightseeing in Metropolis or another city?"

He looked lost in deep thoughts, his fingers intertwined together, shoulders relaxed. He looked like he was readying himself for a fight.

"Thank you. I know that you don't know anymore what will happen in the future, but your perspective helped clear my thoughts."

"No problem. I'm your friend and I would do anything for you. For any of my friends, actually." Ain't that the truth.

"I am honored to have a friend like you, Jin. I hope that your heart problem will be easier than mine."

"Thanks Kaldur."

It's nice to be recognized as a friend. It made me feel like I was rebuilding the bridges I burned before.

...

Wait a second, what did he mean with my heart problem?
I stepped into the TV room, only to find Artemis and M'gann talking together on the couch, while a catatonic Kon was on the big couch looking at the static.

"Hey. Is everything okay?"

I was fairly preoccupied, but when Kon heard my voice, he grabbed my arm and pulled me onto the couch. I almost ended with my head on the floor, but I managed to fly up and land at his side. Where he promptly fell on my knees and started snoring. Artemis and M'gann started snickering.

"What did I miss?"

Seriously, what just happened?

"He remained in the gym all day yesterday, even during the night, without sleeping. He is simply tired, even for a half Kryptonian."

Wonderful, Robin was here. Well, Kon did seem to have bags under his eyes, so I guess there as no fault in letting him sleep.

"Wall-man is here!" And Wally, too. He was looking happier than before. Nice to see it.

"Wonderful. At least we can say that we did our good deed for the day when we listen to your ideas." And Artemis was still snarky, even if her tone removed a lot of the maliciousness from the barb.

"Not whelming, Artemis, not whelming." Robin, for the love of whatever is holy, don't encourage her.

"Jin, can I ask you something?" And now M'gann wanted to ask me something. Wait, what? Like a magnet, all of us turned towards her, with me for the first time noticing that she looked tired. Maybe she didn't sleep?

"Sure. About what?"
Well, it's not like it would be another discussion like the one with sex that I had with Kon, no?

"Well, you said that this world was... a cartoon?" She didn't look sure of the words, but with an affirming nod from Robin, she continued.

"And that it was titled 'Young Justice', true?"

Weird question.

"Yeah, it was pretty popular. They aired it in different nations and it got a tie-in comic. For example, the time you went camping was depicted in that. Along with the fact that it was Wally's idea," I added, a bit of a ribbing, sending the subtle message that his intentions hadn't been hidden at all. He sulk.

"Oh! So we had a lot of fans?"

"Yeeeah?" Why that question?

"Did we have a thing called... ehm... ah, yes. 'Fanfiction'?"

I froze. I could hear Marid laughing uproariously in my mind, while my brain stopped with the sound of brakes failing.

"What?"

I couldn't compute what I just heard. It's like there was a mutiny in my own brain.

"Well, I was researching why Superboy was behaving like that yesterday, and, after a lot of time, I ended on a site where there were a lot of stories written about Superman. I mistook them for articles about him at the start, but after I saw that it wasn't finished, I checked more accurately."
For the love of God, don't tell me that M'gann found the equivalent of Fanfiction.net.

"It was apparently a story written by someone called... oh, I can't remember, but it had a string of numbers after a word..."

"It's called a nickname. It is used on the internet to conceal your true name. A lot of sites use it to grant anonymity to who subscribe to them," Robin explained, in a wheezy tone of voice. A quick glance revealed that he was trying - and failing - to not fall down laughing.

The others were suspiciously silent.

"Oh. Well, after looking a bit more, I found something called 'shipping', but there weren't any mention of ships or boats anywhere. So I thought I could ask Kaldur, but he didn't know either and he suggested to ask you, seeing as a lot of those stories were based on TV shows."

My brain stopped all activity at once. Again. Marid was still laughing, now it sounded wheezy, like it was short on breath. I was trying to not have an aneurysm.

"So?"

Ah, she was waiting for an answer. Right. Jin, don't be rude, answer your friend. The others were all looking at me without saying a word, even Kaldur who arrived a couple of minutes ago, enough to have heard the question. I looked at him. He smiled encouraging and nodded.

"Shipping is a term used to describe two people who are in a romantic relationship with each other. It is usually denoted with the name of a person, a slash sign, then the second person's name."

My voice was flat. Without intonation. I was still restarting my brain. I would also have teleported somewhere else, if Kon wasn't asleep on my legs.

"Ohhhh, this makes sense. I was curious why they were..." Her voice descended to a murmur, before focusing on me again.

"So, did our cartoon have fanfictions?"
Now I was sure. She was trying to kill me.

"Yes, quite a lot. Young Justice had a lot of fans."

"That's... good?" Artemis didn't sound too sure. Good. Feel my pain, feel it!

"And the shipping? What were the most popular couples?" Why? Why was doing this? Couldn't she see that I was dying here?

Judging by her expression, no. The others, Kaldur excluded, yes. Ah, you found this funny? I couldn't hear Marid anymore. Not sure if it was because it stopped talking or because it didn't have enough air anymore.

"The... the most famous..." Ideally the canon ones. But I couldn't reveal that, stupid prohibition. Looking at the laughing faces of my teammates, I started thinking dark thoughts. Something must've showed, because they were suddenly a lot less cheery.

"Weell... shippers, the one who are fans of a couple or others, are extremely varied, so I can say with full confidence, that they shipped everyone with everyone at least once. One of the most famous was Wally/Robin, though."

Yes. That was exactly what I had wanted. That look of not computing before the dawning realisation.

"Another famous one was Wally/Red Arrow, Red Arrow/Kaldur, Artemis/M'gann, Superboy/Robin..."

My grin was now dark and full of teeth, while the others were starting to squirm uncomfortably. Wally was the first to break.

"Why would they couple me with guys?! I like girls!"
I smiled at him sweetly. Like ten pounds of honey and molasses were dripping from my lips.

"Why Wally, were you under the impression that something so paltry as the canon sexual orientation mattered to the writers?" I batted my eyelashes to add to the effect.

"Fanfiction is a collection of the most dark, vile and perversed desires of humanity, as well as the most uplifting, happy and fluffy dreams. Something like the preference for one gender or another is nothing."

Everyone was now frozen in contemplation, looks of awe in their faces.

"I'm going to put Superboy to bed. Later."

I teleported out of there like all the devils of Hell were on my tail.

My teleport brought me and my... friend? Best Friend? Favourite Person? Favourite person to his bedroom, me on the floor and him floating in midair. I slowly lowered him onto the bed, causing only a minor discomfort before he settled. He must have sensed that this was his place.

I never came here, now that I thought about it. Well, now that I was here, I could look around. It's not like there was a lot in here. It's mostly bare, except for some books on the shelves. All the rest was neatly organized and cleaned.

Kon needed some kind of hobby. Maybe some posters or more books. Or a couple of those snowglobes or similar. Kitsch, but funny. And maybe more clothes, or at least, some different clothes.

Well, I didn't think I should remain here much longer. It was an intrusion on his privacy and I didn't want to make him uncomfortable. Also, I had a sudden craving for some schiacciata. Welp, no time like today, as the saying went. I vanished.
I reappeared in the TV room, with a big brown paper bag filled with the same snack that I went to get. Still hot, actually, I asked them to make it, even if it was evening. I also paid an arm and a leg. Lucky me that I was rich. And could also create gems from thin air.

A pair of arms encircled me from behind, a pair of arms that were really familiar.

"Hey, you woke up?"

"Yes. And we are ready to eat."

Right, it's around lunchtime. Well, I could eat something.

After all, it's not like I really needed to eat, it's just for the flavour. I was starting to really adapt to my situation, after all this time. And that meant I could eat as much as I wanted.

"Kitchen?"

"Yes." Curt as always. And he lifted me, shifting me to his side, under his arms, without jostling me too much. Nice of him to remember that.

"Superboy. Nice to see you join us for lunch."

Kaldur was still polite. Well, more like he didn't let what I said to all of them bother him. The others still didn't look at me, except for M'gann, who was actually in the last stages of setting the table.

"What's the menu?"

"Oh, you're back! And we have pasta and then chicken roast with potatoes. Then cookies!"

M'gann, you are really sweet. I raised the bag, while Kon put me down near the chair, next to his own.
"I brought appetizers. Schiacciata."

"Davvero?" ("Really?")

Wha- Robin?

"Tu parli Italiano?" ("You speak Italian?")

"Si, Batman mi ha insegnato. Sono anche stato a Roma una volta. Bella città." ("Yes, Batman taught me. I even went to Rome, once. Nice city.")

"Perchè state parlando in questa lingua invece di Inglese?" ("Why are you talking in this language instead of English?")

"Superboy, anche tu sai parlare Italiano?" ("Superboy, you can speak Italian, too?")

"Si, i G-Gnomi mi hanno insegnato. Ma-" ("Yes, the G-Gnomes taught me. But-")

"Guys, for the people who can't speak whatever language you are speaking, could you cut it out?"

Artemis cut Kon off mid-sentence, making all of us turn towards her, realizing only now that they were all watching us with curiosity.

"Sorry. I just got carried away. It was a surprise that Robin could speak my language."

"I understand. If someone could speak Atlantean, I would react in the same way." Kaldur, you really are the team leader.

"Yeah, yeah, they can speak that language, whatever. I'm hungry!" Aaaand, moment ruined. Everyone devolved into a laugh, while we threw our napkins at him.
"What did you brought for appetizers? Seeing Robin so excited made me curious as well."

"I brought a typical snack of my country. It's-"

"It's similar to bread, it's just fluffy and rectangular, with salt and oil on the top. It can be stuffed with different foods, like ham or tomatoes, or sauces, like mayo, to make sandwich."

And Robin cut me off again. Okay.

"Well, you're not totally wrong." Oh, he is looking confused at what I said. Well, it's not his fault.

"What you just described would be called 'focaccia' in my town. The schiacciata I mean, is this." And I opened the bag, spilling the content in the bowl at the center of the table. Flat, rectangular strips of what looked like thin bread ended in front of everyone, with a glisten of oil and salt on it, some part a bit darker, but still warm to the touch.

"It's a city variant. And I mean literally a city variant. You can only find this kind of schiacciata in the city where I was born. Well, try it and tell me what you think of it."

Kon was the first to try one, followed closely by Wally and Robin, M'gann, Kaldur and Artemis on their heels. Soon the air was filled with the sound of everyone eating. A nice lunch for everyone.

**************

The afternoon wasn't nice.

"Djinni, Superman would like to talk to you."

Red Tornado's announcement caught me by surprise, making me look up from my game of Mario Kart with Kon, Wally, and Artemis, pausing the game.
"Uhh... Why? I mean, it's not like I talked to him recently or anything."

"Unknown. Still, he is waiting in the Training Room."

And with that, he turned towards Artemis.

"Artemis, your uncle and Batman are waiting for you in the gym."

Then he flew away, doing who knew what.

"Well, better go to see what 'Uncle Arrow'..." she said, making air quotes with her hands, "wants from me."

"Keep us informed," Kaldur told her, taking her place in the game.

"I guess I should go too." I shrugged and got up, only to find an arm around my waist blocking me. Apparently Kon didn't want me to go see Superman.

"I don't think that I can not go to see him, you know?" He simply tightened his grip, making me roll my eyes.

"You can come, if you are so worried."

Well, looked like those were the right words, because he put down his controller and got up almost instantly, dogging my steps, leaving the others snickering about my situation.

Clowns.

***Interlude: Superman***** (for Cybandeath on SB)

I was looking at Batman with the hope that he would feel it and stop pestering me about the clone. I
understood why he was doing this and I could respect it. A bit. But I couldn't stand to watch at that... that... boy without thinking that it was created in a lab from parts stolen from me.

But I couldn't say no to Batman. Not for long, at least. And while I would be more than happy to never see Superboy again, his friendship with Jin worried me.

He already attacked him once. Who knew what he would do if he had the opportunity? I shuddered at the images that popped into my mind, scenes of wanton destruction, with corpses sprawled everywhere on the streets running red with blood. The image of Jin's body after his beating was in the foreground of my mind every time I thought about what could happen.

And even after seeing what HE was capable, Batman still insisted about keeping him on the Team, instead of making sure that he wouldn't be able to hurt anyone else.

"Did you want to see me?"

"Jin! Yes, I wanted... to..." I found myself without words, because of what I was seeing right now. Superboy had Jin in his arms, keeping him at his side, and he was scowling at me, trying to imitate my Heat Vision. Not that he possessed that power, thank the gods above. I could only imagine what kind of destruction he would be able to cause with that power.

"You wanted to?"

His voice was... normal. He didn't express discomfort or any other signs that the position was a nuisance to him. So this was normal?

"I... wanted to know if everything was okay. I was around here and I thought to drop in and see if everything was going well."

'I wanted to see if my illegal clone had snapped.' I couldn't say that now, could I? And even after the continual reassurance from Bruce, I couldn't remove my doubts from my head.

"You wanted to check on Jin." Superboy had a strange tone of voice, but he was tightening the grip on Jin, even if he was staring at me. His whole body language spoke of possessiveness, every muscle tense and ready to attack.
"Uh..." And Jin looked like he was uncomfortable all of a sudden. I looked at him, before returning my stare to the clone, which was now sporting a rather mulish expression.

(I refused to remember my own expression when I was sixteen and my mother was scolding me.)

And then everything went downhill from there, really.
Days of Summer, or: Winter is Coming.

Chapter Notes

Used Grammarly for this one.

Days of Summer, or: Winter is Coming.

Happy Harbor

August 24, 09:08

"I don't understand why I need to buy other clothes."

Kon was still pissed from yesterday. The meeting with Superman was a disaster comparable only to that day, so we all decided to not talk about it. Well, okay, maybe not as bad, but it was high on the list.

"C'mon Supey, you can't keep using the same t-shirt and pants all the time. Soon or later someone will recognize you." Wally said, slurping loudly his slushie to get the last dregs from the bottom of the plastic cup.

"So?"

Apparently, Kon wasn't really worried about that opportunity, which... wait. In the show, how did he manage to keep a secret identity? Did he go to school?

I guess I will discover what will happen when we reach that day. For now, let's focus on what we need to get today.

"Well, having a secret identity is important. You wouldn't want people coming to you all the time to ask for an autograph, right?"
Hey, this reasoning could actually convince him. Also...

"You also need to go up a size. Didn't you notice that you grew in all this time?"

Wait, what? I thought that he couldn't grow. Or... I think so. There was something about that? I'm misremembering, maybe.

Well, let's check. I glanced at his upper body and... yes. The seams of the sleeves of his t-shirt were tighter than before. Not at the level of bursting, but tighter.

So, body mass: check.

We three were walking towards the mall, Wally happily eating a hot dog that he didn't have a second before, Kon was still sulking about what happened the day before and I was at his side. With his arms launched on my shoulders, with him keeping me as near as he could.

We looked like a couple and more than few people watched us with knowing smiles on their faces, even if no one came to us to talk.

Focus.

Now, I knew that I was shorter than before, seeing as I shrunk when I came in this world. I was around 5' 8". Which was a lot less than my previous height of 5’ 11”. Kon was two inches taller than me, but now...

"Did you get taller?"

He looked at me, heads slightly cocked at the side, an inquisitive look in his eyes.

"Whoa, you're right!"

And Wally had finished his hot dog, it seems.
"You grew, what, an entire inch? That's fast!"

Was it? Well, I mean, yeah, it was. I think. Now I want to check how fast one grow when during the adolescence, because of an inch in, what, three months? could be fast or slow. And now I'm curious, dammit.

"And this means that I need to change my clothes?"

And, apparently, Kon doesn't care about it at all. I just hope he doesn't catch something because with him being a clone and a hybrid I have no idea on how to treat him. Did Superman ever get sick?

"Let's try to do this fast."

Oh, we've reached the mall why I was distracted. Ok, then.

************

"No."

And this makes the tenth t-shirt Kon vetoed. So, to recap: he doesn't want shirts too colorful, too bright, white or too large. Graphic t-shirts are okay as long as they are not too bright, while dark color works. He already got some replacement of his classic T-shirt with the S on it.

I managed to wrestle him into some blue and dark red t-shirt, a pair of jeans (one blue and one black) and even three buttons down. All blue, but it's a start.

Now Wally is trying to make him wear some of the more colorful t-shirts in the mall, but it seems that we need to move to something else.

"Why don't we go see the training clothes? Maybe there is something that you could like."
"Right, good idea. Follow me!"

And of he goes. With me and Kon following him. Wally looks a lot better than yesterday, after my little 'intervention'.

"Oh, hey, did Artemis say why Batman and Green Arrow wanted to talk to her?"

"Something about an undercover mission somewhere. She said that Batman ordered her to not reveal the details."

Oh, okay then. Let's hope it's something that will not end biting us in the ass.

"What are this?"

Kon has in his hands what looks like training shorts, the elastic kind. The one who look like spandex.

"Training shorts. They are used because they are tight enough to not impede the movement and yet made of clothes that grant perspiration."

Mhhh, Wally knows a lot about this. Well, for me. I know nothing of it, so... And with him being Kid Flash...

"You mean that normal people use these?"

Kon looks incredulous. That expression is a bit funny on him, it's a mix between disbelieving what Wally is telling him and insulted that others wear it.

"Yes. It's a pretty common..." "No."

Like a rock, ladies, and gentleman.
"Why not?" I ask from the side, where I was staying to watch the scene and be ready to intercept any kind-hearted assistant. They don't deserve the wrath of Kon on them.

"They'll make me look stupid."

So sure. Well, let's see if I can manage him to change his tune a bit.

"Why don't you try it on? Maybe you will change idea."

He shoots me a glare, before looking at the outfit I was pointing at. It was a training outfit, all black, the same materials of the shorts he still had in his hands.

He glared at me again, while I was trying to keep my smile off my face.

"No."

I raised an eyebrow. Kon continued to glare at me.

Wally's head was turning between us like he was following a tennis match.

"What's happening?"

Oh, Robin's here. Because this wasn't hard enough. Can't I even play a small prank? Ok, let's go with plan B.

"Okay, let's see if this work better: I'll try one with you. Would this work?"

Is he wavering? Yes, he is. Just another little push...

"Come one, it's just for fun. If you really don't want to, I will not make you do it, but it would be something new, no?"
Okay, I'm manipulating him a bit, but it's nothing big or bad. If he had some problem that would actually make him uncomfortable I would've dropped it instantly, but he actually doesn't. I think.

"Look, if it's really a problem, we can just drop everything. You're not..." "I'll do it. But you do it too."

And he launches a pair to me before stomping towards the dressing room.

"... what just happened?"

"I dunno Wall, but I know that will be something funny."

And with this last pearl of wisdom from the resident Boy Wonder, I shrugged and got a pair that actually was of my size, after a moment of confusion. I'm still not habituated to the difference between America and Europe. I mostly create my own clothes, after all.

They are a couple of long pants and a long-sleeved shirt, nothing really extreme beyond the way they clung to my body. It was a bit uncomfortable, even if I wasn't fat anymore. Body Image problem doesn't go away in three months.

When I got out, I'd left my clothes inside the room, boots included, so I was only in training gear and socks. It was a bit strange, but it wasn't really bad.

Not my style, I prefer loose clothing. I like the way they look.

But it wasn't bad.

"I don't think they are my style, honestly. What do you think?" I asked the other two, only to see that Kaldur and M'gann were here as well. I glared at Robin, which only answered with a grin.

"You... You look great." M'gann stammered, while Kaldur came near to look better at them.
"They resemble my costumes."

Now that he mentioned that, I could kind of see the resemblance. But whatever, it wasn't this the reason why I put them on.

"C'mon Superboy! It's your turn!"

Robin, why aren't you a bit more tactful?

"No."

Yeah, exactly what I thought.

"You made a deal!"

"...."

Silence. Would that work or not? I wonder if the number of people inside would change his answer. Not that there were a lot, mind you: two kids with the mother, two boys looking at the hoodies, one girl checking some dresses and the shop assistants reshelving the merchandise.

The dressing room door creaked a bit while he stepped out. I turned and watched.

I must admit, Kon was a really handsome boy.

The training gear was knee-length short and a short sleeved shirt, tight enough to cling to every one of his muscles, mainly his arms and legs, and to highlight his abs deliciously.

The whole ensemble made me go red, along with M'gann. Robin was silent, while Wally had his mouth wide open and Kaldur was looking at him with a rather calculating eye. I sent a rapid look around, to see that more or less everyone was staring.
And it was making Kon a bit uncomfortable, judging by the way he was starting to fidget a bit.

"I look stupid."

"That wasn't the word I would use..." "Me neither..."

Robin was clearly evaluating Kon, while M'gann forgot to be embarrassed. And restraint, if her looks were to believe.

"You look great."

I chimed in, distracting him from the other people in the store and, at the same time, berating myself for my thoughts at the moment. It was neither the time nor the place. Especially with what I was wearing now.

"Well, Wally, Rob, it's your turn."

"What?" "Wait a sec, I never..."

Wally withered down under my raised eyebrow, while Robin looked a bit taken aback like he didn't expect this. Too bad.

"I and Superboy did it, so you can do it, too. C'mon, it's just for fun."

"Oh, I want to try one, too!" M"gann, your intervention was perfect.

"Well, if Megan tries one, I guess that it won't be so bad." And Wally changed his tune instantly. How curious.

After ten more minutes, we found ourselves all clothed in training gear, all together and with the only girl of our age in the store photographing us.
I bought all the clothes right after, obviously. It would be rude and pointlessly cruel to not do it.

Still, it was fun. And we managed to convince Kon to buy more clothes.

Mount Justice

August 24, 14:06

"Jin, we can have your next lesson, if you're ready."

Mr. Zatara came trough the Zeta Tube ten minute after lunch, a reminder that we had another lesson scheduled for today. I had put it out of my mind for a bit, honestly.

At this notice, Kon mood became immediately sour and he got up, walking towards the gym. Well, he still doesn't like being separated from me. It's a bit worrying, honestly.

"I'm coming."

And a rapid teleport later, I was again at Shadowcrest. And Zatanna was there as well.

"Hello, Zatanna. How are you?"

Being polite didn't hurt anyone.

"Very well, thank you. And you?"

She was dressed in a white blouse and skinny jeans, black mary janes on her feet, her hair flowing freely behind her.
"All well, thanks for your concern. Well, I need to go to the lesson, so I bid you goodbye."

And, with a bow, I followed Mr. Zatara towards the same room where he taught me last time.

"I trust that you know that Zatanna is too young to be courted."

I choked on thin air, turning towards the magician with eyes blown open.

"Wha-what? No, I don't... Why would you... she.."

"Calm down and talk properly."

A deep breath later, I managed to compose myself and fell midair at the center of the room, trying to calm my racing heart.

"I am, in no way, shape or form, interested in a romantic relationship with your daughter, Mr. Zatara."

"Good."

His tone was dark and foreboding, like the one every father get when his daughter is threatened by some boy.

"Because if that was the case...."

Yeah, definitely a father.

**********

After a rather embarrassing conversation with Zatanna, I departed that evening with a fast healing black eye and other assorted injuries, a smug Zatanna and a satisfied Mr. Zatara.
Fortunately, everything was gone for the time I reached Mount Justice because I didn't want to see the reaction of the others at that.

Robin would make a joke, Wally would ask about what happened while Kaldur would be worried that I was attacked. Artemis would've said something about my ability to defend myself and M'gann would fly instantly to get the First aid Kit. Kon would get angry and go break something or interrogate me about who did this.

Friends. You can't live without them and live with them is difficult.

But I would gladly burn the whole world to the core to keep them safe. Metaphorically speaking, I mean.

Unless they had another planet to fallback. In that case literally speaking.

I blinked a couple of time. What was I thinking about? Zatanna, injuries, reaction, the proclamation of undying loyalty... right, I got sidetracked a bit.

"You're back, thank god."

"Wally? What happened?"

"It's..."
"Wally? What happened?"

He looked worried. Very worried.

"It's Supey. Something wrong with him."

That made my blood freeze in my veins.

"What happened?"

I started walking towards the hallway, with Wally walking just ahead of me.

"He was angry and moody all day, working out in the gym and generally growling at everyone. Then, an hour ago, he suddenly collapsed."

"Do we know why?"

I was trying to not panic.

"We brought him to the infirmary, calling Red Tornado. He then called Batman and Black Canary. Apparently, he has a fever. A strong one."
"A fever? But... he's Kryptonian."

"I know! But it doesn't change that he has a severe fever. They are still trying to understand what is happening."

This was worrying. What could be the problem with Kon? I mean, with his new regeneration he should be immune to any illness that was not specifically created to fight a regenerator. Maybe a virus or a retrovirus?

Purple energy started to collect around my hands, my head swimming with the possibilities when a hand on my shoulder made me stop.

"Jin, look, I know you are worried, but... we will heal him."

The resolve in Wally's voice assuaged my worries a bit, letting me stop and take a deep breath before entering the Infirmary.

"What's the situation?"

Batman was the one who answered me.

"Temperature at 103.46 Fahrenheit. Or 39.7, seeing that you are Italian."

That was absurdly high.

"It's not bad as it sounds. Kryptonian temperatures are higher than humans', so this is more like he has a bad fever, but not life threatening. The problem is the reason why he fainted."

"The reason?"

"You will not like it." Robin was frustrated, judging by the way he was tapping on his wrist computer, a grimace on his face. The others were scattered in the room, looking at the bed where Kon was resting, face flushed red and hot to the touch, his breath short and a bit ragged.
"I don't care if I don't like it."

"He fainted because he didn't feed himself properly." The metallic tones of Red Tornado cut through the tension, making me turn towards him.

"What?"

"Superboy didn't eat enough in the past few days to sustain his new metabolism and, seeing as he is still adapting to it, he overworked himself and didn't sleep enough."

Rob was right. I didn't like it. Not a bit. It wasn't the same thing as saying that it was my fault, but it sure sounded like that.

"Do we know how much time he will need to recover?" My voice was ringing hollow to myself, as if all energy simply left me.

"Do not worry too much. Once his body has had some food, he will get better in short time," Kaldur said, putting a hand on my shoulder in a gesture of comfort. It was a nice gesture on his part.

It made me feel a bit better, all things said.

"Done."

Batman's voice caught the attention of everyone in the room, making us turn to see what exactly was done. Apparently, he managed to insert an IV needle into Superboy, connected to a saline solution, or a solution full of nutrients, I would guess, seeing as the lack of them caused the problem.

"With a bit of rest, Superboy will be okay soon. Now, all of you, go rest." Black Canary was kind, but stern. Her tone made it clear that she wouldn't tolerate any whining.

I didn't want to leave him alone.
"Can I stay with him?"

Batman, Black Canary, and Red Tornado looked at me, before looking at each other, a silent conversation between them.

Then Canary spoke.

"You can, but you still need to go to sleep."

"Sure." Not. I doubted that I would be able to sleep very well.

One after another, everyone walked out of the infirmary, with only me and Kon remaining.

I sat near him, almost feeling the heat emanating from his body. He was connected to the various medical instruments that analyzed the heart rate, temperature and who knows what else. I simply created a towel, then wetted it with cold water and put it on his forehead. I wasn't a good singer, but I could hum a bit and a lullaby was within my ability.

"Ninna nanna, ninna oh, questo bimbo a chi lo dò..."

*************

Mount Justice

August 25, ?

I woke up with an arm around my shoulders and my head resting on something hard and warm. Blinking away the last remnants of my dreams, dreams that I didn't remember, I tried to get up, but the arm around me was keeping me down and the only thing that I could do was turn my head and look at who was keeping me still.

Apparently, Kon got better during the night and managed to hug me with an arm. He was sleeping now, but he was looking much better than before: his face wasn't red anymore and he wasn't too hot to the touch. A giggle made me start and turn towards the sound. M'gann was on a chair on the other
side of the bed, stifling her laughter with a hand.

"You two are so cute."

I felt my cheeks heat up at that and I smiled sheepishly.

"Thanks, M'gann."

The conversation fell flat after that, with me simply waiting and M'gann looking at me and Kon. Then, she sighed.

"You know, I thought I could have a chance with you or with Superboy. But the more time passed, the more obvious it became that you two were... what's the phrase? Joined at the hips?"

She chuckled, a bit wetly, before shaking her head.

"Superboy is so focused on you that he barely lets anyone else near him."

"But that's... not true. At the beach and the other days, the trip to the mall..."

She stopped me, shaking her head with a smile on her lips.

"He was that open only because you were with him, Jin. Did you really miss that?"

I stopped, thinking back on that days and... yes, I was with him all the time, but that didn't necessarily mean that...

I stare blankly at M'gann, who was smirking like the cat that got the cream, and I...

"You are a bit clueless, you know?"
"Yeah, I know."

Because, seriously, what else I could say? I really didn't notice that Kon made me his focal point. Honestly, it's kind of terrifying.

"After some time I simply... accepted that it wasn't meant to be. Maybe if things went different...."

And she stopped, looking towards her hands, while I was feeling really uncomfortable. Because, well, if I wasn't here... But now it was too late and even if I disappeared it wouldn't help.

"However! I will not let this stop me. So, this is my warning to you: if you ever break Superboy's heart, I will be very angry, understood?"

She... was a bit scary, if I had to be truthful, so I simply nodded.

"Now I need to let the others in, but I'm going to bake something. See you later."

And she flew out of the room, without giving me time to speak.

"Well, that happened."

"What happened?"

"Oh, Robin. Hello. I would get up, but I'm a little tied right now."

His eyebrow was visible, so I managed to see it arch above his glasses, a small smile on his face. It seemed that it was his default expression.

"So I see."
I rolled my eyes as visibly as I could. His resulting smirk was the only answer I got.

"So, what happened?" he insisted, relaxing on the chair and looking at me, the artificial light glinting off his shades.

"M'gann. She just said..."

"Let me guess: she will fight to the death for the hand of the fair prince."

"Wrong, mini-bat. She said that if I ever broke the heart of Superboy, she would be very angry."

"And that would be a disaster, heavy on the dis."

"Yeah. Yeah, it would be. Well, at least Wally will be happy. Unless she focuses on you, but I don't think that you are her type."

"Or maybe it's because I'm thirteen?" I looked at him, a puzzled expression on my face, before morphing to a look of amusement.

"What? Why are you amused?"

He leaned a bit forward, using the bed to balance himself.

"Nothing, nothing, don't worry. At least nothing you really want to know..." Take the bait. C'mon, let me start this day with some fun. Take the bait.

Robin stopped and looked at me with an inquisitive air around him, unsure if he should ask more or let the matter rest. Evidently, he saw something on my face, because he sat back in his chair and shook his head.

"No, thank you. I think that I will pass. For now."
My smile only became wider, but I accepted his circumventing.

"How are the others?"

"All okay. Worried about Superboy, but okay. Also, going by what Batman said, he will be up and running by tomorrow at the latest, so..."

"Yeah."

Both of us fell into a relaxed silence, while I mulled on the news he gave me. Tomorrow, huh?

"Well, I'm going. I need to go back to Bat. See you tomorrow?"

"Yeah, sure. It's not like I have anywhere else to go."

I smiled a bit, only the left corner of my mouth rising, while Robin simply grinned and skipped out of the room. Next one to come was... Kaldur, it seemed.

"Hello, fearless leader."

"Good morning to you too. I see that you slept here, even if Batman, Red Tornado and I all told you to go back to bed."

Typical Kaldur.

"I slept. It's better than what you were expecting."

He chuckled calmly, with the same poise he used with everything. Every now and then I caught myself pondering if it was his own character, or if he was trained this way.

"True. Still, it must've been a rather restless sleep."
"Nah, just a couple of nightmares. Nothing new, really."

This made him frown. He sat in front of me, hands on his knees.

"Do you want to talk about it?"

He was open, trustworthy. And I wanted to talk. But...

"Now is not exactly the time." I pointed out, waving with a hand to show my position. I was starting to get a crick in my neck, even with my regeneration working. I really hoped that Kon would wake up soon.

"If you want to, I am here. Like all the others."

"Thank you Kaldur. I'm lucky to have friends like you all. And I will talk to someone, but for now I'm alright."

He nodded, before looking at Kon with a contemplative look on his face.

"He seems healed."

"Yeah, he just needed more nutrients. Now we just need his body to finish recovering."

And we turned to look at Kon... who was already awake. And looking at me with a puzzled expression on his face.

"Uh... when did you woke up?"

"When Robin left the room."
And he didn't say anything. And Kaldur didn't say anything. I glared at the boy, which only caused him to chuckle.

"I will leave the two of you alone. Superboy, it's nice to see you up again."

"It's good to be up again. Thanks Kaldur."

Mhh, he seem less stressed than the last days. Good.

"Could you let me up? I'm starting to get a cramp in my neck."

He lifted his arm, letting me get up, in an erect position giving me the chance to crack my spine and get rid of the various kinks that had accumulated during the night. It made me feel really good.

"How do you feel?"

Kon looked at me, before looking at his hands. He closed and opened them a couple of time, like he was trying to check something.

"I'm feeling... like I did when I flew for the first time."

Well, that was high praise. Really high praise. I knew that Kon used flying for, like, the upper bar for good sensations.

"Nice to hear that. You made me worry."

"I'm sorry for that."

He was still uncertain of something, like he was trying to puzzle something out.

"It's something that no one of us could have predicted, so don't worry and focus on getting better."
You have all tomorrow to recover."

I smiled and got up, stretching my legs. Man, being cramped like that made me stiff all over.

"I'll send the others in while I go and get something for breakfast. You want anything specific? Sweet, salty?"

"No, anything is fine." Still short phrases. Eh.

"Ok. Bacon, eggs, some pastries and a coffee?"

"It sounds delicious."

That made me balk a second, but then I shrugged. He must have taken the term from me or someone else.

"'Kay. I'll send Wally inside."

"Thank you."

I walked to the door and got out with a smile, Wally already in front of it, vibrating slightly.

"Jin! Is it true that Supey wokeup? Canwegoseehim?Ishealright?"

"Yeah, yeah. Go on." And the speedster zipped inside, while I made my way to the kitchen.

***********
I was floating back with a tray full of food: bacon, omelette, pancakes, a couple of slices of cake, orange juice, coffee, fruits and some pastries. I found him walking outside the infirmary, with Kaldur and Wally around him ready to help if he needed them, but otherwise appearing healthy. Wally was agitated by something, but Kaldur was collected as always.

"Shouldn't you stay in bed?"

My question didn't cause any reaction in the teens. Kon simply shrugged and started walking towards the living room.

"I can rest on the couch as well as the bed. And I wanted to see this Sleeping Beauty film you told me about." Oh, right. We were showing him various films to bring him up with a bit pop culture. I felt like a clichè when we used this explanation to have a movie night, but whatever. Films are an important part of the culture of a place.

"As long as you eat everything, it's okay with me."

And I followed him towards the couches, when Wally sped around to call the others inside. It wasn't evening, but it was still summer and we didn't have anything else to do. Training was a no go, seeing as nobody was able to concentrate, so movie it was. Wally had already started the DVD-player when we reached the living room and he was joined by M'gann. Robin appeared after the first half hour and we spent the whole day lazing away. It was a nice way to spend time with friends.

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August 26

Mount Justice 08:34

I should have training with Mr. Zatara today, but I called him to opt out, seeing as I wanted to stay with Kon and be sure that he would recover. It was a peaceful day, all things considered. Film, snacks and the others that relax with us. Even Robin was here, even if he was a bit sleepy because of the late night patrol. Then the Zeta Tube activated and soon Mr. Zatara and Zatanna came into the room, to everyone's surprise.

"Good morning Jin. How are you today?"
"Uh... good morning, Mr. Zatara, Zatanna. I'm fine?"

"Seeing as you didn't want to leave Superboy alone while he recovered, I came here instead. And Zatanna asked me to come, so here she is."

I could see the victorious glint in Zatanna's eyes, so I guessed that things were a lot more complicated than the other mage made it out to be.

"And Dad said that I could help with the lesson!" The mini-mage looked dangerously excited. What did she mean with helping with the lesson?

I turned a questioning look towards Mr. Zatara and he simply gestured towards the ring used for sparring.

"You've got good enough with the basics to start learning how to apply that basic knowledge. So, you and Zatanna will spar. No physical contact is permitted, only magical."

I didn't expect this.

**********

"Ready?"

Everyone was assembled in the room, Mr. Zatara working as a referee for the match. Zatanna was bouncing on her heels, while wearing an outfit similar to her father's. I was with my jacket, my pants and boots.

"Go."

We stayed silent for a moment, she pursing her lips, while I was pooling magic around my hands, manifesting it as a purple-blue haze. I had more raw power, she had the knowledge that I didn't. My teammates were taking bets, while Kon was looking at me. I narrowed my eyes, she smirked. Then, she lifted her wand.
"Llaberif!"

A trio of fireballs started racing towards me, the air heating up immediately. I pointed with my left hand and three ribbons of purple magic shot up, intercepting the spell and turning the red flames a deep purple, causing them to orbit around my head for a second, before shooting towards Zatanna.

They were promptly intercepted by the hailstorm she conjured right after she cast those fireballs. I hastily conjured a shield to protect me from the storm, while I worked on my next move. Hmm...

The whole thing exploded outwards, counteracting the knives that were ready to impale me, while I teleported away, straight up. From up there I gained precious moments and, after rubbing my hands together for a second, I discharged a lightning bolt towards her.

Her eyes went wide and she hastily dropped to the ground, starting to roll away when I happily continued to try and turn her into a lightning rod.

Then, an actual lightning rod appeared near her and it started to absorb my electricity. Fine. Ice it was.

I pointed my right index finger at her, a purple snowflake on the tip, as I prepared to release a ray of cold and snow towards her, when I needed to move. Because the lightning rod she conjured almost impaled my head.

"Are you trying to kill me?!!"

"Dniw sedalb!"

At that, I turned into purple smoke and reformed on the ground, the wind she used to try and dice me passing through me without any effect.

"Very well."
I stomped my feet and spikes of earth surged from under her, trapping Zatanna inside a cage made of rock. She teleported away and reacted with a spray of mist that obscured my sight. I counterattacked with wind blades of my own to blow away the mist. She used my move to tag me with a round of magically-enhanced paintballs.

I was now splattered with yellow and pink.

With a smile and a calm stare, I sent a wave of fire towards her, forcing her to jump away and I managed to hit her with red paintballs. She gloated for a second too long.

She tried to retaliate, but I was ready this time, and a shield blocked her attempts to hit me again. Then, she switched tactics and turned the air around me into a block of ice.

That's playing dirty.

I turned the ice into air and trapped her in a cage made of roaring winds, so strong and compacted that they were carving gouges into the concrete of the floor. Another second and the whole cage exploded towards me, roaring with magical fire.

A rapid teleport and I was in the clear, but the whole thing simply turned and went after me, assuming the shape of a dragon made of magical flames and winds and bits of concrete ripped from the floor. I was tempted to take it face to face, but I simply prepared to teleport again...

"Pots!"

...and Zatanna blocked the whole world around me. We already knew that it would need a magic as strong as mine to lay enchantments on me, so she went for the next best thing and blocked the time around me. Oh, she couldn't keep it up for more than five or six seconds at most, but it would be enough for the whole thing to incinerate me.

But time... I studied time when I was with Mr. Zatara. Being a Final Fantasy fan and having access to magic practically demanded that I develop Slow, Haste and Stop. It wasn't easy, but I made some progress.

Magic surged from within me, enveloping my form in a purple flame and the spell shattered into nothing, letting me teleport away mere moments before the flaming dragon came crashing against
me. I won. She couldn't possibly have enough energy to continue after this stunt, while I was barely breathing hard. And even that was from adrenaline. I smiled at her and I saw her smiling back. She had a purple crystal in her hand. A familiar purple crystal.

The crystals that I made with my magic. Crystals which I discovered were crystallized energy. And she was using my energy against me!

"You shouldn't let your guard down," she chided me, before cutting the air with her wand and sending the dragon, now made of magical fire and time magic mixed in, against me.

I raised my hand over my head, keeping them cupped together, and the face of a clock with roman numbers and unmoving arms appeared, before starting sparkling with energy, everything in shades of grey. I thrust forwards and my prototype Stop spell and her monstrosity of magic collided at the center of the ring.

I was putting more and more energy into my spell - and it was already terribly inefficient - while she was literally consuming the crystal every second. Then something destabilized in the spells - maybe Mr. Zatara attempted to dispel them or something else - but the whole thing imploded in a purple flash.

When everyone had blinked away the bright spots in their visions, we could see what happened.

And I saw Robin, in his uniform, badly beaten and bleeding in the center of the ring.
Short Story Blues, or: It's starting again.

Chapter Notes

Unbetaed. And short.

Sorry.

I would like to say that I acted as soon as I saw who was on the ground, but I was still as a statue, Zatanna in front of me and all the others looking at the figure on the ground.

Then Robin, the one not in the costume, got near him, followed right after by Wally and Kaldur, their movement shaking us from our shock and letting me focus enough to check the boy on the ground.

He is dressed as Robin and, at a glance, the costume looks authentic. He also has been beaten with something, judging by the bruises, what looks like a broken bone and the blood on him.

The shape of his jaw is different from Richard, as well as his hair. Also, he seems taller and bulkier than him, older. Another Robin, then?

My knowledge on the subject is spotted at best, but I think I remember that Batman had more than one Robin in the comics, so this could be one of the latter ones. Both me and Zatanna were using untested and highly unstable Time Magic, so it's not completely impossible that-

"DJINN!"

"What?"

I got out from my trance to see Kaldur in front of me.
"Snap out of it! You can't lose focus right now!"

He was extremely serious, in the same way, he was during a mission, focused on the objective and leaving everything else on the side. He was staring at me with seriousness, hands on my shoulders.

I shook my head, a bit like a wet dog, and refocused on the now, instead of the might-be of Batman and Robin.

"What do you need from me?"

"He is glowing!"

Robin's voice came from the ground, where the Other Robin was softly glowing with purple and blue, bands of curling smoke threading around him, slowly cocooning him in a shell.

But he was still injured. A lot.

"What do you want me to do, exactly?!"

I was starting to hyperventilate, until Kon put his hands on my shoulders, dragging me against his chest, and hugging me tightly, grounding me somewhat.

"Heal him!"

Robin, our Robin, was near panic, his hands hovering on the bloodied form of the Other Robin, that was starting to lose solidity. His feet were looking a bit like a ghost, all see-through.

"I don't know any healing magic!"
"For the love of- I wish for you to heal him!"

Zatanna’s voice cut through our panic, hitting me like a lightning, making me move without even thinking. I raised my right hand and Snapped my fingers.

Dling!

A wave of purple magic solidified the boy for a second, his wounds vanishing like dust under a stream before he started to vanish faster than before.

First his feet, then the legs. His eyes fluttered open to see all of us around him and he tried to say something, but nothing came out of his mouth. His voice didn’t reach us and, with a look of marvel and surprise, the Other Robin vanished.

All of us remained still for a few seconds, looking at one another with questioning eyes, not sure of what to do. Mr. Zatara took Zatanna back to Shadowcrest, Batman arrived to whisk away Robin and Martian Manhunter took M'gann.

Kid Flash stayed for some more time, before returning to his uncle and Kaldur simply squeezed my shoulders, bumped Kon's arm and vanished in the light of the Zeta Tube.

Kon grabbed me like a teddy bear and we ended in the TV room, watching a film. It was surreal.

I fell asleep after thirty minutes and I woke up the next day, still in Kon’s arms.

*************

August 27

Mount Justice.

I woke up silently, stretching my arms and feeling my back popping. Then I felt something pressing on my middle, where my ribcage was. And I snapped my eyes open, seeing that the bed where I was laying on wasn't a bed but a still sleepy and half-dozing Kon.
That was still hugging me like a teddy.

Okay.

I laid my head back down, simply letting Kon wake up in his own time when I heard a low chuckle from the other side of the couch.

I slowly turned my head towards the sound and I saw Robin watching me while balancing the chair on its back legs and eating peanuts by tossing them in the air and catching them with his mouth.

It was the most circus thing I ever saw him doing.

"Any reason you are eating peanuts for breakfast?"

I decided to not ask why he wasn't eating like a normal person, for the sake of my rapidly dwindling sanity.

"It's ten in the morning, sleepyhead."

He was sounding rather... chipper, for someone who saw someone vanish into purple light just the day before.

"Ah."

"And if you are worried about me, don't be. Now that I know what could happen..." he remarked the could "... I will make sure that it will not come to pass. After all, I wouldn't be a good Robin if I couldn't keep my successor alive, would I?"

And he leveled me a stare, which was a bit strange because, you know, mask, that was pointed enough that he made his point very clear.
"Ok, ok."

I raised my hand in surrender, with a smile on my face.

"Good."

He jumped down from the chair, starting to walk towards the door, tossing the empty packet of peanuts in the bin, putting it in with one try.

"See ya later, I'm going back home."

"Bye."
A short mission, or: Where anger get the best of us.

Chapter Notes

Thanks to Hye on SV for betaing

A short mission, or: Where anger get the best of us.

Kon and I planned to spend the morning on the couch, but after fifteen minutes, Robin returned to Mount Justice in a hurry. His expression was focused.

"Suit up. We have a mission."

That tone brook no argument and I simply got up, Kon following me closely.

Soon everyone else, barring Artemis, was collected in the Tube Room. Robin in front of us, tapping away on the main computer, the screens lighting up with images.

Two different dossiers and what looked like a police report appeared on it.

"Yesterday morning, at 08:15, a barrel containing what appears to be mud arrived at Wayne Foundation. Scanners didn't reveal anything noteworthy: no radioactivity, no explosive, nothing. But..."

And the video started: a creature that looked like it was made by mud, their body in a permanent state of flowing, rampaging into the foyer of the construction, before escaping into the sewers. Then the display changed to show what looked like a chemical analysis.

"The enemy, codename 'Clayface', seems to be made of clay, with no discernible core, heart or brain. Its rampage was cut short by the sprinklers, showing that he seems to have a passing weakness to water. Batman managed to trace its path in the sewers, but thing got complicated when Killer Croc met him."
The display changed to show the image of a crocodile/man hybrid walking on two legs, wearing pants.

"Waylon Jones, codename Killer Croc. Currently teaming up with Clayface."

His expression was serious and he was angry. At what, I don't know. Still, this was bad.

"They are hidden in the sewers and while Batman is busy with analyzing the data he managed to collect from Clayface's initial rampage, the mission to find them falls to us."

And that was it. Our new mission, brought by Robin.

***************

Gotham City
Sewers

The sewers were dark, foul smelling and wet. I would have much preferred if we didn't have to explore them, but I didn't have a choice.

Aqualad was first, with Robin right behind him. Miss Martian was in the middle, then me, then Superboy and Kid Flash closing the whole thing.

It was the second hour of exploration and, for now, we haven't found anything of note. Starting from the point where the villains met, we tried tracking the two, but with very low success. The water and time had erased everything.

Robin was clearly fuming, Miss Martian looked more and more distressed, Kid Flash was silent and Superboy was scrunching his nose in disgust from when we descended into the place. Aqualad looked calm, if a bit worried about us.
Me? I was curious as to why Robin was taking this so personally. I mean, I knew that he was the adoptive son of Batman, but why he was taking this whole thing so personally escaped my mind.

"Robin, we are getting nowhere."

"I know."

Aqualad tone was conciliating, but to no avail. Robin was like a dog with a bone.

"We don't even have a clue, dude! What do you want us to do, snap our fingers and find them?!"

And Kid Flash was exasperated as well, throwing his hands in the air and yelling. Robin stiffened at that, turning to look at us.

"Yes."

"What?" Was the collective question we all asked, looking at him like he had gone crazy.

"Djinn, I wish for us to find where Killer Croc and Clayface are hidden."

I looked at him warily, before looking at Aqualad, searching for confirmation. At his nod, I sighed and snapped my fingers.

Dling!

A glowing trail made of purple smoke appeared from nowhere, snaking its way into the sewer and disappearing behind a curve. It looked a lot like the Clairvoyance spell from Skyrim, actually.

Good to know.
"Well? Let's go."

And we started to walk again, this time with an actual idea of where we needed to go. It was somewhat worse than when we didn't have a clue of where they were.

The anticipation of the whole thing did more to hit our nerves than before, every one of us readying for the fight.

At the end we reached the place where the two supposedly were: a large space, roughly circular, big enough to comfortably house someone larger than a normal human without any problem at all.

The only problem was that there was no one here. The trail ended right in the middle of the dirt colored floor, near what looked like a puddle of...

"Above!"

Kid Flash's shout was enough for us to scatter, before what looked like a small mountain landed on us, breaking and cracking the floor.

Seen in first person, it was much more impressive: Killer Croc was tall, with a body that was wrong somehow. His lower jaw was made of metal and the scales that covered his body were a muddy green. But he was still only one, so...

"Gaa-"

Kid Flash screamed again, soon being cut short, as the dirt puddle enveloped him, showing himself to be Clayface. So we had a giant crocodile/human hybrid in front of us, who is looking at us like we are a snack, and a man made of clay behind us, that is starting to choke one of our teammates with his body.

And that sounded worse of what I thought.

We all looked at Aqualad, wondering on what we should do.
"Robin, Miss Martian, Superboy. Take Killer Croc. Djinn and I will take care of Clayface."

Well, then. First point of order: save Kid Flash. Easier said than done.

I turned on myself, turning into smoke mere seconds before an arm made of clay squashed me like a bug, reforming behind the monstrosity, near the ceiling, and using what I would use against what was, essentially, a block of mud: water.

A spray of water, conjured from my hands, hit the center of mass of the thing in front of me, doing nothing more than punching a hole in his body. A smirk appeared on what passed as the face of the thing, before it contorted into and expression of rage when Aqualad used my distraction to sever the part that was keeping Kid Flash contained.

He splayed there for one moment, clearly regaining his breath, before, shakily, returning upright. Just to throw himself down when a stream of clay went towards him, only avoiding being turned into a splat on the wall from Aqualad, who interposed himself on the path of the attack.

Without the time to raise a shield or bracing himself for the hit, he was sent flying towards the rough wall of the cave, hitting it with a loud crack.

"Aqualad!" Kid Flash had a worried expression on his face, but I was focused on the 'face' of Clayface, who was sporting a rather malicious grin on his twisted features.

"Get baked."

A movement of my hand raised a wall of fire between him and our downed team leader, while Kid Flash disappeared seconds before the flame appeared. Just to reappear in front of the monster, spinning on himself and creating a tornado that flung him back, towards the fire. I made a sharp circle with my fingers and the fire spread around him, looking like it could work.

Then, he stopped. And smiled an ugly smile.

Before being sucked underground, using a tunnel that we didn't notice because it was covered by his own body, dammit.
I extinguished the flame, to give use more space to maneuver, and Kid Flash sped up to Aqualad to check on him.

"Shit!"

I descended from the ceiling and reached him as fast as I could without teleporting, reaching him in less than ten second. And I saw what Kid saw. One the side of Aqualad's side was a deep gash, longer than my whole palm, oozing blood and bits of stone. It was an ugly wound, caused by what appeared to be a sharp piece of rock that broke when he impacted against it.

And seeing as we were in the sewers, I would bet my bottle that it was already infected by something and, if it wasn't, it would be soon.

"We need to-gah!"

Kid Flash sped away from the projectile aimed at his head, getting Aqualad away in the same movement and letting the ball of clay splash harmlessly against the wall.

"Kid! Keep Aqualad safe!"

"Guys, could you please hurry!? He is refusing to be restrained!"

Robin's voice attracted my attention to their side of the battle, where Killer Croc was using various throws to keep Superboy from pinning him, while using him as a projectile against Miss Martian. It was being less and less effective as Superboy adapted to his fighting style.

And I shouldn't have let myself be distracted from it, as a wave of clay covered me and started sucking me towards the floor, constricting my movement.

It was gross and I wanted. It. Away. From me. NOW!

An explosion of purple freed me from the grip of Clayface, my eyes shining with inner light, purple
smoke coiling around my limbs.

"You went too far."

Clayface threw a volley of clay spheres against me, each big as a cannonball. I didn't even bother to dodge, I simply turned into smoke and let him rage against me, keeping his attention away from my teammates.

Then, when he stopped to reevaluate his strategy, I shined brighter and started to turn everything around me to crystal. Clayface sent a wave of mud at me, trying to stop the whole thing. He only managed to get that part of his body turned to crystal, then sprayed against him as a shower of projectiles.

It managed to make him flinch for a second, giving me the opportunity of raise a wall of crystals between me and everyone else.

"Djinn! Aqualad stopped breathing!"

That froze me and, judging by the sounds of renovating struggles from the others, caught them by surprise as well.

"Do you need my help, maridling?"

I stopped at that, weighting the offer for a second.

No, I couldn't keep relying on Marid for solutions.

I refused its offer, focusing back on the fight at hand. I had the power of reshape reality.

Why haven't I already won this thing?

With a flash of light, crystals started to grow from every direction, soon climbing the body of Clayface, giving him no way to escape, the hole he used before blocked by the same crystals that were climbing his own body.
An expression of panic was the last thing he managed to do, before the coffin of purple crystal enveloped him completely.
That night, I dreamt. Of home, of my mother, my brother.  

I was in the backseat of her car, the green one, with the brakes that screeched lowly every time that she even pushed them slightly, my head against the window pane.  

She and my brother were arguing, I cannot remember what. It was simply something that they did. Or I and she did. Or I and my brother did.  

We weren't a happy family. Or a well adjusted one.  

Still, I was looking outside, a darkness full of stars, comets passing near the car, that was speeding on a street in the middle of nowhere. We were going towards home, where we would split: me and my brother with dad and she to her home, with her cat and her dog.  

Some time I envied her. Some time it pained me to see her going to an empty house. Maybe because I could see myself in that and I feared that I would remain alone until my death.  

Still, for now, we were traveling in the middle of the space. The whole thing was perfectly normal like thing often is in dreams.  

Then I woke up, my cheeks wet.
Mount Justice.

August 28th.

Aqualad was back down to Atlantis, being treated by his people. Maybe visiting his family, I guess.

I woke up with a yawn, bending my back until I heard the telltale snap of bones. After that, I yawned, even more loudly, tossing the cover aside and walking towards the kitchen, ready to eat something. I only had boxer and a shirt on, not even bothering to put on some pants.

I was alone here, after all. Even Kon was somewhere else if I remembered correctly.

So I dragged myself to the table with eyes still mostly closed and, with a snap of my fingers, some breakfast appeared in front of me: fruit salad, chocolate pudding, waffles, pancakes and whatever else I wanted. Except for milk and cereal, for obvious reason.

I slowly ate, barely focused on the taste, while trying to recall my dream: I know I cried because of the traces on my face, but why? I couldn't remember anything about...

"Ahem."

I stopped mid-motion, the spoon half raised towards my mouth, and I turned towards the voice.

There, just to the side of the room, leaning against the counter eating cereals, there were Artemis, Kon, and M'gann.

The Martian was beet red, Artemis was freely leering and Kon was looking between me and the girls with an air of confusion on his face.

"Artemis."

I didn't really know what to say, so I simply didn't say anything. She, on the other hand, didn't have
this problem.

"Nice ass." "Artemis!"

Yeah, I expected that much. I shrugged and returned to my breakfast, ignoring the sound of M'gann trying - and failing - to argue with the archer.

Kon slid in the seat in front of me, with the expression on his face that I started to associate with a question to I wouldn't be able to answer completely. Let's just hope it wasn't something too absurd...

"Why was Artemis looking at your ass?"

...or something like this.

My spoon clinked against the plate as I put it down and turned fully towards him.

"Because she likes to see male shapes. Generally, if they are uncovered is better. The same holds true for the reverse. That is, generally, males like to see uncovered female shapes as well."

Done.

"Wait for a second, Genie the Purple. Did you just explain to your boyfriend here why I looked at your ass?"

The fact that Artemis was doing was hilarious. It was a mix between amused, unbelieving and shocked.

"Yes?" I played ignorant, just to see what she would say. Nothing, it seems, judging by the way she was gaping.

"Why are you still calling Jin my boyfriend?" Kon interrupted, making my heart skip a beat with the sudden fear of what would be his next words.
"We are not in a romantic relationship." Yep, there it is.

"What?" She looked incredulous, while M'gann was looking at me with what looked like pity in her eyes. I simply shrugged towards her and started eating again, while Kon was glaring at Artemis like she had said something absurd.

"Dude, you literally lift him and transport him like some oversized plushie, you never leave him out of your sight for more than fifteen minutes and Batman had to pry him out of your arms with a crowbar to send him with Mr. Zatanna to train."

All good points, actually. Not that I cared, even if I should. Continuous contact with other people tend to drain me of energy, but the Team didn't really have that effect on me.

Not that I was complaining, let's be clear. I just... didn't think about it.

While I was lost in my musing, it seems that Kon didn't know how to answer the accusations - because they were accusations - of Artemis, so he fell back on his tactics of crossing his arms and scowling at her. She looked really unimpressed.

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The situation stayed the same for the rest of the breakfast, until the appearance of Wally, making so that Artemis' attention focused on him instead of me. I was kind of glad that we didn't end to bicker all day.

Time seemed to slow to a crawl, the day refusing to end. Artemis was training with her bow, Kon was in the gym, M'gann and I were baking in the kitchen with the minimum amount of power necessary and Wally was playing with the console. Robin didn't appear and neither did anyone tell us what was happening with Kaldur.

It was a boring day. Relaxing, but boring.

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August 29th.

Happy Harbor.

Morning.

I was loudly slurping the milkshake I had chosen for breakfast, while Kon was looking at his own milkshake with an expression of puzzlement on his face like he wasn't sure if he liked it or not. The bench in the park in the middle of Happy Harbor was a good spot for eating undisturbed.

"Do you like it?"

He tried another gulp of the drink, but without any decisive effect.

"Dunno."

Eloquent.

"So, what do you want to do?" At my question, he turned towards me, scowl firmly in place.

"Usually it's you that decides what we will do." And, ok, fair. But why is he angry about that? I always ask him if he wants to do something else or if he is alright with it.

"Then it's time for you to decide, isn't it?" "I guess" and, with a loud slurp, he finishes his milk shake and tosses the empty cup into a trash can. Nice aim.

I wait, sipping at my banana-chocolate-vanilla milk shake, waiting for him to say something. He glanced at me a couple of time like he was trying to see if I had changed idea, but I gave him nothing, making him scowl even harder. In the end, he got up and turned towards the city.

"Let's do something you like to do before coming here."
Strange request. I mean, he usually doesn't talk about before, for some reason, but it's not like I ever volunteered the information, so...

I hummed a bit, trying to think about what I was doing before all of this. Mhh...

"Children card's game it is, then."

That earned me a disbelieving look from Kon, look that I answered with a smile.

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Twenty minutes later we were in front of a game shop. It was fairly empty, so Kon wouldn't grumble about the people too much and I could explain him the rules without anyone complaining that I was talking too loud.

"Hello and welcome to Sixteen Games. What can I help you with?"

The store owner was a tall guy with a bright green shirt, greeting us from behind the register.

"What are you searching?"

Good question. I had the sudden doubt that the games didn't exist in this universe, but I was reassured when I spotted the booster packs lining the wall behind him.

"Do you have any pre-made Magic decks? He is new to the game and I wanted to teach him the game."

Kon was looking around the shop with pure curiosity in his eyes, examining the various games that lined the wall.

"Understood. Let's see what I still have..."
And he turned to search from the wall behind him, before returning with three packs. While he was looking, Kon had returned to my side and was watching me with a stare that was literally saying: What are we doing here?

I smiled at him, before focusing back on the shopkeeper.

"I only have one Power of Prophecy, one Breath of Fire and a Stampede of Beasts. Which one do you want?"

They were all bicolor. I didn't remember exactly the specific, I started playing much later, but they looked all like Vintage (for me of 2016) cards. So I went with instinct and choose my favorite color.

"I'll take the Power of Prophecy one. You?"

Turning to Kon, he looked at me with uncertainty on his face. I gestured to the two pack, explaining the differences between the two.

"The cards are differentiated by color. The main color for this one is Red, that basically means direct damage, fast creatures to attack and big monsters like dragons. The other one is Green, that point on accumulating mana and summoning creatures with a lot of health and power, like hydراs, wurm, and gorillas to..." "Red."

Whoops. I shouldn't have mentioned the monkeys. Kon was still looking lost, but he was now very sure that he didn't want the Green one. He really hates monkeys and everything monkey-related. I wonder what would happen if we meet Gorilla Grodd. If he exists in this universe.

Oh well. I turned to the other man, which was giving me a knowing look, and shrugged my shoulders, before paying for the two.

"You can use the tables in the back if you want." "Thanks!"

I answered, before making a beeline for them, Kon trailing behind me, his pack of cards held tightly in his hands.
"Sit."

I sat on one side of the table and he plopped down in front of me, his eyes looking at me.

"So you passed your time playing card games?"

This was the first words he said to me from the park and my only response was to raise an eyebrow.

"It was this or reading. And I guessed you wanted to try something different than the usual, seeing as you asked me what I was doing before coming here. So, card games it is."

He looked a bit unsure, but, in the end, he opened the box and brought out the deck.

"Right, so! This is a game, but it's a lot more complicated than it looks. Let's start with the basic: there are called Lands and they are what give you Mana, the resource that you use to play the cards. Every card that is not a Land has a Mana Cost in the upper right corner of it..."

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Happy Harbor.

August 29th.

I was alone, a state of being that was a lot rarer than before. Kon was asleep in his room, Artemis back at her home and M'gann was with J'onn. It was the perfect time to sit and read, see if I can recover some of my favorite fanfiction, spend some time doing nothing.

But I didn't manage that. Instead, I went for a walk around Happy Harbor, getting a complete map of the city beyond the park and the Starbucks.

Not that it takes a lot of time, seeing as it is a rather small town. Still, it's a nice place to pass the summer. And, apparently, it has a high school. The Happy Harbor High School, probably one of the most unimaginative name for a school I ever heard. But, hey! What do I know of school naming?
And why I am thinking of school when I have literally nothing to do with it?

"You!"

A female voice grabs my attention, together with the hand that closes on my shoulders, turning me around, just to see a woman, young, black hair, skin lightly tanned and exotic features gripping my shoulder.

"Do I know you?"

I'm trying to not hit her, but being grabbed like this is something that I really can't stand. I hate being touched without my say-so.

"You transformed me!"

What?

She must see my puzzlement because she brings her other hand to the purse - the one I didn't notice the first time - and bring out a familiar deck of cards- oh.

"You read my future some time ago."

"Yeah. Glad you remember me. Now explain this."

And she gestures to herself, indicating her body, now young and beautiful, where before she was old and ready to pass out.

"Well, you asked for love. I gave you the best chance to find it. And it worked, no?" I shrug, not exactly sure why she is angry. Well, I mean, I did rejuvenate her a lot, but I made sure to give her all the papers she would need, along with enough money to sustain herself for at least three years.
"How!?!"

Ohhhhhh, that's the reason she is upset!

.... Wait, I'm getting slow. It's obvious that is the reason she is upset.

"Magic. And now sorry, but I think that your new boyfriend is searching for you."

And I point to the man that is walking, rather fast, towards us, a relieved expression on his face.

"Honey! I was worried! Are you okay?"

I smirk at her, before vanishing into smoke before he can see me, remaining just enough time to see her expression at my disappearing act and the way she smiles at him. Well, it seems that she found the love she was searching. Honestly, at first I was thinking of giving her a cat, but a boyfriend seemed a better choice.

....thinking back, a cat would've been better. It would be less of a risk to my identity. Oh well, the only other one around is a girl that is looking at a bulletin posted in front of the school, so I'm not exactly worried. Time to return back home.

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Mount Justice.

August 30th.

We were in the middle of lunch when Red Tornado entered the kitchen with what could be called a happy expression on his face.

For, you know, a robot with no ability to show expression could have. Honestly, it was mostly his body language to convey the meaning.
"I just got word from Atlantis. It seems that Kaldur will do a complete recovery with no complications. It is expected that he will be able to move freely from the end of the month."

We all remained stunned for a second before we started cheering, Wally talking a mile at a second, Robin smirking smugly and M’gann talking happily at Artemis, which was looking pleased, even if still angry that she wasn’t with us when we went hunting Clayface.

I turned towards Kon, a smile on my face, just to see him smile too, towards me and the others.

It was in that moment that I finally, finally recognized what I was feeling. It took me a lot of time because I wasn’t habituated to feel it and the only example I had was during my first year of High school. Which was, admittedly, many years ago.

I was in love with Kon.
I woke up in my bottle, a bit disoriented. I was sure that I went to bed in my bed last night, so why I was in my lamp? I wasn't...

Then it hit me.

The desert sand were flowing under me while I was flying over it, the night sky above me. Infinite stars glittering in the darkness.

I reached the camp of the Bialyan forces just before Miss Martian, who was still in my view. Then, she cloaked herself and I couldn't do anything but think that it would be better if she could phase shift and spy from under the sands. Oh well.

Then, a scream.

And I made the last error of the evening.

I lit up with my magic, the purple glow surrounding me while I was preparing myself to fall down on them, my emotion overriding my composure, and...

A missile hit me dead on, erasing everything with a blinding white explosion.

"Mh. So I'm at a bullshit level of regeneration. Good to know. Or maybe it's simply a rebirth kind of thing?"
I inspected myself rapidly to see if there were any particular changes, but nothing seemed strange, so I was forced to accept that I could return to normal after being exploded into smithereens.

Then, the whole room lurched violently, sending me sprawling to the ground.

"What the hell?"

Did someone moved the lamp? But it was... KON!

I turned into smoke, flowing up and going out of the lamp in seconds, just to see the empty vastness of the desert in front of me, sand shrouded in darkness as far as I could see. And a gasp behind me.

I turned, lighting up with purple, just to see Miss Martian looking at me with... was that fear?

"Hey, Miss Martian. Sorry for the scare, I thought that there was someone else."

Just to be sure, I quickly looked around, but, as before, I didn't see anything in particular. Except for a marked absence of Superboy.

"Who are you? Why did you call me Miss Martian? How do you know me? How am I on Earth? Why-" "Whoa, whoa, calm down! Give me time to answer." I raised my hands, stopping the onslaught of question that she unleashed on me, before registering what she was saying.

"What do you mean, how are you on Earth? You came with your uncle almost three months ago."
"Three months ago? What do you mean with that?" "I mean what I just said. You have been on Earth the last three months and are part of a team of superheroes, which includes me by the way, with your codename being Miss Martian. With me so far?"

She nodded, looking a bit unsure, but not outright disbelieving of what I was saying. Then she focused for a second, before...

"Miss Martian, don't-!"
Too late.

The feeling of saltwater filling my lungs was something that I would've been happy to never feel again. So would M'gann, judging by her expression. Luckily, she collapsed into a pile almost instantly, so Marid didn't make an appearance. I think.

Still...

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The sun was already starting to peek over the horizon when M'gann woke up, looking more disoriented than before.

"Jin? Where are we? And... Owwwww."

She grasped her head, moaning in pain, eyes closed and becoming even greener than before.

"Don't move too much, you tried to read my mind. And this is the result."

She looked at me, eyes slightly squinted from the pain, with a questioning look. I looked at her, before sitting down on the sand and, after glancing at the sun, creating a beach umbrella over us, receiving a grateful nod from M'gann, who was starting to cover her eyes with her hand.

"I don't know exactly what happened, but it seems like you had lost your memories. You were asking me who I was and how you were on Earth and... yeah."

She looked at me with astonishment, before closing her eyes and massaging her temples, seemingly trying to do something. I wasn't exactly sure of what, though.

"Umh, Miss Martian? What are you doing?" "Trying to remember what happened to me before I lost my memory, a thing that isn't easy, especially with this headache, so please shut up."
I closed my mouth and didn't make a sound. She was angry and in pain. And I wasn't stupid enough to disobey a woman in that state. I wasn't suicidal, thank you very much.

I passed the time playing with the sand, making little sculptures and impossible castles, all in miniature, until M'gann shook her head and turned to me. She didn't look so good.

"Got everything back?"

"Yeah. But there is a problem. The Bialyan encampment have a psychic."

That wasn't good.

"He managed to capture me and... erase my memories? Something like that. Well, not erasing them or I wouldn't remember them right now, but hiding them or making me unable to access them..." "I think I understand."

I stopped her with a frown on my face, thinking of what happened to me.

"We need to find the others" and, with a determined look on her face, she lifted off the ground and sped towards a random direction.

"Wait! We... well, apparently the plan is to fly randomly around. Ok, then."

And I started to follow her, sending one last thought to Kon, with the hope he was alright.

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We were flying around the desert, when Miss Martian stopped abruptly and facepalmed.

"What's the problem?" I asked, a bit puzzled at that reaction, just for her to shake her head.
"I was trying to reach them with my telepathy, but seeing as they don't remember me, they don't know how to answer my probes. I just need to shift to a more active scan, nothing more."

"Fiuuu. For a second I feared that it was something life-threatening, like forgetting Aqualad under the sun or...." we both froze, our eyes watching each other with something akin to horror on our faces.

"Can you find him if he's unconscious?" "I... think so. But the others?" "Robin is in hiding, Artemis is the daughter of a supervillain and I think that she is managing well enough and Wally wouldn't be hit unless he is in some serious trouble."

She turned to me with a considering look "And Superboy? He isn't in his right mind." "What do you mean?" "I mean that went in berserk. He ripped his t-shirt while roaring."

I blinked.

"To be fair, he tends to do that even when normal." That managed a chuckle out of both of us, but she recovered fairly fast, a small smile on her face.

"True, but he tossed away your lamp." She pointed out, with a rather serious expression on her face. I nodded, before freezing.

"Could you... wait here a second? It happens that I forgot one little thing back where you woke up." "What? Djinni, what did you..."

I vanished with a pop, appearing inside of my lamp before flowing out, smoke condensing rapidly into my normal shape. Once I could see with my eyes again, I recovered the pendant/bottle and checked it.

Beyond some shallow scratches and a broken chain, it was intact. Repairing the chains was the work of an instant and I was ready to teleport to M'gann again.

I blinked.
"Where is Miss Martian, though?"

I couldn't teleport to her, I needed a place. So I was, effectively, back to the start, without any indication of where she could be, except for flying towards the direction where we started the first time. The sigh that escaped me was loud enough to be heard all around.

"I really need to stop acting without thinking."

Looking towards the horizon held nothing.

"Well, let's get a leg up and start flying."

And, without saying anything else, I flew off.

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It's extremely easy to lose your way when you don't have any kind of natural landmarks to see where you are going. And seeing as neither Miss Martian nor I thought of leaving signs - which would be erased from the ever-shifting sand anyways, so it wasn't exactly our priority - and we didn't fly straight, I had lost the way fairly fast.

I was now simply flying around without a direction, trying to see if I could find some hint of her position or the others. I wasn't picky.

"Gods above, couldn't you all give me a sign or something!?"

Explosions started to sound to my right, a fair bit of distance from me.

I blinked rapidly a couple of times, before looking to the sky.

"Thanks?"
Turning towards the sound, I started flying towards it as fast as I could. Which was pretty fast, all things considered.

Soon I reached the place where the explosions came from. And, apparently, the Byalian decided to send the big guns to take us out, judging by the tanks that where targeting... are those-!

Then something hit me from behind, slamming me against the sand, right between Kid Flash and Artemis. Embarrassing.

**Especially** when I understood what exactly sent me down to earth. Namely, a berserkering Superboy.

"RAAAAAAGH!!" "Whoa!" "Who-!"

"Superboy!"

At the sound of my voice, he stopped. Completely.

Then I found myself on my back, with Kon crouched on me, his icy blue eyes staring me with extreme focus, his nose contracting every second, like he was trying to sniff something specific. I tried to not let the whole thing - position, focus, etcetera - get to me, but it was somewhat difficult, especially in the light of my revelation the other day.

I was starting to become black more than purple, when a voice broke me from my staring and him from his... whatever it was.

"Watch out!"

I turned towards the voice, just to see Kid Flash pointing towards the other side, while a rather loud whistle was starting to...

Then the missile hit and I couldn't see anything anymore.
This time the explosion didn't blow me up, mainly because of the almost indestructible teenager crouched on top of me. His positioning tanked most of the blast, simply slamming me against the rocky outcropping that was near us, my right arm blown to pieces and my right leg turned backwards.

I couldn't sense any pain, but I could see how green Kid Flash and Artemis were looking. Wally had doubled over and was puking everything he had in his stomach. Which was mostly bile, by this point. His metabolism was too fast and efficient to let food go undigested for more than... oh, twenty minutes?

Barbs against Wally aside, I think I went into shock, seeing that I was mentally rambling on the yellow speedster's eating habits instead of focusing on my arm, which was even now reforming itself from smoke, while my leg was already back to normal.

"Your arm..."

Artemis was not shocked enough to avoid commenting on it, showing that even with the memory loss she was more than badass enough to be on the team. Well, with Sportsmaster for a father....

"Yeah, don't worry. It's going to be okay in a few, no biggie."

I idly noted that the sand where I landed was purple, before hearing the sound of tanks getting ripped in pieces by a pissed superpowered teenager. I wonder if the amount of skin exposed to the sun was directly related to the strength he could exert on any given object. I mean, if it was the case he could go out in a speedo and he would be at maximum strength every time. Except at night, I guess.
My mind was wandering into dangerous territory, so I shook my head to return back to Earth. Just in time to see Wally looking annoyed and talking to me.

"Sorry, I was lost in thought. Could you repeat that?"

He rolled his eyes so hard that I was surprised they didn't fall from their sockets, but he managed to overcome his annoyance enough to repeat his question.

"I said, who the hell are you? And who is the indestructible berserker over there?"

Ahhhhh.

"Well, I am Djinni while we are in the field and I am one of your teammates. The teenager with the anger problem over there is Superboy and, before you ask, he is not the secret son of Superman. He is his clone."

Looks of understanding passed between them, before looking back at Kon, who was reducing the last tank to metal confetti. Kid Flash shivered, before turning back to me.

"Is it safe to stay near him? And more, why is he behaving like that?"

A couple of aerodrones with machineguns dropped behind me, with Miss Martian landing right after them.

"It's because he doesn't have any memories right now."

This caused Artemis to bring out her bow - oh, it was the one that I made for her! - and pointed an arrow at the green skinned female, who looked a bit tired of this whole thing.

Wow, she was actually showing her annoyance with the situation. This must mean that she really is tired of this whole thing.

"Allow me." I stepped up between the two girls, making me one of the most stupid - and probably
suicidal - members of the male species on the planet in this exact moment.

"She is Miss Martian, niece of the Martian Manhunter, another member of our team. And currently the only one, apart from me, that has her memories."

"Oh," Artemis lowered her bow, looking a bit sheepish, with Kid Flash looking starstruck. Obviously. Because some things are a universal constant.

"Thanks for the introduction, but we need to go. I found Aqualad. He's near."

Ok, that got my attention pretty fast. And the other two, too.

"What about Aqualad?"

Kid Flash was the first to question us, staying farther away/apart than I thought he would. Why... oh, right. Memory loss.

"Our team leader, rightfully voted by everyone, Robin included."

This got an incredulous look from the speedster, evidently knowing how Robin could be. Still, it was what happened and Wally would remember it soon. I hope.

"Hey, now that I think about it, where is Robin?"

"Guys, Aqualad?" The voice of Miss Martian brought us all back to Earth, reminding us that we still had a team leader to save.

<THEY'RE HERE! SHOOT THEM!>

Oh, right. We were still near an army trying to subdue Superboy. And us.
Purple smoke curled around my arms before a purple shield sprang into existence, making the bullets bounce uselessly into the sand.

"Wow. A force-field generator? Where are you hiding the projector?" Kid Flash looked supremely unconcerned about the army shooting at us. Oh, and back to the old 'I don't believe in magic' part of his personality. This will be fun.

"It's magic."

He instantly scoffed, backing up a couple of steps.

"Magic doesn't exist. It's just tech or science that we don't understand yet."

I rolled my eyes before addressing Miss Martian.

"Miss Martian, you said that Aqualad is near here. Can you reach him without anyone seeing you?" "Yes?" "Can you bring him here without being seen? We can take care of the army here." "Are you sure? With them without any memory and with Robin still MIA..." she trailed off, with a doubtful tone to her words. I simply flashed a smile, winking at her.

"Ok, then." And she disappeared from view, camouflaged.

"And what do we do now?" Artemis asked, bow on her shoulder and the other hand on her hips, a bit ragged by the whole day but otherwise in perfect condition.

"We defeat the army, find a way to bring Superboy with us and complete the mission, obviously. I refuse to leave him behind."

She shot me a knowing look, complete with a smirk, while Wally was clueless.

"And how do you propose we do this, hot stuff?" "Well..."

But before I could say anything, the shouts of the soldiers stopped, along with the firearms, and then
Superboy’s yells of fury simply stopped.

"We have your teammate. Perhaps you are willing to negotiate, mhh?"

The voice was male, smug and had an air of superiority that hinted that the speaker was someone who was your superior, independent of your position.

"It's not like you can actually hurt him... ouch! What did I say?" "You don't give out information like that to the enemy, idiot!" "He was trashing their tanks without breaking a sweat! I'm pretty sure that they already know!"

Ignoring Artemis and Kid Flash bickering, I kept my attention on the speaker, who started chuckling.

"A bit of discord in the ranks, uh? But I have to admit that you are right. We cannot hurt him with the weapons we have here." A pause that made everything seem suspended in the air.

"His mind, now, that is another thing entirely."

My blood froze in my veins, my mind screeching to a sudden stop. Was he... yes. He must be the one who erased the others' memories.

"What do you want?" My voice cut through the silence like a knife, making Kid Flash and Artemis turn their heads towards me, their expressions a window to what they were thinking. Judging by their horrified stares, nothing good.

"How about a simple exchange? One of you for him."

He was lying. Of course he was lying. There is no way that he would keep his word.

"Ok. I'm coming out now."

Kid Flash’s hand clamped down on my arm.
"Are you crazy? There is no way that that guy is gonna follow his side of the deal." He hissed, with Artemis nodding behind him.

"I know about guys like him, he will never fulfill his part of the deal."

"Look, I know what I am doing, okay? Be prepared to take him and the goons down when I give you the signal."

Both of them looked at me like I was crazy, but Kid Flash let me go.

I stepped through the shield, making it transparent in the meantime, and raised my chin, looking at the man with the cape. He was pale as a sheet, but with some muscle definition implying a certain level of fitness. This was no paper pusher with a bit of power: this one was dangerous.

"I'm here. Let him go."

He smirked. Kon was deeply asleep, with black rope tied around his wrists, held up by two soldiers. Even with all the gunfire, missiles and tank artillery, he didn't have any wounds on him. Good.

"You don't look like much. How can I be sure that you are of equal value to him?" Oh, look. He was trying to find a loophole. Wrong game to play.

"And why does it matter? You asked for one of us, without any other specification. You now have it. So let him go."

"I don't think so." And he extended his hand towards me, a look of concentration on his face, revealing that the top of his head was replaced with some sort of transparent cover, leaving his brain exposed. Some sort of cybernetic enhancement, I guessed.

Then I felt his mind trying to enter mine. I smiled, razor sharp, even as the pale man smirked with full force.
And then we were underwater. This time, I was calm, even with lungs full of water, the pain of not being able to breathe and the slow sensation of drowning...

*While the others were splashing around in a water-war, I put to the test my need to breathe underwater. I didn’t need to breathe and the salt didn’t sting my eyes, so I slipped near the bottom and flew underwater, simply taking pleasure in the sensation of being in the water again.*

Oh, right. I don't need to breathe.

And with that simple realization, the discomfort and pain were gone. I could simply float there, under the infinite sea that was my mindscape, watching the man slowly drown. His eyes were wide and panicked while small bubbles of air continued to appear around him just to be popped out mere moments later.

He was clearly panicking, eyes big and terrified, fixed on me like I was a monster of the days of old, one powerful enough to toy with humans without any kind of consequences. In a sense, I suppose I was.

Just to be sure, I checked if Marid had appeared behind me. Nope. It was just me. So I did something that I knew would haunt him: I smiled. My most sweet, innocent smile.

He tried to back away. He tried to escape. I could feel his mind trying to return back to his own body, like a colibrì beating its wings, frenetic, frantic, desperate.

I admit that I was tempted to let him drown. I watched him slow, his attempt getting more and more sluggish every second, his eyes becoming more and more desperate. I was tempted.

But I didn’t want to let the others see me as an assassin. As someone who could kill without mercy. On the other hand, he did hurt them and Kon...

"I'm going to let you live. But if you ever cross my path again, you will wish you were dead. Do you understand?"

He was almost catatonic, but he managed a nod. I smiled again, still sweet, still innocent. And I relaxed my hold on his mind, letting him go. He almost didn’t manage, but he returned to his mind and I to the real world.
I was wet, but the man was completely soaked, tunic hanging limply by his body, heaving saltwater on the sand, his limbs trembling. Then he made eye contact with me and fainted.

I smiled to the soldiers and spoke.

"I am Djinni. Let my companion go and I will not harm you. Continue to oppose me, however...." and I flicked my hand to a nearby rock. It exploded into dust, with the sound of a grenade. No smoke or heat or anything else. It simply exploded.

The soldiers dropped Kon, staring at me in shock.

Someone said something, someone else started to repeat it and soon they were all backing away, looking terrified and repeating the same word.

That word? Jinn.

It seemed we were in one of the places where the legend was known, so who was I to disappoint?

My smile grew fangs, my legs lost shape and became a whirlwind, whipping sand around me, my eyes started to burn and my hair was smoke. I pointed towards them, a spiral of fire twirling around my arm and coalescing into a fireball. I dropped the shield that was holding back Kid Flash and Artemis.

Seconds later, all the soldiers were down, Kid Flash having done what he did best, and I was back to normal. I didn't teleport to Kon, but it was a near thing. Soon I was seated near him, his head in my lap, hoping it would keep him calm when he woke up.

"That was impressive."

Artemis was carefully neutral, Kid Flash near her and still looking skeptic.

"What was that they were saying? Ji-something?" "Jinn. Spirits made from smokeless fire, with great
power and no morality. They were often bound by great sorcerers in rings or lamps to serve them."
"Wait, wait. They thought you were a Genie?"

I smiled at that. "No, that is another thing entirely. I can grant wishes, if you are curious, but I'm not one of those."

He looked incredulous. "Prove it."

I rolled my eyes, before waving at him.

"Wish for something, then."

He looked startled for a second, before blurting out something "I... mmhhh... want something to eat."

Artemis looked at him like he was an idiot. Oh, I missed that expression.

"As you wish."

Snap.

Dling!

A table with a complete lunch appeared in front of him, with enough chairs for everyone of us. On it, a complete lunch, starting from hors d'oeuvre and concluding with dessert. All in great quantity.

"Lunch is served." "Wow. How did you do it? Teleportation? No, it couldn't be. Matter transmutation? But no one had managed to..." "Weren't you lamenting that you were hungry before?" "Oh, right."

And food started to disappear at a prodigious rate, with Artemis eating something, too. I guess that running around the desert would make everyone hungry.
After some time, I'm not sure how much, the food was gone and Miss Martian managed to bring Aqualad back. He was severely dehydrated, moderately sunburnt, and he was murmuring something, too low to be heard.

"Everything's okay?" Her voice was worried, but she was managing the whole situation pretty well. I nodded in answer, waving where the soldiers and the man in the tunic were, near the rocky outcropping and bound, gagged and blinded.

"Everything under control. You?" "I had to search for him but it wasn't too difficult. He needs liquids though."

"Done." A giant fishbowl full of clean water appeared. Everyone turned to look at me with a strange look, while Miss Martian looked reproachful. I was unrepentant and, after a bit of stare off, she sighed and levitated Aqualad inside the bowl. He instantly looked better.

I snapped a photo, before hiding everything in my lamp. It was too good of an occasion not to, even with the whole situation we were in. And I bet that, in hindsight, it would be funny for everyone.

"Miss Martian, can you restore their memories?" She looked lost in thought for a couple of seconds, before nodding.

"It will take me a while. And it would be better if I could do it one by one. Less risk for errors that way."

Kid Flash stepped forward, black costume still on, a smile on his face.

"Then I'm offering to go first. I want to know if magic is real or not."

Miss Martian gestured to him and they went to a more secluded spot, before falling silent. Artemis dropped down against the fishbowl, while I was still, relaxed, passing my fingers in Kon's hair. He looked relaxed, none of the scowl that he usually sported. If it wasn't for the situation...
But now it wasn't the moment. I had a mission to finish.

Blue eyes opened, looking at me.

"Done. Artemis, could you come here?"

I tuned the two heroines out, focusing only on keeping Kon calm. A soft smile, lips closed, body language as non-threatening I could manage. He brought a hand on my face, exploring my face, before inhaling deeply.

I guess that some kind of feelings remained even if the memories were cancelled. Hidden. Whatever they were.

He snuggled closer to me, curling up a bit and falling back asleep. He was so cute when he was like this. Another photo was needed, so I handed my camera to Kid Win and gestured to me. He sent me a thumbs up, before snapping the picture. Everything to the lamp and I was ready to wait for Miss Martian.

She took her time, making sure that everyone got their memories back. The easiest to do was Aqualad, seeing as he was asleep and not putting up any kind of resistance. After an hour and a half, she had finished with them and she looked ready to return Kon's memories.

I was pretty worried that Superboy would react badly to that, seeing his deeply ingrained dislike for telepathy and other mind-controlling powers and/or devices. Still, the only other ways to have him recover his memories were either waiting - which I didn't know if it would work - or a wish - which... yeah - so it's not like we had a lot of choices. Yet she was the best of a bad situation, so I nodded to her and my magic came alive.

Technically putting someone to sleep didn't count as interrupting the Free Will of someone, seeing as I wasn't changing anything about their decisional process. A nice workaround, but I was a member of a race that could rival the Fae for lawyerspeak and loophole abuse, so I wasn't really surprised.

A delicate veil of purple magic fell over his eyes, filling the air with the smell of lavender and a feeling of warmth, comfort and home.

I gestured to Miss Martian to do her thing and she nodded, putting a hand on his temple and
focusing.

A wave of jealousy hit me while I was watching that scene, jealousy to the fact that I had to see a bond like that and incapable of being part to it. That just resolved my intention.

That telepathy spell that Zatara talked about... I was going to master it.
Both Aqualad and Superboy were a bit wobbly after the telepathic anti-amnesia session, but while Aqualad opted for climbing out of the giant fishbowl (while sending me a glare for that) and trying to find what happened, Kon decided to stay put and simply recover while laying on me like a cat.

I wonder if I am spoiling him or not. Then I promptly decide that I really don't care and return to pet his hair while listening to the discussion that is going on a few feet from the prisoners.

Speaking of them...

"Hey leader! What do we do with them?" I point to the gagged, terrified soldiers and the still unconscious telepath. Did I ever discover his name? Meh, not that it is important.

Kid Flash and Artemis were arguing about something, Miss Martian was trying to play mediator, Superboy (who has been filled on what happened) was glaring at the soldiers.

Aqualad rubbed the temples of his head, looking like he was trying to shake out a migraine, with less success than a fish trying to climb a tree.

Wait, now that I think of it, there wasn't a fish that could climb a tree or am I misremembering something? I could swear that I had read something like that in a book...

"We keep them tied until we are away from here. We cannot keep prisoners and we don't kill."

I nodded at it, silently adding a last part to his sentence: 'Unless we don't have another choice.'
Night in the desert was something to see. Without light to pollute the ambient, the stars were amazing. Like little diamonds on black velvet, as corny as it sounds.

We were all ready to go and charge the encampment, but Kid Flash blocked us with a single question.

"Where is Rob?"

At that, I admit that I sighed and knocked the side of my head with a fist, much to the surprise of the others.

"I cannot believe that I forgot about him."

I grumbled, while flying near Miss Martian and Superboy, with Aqualad, Artemis and Kid Flash running under us, towards the point where we dropped the equipments.

Honestly, at what purpose that giant server that we brought with us, I had no idea. But Robin and Kid Flash were adamant about it, so I guess is something to make our presence here undetectable by normal method of scanning.

Fat load of good it did for us.

"Don't be so grumpy, anyone can forget something."

Miss Martian attempt to cheer me up wasn' realy successful. I simply grumbled something unintelligible under my breath and continued to fly with a Superboy-shaped person bubbling with rage near me, almost breathing my air.

Yes, I told him about my meet'and'greet with a missile. He wasn't happy about it.
And when he discovered that he had thrown away my bottle while he was mindless, he passed the anger stage and went straight up to fury, more silent than ever, face smooth and without the usual frown.

That worried me more than I wanted to admit.

So I focused on reaching the point. It seems that it was farther away than what I believed, the desert playing with our perception of distance, making things look nearer than they were.

Add this to the lack of point of reference we lost our way a couple of times.

Still, at the end we managed to find the right way and stick to it.

"Are they soldiers?"

Artemis question was enough to catch all of us and our focus shifted to what she was pointing to. Robin was dancing around a group of soldiers, trying to put them down, but he was impeded by the constant gunfire that threatened to give him some more breathing holes.

"Kid."

"On it." And he sped away at the command of Aqualad, with me, Miss Martian and Superboy after him. Aqualad ran faster, Artemis right behind him, an arrow already flying towards the nearest soldier.

Chaos reigned for some moments, before the whole platoon of soldiers were subdued, either tied up, enveloped or unconscious in the net arrows of made by Artemis.

"Kid Flash! Aqualad! Nice to see a friendly face in this desert! Who are they?" He gestured towards us, smile firmly in place while the other hand lay casually on his hips. Quite near his belt, now that I think about it.

"Hey Rob. It's a long story, but basically it involves amnesia and telepath. These people here are our teammates. The blonde with the Green Arrow theme is Artemis, the hotie with green skin and a cape
is Miss Martian, the shirtless bodyguard is Superboy and the arabian looking stripper is Djinni."

Thank you for your presentation Kid. You sure have a gift with words. I sent him an half-hearted glare, before lowering a bit and sitting near the thing that I still didn't know what it did. It had some blinking light, but that was it.

"Amnesia?"

He looked fairly skeptical, but I wanted to go home and wash away the sand, using an actual shower and not the magic as I usually did. I wanted to wash away the feeling of being exploded, of having my limbs torn and ripped. When I was like this it didn't hurt, not really, but it was a strange feeling, like something was touching you somewhere you don't have circulation.

Without the pin-and-needles after.

"...ok?"

Whoops, it seems I missed the whole 'convince Robin that we are telling the truth' spiel that Aqualad and Kid Flash derived. Oh well, it's not like they needed me for this part.

Miss Martian landed in front of the boy wonder and started to work her miracle, eyes white and murmuring too low for me to understand what she was saying.

"And now we wait. Man, I had more excitement when I was hunting criminals in the street of Gotham."

Artemis was starting to pace, clearly having reached the end of her rope. I turned towards her, gesturing to the bow.

"How is that thing treating you?"

She looked startled from my sudden interruption of her monologue-slash-complaint and followed my gaze, until she landed on the bow slinged on her shoulder, her face brightening when she saw it.
"This thing is awesome! I don't recognize the metal it's made, but it respond to my touch like a dream. It also can reach much farther than I could with my other bow, but I still need to test it. Green Arrow and Batman returned it to me right before this mission. I have to got to the range and see what this beauty can do..."

I patted myself on the shoulder - metaphorically speaking, of course - for a job well done in distracting her. Kon was still behind me, less than a foot, while Aqualad was plotting with Kid Flash.

************

Night had blanketed the desert and the camp where the Bialyans were stationed. The whole place was abuzz with movement, the soldiers looked like they were on pure adrenaline.

Apparently the man cosplaying as a vampire was someone important. Who knew?

Sarcasm aside, industrial strength lights were sweeping the dunes around trying to fight away the darkness and blocking any attempt at being stealthy. I could almost congratulate them on it. Almost.

That is If we were anywhere near them, obviously. Instead, we all were in the air, around four hundred meters over them. I was carrying Robin, Superboy had Aqualad and Kid Flash, while Miss Martian was floating with Artemis.

We were high enough that we couldn't be seen easily and we had all the time needed to adjust the plan.

"Everyone ready?"

Aqualad's voice was the signal that we were waiting. And a nod from the whole team was the answer.

"Go!"

I teleported away, leaving Robin on a dune of sand, before vanishing and reappear in full view of the camp.
Wind whipped around me, sand flying around and hiding part of my form. I turned into partial smoke, becoming bigger and more inhuman. More Jinn.

In this area my (new)species had a reputation. Not a good one, but a reputation nevertheless. And I was ready to use it for all that was worth.

A missile struck me. Well, more like passed my form and struck the sand behind me. It was soon followed by an hail of gunfire, all completely useless.

Sure, I couldn't really hit anything physically myself, but I had magic for this, didn't I?

With that in mind and keeping a smile that would have made a sociopath feign being proud, I started to advance towards them. With the whirlwind of sand, the purple smoke and the grin to create the appearance of being indestructible.

Keeping their attention.

It was what I had to do. Aqualad was using the local legends to our advantage, making me the nightmare, the thing that goes bump in the night, the legend come to life.

I wasn't sure if, in another occasion, I would consider that flattening or insulting.

.....

Flattening.

Soon enough shouts started coming from the inside of the camp, making the soldiers so focused on me stop. Oh, they didn't stop all together, but in spots, some stopping firing against me and turning towards their companions and shouting, some blindly firing until the entire line was a mess of discord and confusion.
Kid Flash struck in that moment, running up and down the line, sending the weapons in the air, throwing soldiers in to even more disarray and letting me do my job.

I dropped the wind, as well as the smoke form and started to bind them, one after another, trying to not be seen.

It didn't take much time, with the soldiers completely disorganized and under attack from two fronts. Soon they were all captured and the camp fell into silence.

Robin's call came less than a minute later, calling all of us into the tent at the center, the biggest one.

Inside, a lot of scientific equipment was in various states of destruction, Robin was fiddling with an hard disk, with Artemis standing behind him. Aqualad and Miss Martian were watching Superboy, who was petting... a sphere.

A metal sphere, big enough to reach Superboy's shoulders. And he was treating it like a dog or a cat.

"Ok, I'm going to sleep. Superboy, catch."

At my voice he turned, raising his hand and catching the bottle on the (now repaired) silver chain. I smiled at him before vanishing into purple smoke and reappearing into the bedroom inside the bottle.

Where I promptly went to sleep. If they needed me, they could rub the bottle and I would appear. Until then, I was going to relax and rest for a while.
Under the Sea, Under the sea! or: Ariel lied.

Chapter Notes

Thanks to Hye on SV for betaing.

Under the Sea, Under the sea! or: Ariel lied.

September 5th, 16:30

The lamp was being rubbed.
The lamp was being rubbed and I was awake enough to answer.

I emerged from it as a plume of smoke, coalescing into my own body when I saw the others sprawled on the various chairs and couches in front of the TV. Then Kon grabbed me by the jacket and I ended with my back to his chest and legs half formed still hovering in the air.

The others sent us a rather strange look, before looking at each other.

"What?"

Kon sounded perplexed and a bit defensive, tightening his hold on me. It seems like I was relegated to the role of teddy bear again. Probably a fallback thanks to the amnesia.

I shrugged and made myself at home, relaxing.

And before you say anything, no. I still was in love with him. This doesn't mean that I cannot control myself.

I just needed to keep in mind that it wasn't reciprocated and that I would lose the best friend I ever had and voilà. Problem solved. For now.

"What are we watching?"

Robin glanced at me from the recorder, three DVDs already in hand.

"Beauty and the Beast, Sleeping Beauty or The Little Mermaid?"

Both Kaldur and Kon had puzzling looks on their faces, while the others were looking at them.

"The Little Mermaid?" This was more of a question than an answer, but Robin took it as a confirmation and popped the disk inside the recorder, before returning back to his chair, snickering while looking at Kaldur, who simply looked back with a blank face, his question still unanswered.

"Jin, if you can?"

Seeing as this question was from Wally, I snapped my fingers and a series of snacks appeared in front of us. With a lot of sweets, too. Everyone got something while the first notes of the film started,
with the iconic blue screen appearing.

I was both looking at the film and at Kaldur. This could either go well or bad, but it would be hilarious.

************************

"Why are they singing like that? Fishes and other marine lifeforms can't sing."

Wally beat me to the explanation.

"It's a cartoon for children, even if it's loved by a lot of adults, too. Things aren't the same as in the real world."

Kon looked perplexed, but he accepted the explanation.

I got struck by a sudden flashback: my mother, telling me that she was sick of one of my favourite films. Apparently I had rewatched it so many times now, that she couldn't stand the sight of those penguins...

************************

"How did she fall in love so fast? It doesn't make sense!" "It's kind of the whole Disney package, the whole 'love at first sight' thing. Not that it's exactly impossible, it's just that usually end.... bad."

Miss Martian was surprisingly knowledgeable about Disney films. And about love.

************************

"Why is Ursula different from the other mermaids?" "Because she's a Cecaelia, not a mermaid. There are some that live under the rule of King Orin, but they are quite rare. I myself only saw one of them once."

Wally looked interested in that.

"And she was a witch?"

Kaldur shook his head, eyes fixed on the screen. It was during the transformation sequence.

"HE was a warrior, one of the ones tasked to keep order in the outermost cities."

************************

"Why is she interfering?"

There was a beat of silence before Artemis spoke.

"Because she wants her to fail."

Her tone was hard like stone and the matter was dropped quickly, even if the arms around me got a bit tighter.

************************

"How comes Eric can accept her like this without any problem? And this is without getting into the political repercussion of a wedding like that...."
"Uh...."

It seems that Robin doesn't know how to answer, Wally doesn't have the answer either, nor does Artemis, and both Kaldur and M'gann aren't from the land or Earth, so not the same fairytales. Also, The Little Mermaid is a European tale.

"It's because this is only the Disney version of the story. In the original version it was different: the witch doesn't try to interfere with the mermaid courting, the prince simply marrie another princess, whether for love or for political reasons, while still loving the mermaid. Also, the mermaid compare the feeling of walking like stepping on knives and, when she refuses to kill the prince to recover her tail, after his wedding, she dissolves into sea foam."

Everyone is looking at me a bit horrified or sad. Alright, the sad one is M'gann, but Kaldur is the one who was giving me strange looks.

"What?"

"No, it's just... why sea foam? Our bodies are made of the same basic components of humans, so it's not realistic. Unless magic was involved?"

I mill a bit, not sure on how to answer, before going for being truthful, even if blunt.

"Remember that this is a tale written during the height of Christianity, ok?"

A careful nod from him, while Robin look at me like he had understood where I'm aiming and he couldn't believe it.

"Well, the reason for sea foam is because everything that wasn't human didn't possess a soul, so it would return to what it created from when it died."

I await the fallout, but it strangely doesn't come. Instead Kaldur is relaxed.

"I understand. Thanks for your answer."

"Aren't you angry?"

I had expected at least a bit of discomfort or something.

"Why should I? It's an old fact from a religion that I am not a follower of, so I have neither the inclination nor the knowledge to argue about. It's just better to let things die here and go on."

Wow. He is really mature. More than even a lot of adults.

**************

I waved to the others while they vanished in a shower of light, before Kaldur turned towards us. I was propped against Kon, while M'gann was on the other side, smiling.

"I am returning to Atlantis now and I was wondering if you three would care to accompany me."

"I would love to! But..." "Didn't you just go?" M'gann was, very obviously, excited. Kon was... mhh, I'm going with curious. Judging by his scowl...

"Yes, but I need - I want - to return more often."

"And you didn't ask before because...."
I prompted him, curious on the why. I could hazard a guess, but it's better if he says it out loud.

"I am regretful to say this, but our friends would not do well with the extreme pressure at the bottom of the ocean. It would be cruel to offer you and exclude them, so I waited until they weren't here."

Okay, it makes sense. Meanwhile M'gann look really excited.

"Let's go! Oh, I want to see if Atlantis is how you describe..." "Actually..."

We all turned towards him. Kaldur was smiling slightly, looking at M'gann.

"...I thought we could take the scenic route."

*******************

The trip in the Bioship towards the deep of the sea was something out of this world. It was beautiful, with the water around us slowly losing color and light, until we were flying in complete darkness.

Then, a gleam of light and a city, otherwordly in its beauty, appeared in front of us. The building were mostly spherical-looking, using a kind of architecture that was very different from what was on the land.

Lights glinted and shined inside the various windows, small people swimming around, moving in all the three dimensions. It was kind of odd to see something like that as the norm instead of a few outliers.

Still, pretty cool.

I was in the middle of wondering if the architecture was mostly spherical to withstand the pressure extorted by the water when Kaldur interrupted my thoughts.

"Welcome to my birthplace. The atlantean city-state of Shayeris." Kaldur had a small smile on his face, clearly proud of his city.

"It's... spectacular." M'gann was awed from the scene in front of us and, honestly, I couldn't fault her for that.

"Are you shorter?" What?

I turned towards Kon, who was watching M'gann. And, yes, she is actually shorter. By a lot.

"It's the pressure. Even the Bio-ship is smaller at this depth."

"I hope you experience no discomfort..."

M'gann waved away the concern of our team leader with a smile.

"I'm fine, honest."

This granted her a smile from him.

"Good. I have stocked the hold with more appropriate attire and re-breathers."

"None for me, thanks."

Then M'gann surprised us morphing and creating gills on her neck, while her clothes changed from her usual attire to a more streamlined cut, a bit like a swimsuit.
"Wow." "Nice touch."

We went into the back of the bioship to change our outfits. Well, to let Kon change his clothes, I kept mine. Also, I didn't look at him while he was changing, turning and watching the city from the window, until he grabbed me by the waist and dragged me to the airlock.

Soon we were out of the bio-ship, they swimming while I simply floated behind them, upright and without a problem. I could withstand the void of the space and I already knew that I would return into the bottle if 'killed, so i wasn't worried'. Yet, these watery depths were almost comforting in some weird way. Like I was coming home.

Still, I would have problem speaking. Wait, how could Atlantean speak?

Kaldur was gesturing towards a house with pink borders, probably communicating telepathically with the others. Yeah, that still burned a bit.

Meeting Kaldur parents was... a bit strange. First, they could actually talk underwater. Second, I discovered from where he got his blond hair. His mother. His father, on the other hand, gave him almost everything else.

Third, I could understand what they were saying. And this was the third time where I understood something that I shouldn't be able to. Firstly, the ease of which I could speak English. Then, Byalian. And if my hypotesis was correct...

"My friends, these are my parents, Sha'lain'a and Calvin Durham. Mother. Father. Meet Superboy, Djinni and Miss Martian."

"Please, call me M'gann." How...?

"You speak atlantean!" Yeah, that was my reaction as well.

"Not really. But my psychic abilities allow me to translate and communicate."

Kon then gave me the last proof I needed for my theory. He spoke Atlantean.

"The G-Gnomes programmed me to speak Atlantean."

"I understand you - yet, I have no idea what that means. And can you speak Atlantean as well?"

She turned to me, while Calvin took Kaldur aside and spoke to him.

"I guess." My reply to her was in perfect Atlantean. This gained me two incredulous stare from M'gann and Kon, while Sha'lain'a was giving me a curious look.

*****************

"How can you speak Atlantean?"

This line of questioning was the first thing that Kon asked me when we returned to the Bio-ship for the night. Kaldur and Megan were also curious, watching me from their bunks. I simply shrugged.

"I have a theory that I'm almost sure that is correct. Still, I'm not sure. Do you wanna hear it?"

He nodded rather decidedly, looking me straight into my eyes, so I simply shrugged.

"My current guess is that I can speak every language that you know. And for the why... well, I can
only think of an explanation." And I waved towards the lamp adorning the neck of Kon, earning a scowl and a glare at the air over my head.

Was he trying to glare at Marid?

"Well, then it is a lucky coincidence that you ended with Superboy. This will make things a lot easier." Kaldur, tactfully, didn't comment on the fact that I couldn't be part of the telepathy link. "Good night, everyone!"

Thank for M'gann, her cheerful demeanor was a blessing.

"Good night." "'night." "Sleep well."

**********************

September 6; 08:06
Poseidonis.

The city was nice. Not that we stopped for sightseeing, we went directly to the palace.

I could feel a pressure, that had nothing to do with being on the bottom of the ocean, the moment I stepped onto the palace grounds. Some kind of spell or ward or something. It wasn't threatening, but it was... dampening? Maybe some kind of anti-aggression? Not sure.

Our audience was with the Queen. The King (aka Aquaman) wasn't here, apparently.

Why was a King of all the oceans busy being a superhero on the land?

"Kaldur, it is an honor to finally meet your friends and teammates."

Queen Mera was a... well, the world that came to my mind was lanky, all graceful movements and hidden power. She had long red hair, pale skin and a golden headband in place of a crown. A green dress adorned her form, flowing in the water. It was pretty, if I was honest.

"The honor is all ours, Queen Mera. I lived on Mars my whole life without ever meeting a member of the royal family." M'gann was pretty starstruck with the whole situation, it seemed.

"There's a certain wisdom in inaccessibility when the queen carries the heir to the throne."

The queen's pregnant? And this person reveal it to everyone here? Maybe it's not a secret? It would be a pretty good moral-booster if the dynasty was continued.

"Allow me to introduce Prince Orm, my overly protective brother-in-law."

The man was slender, with a swimmers build... and I just realized what I just thought, so, for the sake of my self-worth, let's go on... With black hair and a smile on his face. Honestly, he didn't look particularly worried.

"How can I be anything else while my brother is off playing Aquaman?"

This clearly irked Kaldur, probably because he was implying that his mentor wasn't the wise and conscientious guy he knew. Or something like that.

"King Orins work with the Justice League is anything but a game, my prince."

"Of course. Still, I am glad you and your fellow champions are here, Kaldur'ahm. There have been reports of unrest originating at the Conservatory of Sorcery."
This sounded a lot like a sidequest. Something I would put inside a D&D Session to delay the players. So this was what it looked like in real life.

Kaldur answered at this with a bow and an apology to the Queen, before guiding us to the Conservatory.

********

The Conservatory of Sorcery was big. And beautiful, architectonically speaking. And full of people. It seemed like a lot of Atlantis was interested in magic, specialized or not.

"M'gann M'orzz, Superboy, Jin, these are some of my former classmates: Ronal," A blonde haired, pale-skinned guy "Blubber," an humanoid whale with fins that ended in three-fingered hands... things... and aren't whales mammal? How come he can breath underwater? "Lori Lemaris," A stereotypical mermaid, with red hair, even "La'gaan," A guy that was a bit smaller than the others, maybe younger?, and that looked like the son of The Thing from the Black Lagoon "and Nanae Sha'ark." "That's King Sha'ark, chum. And don't forget it!" And a rather grumpy humanoid shark, like that old cartoon, Street Sharks I think it was called. Now that I think of it, I need to see if it exist here.

M'gann looked like she was enjoying the whole meet'n'greet, while Kon was rather neutral. Me, well.... it was a bit different, seeing that I had some unfortunate images in my mind. Luckily, I managed to ignore them.

"You're all so different..." Yep, definitely enjoying this. I wondered if she can mimic them and to what degree.

"Millennia ago, Atlanteans were all surface dwelling humans... until the continent sank." Cosmo, was it you? Stupid Fairy Oddparents episodes.

"By necessity our ancestors used science and sorcery to adapt to life beneath the waves. Since then, the populace of each city-state has evolved along its own curse." So it's a bit like Darwin's bird, just less restrictive... and I guess that there is a certain degree of interbreeding, seeing as the common ancestor was the same.

Or maybe not.

"Now Atlantis is a continent of diversity and our capital, Poseidonis, is the most divers of all." Sounds like a nightmare for neo-nazis and ther ilk. Me likey.

"It's wonderful! My world could take lessons. Should take lessons." Right, the whole red, green and white issue. Wow, they are the same color as the italian flag. Uh.

La'gaan was the first to approach us to talk, evidently curious.

"And are you three typical of the surface?"

Kon was a bit uncertain of how to answer, with the bright red eyes of the kid pointed on him, while M'gann was chatting with the mermaid.

"Not exactly...." "Not when I'm purple."

A bit of commotion made us turn our heads toward M'gann, who was now showing a rather nice mermaid tail in the place of her legs. I shoot her a thumbs up, with Kon copying me uncertainly. The martian girl smiled at that.
"Well, this has been... charming. But I should go." and, without even a good-bye, Ronal swam away, an expression of... displeasure? Disgust? of something unpleasant on his face, thing that wasn't helped by the remark of the shark with legs.

"What's the matter? Feeling outnumbered?"

I let Kon field the question both from La'gaan and Blubber, when I was trying to parse what just happened with them. My first instinct was to peg the blond as a racist, but seeing the sheer diversity around us, I clamped down on this reaction and shelved the whole matter in the back of my mind. It wasn't the moment for this.

I turned towards Kon, just in time to see him ignore what Sha'ark was saying to him. Then, someone called Kaldur.

"M'gann, Superboy, Jin. These are my dearest friends, Tula and Garth."

They were both pale and slender, but the boy sported a short high ponytail of black hair, clothed in green borded with black, while she had red hair with two bangs long enough to reach her chin, a yellow shirt and a pale green skirt. They were holding hands and, the first thing they did, was hug Kaldur.

"These are your friends? You are welcome here!" She was pretty cheerful, waving with her hand, while Garth looked a bit more reserved, even if he strayed a bit more close to Kaldur than her.

"Yeah. Any friend of Kaldur is a friend of ours."

In the meantime M'gann looked like she was starting to redden, while Kon had that look in his eyes that clued me in to the fact that they were talking telepathically.

Kaldur was smiling, evidently happy to see that both of them were here to greet him. It seemed that my 'revelation' of his feelings and forcing him to confront them had brought something good.

Then, he looked away, a concerned expression on his face.

"Topo?"

A mouse? In this place? Wait, what I am thinking?

A purple boy, with the head of Cthulhu, was trying to swim away discretly. Not discreet enough, seeing as Kaldur reached him in a few seconds, just to reveal bright red markings on his torso, spelling something that neither Kon nor I could read.

And, after this, everyone, except for Garth and Tula, swam away. Fast.

Some in a more aggressive way than other. Hint, it wasn't the mermaid.

"I couldn't read those markings?" Kon question was soon answered by Tula, a worried look on her face.

"They are ancient Atlantean runes..."

"Spelling what?"

"Impure" and with this all my hope of no racism got dashed to hell faster than Superman.

Well, so much for a Continent of Diversity.
"Speak to me of Topo"

Garth's face grimaced in distaste, an air of reluctance around him. But he spoke.

"He was a victim of the purists. They consider themselves the direct descendants of the original Atlanteans..." "...and attempt to scare anyone they consider impure into leaving Poseidonis."

Tula finished, anger on her face. It was clear that this matter was a sore point for her. Not sure why. I could only compare her to some of the white people who were ashamed of even having the same skin color as the nazis, some hetero who were ashamed to have the same orientation as some homophobes and so on.

"What qualifies as impure? You all breathe water."

There was a beat of silence after Kon's words. I almost giggled at that logic. It was so simple in his eyes. It was also heartwarming that he couldn't even understand why someone would consider someone impure over something.

"Tula and I appear human - and thus considered pure..." "But my visible gills render me impure."

Tula put her hand on Kaldur's shoulder, soon followed by Garth. A small smile on her face.

"You are not impure. No one is."

It was a nice moment, but Kaldur was far too focused right now.

"But I was just here a short while ago and there wasn't any word of this."

Garth shaked his head, forlorn.

"This is not a new issue, ἀστερίας. It's something that lurked under the surface for long, long time. And..."

He turned towards Tula, prompting her to speak.

"It's just in the last period that things started escalating, with act of violence made behind hoods and robes. It's starting to become common."

"LET GO OF ME!!"

Someone was screaming and it wasn't difficult to see who it was. It seems like a bipedal shark with bad attitude was attacking someone. And he had some backup.

We sprinted towards the commotion, finding that the old classmates of Kadur were fighting with other old classmates of Kaldur. Well, one.

It seemed like Ronal was on the side of the human-looking one, while the other group was composed only by... well, not human-looking ones. And, judging by what they are saying, it seems like they are accusing Ronal and the other of being Purists. Listening to what they were saying, I could believe it.

"Sha'ark! What are you doing with Ronal?"

The answer was something a bit... stereotypical.
"Preparing supper."

M'gann interfered, eyes white and a telekinetic pulse divided the two, prompting Sha'ark to focus on her.

"Careful, Earther. Come between a shark and his meal and you become the meal."

That didn't exactly endeavor Kon to him, judging by the way he got into his face.

"Try me, instead. You'll break your teeth... chum."

Kaldur tried to re-establish a semblance of civility, but...

"Who started this?"

"'They did!!'"

And from there it ended into bickering, accusations being thrown from one side to the other, threat were made and it ended with Kaldur alone, arm low and head down, an expression of defeat on his face. Garth and Tula went to him. We... well, we let them have their space.

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September 6, 23:50.
Royal Palace of Poseidonis

"Maybe you both would prefer the bioship instead of sleeping in atlantean pods?"
"I'd be fine, if you'd just stop calling them pods."

"I prefer this Kaldur. It reminds me of being back in the womb."

"You can remember being in the womb?"

"Yeah. You can't?"

We were talking aloud, mostly for my benefit, but talking nonetheless. Not for long, though, seeing as we were all quite sleepy.

Then a luminescent, translucent Queen Mera appeared and, well, we had to move.

We reached the doors to the royal bedroom just in time to see a group of hoods swimming away with an unconscious Queen Mera in their grip.

Leading them was...

"Ocean Master! Hold!"

The three goons that were sent against us were... well, dispatched easily.

"DELAY THEM!"

But goons are a disposable resource, so it wasn't a problem for him to send more against us. Luckily, we have a Martians and an half-kryptonians on our team, so... meh.

"You know where to take her."

"You will not take her anywhere."
Kaldur was really passionate about this. And a bit scary when he is angry. Still, Ocean Master was not someone who we could underestimate.

"So now the fish-heads issues commands?"

We were out of the wards of the palace, the villain was monologuing and his goons were bringing the hostage away. I looked to Kaldur to see what we needed to do.

"A little time among the royal and now he believes himself royal as well. But proximity does not create Majesty, fish-head, nor Wisdom, apparently. The royal palace has spells in place, allowing only the use of defensive magic..."

I knew what he was going to do. It was obvious. And all thanks to his monologuing. Speaking of that, why didn't I attack while he was talking?

A purple bubble surrounded us before he had even moved the trident and the discharge of energy impacted on it harmlessly. It was strong. Strong enough that I could feel it, but it wasn't really a problem.

"Ah, yes. Your pet Genie."

I didn't give him the satisfaction of answering. Plus, really? Pet was the worse insult he could come up with? Honestly, I was more insulted by him calling me a Genie.

The bubble pulsed outwards, discharging into a shockwave that disturbed the water around us and let us more breathing space.

Turning towards Ocean Master, I found him with the trident already aimed towards me and him saying something.

Then, a glowing circle of runes surrounded me and I couldn't move.
Finding myself confined by the glowing runes that were around me, I tried to struggle quite uselessly, before calling up my magic, trying to flood the runes with power and shatter them. As soon as I started, their glow moved from a fairly neutral light blue to an angry red.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you. This isn't a normal sealing spell: it's designed to explode if someone tries to overload it. And judging by how much power you are using, you would take out your friends here."

That smug son of a squid... I pulled back my magic as fast as I could, making the runes turn black-blue.

"RAAAARGH!"

Kon flew towards Ocean Master with murder in his eyes, clipping him on the shoulder, before the masked villain hit him with a bolt from his trident, sending him unconscious, prompting Kaldur and M'gann to move.

Water turned into a whirlpool around the villain, while whips coming from Aqualad's weapons tried to wrap around him, using the whirlpool to mask his actions, before trying to send him into the palace. Maybe trying to use the wards that limited the offensive magic?

Still, Ocean Master wasn't someone foiled by tricks like this and, with his trident aglow, he stopped suddenly, before water started to whirl around my teammates, no matter what they were trying to do to free themselves. I got startled by that, my reverie of the whole situation broken, pushing me to find a way out of my current situation.

Not that it was easy to do, seeing that Kon was floating lifelessly right there, while Kaldur just got
ejected from the vortex like a sack of potatoes. Only M'gann remained.

The whole vortex vanished under the sudden telekinetic pulse that the girl emitted, revealing a pissed Martian with several axes to grind. Her eyes were glowing white, her face contorted into rage. It was terrifying.

"You hurt my friends."

And then they were both motionless.

I could keep staring, OR I could see if I could get out of this sealing spell. So I stopped panicking and started to actually think.

I couldn't overload the spell. Could I teleport out? My instinct was to say no, but trying would give me the certainty, so...

Ouch. Ok, not really, but that confirmed it: no teleport. Could I disturb the runes in some way?

BACKSPACE! Ok, no using magic on the runes.

Let's see... I could try...

A shout of pain distracted me from my situation and I turned my attention towards Miss Martian and Ocean Master. The pair was looking like they had tried to swim around the world in a day. The rest of my teammates seemed to be in better shape, but not by much.

"GAH!"

The trident flashed once, twice, then fell from unresponsive hands, drifting down the seafloor below. This could be mistaken as a win, but Miss Martian hadn't moved yet.

I turned my attention back to the spell, now a bit more frantic. Frozen as I was, I couldn't even try to take some deep breaths and this wasn't helping me.
Carefully as I could, I started prodding the spell with my power, purple tendrils scanning the circle of runes around, retreating when they started to turn red.

It was strong. Not invulnerable, but the 'gaps', for lack of a better word, that I found were too perfect to be natural. Probably the method used to make the whole thing explode.

I wasn't faster than it. If I was, I could've made it explode and limit the whole thing with a barrier before it expanded, but...

There had to be a way to escape! Maybe if I tried to... no, it absorbed power. Try to absorb it in turn?

"Need help, Maridling?"

Of course Marid would appear right now. It felt like the devil on my shoulder.

"That young upstart? You are flattering him, if you think so...."

That was both concerning and panic-inducing, but I was already in growing amounts of panic, THANK YOU VERY MUCH...

No, deep breaths. Well, as deep as I could. Not the moment to be out of control.

Marid was silent, but suspiciously so. It wanted something from me, it wanted me to ask for help. Why? Ok, no, I knew why. It's to have me under its power even more, but...

No, no, focus. I needed to escape this seal, the others needed help. M'gann was still motionless and I didn't know in what condition the others were.

Again, testing the bonds was no good. No way out. Let's try absorbing them? Yeah, okay. No, no, stop. Didn't work. There was some sort of strange shield over it.

A precaution? I could overwhelm it... No. It would cause an explosion. Yeah, it's connected. No way out. I was trapped.

I...
I wasn't breathing. Why was I...? Oh. No, not now. I couldn't panic now, I needed to keep my wits. I needed to think. I needed...

I wanted to be HOME!

And then, I was.

The panic subsided, slowly, like the tide. Marid vanished, too.

But how...? I couldn't teleport or even move. And now here I was, in my bottle. With the residue of a panic attack that was...

My eyes widened and I *surged* out of the bottle faster than I ever did, my form leaving an inky trail of smoke in the water. They were still there. Still whole and unhurt.

A sound from M'gann made me turn towards her, making me blanch and look more lilac than purple: she was turning white.

And not in the sense that she was paling, more in the sense that her skin was turning from green to white. Like a sheet of paper.

I knew that she was a White Martian, that wasn't the problem. What was the problem was the fact that she was slipping into her natural form, seeing as she had a learned aversion to it.

I collected Kon, grabbing his hand, and Kaldur with my other hand, and flew towards her, placing myself between them and Ocean Master. Who was... shaking?

Yeah, shaking like a leaf in a storm. Then, with a groan, he lost all of his strength, looking like a puppet with cut strings, at the same time M'gann lost her white eyes, starting to cough water.

"Is everything okay?" I wasn't sure if touching her was a good choice or not, so I simply hovered there, ready to help but trying to not to crowd her.
"Yeah, just-" she stopped for a second, clearing her voice a couple of times, before starting to speak again, "just a bit... disoriented, I guess. I've never tried to do something like this before." She looked like she was ready to fall asleep. Also worried about something, she was biting her lips.

"Uh, you are looking... a bit pale."

"What?" And when she noticed that she was white, her normal green colour returned like it never disappeared.

"Hey, you know that I don't care, right?"

"I know, I know, it's just..."

"A lifetime of being told that you are lesser than the others is hard to overcome. I understand."

She smiled at me, looking somewhat sick, before turning to the others. I grabbed Kon, she grabbed Kaldur and we swam towards the palace.

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September 7, 00:35

Royal Palace of Poseidonis.

M'gann and I waited for our teammates to wake up. They were starting to move now, slowly regaining consciousness.

Ocean Master was still there, still motionless. I didn't ask what Miss Martian did to him, I wasn't sure if I wanted to know.

Let's be clear, it wasn't because I was worried for him. No, I was worried for her. Because... certain things can warp a person, both on the receiving end and on the performing end. And I didn't want M'gann to change because of that.
"...what...?"

Kaldur's return to consciousness was spot-on time, like some kind of cosmic force had made it so to let me avoid this kind of introspection. Or it was chance. Either or.

"Kaldur, you are awake. How do you feel?"

"My head... is spinning but... I'm fine. I'm fine."

He didn't look fine. He looked like he had gone ten rounds in the ring with a wash-machine set on high. Still, he was way too focused right now that we all knew that there was no way to dissuade him.

Kon, on the other hand, still didn't wake up. The magic that hit him was far stronger than I thought and with his comparative weakness to magic... Yeah. If I wasn't still a bit shaken from that panic earlier I would've tried to heal him.

The doctor said that there wasn't anything wrong with him, so we simply had to wait. It didn't help. I returned my attention towards Kaldur, who was saying something to M'gann.

"...ned to Ocean Master?"

"He... I captured him."

"WHAT?!" His eyes bugged out, mouth agape, before recomposing himself.

"Did you already question him? We need to find Queen Mera before it's too late!"

M'gann raised her hands, stopping him before he could work himself into a frenzy, her eyes shadowed and her expression sombre.
"We have him here but he won't be able to answer anyone."

"What? Why?"

He seemed calmer, but only by a bit. She shook her head and gestured towards the corner, where the Atlantean was floating bonelessly. Kaldur blinked at that.

"Wha... How did you manage to capture him?" Not the question I was expecting, but I think that he is still in shock.

"Telepathy. But Kaldur..."

"M'gann, you managed to defeat Ocean Master on the mental plane? He is an accomplished magician, he should have been disciplined enough to give you quite a fight."

She shook her head, before trying to speak again.

"Being a White Martian involves more than just having a different colour skin. But this isn't what I wanted to tell you. Kaldur, he..."

Kaldur waited, looking at her with curiosity, clearly twitching to restrain Ocean Master and squeeze every secret he had. But he restrained himself.

"...I don't know how to say this, so I will simply show you. Please don't do anything rash."

And she brought the villain near us, before her telekinesis yanked off the helmet, revealing Prince Orm to everyone in the room.

I was shocked, M'gann was sad and Kaldur didn't seem able to compute.

"What... what is the meaning... how... I don't understand." He turned towards M'gann, his eyes praying for an answer that didn't make a deep fear come true.
"He is Ocean Master, Kaldur. I could read it in his thoughts."

And, in that moment, I could see the pressure of the entire ocean land on the shoulders of our team leader, crushing him down. The revelation that the brother of his mentor, a man that probably had taught him more than once and someone he respected a lot, was a traitor.

**********************************

Five minutes later, Kaldur had yet to utter a word, when the silence was broken by Kon, finally returning back to the world.

"Who hit me?"

I gestured towards the still catatonic Ocean Master/Prince Orm floating in the middle of the room, eliciting a rather angry scowl on his face.

"Isn't that the Prince?"

"Also Ocean Master. As discovered five minutes ago," I 'explained', pointing at the helmet resting on the floor near him.

"Ah."

Silence, again.

"Did he revealed where the Queen is?"

This was enough to shake Kaldur out of his stupor.

"The Queen! We need...!"
Whirling on himself, he grabbed Orm by his shoulders and tried to elicit a response from him, desperation in his eyes.

"Kaldur, KALDUR!"

"WHAT?!"

All of us flinched back in shock, shocked that he had raised his voice. It was the first time he did that against us.

"Sorry. Sorry, I just..." And he fell silent, not sure how to conclude his sentence.

"Kaldur, we understand." M'gann was a kind word in a moment of need, so she smiled at him, a little.

"I need to save the Queen. I cannot let her and King Orin down..."

"We won't." Kon's proclamation was full of surety.

"We cannot interrogate him, but I managed to get some information from him. Not much, because he was trying to fight me every second, but I have a location."

Kaldur whirled around, looking at her.

"Where?"

She set her face in a determined expression, voice low.

"S'atiroman Cave."
"You do realize that this is probably a trap, right?"

Even with this, I wasn't too concerned now that Ocean Master wasn't in play anymore. I suspected - and Kaldur confirmed - that the spell he used on me wasn't something that everyone could use. It was a fairly complicated piece of magic.

And now that I knew how to escape from it, I could give everyone who was waiting there a run for their money.

"I know."

Aqualad was grim-faced, lines of determination etched into his face, swimming in front of us, leading the way. Miss Martian was right behind him, while Superboy and I guarded the rear. The place where we were going wasn't exactly far away, just enough to reach it in less than an hour.

The opening of the cave was ahead of us, with the only problem being the legion of hooded racists stationed in front of it, ready to confront us. The two sentinels spotted us, raising the alarms pretty much instantly.

"INTRUDERS!!"

Rays of magical energy started raining on us, promptly shielded by me. Now that I was free to use my powers without risking injury to my teammates, they didn't have a snowball's chance in hell to hit me. Or any of my other companions, if I had anything to say about it.

"Stop this! You cannot win!"

Kaldur's voice was hard like stone, resonating around us. He looked a lot like Aquaman for a second and the similarity hit the cultists, too, because they faltered for a second.

That was when the others - Blubber, La'gann, Nanaue, Lori, Tula, Garth, Topo...
"Impures!"

The cry came from around the cave, our allies hitting them from both sides, causing even more chaos within their lines, allowing us to quickly down the four or five people that still were blocking our way before swimming towards the open mouth of the cave. Things were going well. Inside we found something that no one wanted to see again.

"Ronal? How could you..."

"Shut up, Impure. You and your earther friends have sullied the water of Atlantis for far too much time!"

The blond boy was in front of what looked like a giant seashell, an empty pedestal in front of him, runes etched on the borders.

"Ronal! What the hell are you saying?!

I couldn't even imagine what hearing something like this from someone who you considered a friend would feel like, and honestly, I never wanted to.

"I'm saying that the degenerates that had plagued Poseidonis end now. Do you recognize this?"

And he raised a trident, a familiar-looking one. The one that Ocean Master had lost during our fight before. Miss Martian started to vanish from sight but a snarl from the blond boy on top of the stairs stopped her in her tracks.

"I wouldn't do that. Not if you want her to survive without any damage."

And he pointed over him, where Queen Mera was hanging bound by shackles and gagged with a strand of algae.

"Tonight is the night when I save Atlantis from the corruption and the filth that infest these waters."
And he raised the trident, saying something in a language that sounded only vaguely like Atlantean, only a lot more archaic. Strands of blue energy connected the blades of the trident to the queen and magic started twisting around the room, creating a whirlpool.

An insane laugh escaped from Ronal's throat, glee shining in his eyes. Kaldur looked like someone had nailed a stake through his chest but, soon, his features hardened once again.

"Let's take him down."

"Oh? And how do you think of doing that? Any moment now my spell will rob you of your life and, soon, every other impure..."

And then everything stopped. The magic simply vanished, the water returned to its previous stillness, much to the confusion of the baffled Ronal.

"What? WHAT IS HAPPENING?! WHY ISN'T IT WORKING?!"

"Oh, but it did work."

And then a hand plucked the trident from Ronal's. He didn't fight it, mainly because he was too busy staring at the arm that was jutting out of his abdomen, covered in his blood.

"Just not in the way you were expecting, that's all."
The creature behind Ronal was humanoid and apparently female, if its chest was a clue. Still, it was clearly neither human, nor atlantean.

The blond boy fell to the floor, his movement only barely hampered by water, while a cloud of dark red-brown enveloping him like thick mist, his groan of pain muffled by the shock.

"Well, well...."

It spoke, voice tilting a bit, harmonical in its cadence.

Then I felt icy cold fingers trail the back of my neck and down my spine, prompting me to turn around, just to see the creature walk away with the trident in its hand, a little smirk on its face.

"Ronal!"

Aqualad swam towards his friend, face sculpted in anguish, while the others and I were ready to defend ourselves and our friend.

"How interesting. Well, I guess that some thing had to change during my sleep."

We were completely frozen, not sure on what just happened. Then the creature was once again in front of us, its hand trailing over the dormant face of Queen Mera.
"Well, the whelp did free me from my prison, so *I guess* I should *at least* let him live..."

It looked puzzled for a second, before shrugging, dismissing the matter entirely, turning towards us. Aqualad was trying to patch the wound with what looked like rudimentary magical healing.

"Well, first of all, I need you all to get out of here. So, shoo."

It made a shooing motion with its hand and we...

The water itself pushed us out, banging us against the rocks, with the strength of a geyser, sending us in the middle of the fight between Kaldur's friends and the cultist that were still outside of the cave.

"Ronal!!!" "Kaldur!!!"

"Run!"

The shouts of everyone was creating a cacophony of sounds that made it impossible to hear what they were saying, exacerbated by the fact that they were ready to jump at everyone throats.

"How amusing."

**THAT** voice was audible over everyone else, however. The creature floated out of the cave, the Queen bound and gagged behind it, ropes of energy keeping her unconscious and connected to it.

Everyone turned towards it.

"No, please, continue. Watching a group of squabbling babies is extremely amusing. Go on."

The silence stretched on, except for the couple of cultist that were trying to save Ronal's life.
Their frantic recital of formulae was something that simply underlined the tension. Whatever the thing in front of us was, it was something bigger than what we were doing before.

It chuckled, head slightly turned to its side.

"No? Oh well..."

I flew in front of the other, reasonably sure that it couldn't kill me or damage me permanently.

I hoped.

"Who are you?"

One of its eyebrow arched, the water twisting around us, answering some unseen command, trapping us inside of a whirlpool of gigantic proportions.

"A maridling speaking to me like that... how are the times changed."

That made me go into high alert almost instantly. This thing in front of me knew about Marid. Knew about me. Knew too much.

"You didn't answer."

"I'm Oceania. The one all the water bows to."

An ominous title. And I have the feeling that it wasn't just for show.

"Well, nice to meet you," not "but could you release her?"

Don't make names, you don't know if it can use it.
"No."

No explanation, nothing to go on. Hard way it is.

"That... is not an answer that I can accept, sadly. I need to save her."

I kept my face carefully neutral, eyes not looking towards Miss Martian or Superboy or Aqualad.

"Mhhhhh... I don't think so."

And it smiled. I felt myself chilling to the bone and, instinctively, threw up a shield.

A jet of water, cold as ice and as big as a needle, hit me right exactly where my heart was, bypassing the shield like it wasn't there, followed right after by another ten, making me look like swiss cheese.

The wounds knitted itself back to normal in a second, but it was enough for Superboy to propel himself against Oceania, fist raised and ready to turn it into a pulp, just to be sent back by another jet of water.

Miss Martian was repelled in the same way, before the others started to pitch in, spells shaping water in weapons or using rays of energy trying to hurt Oceania in some way. Without any success.

Spells failed before touching its cerulean skin, the water simply refusing to hurt it, the only thing they did was move its air into a dark blue cloud resembling the grasping tentacles of some yet unseen marine creature.

"Water can't hurt me. You, on the other hand..."

And then everyone was simply restrained by the water around us. No possibility of movement, no way to escape from what was all around us.
There wasn't even way to shout, the water acting as a gag.

It was the second time in a day that I was restricted with no way to escape and, frankly, even with all the fear that Oceania raised in me, I was sick of it.

A corona of crystal shards appeared from nothing around me and fired towards it in the same breath, only getting a minute shifting of its facial expression before twirling columns of water appeared from nothing to intercept the shards.

A push of telekinetic power sent half of the cliff down on Oceania, which only gained a disappointed shake of its head.

"Honestly, it's kind of pathethic how you children are still trying to fight. You are so weak that you aren't even an obstacle. Merely a nuisance."

Well, someone is confident.

How the hell do I manage to fight against someone who control water to such an extent?

I could try removing the water, but under the ocean?

I....

***************

"Now, remember: magic is complicated and if you try to experiment without supervision you could end up hurt. More often than not, mixing different discipline of magic results in an explosion. Like in Chemistry."

"And they never cancel each other out?"

"Oh, no. That is the SECOND most common result."
"So, if I ever want to undo some spells..."

"That is another thing entirely."

***************

Thank god for my tendency of going on various tangent when learning. And thank god for Mr. Zatara to effectively answer my questions.

I let myself relax as much as I could and purple, thin mist enveloped me and, immediately, I had to tense all over again, to prevent the almost nuclear explosion that threatened to envelope me and everyone else.

Ok, second try. No pressure. If I can't think of a way to do this everyone dies, so, you know, no sweat.

Again, purple mist surrounded me and, this time, it didn't threatened to explode all of us to kingdom come. It, on the other hand, took all of my attention to keep the whole thing stabilized, while fighting the magic trying to block me again. This also had the effect of attracting the attention of Oceania on me right away.

"So the maridling is trying to take control of my water?"

It didn't even look threatened, merely amused. Like you would feel amused when you meet a child playing at being a lawyer or medic or something like that. Lucky for me, I wasn't trying to get control of the water.

Just block out its control.

"Nope."

And concentric rings of purple magic flowed from me, wrapping around the bodies of my friends.
and the others, freeing them. Momentarily.

"GRAAAAARG!"

The punch did connect this time, only making Oceania move its head slightly, no longer amused. It looked more annoyed than anything.

Superboy was yanked back from where he was by a telekinetic pull, just in time to avoid the water blade that almost decapitated him, making me lose focus for a second, feeling the water around me rush to crush me like a tin can, before I managed to block it again.

"Djinni! Bring us out of here!"

Kaldur voice shocked me out of my hyperfocus, making me aware that there was a full on fight around me. A losing fight, with Oceania simply blocking or, when someone used water as a part of their attack, ignoring any attack.

Bring everyone out of here. Yeah, good idea. Problem was....

"I cannot!"

"What?!"

"If I don't focus on blocking it, the water will crush us all! And I cannot focus on anything else! If I do, it overpowers me!"

Then it dawned on me how bad this were going.

"Fuck."

Kaldur swore.
And, after that, it was... a bit like in the first Kingdom Hearts when you are fighting Sephirot for the first time.

Running, dodging, trying to hurt it some way, while Kaldur was calling backup from the League, only to receive static in response.

Then the "cavalry" arrived. More like more victims. Nana'ue was the first to attack, only to be flung out towards the rocks around the cave, just to be saved from being impaled by Topo. Tula and Garth reached Kaldur, trying to pool their magic together to at least slow Oceania, while the others ran interferences of some kind, fighting with the cultist, who had discarded the robes and their prejudices.

Lori Lemaris and La'gaan had put up an improvised hospital, healing who needed it, as best as they could.

Miss Martian was the most useful out of everyone, her telekinesis unaffected by the water and it was actually causing some slight damage. Very slight, but it was something.

The whole scene was tinged by the faint purple of my magic, with me being at the very back, Superboy in front of me like a defender, even if he was shaking in fury, evidently wanting to go and punch that thing. I was, in all that, keeping up the interference against the absolute control that Oceania was able to extend on the element. It literally controlled it to an absolute degree.

I managed to degrade it to a mere "perfect", instead.

"We invoke the power of the Tempest!"

Garth, Tula and Kaldur intoned, Kaldur in front of them, Garth in the middle and Tula in the back, forming a circuit that amplified the power they were calling ninefold. Light and power coiled around them, forming a whirlpool of energy, lightning dancing around them, crackling and snapping, looking more like something out of a natural disaster than a spell summoned by three teenagers. Everyone cleared the way, with an expression of surprise passing on the face of Oceania.

Then a lightning bolt the size of semi-truck hit him right in the center of the body, reducing the water around it to its constituent atoms and obscuring Oceania in a cloud of steam. Blubber, who no one had managed to spot, somehow, propelled himself out of his hiding spot and, using a rock as a shield, managed to remove the still unconscious Queen Mera from the energy prison. I really hope that
she and the kid will be okay.

"I admit, I have underestimated you."

Instantly my magic was punched through like wet paper, the water around us clamping down on us and starting to *squeeze, making my bones creak with the strength behind it*.

"But while it was fun while it lasted, I think the time for playing has finished."

Oceania was completely unscathed. A spell I was sure would have hurt me and it didn't even have a scuff mark on it.

"You are outmatched."

"First of all, I will retake what is mine."

And Queen Mera simply floated back to it, even with Blubber's attempt to move and keep her away from the creature. This only made Oceania smirk, its attention turning towards him, an expression of cruel amusement on its face.

"And for your interference, I think that I will turn you to ice and let you melt in the sun."

An expression of pure panic manifested on Blubber, before he was turned to ice, beautiful and impossibly realistic. Shouts of anger and horror rose from everyone, not wanting to believe their eyes.

"You can't win."

We couldn't let Oceania win. Purple swirled around me, before exploding like a wave, like a sandstorm, my own magic mingling with its, counteracting it, battling it. It was like holding the sky on my shoulders. It was something that I never did before. And I was sure that I couldn't maintain it for more than a few minutes without burning out or something. In that moment I really didn't care that much.

"You need my help."

Your help come with too many strings attached.

Lori and La'gaan maneuvered where the Blubber-iceberg was, dragging it away. Topo had to save Nana'ue again from a series of ice shards so sharp they planted themselves in the rock around us like
a knife in a pudding. Miss Martian looked furious, her complexion turning white and her blows growing more and more lethal as time passed. Superboy was still in front of me and I couldn't say anything to him, because my ability to talk was, at the moment, unusable.

"You don't really have a choice."

I ALWAYS have a choice.

Magical energy filled the air, spells flinged towards Oceania, who literally shook it off like water off a duck's back.

Then, it smiled and started to grow big and tall, monstrous in size and yet still recognizable.

In a vortex of water and power, it started growing and growing, until it was towering on us all, Queen Mera floating inside its body and a grin more sharklike than an actual shark on its face.

"Are you still sure you have a choice?"

...

A wave of its hand and most of the others went tumbling towards the rocks, some managing to recover before hitting them, other falling unconscious, while the major part simply broke some bones, their screams of pain making me want to retch.

"Well?"

Fuck.

Aqualad, Garth and Tula were panting, expression crestfallen and clearly unable to think of a way out. Miss Martian was still fighting, but clearly more desperate than angry now, her face fixed in a scowl. Superboy was trembling and, with a roar of anger, rocketed towards Oceania, fist raised. Before he could even touch the creature in front of us, a blue wall slammed in front of him, sending ripples all around us. Then he started pummeling it, breaking it in a few hits, only to have another one spring into existence in the same moment, soon followed by five other, boxing him in.

I was starting to lose my form, channeling more energy than ever before, even more than when I grant a wish. Already my legs had turned into smoke, ending just right under my waist, my tattoos pulsing with blue light, the feeling of not-pain running through the part of me that wasn't smoke.

"You cannot win."

And you are insisting too much on this. So, no.
A wave of cold passed over the whole battlefield, making Oceania turn towards the source: Superboy. He managed to freeze the shield in front of him, a trail of frost coming from his lips, his rebreather slightly raised to expose his mouth. He quickly put it back in place, breathing deeply again and looking at the monster in front of us, who looked back, barely fazed. The ice turned back into water almost instantly, souring the expression of Kon and Miss Martian landed a hit that split the skin on its shoulder.

Its first wound in the battle.

The cheers that the temporary success raised were short lived. From the blue blood Oceania spilled came monstrous shapes, almost like nightmares of what a marine creatures was.

And everything became immensely more difficult. Aqualad, Garth and Tula, having recovered their breath, started organizing the others in a formation that was marginally more effective than before. Marginally.

"Do you wish to see all of your friends die to your stubbornness?"

That was what made me lose control. I don't know if it was temporary madness or something like that, but what I blurted out was something that never I could eve thought I could say, under normal circumstances.

If you are so insistent in asking me to help, what are you going to give me?

"...what."
You’re only second rate, or; Where I make bad decisions.

Chapter Notes

Betaed by Pietersielie on SV.

You’re only second rate, or; Where I make bad decisions.

'You heard me.'

"I'm offering my help and you want me to give you something?"

'Yes. And before you try to feed me some line on how you are doing me a favour, let me stop you. The simple fact that you are offering your help makes me really suspicious.'

"And why is that?"

'Well, because every time I asked you for help I got my ass in the fire for what I had to give. So I'm not going to ask you for anything else.'

Silence.

Good, because I was already busy with trying to keep the water around us still, ensuring that it wouldn't crush us into marbles.

It wasn't easy, especially now that Oceania had monsters under its command and, while they weren't impervious to our blows, there was still a lot of them.

And I couldn't do anything.

Well, I could attract its attention to me and try to lure it to the surface. That would help, right? Or, at least, it would give me less to do.

Then water moved and part of its body froze, the attack coming from inside the purple mist that was around the battlefield - when did that happen? Oh, I only had my arms, upper torso and head
remaining. I didn't notice - Superboy shot out, his punch hitting the ice before it could melt.

I don't know if it was the fact that it was frozen, the fact that the strength of the punch must have been enormous or the remaining trails of purple magic still curled around his fist, but he managed to injure Oceania, literally passing through its thigh.

The bellows of pain that the creature let out was something without any human equivalent. It reminded me of some long-forgotten sea creature and it was terrifying.

Its eyes shone darkly and its legs started to morph. Soon they split and its impersonation of Ursula became more appropriate.

Now it sported eight massive tentacles, dark blue with yellow rings scattered around its body, making me freeze while I was reminded of another blue-and-yellow terror of the sea.

"Everyone! Don't let its tentacles hit you!" Aqualad's voice echoed across the battlefield, breaking the horror that had gripped us all and making us dodge away, fast.

Still, we managed to injure it. It was something.

***********

It was a false hope.

"Why aren't you calling on my help, again?"

'Because of the fact that you want to be called to help.'

After the first two minutes, we already had three injured and La'gaan and Lori were busy trying to not let them die from the poison. Aqualad tried to send Tula towards Poseidonis, with orders to ask for help, but when she tried to do that, water seized her as she stepped out of the purple mist that I was using to counter its water control and Garth had to stage a hasty rescue, gathering some of the mist and using it to grab her and bring her back.

There was a flipside to it, though. The more adept magic users realized that they could use the magic that I was using to blanket the battlefield as a weapon against Oceania. It worked... to a point.
Basically, we were trying to kill a god with papercuts.

"Look out!" "Behind you!" "Shields up!" "Whirlpool!"

And we were trying to do it while the environment around us was actively trying to kill us. Really, I didn't even know how I managed to keep up this long.

All that remained of me was my head and my hands. Everything else was a purple mist vaguely shaped like the impression of a man.

On the plus part, I was intangible, so almost every attack passed through me without hurting me. Except when Oceania focused on me. Then its magic hurt.

Still, we weren't winning. We weren't even keeping the whole thing to a standstill. We were basically entertaining it until it decided we lost our entertaining capacity and we became a nuisance.

"Are you still convinced to not ask for my help?"

'Yes.'

"Very well. What do you want?"

....

Marid was giving in? No. I couldn't believe it.

But I didn't have the luxury of not believing Marid. We were losing, plain and simple, and even with all that I could do - nothing, except for what I was already doing and, boy, didn't I feel useless - I needed its help. And Marid knew this.

So why did it accept my outrageous demand?

"Are you really questioning my benevolence now? It hardly seems the time and the place."

'Don't care, still suspicious.'

"Very good! You are finally starting to think like a proper Marid-kin."

What?
That caught me by surprise. I wasn't expecting that answer.

"As reward, here's the answer you're searching for: I have something to conclude with the creature that calls itself Oceania."

Well, that was... actually believable.

I could believe that Marid wanted to act in revenge. Not that I trusted it, but I could believe it.

"So, what would you ask from me, maridling?"

I... honestly didn't consider what I would actually ask. I used it as a stalling tactic and now that Marid accepted, I was stumped. Well, there was a spell I had problems with...

'I want the knowledge on how to speak telepathically with another. Without them drowning. And without lowering my mental defences. Oh, and your help must conform to my definition of help.'

"That's it? Very well."

...That was easy.

A little too easy, if you get my drift.

"After I give you the knowledge you are searching, call my name. Then I will take care of the rest."

But it’s not like I could see any other way to resolve this whole problem. If Wonder Woman or Batman or Superman was here, maybe, but...

'Okay, I’m ready.'

"Here’s what you search."

And my head was filled with information. Information that told me that I was going in a completely wrong direction with the spell, holy fuck. I was really barking up the wrong forest, nevermind the tree.

Still, I made a deal. At least I had the time to alert the others. Pity that I couldn’t bask in their surprise, but… eh.

*Heads up! I’m going to do something very stupid that could possibly kill us all, but if it works will remove Oceania from our lives… forever.*
*Who?* *What?* *Djinni!?*

Their mental voices were pretty distinctive and I could recognize them pretty easily. Yet, I didn’t really have any time to explain, so…

“My!"

My voice was loud and clear and, somehow, it echoed over the battlefield, making everyone stop and turn towards me. Even Oceania.

I was shining purple and black. My body reconstituted itself, before splitting open like a book, vertically. Then, a hand came out. A hand that was bigger than I remembered, black and blue, reached out.

And then Marid simply surged out, with a trail of smoke.

And then I passed out.

****

Well, okay, not really. I was still conscious and I saw everything that happened after. From a prime point of view, actually.

The main problem was that I could neither control what was happening nor move. AND I was inside the giant Marid which was starting to fight giant Oceania.

If I had landed in an anime, it wouldn’t have taken three months and change to get to the fight with giant robots, but I was in a DC cartoon/comic combo, so….

Not that I was in anime or a cartoon/combo, because this was as real as it was going to get. It was also pretty strange to say these kinds of things seriously when inside a giant entity from another dimension while my crush/love interest/favourite person was hovering just far enough from the fight to look at what was happening and not get hit by all the magic that was being thrown around.
Also, I needed better coping methods with stress instead of going into longwinded rants inside my mind, especially when in the middle of a battle of giant entities from other dimensions.

With at least one entity from another dimension.

Marid was talking to Oceania, instead of simply ripping it to shreds, but it wasn’t a very civil conversation, at least from what I understood. The language they were using was more concepts and meanings instead of words. I was assuming the reason I could understand them at all was due to my situation, i.e., being inside one of the participants.

After Oceania hurled a particularly vicious insult to him - something about being a faker of… something, I didn’t catch that - Marid stilled, then the other and they started looking at each other in the eyes.

Unmoving.

The tension was so high that I could cut it with a breadstick. {Why waste the breadstick? Yes, I’m hungry, why do you ask?} Like in that old ad about the tuna can.

Then, Oceania started doing something with the water, an imperceptible ripple, and Marid answered with a small twitch of its finger and they returned to staring.

Again.

A set of blades made of water landed on the back of Marid just to simply move through it without harm. The retaliation was some sort of arcane manipulation of reality that had the final result of Oceania being pulverized in front of my eyes.

It reformed as fast as the atomization went, obviously, but I was pretty sure that it was at least one point in Marid’s favour.

Oceania’s retaliation was to try to crush Marid with, approximately, forty tonnes of water. I think.
It did actually inconvenience it for some short seconds, before the water simply stopped and Marid retaliated with a vicious dismemberment that made me almost sick, until I saw that Queen Mera was still alive, still in one piece and awake.

We locked eyes and an unspoken agreement passed between us: we were in way over our heads.

During our communion, the two otherworldly entities that were fighting only got more vicious, moving from disembowelment and crushing to more supernatural effects.

I think that one spell Oceania sent was something to do with time travel and Marid answered that with something that roughly started to translate to, ‘The void between stars…’, before I stopped paying attention to it.

No Cthulhu mythos crossover for me, thank you very much.

From there, it was a simple matter of escalating matters more than Dragonball and Taylor Hebert together.

Which was impressive, I’m not denying that. Still, I lost track of what they were actually doing partway into the third minute of the fight.

I couldn’t even understand which one was winning, the forces they were calling had become so exotic that I simply couldn’t comprehend them. And yet…

If this was what a true, experienced member of my race could do, what did it mean for me?

At the twenty minute mark, Marid smirked. And Oceania…

Oceania screamed.

And then… And then it started to vanish, in motes of light blue, an expression of horror and strife on its face.
"You should have thought better than challenging me. Your punishment starts now."

"Please..."

"You are my kin. Yet it doesn’t excuse your behaviour. Begone."

...What? Kin? Does that mean...

My horrified face vanished when Marid turned its attention towards me.

"My part here is done. I am pleased with how you behaved, maridling. Continue."

If I am honest, this was what uneased me more than everything else that happened today.

Then Marid disappeared and everything went silent, with Queen Mera looking at me, as lost as I was.
First day in a new Kind of Hell, or: High School Blues.

Chapter Notes

Betaed by Armourdefense on SV.
Also, the last pre written chapter I had. From now on, you'll need to wait.

First day in a new Kind of Hell, or: High School Blues.

Mount Justice

September 7, 06:41

“...and, after Queen Mera and King Orin congratulated us, we came back.”

Kaldur was wrapping up the video-report to Batman in the morning, explaining what happened last night.

After nodding at us, Batman vanished from the screen. I hoped that wasn’t a bad thing.

While I was walking out of the room, Red Arrow appeared on the screen.

Meanwhile, M'gann was in the kitchen, doing something, while Kon was working on his bike. I honestly forgot when he received that one, but he looked like he was having fun, so who was I to question it?

He also looked a bit sleepy, and it was pretty obvious why, we didn’t manage to return to the mountain until morning, even accounting for the time zone. We did catch some sleep, but none of us were firing at full cylinders, that was for certain.

Sphere went beeping to Kon, wanting attention. It behaved more like a puppy than a machine, which was pretty interesting. It was already been established that it wasn’t neither terrestrial nor martian in
origin, so it seemed that it reached the Earth via other means.

Which didn’t exactly narrow the field that much, considering that there was an alien invasion every other year. Or more frequently.

Still, seeing Kon smiling at it - him? her? - like that was heartwarming.

There is nothing like a boy and his dog.

Or a boy and his alien, sentient, biomechanical Sphere.

“Superboy! Jin!” M’gann called, smiling and flying towards us with three brown paper bags, like something you could see in a TV show or similar.

“Ready for school?”

....

Wait, what?

“Wait, what?”

J’onn J’onnz, Red Tornado, Kaldur and M’gann looked at me like I was a complete fool.

“...Yes?” “M’gann, the look of innocence doesn’t help you right now.”

She snickered a bit, while Kon moved near me and looked at me with a curious look on his face.

“I thought they had spoken to you about this.”
“Kaldur, if they had spoken to me about this, I wouldn’t be surprised.”

Martian Manhunter reached us. “Are you against going to school?”

I cocked my head, thinking for a second. Was I?

“No, not really. But I had… a very different experience, scholastically speaking. I am Italian and, school works differently from here, at least as far as I know.”

Like grades, how the hell they work?

“About that, you don’t need to worry yourself.” The mechanical voice of Red Tornado attracted my attention. “We signed you up as a transfer student, so every discrepancy will be explained as being from another continent. If you need help in scholastic matters, I am sure we can organize something.”

Not what I meant, but nice of him to offer.

“Okay, thank you. Under what name did you register me?”

“Your chosen name,” J’onn explain, raising a folder of papers, with my photo - with my human appearance - on it “And these are the transfer papers.”

“Okay then.”

“As I was saying, the first day of the scholastic season carry great cultural resonance. We want to wish all of you well.”

Wordy.

“Guess it’s not a Kryptonian thing, then.” Kon’s face was somewhat sad while saying this, maybe thinking about Superman.
“I, too, want to wish you well. I understand that this will be the first time you will experience something like this and I understand that it can be overwhelming. But you have friends to help you with this, and I am sure that things will go well.”

And another excellent example of why Kaldur is the team leader. That speech was inspirational as hell.

“Oh, I want to show you my outfit! I spent hours trying to decide it. What do you think?”

M’gann’s clothes changed from her normal costume to an earth outfit: black shoes, knee-high white socks, a light red skirt with a black belt, a white shirt and a light red jacket.

It was pretty cute.

“What do you think? Can M’gann M’orzz pass as an Earth girl now?”

Notably, she was still green. And Kaldur was on the spot, with her looking directly at him. “Well..”

“Just kidding!”

And her skin tone turned from green to pink, just a shade darker than Kon.

“Well, we are ready to go, I guess.” I shrugged, thinking about the fact that I didn’t even have my books. Maybe they gave them at school?

“Jin, shouldn’t… you know… change, too?”

I looked at Kaldur. “What do you mean?”

I gestured at myself, in all my purple-and blue, arabic stripper glory.
“Isn’t this how normal Earth teenagers dress?” I couldn’t keep the smirk out of my face and Kaldur facepalmed.

“I get it, we will not do something like not mentioning you were signed up at school.”

“Right, about that. Why you didn’t tell me about this?”

“That’s because I forgot.” That wasn’t J’onn or Red Tornado. That was Kon.

“What?”

He shrugged, a bit ashamed, but not really much.

“Superboy told us that he would go to school only if you went, too.” Red Tornado revealed, making all eyes turning towards Kon.

“I meant to tell you yesterday, but with all that happened it slipped my mind. Sorry.”

It didn’t sound like an excuse and Kon did look apologetic. Still… it was something that wasn’t right.

“Superboy. I understand that what happened yesterday was… what it was, but… Things like this are Not Okay,” I stressed the words “You don’t sign someone up for something without their knowledge and consent. It’s not something that is done. It’s a betrayal of their trust and...”

I didn’t know how to explain myself, but it seemed that I didn’t need to. Kon looked like someone told him that I had died in a gruesome manner. He looked like he was ready to cry for a moment, before nodding.

“I am sorry. It will not happen again.”

“As long as you remember it. Okay, so, changing.”
Now everyone was looking at me. I answered with a look of my own.

“I’m not good at staying angry.” The explanation didn’t seem to satisfy them, but it was the only thing that I could say. Beside, it was the truth.

“Now, I’m not sure that this will work, but I’m guessing we...“

“Wait, that’s all?” M’gann is too emotional for her good.

“M’gann, I am not good at staying angry, especially when it comes to people I really love. Am I hurt? Yes. Will I let it color my interactions with him forever? No. Chances are, I will forget about it in a month, top. It’s not that I don’t care, it’s just that I don’t see the point in being angry or hating someone. It’s not useful, productive or healthy.”

Also, I was starting to have my suspects on why he ‘forgot’ to tell me.

Kon looked like I had struck him with a kryptonite-laced hammer, Kaldur was looking sad and M’gann had her eyes shining. J’onn J’onnz and Red Tornado were quietly chatting, talking about something that I couldn’t hear.

“Now, let’s see if I can turn this arabic outfit in something more appropriate.” To my definition of appropriate, of course.

I closed my eyes, focusing on what I wanted, and then - I couldn’t resist - I raised my hand over my head and purple smoke started to encircle me, obscuring my form. Where it touched, things changed: the skin was the first thing to change, turning pale. Only the tattoos remained, now purple-outlined blue. My nails were black, eyes lined with Kohl, so sharp that they could kill a man. Luckily, no other make-up was on my face. My hair were braided down my back, long enough to reach my ass.

My clothes were pretty normal, after that. Black T-shirt, purple hoodie with the S-Logo on it, just with the black background instead of the yellow, marking it as a Superboy logo instead of Superman, black jeans and knee-high boots, the jeans ending inside of them. Rings and earrings remained the same.
“Done. What do you think?”

Kaldur was looking at me strangely, M’gann now almost snickering and Kon was looking at my chest.

“It is very… distinctive. It… suits you.”

Kaldur was awkward as always in making comments. M’gann simply smiled and nodded. Kon…

“Can you change my t-shirt?”

I didn’t expect that.

“I… You… Yeah, sure. In what?”

“An image of your bottle with smoke coming out of it.”

I didn’t expect that. I could also speculate that it was his way to ask for forgiveness. Or he simply wanted to feel less guilty.

In the end, it didn’t really matter. I smiled and snapped my fingers.

His t-shirt changed. The logo disappeared and, in its place, there was my lamp with purple smoke coming out of it, ending with a cloud around the neck of the shirt.

“Done.”

“Thank you.” He had a small smile, checking the softness of the shirt.

“You look nice. And you won’t risk someone to discover your identity this way!” M’gann was her supportive self. It was nice to have an optimist in the group.
“About identities. You need a name.” Kaldur interjected, his words directed to Kon.

“A what?”

Oh.

We were at that moment. I kept my mouth shut and turned towards Red Tornado.

“I chose the name John Jones for myself,” Martian Manhunter shapeshifted into a human, while talking “And suggested John Smith for Red Tornado. You could be a John, too.”

“Pass.”

He stole a glance at me, so fast that I almost missed it. M’gann looked at me for a second, before smiling at Kon.

“Conner has always been my favourite name.” Again, he looked at me. I smiled.

“Conner it is.”

“Now you require a last name.” Kaldur was smiling.

“Perhaps… Kent.” This time J’onn suggestion wasn’t greeted with an instant rejection and M’gann latched on it.

“Oh, like an homage to Dr. Fate?” I tried to keep my mouth shut, really, but…

“Also the last name of the secret identity of Superman.”
Everyone turned towards me. I raised an eyebrow, while J’onn looked like he was mildly upset that his ploy was revealed like this.

“I’ll take it.”

Well, I didn’t expect this. I imagine that more things change, more they stay the same. Still, the look on Conner’s face wasn’t of hope. It was of revenge.

I can hazard a guess that things will not go well, but what do I know? Canon is currently going out of the rails and down a cliff. It only needed a bit of time to get some speed.

“If this matter is resolved, then, you need to go to school.”

Red Tornado. Trust him to stay on the important things.

“Aye, aye. We’re going.”

We flew out of the cave to the end of the woods, and then started walking to town.

***********

It was still early in the morning, the town just starting to move as we were walking down the road. I had a suspicion I needed to resolve, because I cannot keep my nose out of things.

“So, how much of you forgetting was actually forgetting and how much was you testing my boundaries?”

M’gann let out a sound that I wasn’t sure it was physically possible for a human to make and Kon looked like he was a deer on the path of an eighteen-wheeler with stadium projectors for headlights.

“What- Why are you saying this, Jin?” Right, civilian names.
“Because I tend to overthink things and, also, when did Connor forget something?”

At that, she stops, trying to think about it and coming up blank. Now, I know that Kon doesn’t have an eidetic memory - At least I don't think so - but his memory is better than normal.

And now, looking at him, he turned from deer into sad kitten. How can a six-foot plus man with muscles like that look so much like a kitten under a downpour of rain?

“It’s because...” He looks like he was struggling to find the words, but he managed to stammer something out “It’s because you always let me do what I want without consequences and… I don’t want to… abuse you or something.”

I didn’t expect this. Where did he get that notion? I mean, I admit that my track record isn’t that stellar, with the first incident… and the second… and the continuing in taking the fault… and…

On the other hand, why didn’t he think of this before?

“I.. okay, wow. Well, don’t worry. If you ever do something that I am not okay with, I will tell you.” “Yeah, okay. Sorry.”

M‘gann was blushing, but soon we returned to the normal chatter, mainly M’gann speculating how similar it would be to her favourite show, Hello Megan, and what could possibly be different.

*********

Happy Harbor High School

September 7, 07:55

We reached the school with five minutes to spare.

It was bigger than I was accustomed to. I wondered if it was for population problems or simply the way they managed the various classes.
Kon bumped into me, while I was looking at the school, sending glares all around us. M'gann was kind of curious, too. I glanced around, noticing the fact that most people were looking at us. Well, specifically at me.

I’m guessing either my clothes or my hair or my jewelry. Or my tattoos. It doesn’t look there is that much variety around here, at least from what I see right now.

I don’t think I can see anyone who isn’t wearing a t-shirt with a superhero logo on it. I wonder if they get royalties or something? It would be a convenient way to explain why they have that much money without every one of them being a billionaire or something.

Batman being the exception.

“We should… I actually have no idea. Find the office?”

“Hello there!”

We all turned towards the voice, kind of surprised. And, being teenagers superheroes that just escaped recently from a potentially world-ending abominations thanks to another, just slightly nicer, potentially world ending abomination, we were still a bit high-strung.

The speaker was a girl, black hair, brown eyes, with a nice smile that became a bit strained once she saw me. It was covered fairly fast, though, so I simply ignored it.

“I noticed you looked a bit lost, so I thought I could help. If you want.” Her offer was a surprise. Still, pretty nice of her.

“Oh, really? Thank you! We weren’t sure where we should go, it’s our first time here!”

“Oh? Were you homeschooled?”

Mhhhh….
“They were. I just transferred here from Europe, so I’m even more lost than them.”

“Europe, really? That’s SO interesting! Oh, I didn’t introduce myself. I’m Mary Cunnington.” She nodded at that, keeping her smile.

“I’m Jin Albari, she’s Megan Morse and he is Conner Kent.”

From there, Megan and Mary devolved into chatter, while we walked towards a board and then, after checking a series of lists, she directed us towards our first class of the day.

Social Studies.

************************************************

Social Studies was… interesting. I didn’t have a frame of reference, but things were kind of normal, in a warped way.

Yes, I know that it doesn’t make any sense. But at least in the privacy of my thoughts I am allowed to be nonsensical. It’s not like someone is reading my thoughts. Marid had made sure of that.

And speaking of reading my thoughts….

*Hullo. It’s me! Showing off my new spell even if we are sitting one near the other. Except for M’gann, that is on the other side with a complete stranger.*

*Jin? how are you…?* M’gann was surprised. Kon was even more surprised, turning towards me and almost shouting. Almost.

He managed to control himself and turn back towards the teacher’s desk, where a man with brown hair and glasses was watching us.
“Well, welcome to a new year of learning. I’m Mr. Carr and I will be your Social Studies teacher for the rest of the year. Please remember that I will assign you both individual projects and group projects and in the latter, if everyone doesn’t contribute to it, everyone will get a 0. This said, let’s start with something a bit more interesting.”

And he stepped outside the room for a moment, before rolling in a TV set, which he turned on on a report on Rhelasia. Which was a country that I knew for certain that it didn’t exist in my world. Still, it seemed like it was this counterpart of Korea, so I could, more or less, understand what was happening: war, cold war, the war and so on.

I admit that it was a bit of a surprise to see Lex Luthor stepping in as a mediator, but it was nothing compared to the way Kon reacted: his whole body locked up so tight that I could hear the straining of his teeth from where I was. Yet we remained silent and watched what was happening.

“If Lex Luthor unknown strategy for peace fails, the 2 Rhelasias are looking at all-out war before morning.”

The screen went black and the teacher stepped up from his position near the desk, addressing the class.

“Who can tell me more about Rhelasia? Marvin?”

A guy on the skinny side, with a Martian Manhunter t-shirt, jeans and a dark green beanie shot his head up in surprise, clearly not paying attention. Still, he valiantly attempted to make a joke.

“Well, Mr. Carr, it’s...” and here he fumbled a bit, before raising his hands in an expression of innocence “better than Fakeasia.”

It wasn’t funny. Barely anyone laughed and even who did, it was an half-hearted laugh, mostly just to break the boredom.

With a sigh of long-standing suffering, the teacher shook his head. “Anyone else?”

“Modern Rhelasia was created in 1855 and ruled by the Buquoon Dinasty until it was divided by the Great Powers into North and South Rhelasia after World War 2.”
Conner simply stood up and started talking, like he was reading from a book, leaving everyone, me included, without words and the teacher speechless. He was literally with his mouth open.

It soon turned into a smile. “Very good.”

“But why are they fighting? They’re all humans. I mean, Rhelasians. Right?”

He was still so young.

“Right on both counts, actually.” Then Mr. Carr turned towards the blackboard and started writing something, but the mental voice of M’gann distracted both of us.

*It’s no different on Mars. The White Martian minority are treated as second class citizens by the Green majority. Even changing colors didn’t help.*

*Because of the telepathy, right?* my mental voice was the only comment that she got, with Kon looking like he had swallowed… well, not a lemon because he actually liked them, but something unpleasant.

The end of the school day was heralded by M’gann dragging both of us towards the football field after seeing a flyer for the tryouts of the Bumblebees, the school cheerleader squad. One of the girls - she introduced herself as Wendy - called her to start.

I found the whole thing a bit ridiculous, if I had to be completely truthful, but she looked like she was having fun.

“Ok Megan, you’re up.”

“Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee, hornets, hornets, can’t be beat! Bzz-ting! Ow.”
Ok, correction: a lot ridiculous. Still, it was something that she wanted to do, so…

From my vantage point, on the bleachers with Kon, I had a full vision of what happening, and yet, I was caught by surprise when the other cheerleaders drenched Megan with a bucket full of water. Kon, on the other hand, reacted way more explosively, gripping the wooden bench so hard that it broke, already ready to fling himself towards them.

*Conner, no!*  

Before the mental voice of M’gann stopped him in his track, making him lose his balance and almost stumbling down, only barely stopped by my hand. I managed to grab him before he could fall headfirst in the football field.

On said field, Megan was jumping up and down, before being enveloped by a group embrace from the other. Then, they pointed at us, but I wasn’t able to hear anything.

After that, as they said, the rest was history.
Chapter 33: Anxiety Ever After, or: What the Hell?!

September 14

Mount Justice

The school was… interesting. Boring, incertain aspects – a lot of aspects – but interesting.

For the first three days, give or take. Then it became simply boring. A feeling, I was sure, that was shared by 90% of the students.

I never claimed to be original.

Still, I would admit that belonging to a secret squad of superheroes was a little problematic for schoolwork. Especially when, after only a week of school, Batman called me, Aqualad, Superboy and Miss Martian to a private meeting with him, Martian Manhunter, Red Tornado and Superman.

Batman was debriefing all of us on what was happening, four pictures above and a little behind him: A grey-skinned, bald man that looked desiccated, a caucasian man with a blond buzzcut and shades, a blue-grey skinned woman with blue hair and another grey-skinned boy, around our age, with white hair that spiked up. What’s up with all this strange skin colours?

“This past Fourth of July, four ice villains staged simultaneous attacks. Mr. Freeze, Icicle Jr., Killer Frost and Captain Cold. They were all easily apprehended. Perhaps too easily.”

A brief pause to let us dwell on what this meant, before he kept speaking.
“Cold and Frost were immediately sent to Belle Reve penitentiary, a federal prison designed to house supercriminals.”

The screen behind him changed, the two middle photos – Captain Cold and Killer Frost – shranked and moved over another, new image: a high-tech looking, imposing structure, with thick walls, turrets on it and only one road in, surrounded by what looked like a swamp. The Dark Knight turned towards it.

“The 17-year old Icicle Jr. was sent to a juvenile facility.” The one where Artemis went, I’m guessing. “Mr. Freeze, to his usual cell in Arkham Asylum.”

Batman turned back towards us, his expression clearly unhappy.

“But Freeze petitioned the court to be declared legally sane and junior sued to be tried as an adult.”

Not good. A lot not good. I could understand what it meant, at least a bit. A quick glance around me and the other had got the picture as well.

“As a result, both await transport to Belle Reve, which seems to have been the goal all along.”

Batman stepped onward, towards us, while he was speaking.

“I’m sending two of you in to find out why.”

Well, I mean. More than the why, I’m guessing on the how and more detailed explanation of wait, what?

“Which of us, sir?” Aqualad stepped forward, an inquisitive tone in his voice. I must admit I was curious as well.

“The original plan was to mask Miss Martian and Superboy as some minor supervillains. Unfortunately, the only two easy to match would have been the Terror Twins and they have already been apprehended. This means that we need to find another way. While, thanks to her shapeshifting abilities, Miss Martian could pass as anyone, sending her alone is not an option.”
Well, that was a problem. I think I had the solution, though.

“I think I can help with that.”

All the eyes turned to me, some curious, others neutral. I smiled and let purple smoke envelope me, while I focused on the change I wanted.

First, I turned female. It was uncomfortable, but nothing that I couldn’t stand. Second, my skin went from purple to a light bronze, my tattoos turning into gold flames rather than blue smoke. After that, my hair changed, red bleeding in until it was the exact same color as a campfire. Finally, my eyes became burning gold, almost engulfing the whole iris and sclera.

As a final touch, I changed my clothes from my usual arabic attire to a loose dress, in red, transparent silk, adorned with a low hanging gold belt inlaid with rubies and a gold pendant with a big ruby in the middle, connected by slim gold chains attached to the dress, rested in the cleft of my newly acquired breasts. To complete the image, another gold choker, with another ruby in it, appeared around my neck.

“What do you think? Do I pass for an Efreet or not?”

While Superman and Aqualad were watching me with an uncomfortable expression on their faces, Miss Martian and Martian Manhunter watched me with a strange fascination. Batman was, of course, unreadable, while Kon…

“What’s an Efreet?”

Yep. There he is.

“A kind of Jinn, just oriented towards fire instead of water, air, or earth. Of course, the distinction is more for the level of power than anything else. The order, from the lowest to the highest, go: Djinn, Efreet, Dao, and Marid.”
“Oh, ok.” And that was that. From his part, at least.

“I’m not comfortable with a guy, even if in a female form, housing with the girl part of the population.”

Superman interjected, looking at me. Or, well, looking at my face. Maybe I should’ve made the dress less skimpy.

Batman, on the other hand, simply stared. An inquisitive stare that made me feel kind of uncomfortable.

“Are you a shapeshifter?”

The question was out of the blue and left me kind of dumbfounded, but I answered all the same, not exactly seeing where this was going.

“I can change shape, if it’s what you mean.”

“Let me reformulate: your gender identity is male, right?”

I nodded.

“Then no.” And the matter was concluded. That tone of voice brokered no arguments, no discussion.

“Moreover, we have another problem to take care of, and you will be needed for it.” The images on the screen changed, showing a nondescript park. “This is Hamilton Park, a small park in Manhattan. Yesterday, this was found.”

And the image showed a… “Glass coffin?”

Everyone was puzzled by that, me more than anyone else. Still, it was a mission.
“You, together with Kid Flash, Robin and Artemis, will go and investigate what is happening, if something is happening, and report back to me. Superboy, Miss Martian. Aqualad and Red Tornado will be your backup while you are in Belle Reve. Dismissed.”

And he vanished with a flutter of his cape, the Z-Tube porting him away. Kon was decidedly not happy with this development, but he was taking things pretty well.

“Well, we’ll see each other when we are done. Good luck on the mission, Conner.” He nodded at me, with a definite frown on his face, before turning towards the others and started talking strategy.


The trio was still a bit beat up from the mess with the giant snake and the Kobra cult, but looked well enough to go.

“Heya, Jin. How’s it going?” Wally waved, smiling, while Artemis and Robin greeted me. I smiled back, before pointing at the screen.

“Thinking that we are going to get involved with something absurd again. They found a glass coffin in Hamilton Park, Manhattan.”

Their smiles switched to surprise, clearly confused by the absurdity that was a glass coffin. Robin, always the professional one, switched into work mentality and moved up towards the computer, recalling the files, waving distractedly to the others.

“Apparently the coffin was found in the park one morning and nothing could be done to move it. Nothing could break it, either.”

“So, what are your bets? Alien invasion? Supervillain plot?

“I mean, it could be a supervillain. It’s something that could come out of the mind of a Gotham villain, I guess.” Artemis looked dubious at her own words, chewing her lip, while Robin hummed noncommittally.
“Like Mad Hatter? Not his M.O., but it does have some similarities. An imitator?”

“Could be. No names jump to mind, though.”

“Well, the files don’t say anything else, so I guess we are going. There’s a Z-Tube in Manhattan and from there it will be fast to reach the park. Let’s go and see if we can get more information onsite.” And, with a nod, Robin walked towards the Z-Tube, selecting the destination.

“Ready?” And our world vanished in light.

*******************************************************

Hamilton Park was lovely. Tall trees shaded cobblestone road that snaked from a central square with a fountain in the middle. The glass coffin that was placed under two high trees looked right at home, almost straight out of a fairy tale.

It was made of what looked like gold and glass, empty inside except for the silk that covered the cushions. It was reported to be immune to any kind of tool used to try and analyze it, so there wasn’t a way to see if it was true gold or not.

“I still think that my idea of an alien artifact is valid.” Kid Flash crossed his arms, studying the coffin. Artemis rolled her eyes, while I tapped on the glass. Robin was ready to say something, but he froze, causing all of us to stiffen and look at him.

“Rob?” Kid Flash got shushed by Robin, before looking around.

“Did you hear that?” I strained my ears, like the others, trying to hear what Robin was talking about. Then, a female voice echoed around us.

“With ‘Once Upon A Time’ all stories start,
And so, dear readers, from here let us depart.

But, this time, I ’m in control and once I’m done,

Your ‘Happily Ever After’, there won’t be one!”
After that, everything started to… black….. ou….

******************************************************************************

When I opened my eyes, I was laying on a bed, inside what looked like a luxurious Arabian palace, a low table near the bed with a bowl full of dates, grapes and figs on it.

Then, another problem took my attention: two gold bracers, half the length of my forearms, encircled them, from the wrist up. They didn't have any clasp and they were far too fitting for me to simply slide them over my hands.

Before I could try to do something more, the same feeling that I got when someone was rubbing my bottle overcame me and I was forced to appear from… an oil lamp in the hand of what looked like a street rat.

“The stories are true….” His expression of wonder was quickly overtaken by something far more sinister. I glanced around, before plastering a smile on my face.

“So they are. I am the Djinn of the lamp. Ah-ah!” I stopped his words with a raised hand before he could say anything.

“Before you ask anything, know that there are rules that I have to abide to: I cannot make anyone fall in love, I cannot kill anyone and I cannot bring the dead back to life. Beyond that, you have three wishes.”

The guy had lost steam while I was speaking, but now he seemed to recover, his hands gripping the lamp from where I came out so hard that his knuckles turned white.

“Very well. Djinn! I want revenge on those who have wronged me. The cowardly merchant, his daughter and son, the vizier… I want to never see any of them again!”

I smiled.
“As master commands.” And I snapped my fingers.

Dling!

He vanished, my lamp clattering on the ground. Everything around me starting to waver, like watercolor under running water. Then, I was in a forest.

“Well, that happened. Now, I need to find the others.” The oil lamp was still there, so I guessed that whatever had brought us here, it had created a bond between me and it. But their magic was pretty obvious to me, so my reaction was sending the guy somewhere else. Like another world.

If he didn’t simply vanish into nothingness once he got out of the radius of the spell. Things like that were pretty hard to judge.

Now, to find the others… I snapped my fingers, trying to teleport to them. Nothing. Some tries later, I concluded that I couldn’t use my magic except for flying and returning to the lamp. I was lucky that I wasn’t banished back to it, actually.

Then, a soft voice reached my ears, high-pitched and fast.

“Run, run as fast as you can! You can't catch me. I'm the Gingerbread Man!”

The Gingerbread Man?

“Oh man, a river.”

“Well, hello there. Do you want help to reach the other side?”

“Thank you Mr. Fox, but I don’t want to get eaten, so I’ll decline.”

“Eating you? Oh, I would never! I have a toothache and I can’t eat sweets!”
“Oh, well, in that case...”

“Here, jump on my tail, so I can swim without risking the river washing you away.”

Wait a sec, in the original story the gingerbread man ended in the fox’s stomach. And that voice...

“So, little gingerbread man, do you have a name?”

“I’m Wally!”

“Well, Wally, you are a bit heavier than I thought. Why don’t you step on my back, that my tail is dipping down in the water? I wouldn’t want to lose you by accident.”

“Well, ok...”

I shot straight up, flying out of the canopy of the trees, looking around trying to see a river. Once found, I just had to reach them before the fox could…. I shivered at the thought.

“Oh, Wally, the river is stronger than I thought. I’ll have to use a bit more strength swimming and my back could dip under the water. Why don’t you step on my nose, so that you won’t be at risk of ending in the river and dissolve?”

“Yeah, I don’t want to dissolve anymore than I want to get eaten.”

There! They were on the other bank of the river, the fox just having reached it, Wally on his nose. I dove for him.

The fox sent him in the air with a quick snap of his head, opening his maw wide, ready to catch him in his fangs. I sped up, snagging Wally a moment before the fangs could close on his legs.

“Oh man, thanks! I didn’t think that the fox would eat me!”
“You’ve never read the fairy tale, did you?”

“Uh, no.”

He was actually a pretty good representation of Wally in his costume of Kid Flash, if one didn’t look too closely at the fact that he was made of gingerbread. And had a delicious smell.

“I can totally understand why all those people wanted to eat you.”

“Thanks? Please don’t eat me?”

“Don’t worry, I’m not hungry right now.”

“Thank goodness.”

We remained in the air for a few more minutes, trying to decide where to go. Problem was that we didn’t have any information or any way to find them, seeing as my magic was still out.

“Wally, can you try rubbing the lamp? I can’t use my usual magic and I have a bad feeling for this whole story.”

“Sure. Here I go.” And he rubbed the lamp. Nothing.

“Doesn’t work. Thanks for trying.”

”Awww, man. I hate when the bad guys manage to cheat us out of our cheat option.”

I never thought of it in those terms, but he was pretty much correct.

“So, what do we do?”
Wally had no answer.

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