



Ultimate Speed Force #4

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Last Issue:

After a ferry disaster snarled traffic for miles, Iris and Wally became involved in deeper mysteries surrounding a blood bank stored in a Gardner Street apartment and the elusive truth about the Church of Speed.

Captain Cold and the Top continued their battle for influence over the Rogues Union, with Snart ratcheting up the tension and Dillon merely offering vague clues to something big on the horizon.

But, all games and investigations were called off as a riot enflamed Iron Heights Will anything in the Sister Cities survive?

Ultimate Speed Force

#4: Cadence to Arms

Writer: Tim Abramo

Artist: Hannes Klesse

Iron heights Prison**Warden Wolfe's Office****1:31 PM**

Buried deep within Iron Heights prison, as the air raid sirens blared through the open window, Warden Gregory Wolfe sat with his chief of staff, his bulky frame unmoving even as the screams and sounds of chaos could be heard from within the prison. He looked every bit the powerful man he believed himself to be as he sat behind the desk, taking a long drag off his cigar, but not moving from where he was sitting.

"Really sir, I must again suggest we get to the secure area before the prisoners get any closer to your office," the young woman offered, trying to will the warden to action, "They are beginning to overwhelm the staff on this level."

He just stared intently at the young woman, his eyes not breaking away from hers as he leaned forward at the desk, very interested in hearing about whatever Ashley Zolomon had to offer.

Ashley was young but capable, and Wolfe could tell that a dozen different contingency plans were already running through her head. She was on the short side and blonde, bags under her eyes from the lack of sleep and a worried look etched on her face.

“We shall do no such thing until I get some answers. Now, let’s go over this once more. How did these cockroaches escape from their cells, Ms. Zolomon?”

“Someone got a hold of today’s access codes, and released all the cells. That same person appears to have redirected security personnel throughout the complex, causing duplication in nonessential areas while exposing weak links in the system.”

“This is unacceptable,” he said with a low growl. “You want you explain how prisoners got hold of Omega level classified materials?”

Ashley just winced, bracing herself for the backlash to her answer. “We don’t know, Sir.”

“You don’t know?” he asked incredulously.

“The prisoners from Pandora’s Box appear to have moved upward and released the other levels on their own, possibly to buy time for an escape. Our guards are proving effective in containment, but they will not be able to hold on indefinitely. Whoever they were, they appeared to have been prepared for all contingencies and knew our protocols inside and out.”

Wolfe continued to puff on his cigar as she spoke, letting the smoke trail from his mouth as he watched the various monitors in his office, showing that the prisoners were slowly, but surely turning the tide on the guards.

“You want my opinions, or do you want to continue to dress down my wife while the situation out there goes to hell?”

Wolfe placed the cigar down into the ashtray and looked over to the couch. Hunter Zolomon stared daggers at the warden as he shuffled

through papers in a briefcase.

“If I wanted your opinions, Hunter, I’d have asked for them.” The warden returned the man’s intense gaze, leaning up on the desk slightly to give himself the appearance of being a full head taller than the profiler. “But if you feel you have something to contribute, by all means, please share.”

Hunter tossed a file at the warden, several pictures spilling out of the envelope. Each one featuring a man in glasses with a long ponytail. “Hartley Rathaway,” he started, speaking as if he’d rehearsed this speech previously. “Last in your custody three months ago, he is knowledgeable with computers and gifted in the field of manipulation. If the Rogues wanted to compromise your institution, he’d be the vanguard.”

Even Ashley began to shake her head.

“I see I was mistaken.” the Warden said grimly, “You have nothing new to add but this constant harping on costumed clowns playacting wrestling storylines. This is why you were dismissed from your position in the first place, Hunter.”

“Gentlemen!,” Ashley called out, drawing the attention from the two men as they continued to fume, “You can sit here and banter all you want, I’m going to the secure area before this riot gets any worse. I suggest you do the same.”

“Oh, but you’ll miss all the fun!”

All three cast their gaze towards the door and saw Marc Mardon, the Weather Wizard, leaning against the doorjamb. He was still bruised from the assault he’d endured the day prior, but he was smiling broadly as he looked over the three people in the office.

“But the lady is right, I think all of you should come with me, it’s not safe here and I’d hate to see anything happen to you should the prisoners come by.”

The Streets of Central City

1:33 PM

He ran.

Pushing himself faster than he ever had before, the maroon streak raced across the streets of Central City towards Iron heights prison as fast as his legs could carry him. Every second that passed only increased the tension and the need to go faster.

The Flash knew all too well what a riot could lead to, and if the prisoners escaped their cells it would be nearly impossible to keep them from spilling out into the city. Iron Heights was built for containment, but if the prisoners rushed the perimeter, there was little to keep them from the city.

He had to prevent that at all costs.

As he ran, he could see a storm brewing on the horizon. It formed suddenly and swiftly, a few drops of rain suddenly became a deluge, as lightning ripped across the sky and thunder boomed in the canyons of the city. It wasn't long before the rain turned to sleet, which only forced Wally to run further and faster, even as the roadways became more and more treacherous to race along.

A klaxon sounded across the cityscape, as concerned citizens throughout the Sister Cities looked towards the hulking structure of the prison visible on the horizon even as they fled the increasingly unpredictable weather.

Drills had been run over the years and the citizenry knew that was a sign to rush inside, and did so.

"How far away are you, son?"

Wally, reacted to the voice of Jay Garrick, tapping a communications panel built into his hood and spoke. "About thirty seconds," he said, even his voice straining a little as he ran.

"I'll join you shortly," Jay warned through the receiver.

"You'd better hurry, Weather Wizard seems to have gotten control of his wand already." Wally cautioned as he continued to push himself even harder, the buildings and landmarks of Central City blurred beyond recognition as he ran. "It's getting messy out here. What have you found?"

"Jesse hacked into the security cameras. We can only see about 50% of the facility, but we know they've taken hostages."

Inside Quickstart Enterprises, Jay Garrick paced nervously as Jesse Chambers sat behind a computer, typing furiously.

"We need to get more," Wally insisted into the microphone.

"I'm working on it." Jesse chided, showing irritation. Jesse was in her early thirties, tall and blonde, even though she'd given up the hero game almost a decade earlier, she still had the same runner's frame all the speedsters seemed to share.

"Send smoke signals, call Oracle, do what ever you need to do, Jesse," Wally commented, starting to show a little irritation. Trying to redirect his attentions he started to speak to Jay once more. "You know this can't have been spontaneous. They're too well organized. I'm telling you the Rogues must be involved. We let them get too comfortable."

Jay sighed, he couldn't disagree. "Between Gardner Street and the ferry disaster, this city's been taking a real beating," the elder speedster finally admitted. "But this doesn't seem to be the Rogues style, Wally."

"Unless they're using this to cover something even bigger."

With that revelation, Wally knew that he couldn't afford the luxury of stopping and felt his muscles searing as he pushed them further than he had in some time. He couldn't help but notice Jay Garrick's silence on the other end, "Jay?"

"It just got worse," Jay spoke finally in Wally's ear.

"How can it get worse?," Wally asked as he left the crowded city center and headed towards the riverfront, the Flash felt the cool breeze coming off the water and knew he could finally cut loose.

“That is Bart’s class is there, isn’t it?”

Wally went wide-eyed, remembering his cousin talking about the trip to the prison. “We’ve got to tell Iris.”

“I’m sure she’s already gotten word, son. I’ll meet you at the prison. We’ll get him, and everyone else, out of there. Garrick out.”

With a loud crack, the maroon speedster shattered the sound barrier as he ran, no longer needing to fear the shattering of windows or damage to buildings from the impact.

Wally only hoped he and Jay could make it there in time.

Iron Heights Prison
Somewhere on Level A
1:34 PM

“I’m hungry.”

“That’s what you’re worried about right now,” Carol Bucklen groaned in frustration as she looked around the corner, “being hungry?”

“But I am,” he said simply. “Why, what are you worried about?”

“Oh, I don’t know, the prisoners that have escaped? Maybe the fact that our lives are in danger?”

“Oh, that?,” he asked, watching from the alcove as prisoners marched captive guards down to a lower level. “It’s nothing we can’t handle.”

“We? I thought you were just going to call Wally!,” she asked, suddenly looking very concerned. “You didn’t say anything about going out there yourself. This is too big, Bart. We should just go back and find the others.”

“Just sit back and be hostages? No way! It’s simple. I get you out of here and then I put a stop to this,” Bart offered, trying to seem far more

confidant and resolved than he felt, continuing to speak in hushed tones.

“You can’t do this on your own, Bart,” Carol said, her voice starting to crack a little. “It’s too big.”

“No one ever told my Dad that.”

Carol sighed, not wanting to step into that trap again. “Bart, there’s a **riot** going on out there. Leave this one to Wally and Jay and the rest of them”

“Impulse is the only one here right now, and if I can get in touch with Max, maybe he can help me until Jay and Wally get here. We can’t let the prisoners hurt any of the hostages, Carol. Our friends are down there”

“Our only chance for help is that crazy old guy who leveled Gardner Street?,” she asked, “For all we know he’s the one who started this!”

“I’ve got to do what I can,” he said looking surprisingly assured of himself, looking her square in the eyes, trying to find some way to convince her he was doing the right thing.

He just held out his hand, and said, “When you get out of here, go find my Mom, she’ll keep you safe until I get back.” She continued to look at him nervously, so he added, with resolve, “I will be back, Carol.”

“How do you propose we get out of here?” Carol asked, looking down the hall again, the sounds of the riot coming that much closer to where they were hiding.

“With those,” Bart said, pointing to a notepad in Carol’s pocket. “You started taking notes on the bus, there’s got to be something in there that can help us. Right?”

Carol was surprised she hadn’t thought of it first as she started to flip through the pages.

Bart stood by, tapping his foot nervously.

“I got it!,” she called out, before immediately clamping her hand over her mouth. Her eyes went wide as the sound of her exclamation carried

through the halls. "Look here," she pointed to her meticulously crafted notes.

Bart peered over, following the lines as she read them.

"The prison has been built up and improved upon over the years, with the newer structures built on top of the older ones," she read aloud. "You know what that means?"

Bart nodded, but said nothing, indicating he in fact had no clue where she was going.

"If we can find a weak point in the defenses and get down to the lower levels, we might be able to get out of here." Carol then paused for a moment, "Of course, that means..."

"...the prisoners can too," Bart added, the realization just sinking in.

"Not if we put a stop to them first," a voice came from the shadows, as Max Crandal emerged into the alcove. "Time to earn your stripes, Son of Allen. You too Ms. Bucklen."

Carol shrieked loudly, startled by the sudden appearance of the speedster in their hiding place. "Who do you think you are, sneaking up on us like that?" she questioned, not recognizing the man from her interactions with Bart and his family.

"This is Max, Carol. I told you he'd help us. With his skill and your notebook, we can't lose!"

Carol just stared at the two, a chill suddenly running down her spine..

The Back Room of Gambi's Tailor Shop
Bowery Section, Central City
1:35 PM

Captain Cold paced back and forth at the head of the room, the assembled union looking nervously up at him. It had been a long time since the entire group had been called together.

Evan McCulloch, the Mirror Master busied himself with a knife, stabbing it into the table between his fingers with growing intensity as Digger knocked back a pitcher of beer, several others clearly empty on the table before him. Mick Rory watched Cold's pacing with an intense gaze, and Rory Hathaway, the Pied Piper kept to himself towards the back, but eyeing the crowd nervously .

Outside the building, the raging storm could still be heard, hail pelting downward, shattering windows as it bounced off every surface. They could hear every ping of the ice balls because of the deafening stillness inside the room as Cold paced furtively, before advancing on the assembled Rogues.

Cold quickly turned and slammed his hands down on the table, drawing the attention of the entire group.

"Someone have something to share?" he asked, irritated. He scanned the entire group one by one, making eye contact and watching as most, save Digger and Rory averted their gaze slightly.

No one in the group spoke.

"I like to think I'm a patient man, and I've always encouraged you Rogues to feel free to freelance from time to time, so, if anyone has any information at all about what's going on inside Iron Heights, I'd appreciate it if you could share that knowledge with the group, so that we all may profit."

Silence continued to hang thickly in the air.

"Ok, then," he said as he eased himself into a chair and looked over the group once again, "Devil's Advocate time. If we let this go, what's the fallout?"

From the back of the room, Hartley Rathway raised a hand. "I understand Ahmnet Black has suggested halted trading throughout the Network until the situation at Iron Heights is resolved. That stands to cost us, conservatively, one million dollars each hour the black market is down.."

Digger looked up with surprise, “We’ve had bigger problems in the last five years and it stayed operational, why she want to close it down now?”

“As I understand it, she is concerned about the safety of the traders should the prisoners escape. The assurance of Rogue security was not enough to convince her to keep the markets open. I indicated if she continued to insist, the Union would be forced to reconsider our arrangement, but she would not relent.”

Cold frowned, “Digger, contact Ms. Black and tell her I intend to remind her of her position, and indicate this is the last time I intend to have this conversation. Piper, draw up a list of potential replacements.”

Digger and Hartley nodded, each prepared to complete their tasks once the meeting ended.

“I say we kill the lot of them.” Evan McCulloch said, his Scottish brogue thick and heady, not the put on that Digger’s Boomerang accent was. “Show we mean business.” The eyes of the room fell upon McCulloch, but it didn’t seem to bother him much. “We don’t act, and we look like asses.”

“That’s your answer to everything.” Hartley chided, tired of his “kill first, ask questions later” attitude. “Trickster doesn’t want us to make a move against... .”

“Screw him.” McCulloch countered. “Pretty boy wants to play both sides and stay off the front lines, he doesn’t get a vote. Ain’t that right?”

Cold remained silent for a moment before speaking. “Where’s Dillon?” he asked.

Digger spoke up, sighing heavily. “We have several agents monitoring his position. He hasn’t contacted anyone or done anything since we placed him under surveillance.”

“We should have killed him.” McCulloch opined to no one in particular.

Cold seemed to consider his words carefully as he stood. "I want Mirror Master, Heatwave and Boomerang to show a presence at Iron Heights. Do not make a move until you receive instruction from me, and me alone. Is that understood?" he stated, in such a way that it really wasn't a question.

The group nodded as they prepared to go off to their assignments, feeling Cold's eyes fall upon them. .

"But I want you to know," Cold stated, looking directly at Mick Rory as he spoke, "I find out that any of you are involved in this riot in any way and I will kill you in the most unpleasant manner possible. You will suffer long, and you will suffer hard." Cold continued to speak, his face curling into a cruel smile, "and I will find out."

Outside Iron Heights

1:37 PM

As the storm raged above, the crowd gathered outside the prison, slowly being driven back by the whole of the police force from both Central and Keystone Cities, was starting to dwindle.

Wally skidded to a stop as he approached the outer walls of Iron Heights, tapping his communicator again and speaking aloud. "Jesse, what do we got?," he asked, surveying the scene

"Eighteen hostages; the warden and seventeen staffers are all being kept in the common area of E Level. Pockets of guards are fighting back but pinned down in several of the levels about that. At least 100 prisoners are loose inside the complex."

"What's the best way inside?"

"The prison is locked down, all security fields are still up," the blonde said, speaking into the microphone in his hood.

"Jesse, find me a way in."

She sighed, followed by the sound of furious typing. "Go to the South

Wing. There's a pinhole in the grid, but it should be enough for you to vibrate through. Unfortunately there's going to be about 10 guards waiting to pounce when you get in."

"No other options?" Jay called out.

"That's it," Jesse confirmed.

"Then we're going in." Wally and Jay raced to the South Wing of the prison, weaving between the police barricades and vibrating their molecules at just the right time, slipping inside the prison walls.

As Jesse had indicated, several large and muscular men descended on them, their orange prison-issue jumpsuits straining to contain their bulk. Wally dodged a haymaker thrown by the nearest prisoner with only an inch to spare, before throwing a few quick rabbit punches to the man's stomach, dropping him to the ground.

Wally and Jay were forced to fight on the defensive, dodging awkward but powerful punches and forced to pound back with quick jabs and sharp uppercuts. Jay was clearly the superior fighter, his skill forged from 50-plus years of being the Flash, Wally was less skilled, but was able to get the job done, and after a quick battle, were free to move about the complex.

"You're on A level," Jesse instructed, "The guards and hostages are being funneled down to E Level."

"Pandora's Box," Wally said with a smirk, as he and Jay prepared to secure the prisoners, using cable ties to attach their hands to a water pipe, so they could be collected by the authorities later, "it figures they would stick to what they know. Have they made any demands?"

"Nothing yet."

Jay nodded. "They're still trying to gain control of the facility. We were seeing heavy fighting on B Level, so we should head there first before we worry about anything else."

"Right," Wally said as he secured the last of the thugs to the wall.

Jay and Wally raced down to the next level where they could already hear the sound of heavy fighting between prisoners and guards.

Outside Iron Heights

1:45 PM

Iris huddled outside, breath visible in the stormy air. She stood defiant behind the police barricade, an intense gaze and reporter's notebook the only thing keeping her from having to deal with the fact that her son was trapped inside that horrible institution, and her nephew and close friends would soon find a way to join him.

So she had little choice but to power past her worry as the Chief of Police, a surly man named Garfield, spoke to the gathered press.

"The prisoners are in control of 50% of the institution, prison guards sealed off as much of the structure as was possible, focusing on removing as much non-essential personnel from the building as possible. The warden remained behind in order to facilitate the evacuation."

"When will the warden be available for questioning?" one of the reporters asked from the back of the crowd.

Garfield measured his words carefully. It wasn't common knowledge yet that the Warden was amongst the hostages currently being held inside the facility, and he wasn't about to share that intel if he didn't have to. "He will be made available as soon as the situation defuses itself."

Iris could tell he was lying, but knew where her concerns were. "There are reports there were several class tours of the prison at the time of the riots.." she started, but Garfield anticipated her line of questioning.

"...The students were all evacuated to the secure area before lockdown and are completely accounted for. As soon as prison staff reclaims the prison, they will be free to go home." He then paused a moment. "No more questions, we'll be holding another briefing in one hour."

He tried to disperse the crowd, but Iris was unwilling to leave, wanting to at least keep the building within her sight.

Pandora's Box

E Level

Abel Crown paced nervously, puffing away at a cigar he'd procured from somewhere in the complex. "They still haven't reported in, have they?" he asked, looking to a few other orange-clad prisoners.

"No, sir," one of the prisoners reported. "The South Wing has gone quiet."

"I don't like this. Send another team up to find out what's going on. If the South Wing squad is alive, have them killed. I will not tolerate dissent in the ranks." Crown stated, as the group nodded and moved off and up the stairs.

He walked over to where the bound Warden Wolfe and the Zolomons were seated, bound and gagged together. "Wouldn't you agree, Warden?" Crown asked, knowing Wolfe wouldn't bother answering, even if he could.

"Who died and made you leader, Crown?," the Weather Wizard asked as he walked towards them, his eyes already sparking with rage.

"I'm the only natural leader in this group, Mardon. You see all we've accomplished since I took over this little riot, don't you?"

"The way you talk, you make it seem like you planned this whole operation. You certainly seem ready to take credit for it." Mardon added, not hiding the disgust in his voice. "What keeps me from killing you right here, right now?"

"Them." Abel Crown pointed to the large group of orange clad prisoners who seemed to ring around the two men. "The Rogues ain't in charge here, Mardon. The sooner you accept that, the better."

"Then who is?"

“We are.” Abel Crown said with a smile. “We are powerful, and we are massive. And you’re either with us, or against us. So tell us, which are you?”

Next Issue:

The riot threatens to explode as Mardon is faced with a dilemma, does he stay a Rogue, or join the Massive?

As Bart, Max and Carol descend deeper into Iron Heights, Wally and Jay are forced to assist the prison guards against the escaped prisoners, learning a great deal about how discipline has been handled in the prison in the process.

It will take all their skills and talents to keep the prisoners away from the weary cities of Central and Keystone. But will all their hard work be for naught when the Rogues decide to assert their authority and make an example out of the rioting prisoners and Ahmnet Black’s Network?

All this and more, next issue in: “Jailhouse Rock.”

If you enjoyed this story, you can find more alternate universe tales of your favorite DC heroes at DC3 Multiverse.

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From the same author on Feedbooks

Ultimate Speed Force #1 (2008)

Ultimate Speed Force: Family Ties.

Wally West is the Flash, the Rogues are a force to be reckoned with, Iris is struggling to raise her son after the loss of her husband, and the patriarch of the speedsters, Jay Garrick, watches over all in his twilight years. In a flash of lightning and a crack of thunder, it will all change! Come and find out how!

Ultimate Speed Force #2 (2008)

Ultimate Speed Force: Speed Kills.

Something is stirring up the Rogues as an old face returns to threaten a schism in the ranks, but all that may pale to insignificance in the face of the mysterious arrival, now locked in the heart of Iron Heights! Or considering the dark words of the Top, maybe there's more connection between the two than meets the eye!

Ultimate Speed Force #3 (2008)

Ultimate Speed Force: Zwischenzug.

Mysteries abound and trouble brews as the Rogues deal a disastrous lesson to the returning renegade known as the Top, the enigmatic Max escaped Iron Heights, Wally investigates the Church of Speed, and Bart goes on a field trip! And you just know, of all those events, Bart's has GOT to turn out the worst!



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