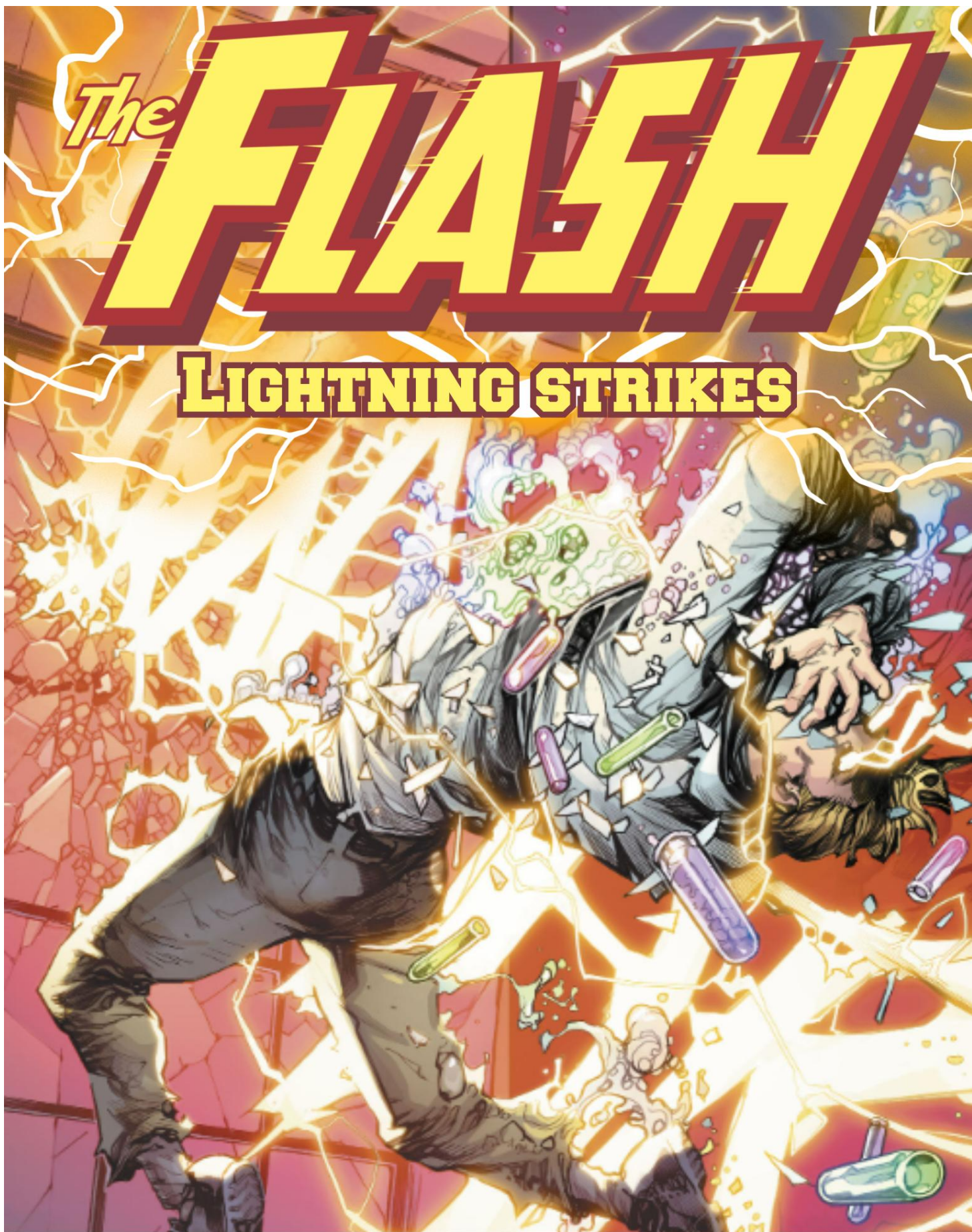


*The*

# FLASH

**LIGHTNING STRIKES**



# Chapter One

The rain poured down in heavy sheets, drenching the streets of the quiet suburb. Thunder rumbled in the distance as an eleven-year-old boy sprinted through the downpour, clutching a comic book tightly against his chest. He hunched over it, shielding the pages from the rain as best he could. His sneakers splashed through puddles, but he didn't slow down—not until he reached the familiar front door of his house.

Barry Allen burst inside, shaking the water from his arms before carefully wiping his feet on the mat. The warmth of home wrapped around him, the scent of spices and something sizzling on the stove filling the air. From the kitchen, his mother's voice called out.

"Barry? Is that you?"

He let out a breath, running a hand through his soaked hair. "Yeah, it's just me, Mom," he answered. "I was at the comic shop when it started pouring. Mr. Frederickson told me I should head home before it got any worse."

Barry walked into the kitchen, setting his damp comics on the table with care. His father, Henry, leaned over to inspect them, a knowing smile tugging at the corners of his mouth.

"Oh, I see you got your taste from your mother," Henry mused. "Heroes rescuing those in need, always doing what's right."

Nora Allen wiped her hands on a dish towel before stepping over to her son, cupping his cheeks between her palms with a tenderness that made Barry squirm.

"Mom," he groaned. "I'm eleven. You don't have to baby me."

Nora chuckled but didn't let go just yet. "I just want you to know how proud I am of you," she said softly. "You always stand up for what's right, and your optimism? It's contagious." She gave his face a final, affectionate squeeze. "Never lose that, Barry."

Barry glanced down at his comics, the colorful heroes frozen mid-action on the glossy cover. He smiled, a warmth filling his chest that had nothing to do with the kitchen's heat.

"I won't, Mom," he promised.

Outside, the rain continued to fall, but inside, Barry Allen stood in the light, held in the warmth of a moment he would cherish forever.

## 11 Years Later

The blaring red numbers on Barry Allen's alarm clock read 8:30 AM. His eyes shot open.

“Oh, shoot.”

He scrambled out of bed, shoving one leg into his pants while simultaneously shoving a piece of toast into his mouth. The morning routine was a chaotic blur—buttoning his shirt as he searched for his coat, stuffing his keys into his pocket while barely managing to tie his shoes. Within minutes, he was out the door, bounding down the steps of his apartment complex toward the spot where he’d locked up his bike the night before.

He stopped short. The chain lay severed on the ground, and his bike was nowhere to be seen.

“Oh, come on. You’ve got to be kidding me.”

Barry’s head whipped toward the street just in time to see the bus arriving at the stop down the road. He sprinted toward it, weaving through early-morning pedestrians, but as he reached the curb, the doors snapped shut. The bus pulled away, leaving Barry standing in its wake, panting and drenched in frustration.

With no other choice, he waited, checking his watch every few seconds. Finally, the next bus arrived, and he climbed aboard, slumping into a seat.

...

The Central City Police Department towered ahead; its aged brick exterior bathed in the glow of the early morning sun. The bus hissed as it came to a halt near Jitters, sending a puff of exhaust into the crisp air. Before the doors had fully swung open, Barry was already moving, dodging past commuters and racing toward the precinct. His shoes barely made contact with the pavement as he took the stairs in quick, bounding strides, his heart pounding in sync with the urgency in his chest.

Inside the CCPD Crime Lab, Captain David Singh stood with his arms crossed, surveying the room like a general inspecting his troops. The air hummed with the soft whir of centrifuges and the tap of keyboards, but a single question cut through the noise.

“Barry. Barry Allen. Has anyone seen Barry?”

The lab techs exchanged wary glances, their shoulders lifting in unison before dropping with half-hearted shrugs. No one spoke.

Singh exhaled sharply, pinching the bridge of his nose. “Well, when he gets in, send him to my office.” His tone left no room for argument.

Meanwhile, Barry wove through the building’s familiar maze of corridors, his steps quick and determined. He could *not* be late again. He barely registered the voice calling his name until August Heart fell into step beside him, flashing a lopsided grin.

“Hey, Barry! What’s up?”

“Can’t talk, August. I’m so late. Sorry!” Barry called over his shoulder, pushing through the doors of the crime lab.

Patty Spivot leaned against her desk with a knowing smirk, arms crossed. “Barry, Captain Singh wants to see you. In his office.” She lowered her voice slightly, her eyes flicking toward the hallway. “Watch out—he did *not* look happy.”

Barry groaned inwardly, rubbing the back of his neck. “Thanks, Patty.”

As he turned toward Singh’s office, the scrape of wheels against tile signaled Albert Desmond rolling his chair closer to Patty’s desk. He folded his arms, an air of smug satisfaction settling over him like a vulture eyeing fresh prey.

“Oh, I *hope* the golden boy gets it this time,” he muttered, his voice thick with bitterness. “He makes us all look bad.”

Patty’s smirk vanished. Her gaze turned sharp. “Grow up, Albert. Barry corrected *one* of your mistakes on a case, and you’ve held a grudge ever since? You should be *thanking* him.”

Albert scoffed, leaning back in his chair. “Yeah, right. We all know you’ve got the hots for Barry. Your opinion doesn’t mean much.” He turned toward another tech, James Forrest, nudging him with an elbow. “Forrest, come on—back me up here.”

Forrest barely glanced up from his microscope, adjusting the focus with steady precision. “Don’t drag me into this,” he muttered. “I just want to keep my head down and do my job. If Barry finds an error, I’d rather he fixes it than let it cost me mine.”

Albert let out another exaggerated scoff, louder this time.

Forrest sighed, rubbing his temples. “One of these days, I’m gonna buy a boat, sail off into the ocean, and leave all this behind.” He paused, finally looking up at Singh’s office door. “Still... wonder what’s happening in there.”

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Inside Singh’s office, Barry stood across from his boss, shifting awkwardly.

“Barry, late again,” Singh said, rubbing his temples. “We talked about this. What was it this time?”

Barry exhaled. "Well, I had to take the bus because my bike got stolen, but I wasn't quick enough to catch the first one, so I had to wait for the second. Then they dropped me off at Jitters because apparently, they don't stop any closer. So, I ran here from there."

Singh's eyebrows lifted. "Wait... did you say your bike got stolen?"

Barry hesitated. "Uh... yes, sir."

Singh leaned back in his chair. "Did you report it missing?"

Barry rubbed the back of his neck. "No, uh... I've been busy trying to get here, sir."

Singh sighed again. "Okay, well, I'll excuse you this time. But head downstairs and file a police report. You do great work when you're here, Barry, but you have to be here."

"Yes, sir. Sorry, sir."

Singh nodded. "Good. Moving on—that's not actually why I wanted to talk to you." He gestured toward a case file box on his desk. "Those files you requested. They just got here. I know how much this means to you, but it's not to be worked on during department time. Understood?"

Barry's breath caught as he read the label on the box: Nora Allen. After all this time spent waiting it had finally arrived. "Yes, sir," he said, his voice quieter. "Only personal time."

Singh gave him a knowing look. "Good. Now get out. The lookie-loos are already getting curious."

Barry nodded. "Thank you, sir."

"Yeah, yeah. Close the door behind you."

Barry walked out, shutting Singh's office door behind him. He grabbed his lab coat off the rack and settled into his desk, eyes immediately drawn to the case file box sitting there.

Patty appeared beside him, staring at the label. "You okay, Barry?" she asked concern in her voice.

Barry forced a small smile. "Yeah. Thanks for checking on me. Just... had my bike stolen this morning. So, that sucks." He sighed. "Singh's making me file a police report. I think he's hoping to catch me in a lie, but I swear, it really did get stolen."

Patty smirked. "Well, better get down there, then. Time is of the essence in these kinds of investigations."

Barry shot her a sarcastic look. "Ha ha." Barry lifts the box, setting it aside before heading downstairs.

Barry walked down the stairs and found his detective friend, August Heart, waiting for him.

“Barry! Visiting so soon? Wow, can’t be that bad up there.” August says.

Barry rolled his eyes. “I told Captain Singh I was late because my bike was stolen, so now he wants me to file a police report.”

August grinned. “Oh, I see. You need your fancy detective friend to find your bike for you? Now, was this a trike, or did you finally upgrade to training wheels?”

Barry exhaled dramatically. “Very funny. I’m surprised you became a cop when your jokes are so good.”

August smirked. “Couldn’t go full-time. I get all my best material from you.”

Before Barry could respond, a red-haired woman walked up behind them. August’s eyes twinkled with mischief. “Uh-oh,” he muttered. “Your stalker’s here, Barry.”

Barry turned—just as Iris West stepped forward.

“So, boys,” she said, a teasing lilt in her voice, “anything newsworthy today?”

Barry offered a polite smile. “Sorry, Iris. You know we can’t comment on open investigations.”

“Oh, come on,” she pressed. “Just give me something. You’re always so elusive, Mr. Allen.”

August grinned. “That’s because my friend Barry here wants your number, but he’s just shy about it.”

Barry’s eyes widened in horror. “I—wha—no, that’s not—”

Iris chuckled, pulling a business card from her purse.

“Oh, I see,” she said. “All tongue-tied, Mr. Allen?” She handed him the card. “Well, when your tongue loosens a bit, give me a call. I’d love to hear any updates you have—or just grab a coffee.”

She winked, then turned and sauntered out of CCPD.

Barry turned slowly to August. “Not cool, dude.”

August grinned. “What? Come on! She’s totally into you. She only ever comes by when you’re here.”

Barry shook his head, already heading upstairs. “Don’t have time for that.”



“Boring!” August called after him trying to get Barry to change his mind by peer pressure.

Barry, however, just kept walking, trying to ignore the smirk on August’s face knowing he had just been put in a situation he had no time for.

Later that night, the hum of computers in the CCPD Crime Lab faded as monitors flicked off, one by one. Lab techs gathered their belongings, stretching from hours of sitting. Conversations were hushed, the usual end-of-day small talk filling the space as everyone prepared to leave.

James Forrest leaned toward Patty Spivot, his voice barely above a whisper. “Patty, he’s not gonna come.”

Patty glanced toward the far end of the room, where Barry Allen remained seated, eyes locked on his screen. She sighed but squared her shoulders. “I gotta try.” She walked over to Barry’s desk, stopping just beside him. “Hey, Barry. A couple of us are going out for drinks tonight. Would you like to come?”

Barry hummed in response, fingers still tapping at his keyboard. He glanced up, blinking as if he had just realized someone was speaking to him. “Sorry, what was that, Patty?”

Patty forced a small smile. “Never mind. I just wondered if you wanted to come grab drinks with us.”

Barry glanced at the stack of files in front of him, then back at her. “Sorry, Patty. Not tonight. I’ve still got too much to do.”

Her smile faltered for just a second. “Oh... okay, Barry. Well, goodnight.”

“Goodnight, Patty.”

She lingered for a moment, as if waiting for him to change his mind. But when it became clear he wouldn’t, she turned and walked away, her footsteps fading into the quiet as the crime lab emptied.

Alone now, Barry reached for the evidence box on his desk. He flipped open the lid and pulled out an old file. Inside, nestled among crime scene photos and forensic reports, was a single piece of paper— A Certificate of Achievement.

His name was written neatly in the center, an acknowledgment of something he’d once been proud of. But it wasn’t the words that held his attention. It was the bloodstain in the corner.

## **11 Years Ago**

The sun had long since dipped below the horizon as young Barry Allen walked along the sidewalk, his feet practically bouncing with excitement. In his hands, he held the Certificate of Achievement he had just received from school for getting the best grades in the class. He couldn't wait to show his parents. As he rounded the last corner toward home, his steps faltered. Something was wrong.

Flashing red and blue lights bathed the street in a chaotic glow. Police officers crowded the front lawn of his house, their radios crackling with static and hurried voices.

Barry's heart pounded.

Then he saw his father.

Henry Allen stood in the middle of it all, his arms locked behind his back, handcuffs biting into his wrists. Two officers flanked him, guiding him toward the waiting squad car. His voice rang out, desperate and raw. "I didn't do this! I'm a doctor! WHY WOULD I DO THIS? You have to believe me!"

Barry barely registered the voices of neighbors whispering around him. He ran. Under the police tape, through the open front door. He stopped cold.

His mother lay motionless on the floor, a pool of blood seeping beneath her. Barry couldn't move. Couldn't breathe. His knees hit the hardwood, but he didn't feel it. The Certificate of Achievement slipped from his fingers, fluttering downward, slow as a feather.

It landed in the blood. The corner darkened, absorbing the stain.

But Barry didn't blink, he didn't look away. The voices around him faded, the world shrinking to the sight before him. Everything he had ever known had just been shattered in an instant.

## Present Day

The dim glow of fluorescent lights cast long shadows across the chemical storage room as Barry Allen sat hunched over his desk, the weight of the past pressing heavily on his shoulders. He set down the blood-stained Certificate of Achievement, exhaling sharply before pulling out his phone.

With practiced ease, he dialed a number and placed the call on speaker, his hands already rifling through old files spread out before him.

A robotic voice filled the quiet room: *"Thank you for calling Fallville Penitentiary. Please say the name of the inmate you are trying to reach. In the case the inmate you are trying to call*



*has no cell privileges, you will be directed to a live representative who will give you your options. Please say the name after the beep.*" A soft beep followed.

"Henry Allen."

There was a pause, then: *"Please hold. Note that calling privileges end at 6:00 PM. Current time: 5:45 PM."* A low, tinny version of hold music crackled through the speaker as Barry waited for his father to pick up the phone. He could imagine him in his orange prison jumper waiting for his call, the only thing that he got every day.

"Barry?"

Barry straightened at the sound of his father's voice. "Hey, Dad. I wanted to call and tell you that I finally got Mom's case file. I'm gonna finally be able to prove your innocence."

For a moment, there was only silence. Then, Henry sighed. "Barry, I thought we talked about this. I told you not to do that." His voice was firm but weary. "You've got a new life in Central City. You've gotta let go of me—and the trauma of what happened to your mom."

Barry shook his head, even though his father couldn't see. "No, I can't do that. Not when you're spending your life in prison for something you didn't do."

Henry hesitated before speaking again, his voice rough with something unspoken. "Barry..." he coughed. "You can't let this control your life. When you went off to university, I was so excited that you were doing something with your future. That you weren't just staying here in Fallville, trapped by the past." Henry coughed again. "But then Darryl told me you were studying forensics to prove my innocence. And I was sad, Barry. I love how hopeful you are—that you think you can solve this. That's something your mother always loved about you. She thought your optimism was your best trait. And I agree. But you've gotta let me go. Go live your life."

Barry clenched his jaw. "I know how you feel about this, Dad. And you're not gonna change my mind. And I'm not gonna change yours." He paused, frowning. "But on another note—you sound sick. Are you okay?"

Henry chuckled lightly, though it was followed by another rough cough. "Yeah, I'm fine. Just a stubborn cold." He coughed again before adding, "I'm a doctor, remember? Even if I haven't practiced in eleven years. I know not to be worried about the common cold."

Barry wasn't entirely convinced, but he let it go for now. "Okay, Dad. If you're sure. Well, I'm gonna get started on this. I'll let you know if I find anything of note. I love you."

Henry's voice softened. "Sounds good, son. But remember what I said, not everything has to be about me. Do something with your life, Barry. You can achieve anything you set your mind to. Love—" The line went dead.

Barry's phone buzzed once, displaying the automated message: *"Your time is up. Thank you for calling Fallville Penitentiary. Calling privileges begin again at 8:30 AM."* He sighed, setting the phone down. The weight in his chest hadn't lifted—it never did after these calls. But there was work to do.

Barry reached for the case files, flipping through crime scene reports, evidence logs, and statements. He pinned pages to the corkboard in front of him, connecting them with strands of red string, tracing patterns, searching for something, anything that had been missed all those years ago.

The sky outside darkened, streetlights flickering to life, but Barry didn't move from his spot. He studied the board, frustration gnawing at him. "What am I missing?" he muttered. "What's here that wasn't caught eleven years ago?"

Leaning back against the metal racks of chemicals, he exhaled deeply. His father's words echoed in his mind.

"Do something with your life, Barry."

His gaze drifted to his phone, then to the small business card resting beside it. Iris West. He hesitated only for a second before typing out a message. "Late-night snack?" He stared at the screen, finger hovering over the send button.

...

Patty Spivot and August Heart stepped into the darkened CCPD Crime Lab, flipping on the overhead lights. The space was silent, the glow of monitors long extinguished.

August frowned. "That's weird. I was sure Barry would still be here."

Patty sighed. "Oh well, I guess we tried."

August shot her a knowing look. "Oh no, you're not getting out that easily. Just because you drunk-shared your feelings for Barry doesn't make them any less real." He crossed his arms, grinning. "I'm a man of action, Patty. I believe in just going for it. Consequences be damned."

Patty groaned but shook her head, smiling despite herself. "You're right. He might be in the chemical storage room—he works in there sometimes when he wants space." She squared her shoulders. "So, I'm going in there, and I'm just gonna tell him how I feel."

August beamed. "Oh yeah! You go, girl!"

Patty took a deep breath and turned toward the chemical storage room. She had barely taken a step before—

CRASH!

A deafening explosion shook the building. Patty's heart was lounded. She ran towards the sound hoping desperately that Barry was ok.

## **Moments Earlier**

Barry Allen stared down at his phone, thumb hovering over the send button. "Late-night snack?" It wasn't much. Just a simple text.

But after a moment's hesitation, he sighed and deleted it.

Before he could dwell on it, muffled voices drifted in from outside. He couldn't make out what was being said, but the tones were familiar. Patty and August. Barry shook his head with a small smirk, slipping his phone into his pocket. He turned toward the door.

And then—everything slowed.

A blinding lightning bolt tore through the window, shattering the glass. Barry barely had time to react before it collided with his chest.

The impact was like an explosion. Energy surged through his body, his nerves igniting in white-hot pain. The force threw him backward, slamming him into the racks of volatile chemicals.

Glass shattered. Liquid spilled. The air filled with the acrid stench of burning ozone. Barry gasped, his body convulsing as arcs of electricity danced over his skin. His vision blurred. The edges of his consciousness flickered. The last thing he saw before the world faded to black.

August Heart, throwing the door open. "Patty, call 911!" he shouted.

Then, everything went dark, and Barry slipped into unconsciousness.

# Chapter Two

Darkness.

Then lightning.

Flashes of images burn through Barry Allen's mind. His mother's warm smile, her voice calling him brave. His father, pleading with him to live his life.

Then the blood.

His mother's lifeless form on the floor. His father in handcuffs, shouting his innocence.

Barry can see it all in this tormented vision that he can't wake up from, the story of his life flashing like a movie. Lighting crackles across his vision separating the memories as he tries to desperately get away from a prison that felt like eternity.

...

The world came back slowly—first in the rhythmic beeping of monitors, then in the sterile scent of antiseptic. Barry's eyes fluttered open. The ceiling above him was unfamiliar, the weight of IV lines and feeding tubes pinning him down.

A doctor rushed into the room, checking his vitals. "Mr. Allen, you've been in a coma for three months. Welcome back."

Barry's heart pounded. "Three months?" He swallowed hard. "What happened?"

The doctor adjusted the monitors. "Your friends, Ms. Spivot and Mr. Heart, found you collapsed in the chemical storage room. We believe you were struck by lightning, which threw you into a rack of chemicals."

Barry exhaled, trying to process it. "So... is that what put me in the coma?"

"We believe the lightning caused it, but over the past three months, we've seen no lingering effects from the chemicals."

Barry hesitated. "So... am I good to go?"

The doctor smiled. "Yes, we can start the discharge papers now. I would suggest going to get something to eat."

The air was crisp as Barry walked the bustling streets of Central City. Everything felt too fast—too loud. He hadn't set foot outside in months, and yet here he was, breathing it all in like nothing had changed.

Spotting a familiar restaurant, Barry made a beeline for Big Belly Burger.

Once inside Barry stepped up to the counter, scanning the menu. "I'll have the Belly Buster, a side of fries, and a Chocorrific milkshake."

The cashier punched in the order. "That'll be \$4.50."

Barry fished the bills from his wallet, exchanged cash for a number, and moved toward a table. As he waited, a tray of food slipped from a nearby server's hands.

Barry's eyes widened. The tray fell but in slow motion. Plates tumbled, gravity dragging them down at an unnatural pace. The moment stretched out, elongated, like time itself was bending. Then...

"Barry?"

His focus snapped back. The tray crashed to the floor, and everything was normal again. Barry turned to find Iris West standing nearby, coffee in hand, looking at him with concern.

"Iris?" He blinked. "How are you?"

Iris scoffed. "How am I? How are you? I was waiting for you to text or call, but you disappeared. So, I popped into the precinct, and August told me you were in the hospital."

Barry exhaled. "Yeah... he probably knows more about it than I do." He rubbed the back of his neck. "I just remember the room going black. They just discharged me this morning." A worker arrived with his food, setting the tray down.

"Thanks," Barry said before turning back to Iris. "I just... needed something that didn't come out of an IV bag, you know?"

Iris smiled. "Yeah, I get that." She studied him for a moment. "So, back to work? Or... what's next?"

Barry poking at his fries. "I think I'm gonna take some personal days. Get back up to 100%."

Iris reached into her bag, pulling out a card. "I have a feeling you lost my old one."

Barry chuckled. "Yeah, apparently my phone got fried along with me."

Iris smirked. "Lightning bolts tend to do that." She winked. "If you have time while you're recuperating, give me a call. I make a mean chicken soup."

Barry smiled. "Thanks, Iris. That means a lot."

"Bye, Barry."

"Bye, Iris."

She gave him one last look before heading up to the counter to order and go off to work on an article. Barry tried not to stare as she opened her laptop and started to type. She was just so beautiful. Eventually, she got her food and left waving at Barry as she did. Barry couldn't believe his luck that she would be interested in him.

As Barry sipped his milkshake, he decided that he needed to go visit CCPD. He stood up from his table and started walking.

As Barry entered the Crime Lab, applause erupted, "Welcome back, Barry."

Barry blinked in surprise. "Wow. How did you all know I was back?"

A voice behind him laughed. "Oh, I may have had something to do with that."

Barry turned to see August Heart grinning. Barry's smile faltered. "August! I hear you... saved my life."

The two hugged as the lab techs returned to their work.

August exhaled. "I hope I don't end it now, though."

Barry frowned. "What?"

August hesitated. "I'm transferring out of Central City."

Barry's chest tightened. "What? Why?"

August sighed. "It's been too hard for me since my brother died. And when you were in the coma, I realized... there's nothing left for me here."

Barry's voice softened. "But I'm awake now."

"Sorry, man." August shook his head. "I gotta go my own way."

Barry sighed. "Well... good luck to you. You'll be missed."

They hugged again, and then August was gone.

Barry stood near his desk, thinking about August leaving and how that would change things when Captain David Singh approached, hands in his pockets.

“Barry, I’m guessing you’ll need a few days before you’re back fully.”

Barry nodded. “Yeah, that’s why I came in. Wanted to tell you in person that I’m finally gonna use some of my personal days.”

Singh raised an eyebrow. “Well, you’ve got plenty saved up.” He smirked. “This is the first time you’ve ever taken a day off.”

Barry chuckled softly. “Guess I was overdue.”

Singh gave a small nod. “Enjoy it.” Then, without another word, he turned and disappeared into his office.

As soon as he was gone, Patty Spivot appeared beside Barry. “Hey, Barry.”

Barry turned, offering a tired but genuine smile. “Patty, how are you?”

She hesitated before answering. “I’ve been better.” Without warning, she punched his arm, lightly, but enough to make her point. “Don’t worry us like that again, okay?”

Barry smirked, rubbing his arm. “Oh, I don’t plan on it.”

Patty exhaled, nodding. “Good. Good. Well, I gotta get back to work.”

Barry hesitated before stepping forward and pulling her into a quick hug. As he did, he leaned in, whispering, “You know, with me gone, you’re the best CSI here.”

Patty pulled back, giving him a knowing look. “Oh, Barry. You know I’m better than you.”

Barry laughed. “Yeah, I guess you could say that.”

She smiled before stepping away. “Alright. Bye, Barry.”

“Bye, Patty.”

As she returned to her desk, Barry took a final glance at the crime lab, then turned and walked out, the weight of the day still pressing on his shoulders.

...

Barry stepped inside his apartment, inhaling deeply. It smelled stale. Three months of emptiness clung to the air. With a sigh, he threw open the fridge, grimacing at the expired contents before cleaning up the mess.

When he finally glanced at the clock, he froze. He had cleaned the entire apartment in just a few minutes.



“What is going on with me?”

His gaze flicked toward a framed photo of his dad. Reaching for his home phone, he dialed the number for Fallville Penitentiary.

*“Thank you for calling Fallville Penitentiary. Please say the name of the inmate you are trying to reach.”* A soft beep.

“Henry Allen.”

Barry waited on the line, fingers tapping waiting as he always did while the prison system routed his call the correct way. However, as he waited, he felt that this was a longer wait than usual. He pressed the phone tightly against his ear, fingers gripping the device with a nervous energy.

The automated voice droned through the speaker: *“That name does not register in our system. If you would like to speak to a representative, please press one.”*

A chill ran through Barry’s spine. He quickly pressed one, his heartbeat hammering.

After a brief pause, a human voice crackled through the line. “Hello, what can I help you with?”

Barry swallowed. “Hi, I’m looking for an inmate. Henry Allen.”

There was silence for a moment. Then the woman on the other line spoke, “I don’t have anyone here by that name.”

Barry sat up straighter, his grip on the phone tightening. “Was he released?” His voice wavered slightly. “Henry is my dad. Can you tell me anything?”

Another pause. The worker’s tone softened. “You’re Barry, then, I take it?”

Barry’s breath hitched. “Yes. Barry Allen. Henry was my father.”

The voice on the other end sighed. “I’m sorry to tell you this, Mr. Allen. We all loved Henry. He was our favorite here. None of us ever believed he was guilty of what they charged him with.”

Barry’s stomach clenched. The worker’s next words hit him like a freight train.

“But sadly, he succumbed to an illness he contracted. He didn’t inform any of the nurses... and he passed in his sleep.”

The air in the room suddenly felt too heavy. Barry’s mouth went dry. His voice was barely a whisper. “My dad is... dead?” The words felt impossible.

“Yes, Mr. Allen. I’m so sorry. May I ask... where have you been? We tried reaching you.”

Barry’s body stiffened. His hands trembled as he inhaled shakily. “I was... I was struck by lightning three months ago.” His voice cracked. “I’ve been in a coma. I just woke up.”

The worker sucked in a sharp breath. “Oh... that’s terrible. I’m so, so sorry.”

Barry barely heard them. His mind was already spiraling. His father was gone. Just like that. “Where was he buried?” Barry managed to choke out.

“Near your mother.” The worker hesitated. “All of us at the prison chipped in for the funeral. It was a beautiful service.”

Barry’s hand shook violently—and then, suddenly, his fingers blurred. The phone slipped through his grasp, falling straight through his hand. It hit the table with a dull thud, the receiver dangling from its cord. Barry’s entire body vibrated.

The voice on the other end called out, faint and distant. “Mr. Allen? Mr. Allen, are you still there?”

Barry squeezed his eyes shut, forcing down the burning in his throat. His fists clenched. He had to go. Without another word, he slammed the receiver down, cutting off the call. His breath was ragged. His vision blurred. His father was gone. And he hadn’t even been there.

Before he even realized he was running.

Lightning crackled around him, the city blurring into streaks of light. In a heartbeat, he was outside the Fallville Cemetery. The place etched into his memory from the times his adoptive father Darryl would take him to his mother’s grave and now he was visiting his father.

Barry tried to before making it to the cemetery instead he fell, tumbling across the gravel, skidding to a stop against the chain-link fence. Pain flared through his ribs as he lay there for a moment, catching his breath.

“Ow.” Barry groaned, pushing himself up and clutching his side. His clothes were torn, dirt clinging to his skin, but miraculously he wasn’t bleeding.

He looked up and saw the sign above the gate which read: FALLVILLE CEMETERY.

His breath hitched. “Am I really in Fallville?” But he knew the answer. He was here.

His eyes swept across the cemetery, searching. And then, at the top of a small hill, he saw them, his parents' graves. Barry moved toward them slowly, for once not rushing. When he reached them, he exhaled shakily.

"Hi, Mom," he whispered. His voice cracked. "So... you got Dad to come join you, huh?" Tears slipped down his cheeks, unbidden. "I was just a kid at your funeral. And I was in a coma for Dad's."

He turned to his father's grave. "You stubborn man... you should have let them check you out." He clenched his fists. "I knew you were sick, but you couldn't admit it was more than a cold. You weren't supposed to die in prison, Dad." Barry says sinking to his knees before the graves.

"I was going to get you out." His voice broken with the pain. "We were going to catch up on everything we missed." His fingers traced the cold stone, his mind swimming in memories.

"You know... that coma I was in? It was caused by a lightning bolt. The doctors say I'm fine, but..." He exhaled. "I don't think I am. Something's changed." He wiped his eyes, composing himself. "I can move fast. Faster than anything I've ever seen. I ran here, Dad. From Central City. In minutes." The words felt unreal, even as he said them.

So, he closed his eyes and tried to feel what his parents would say to him. And then like a distant memory. their voices came to him.

His father's voice, "Your mom always loved your optimism. Put it into something. Do something with your life."

His mother's voice, "You're my hero, Barry. You always know what's right. Never lose that."

Barry's eyes snapped open. Tears still glistened, but they had slowed. His mother's words and his father's belief in him. They had been telling him the answer all along. He rose to his feet.

"Okay. Okay." He exhaled. "I have to use these powers to help people." His jaw set with determination. "I'm going to make you guys proud." He stepped back, one last look at their graves. "I love you both."

And then he ran. The cemetery blurred behind him as lightning crackled at his heels.

# Chapter Three

Barry Allen sat at his desk, pen in hand, writing in a journal. *"Something strange is happening to me since my accident, he wrote. And it's up to me to figure it out."* He writes in his journal.

His eyes flicked to a sample of blood he had just drawn. With careful precision, he placed the slide under a microscope and adjusted the focus.

As he peered inside, he muttered to himself. "Looks normal...", but then Barry looks closer, and he sees it. Something was different. The building blocks of his very DNA shimmered with energy, a faint glow crackling beneath the surface of his cells.

Barry leaned back, his mind racing. "The energy has supercharged my cells. If I concentrate... I can speed up my entire body."

He held out his hand and focused. A faint hum filled the air as his fingers blurred, vibrating at an impossible speed. Then lightning crackled around him. The charge spread through his limbs, his whole body vibrating faster and faster.

Suddenly...

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

The smoke alarm shrieked.

Barry looked down. His shoes were on fire. "That's going to be a problem," he muttered rushing to the window. He flung it open, fanning out the smoke with his hands before it could trigger the sprinklers.

He grabbed his journal and quickly scribbled down: *"Shoes on fire. Friction problem."*

...

The horizon stretched endlessly before Barry as he stood at the edge of town, preparing to run. He stretched, shaking out his limbs.

A journal entry he had recorded before coming out here played through his mind. *"Super speed. The ability to run at speeds beyond normal human limits. Still unstable. Last occurrence was at my parents' grave—activation was uncontrolled. Further testing required to determine limits."*

Taking a deep breath, he launched forward. The world blurred. His pulse synced with the energy coursing through his veins.

“30... 50... 80 miles an hour in a heartbeat. 120 felt like a snail’s pace. 170, I was finally moving.” He thought as he moved across the plains. The wind roared past his ears, the landscape stretching into streaks of color. “I could finally let everything fly past me. Just be in the moment.”

Then, 220 miles per hour. Barry tried to slow down, and it did not go well. Barry stumbles, feet skidding, his body tumbling forward in a blur of limbs. He finally crashes into the dirt, rolling to a stop.

Groaning, he looked down at his smoking shoes. “Note: Find a way to stop.” He sighed, wiggling his bare toes through the burnt remains of his sneakers. “And find a solution to the friction problem.”

Back at his apartment, Barry sat at his computer, scrolling through scientific research papers. “There has to be something...”

Then, an article caught his eye. *WayneTech Develops Heat-Resistant Fabric for Firefighters*

His mind raced. “I could make that.” With newfound determination, he gathered materials, using the WayneTech research as a guide. Hours passed in a blur of trial and error, calculations, and fabric tests.

Finally, he held up the finished product. Yellow boots. The material was friction-proof, capable of withstanding the intense speeds he was beginning to reach. As he admired his work, his phone buzzed.

A text from Iris. “Coffee?”

Barry smiled. “Guess testing will have to wait.”

...

The scent of freshly brewed coffee filled CC Jitters as Barry Allen stepped inside. He spotted Iris West sitting at one of the tables near the window, waving him over with a warm smile.

“Barry! Good to see you!” she said as she stood.

He returned the smile, embracing her in a quick hug. “Hey, Iris. I’m doing okay, I’ve been better.” He sat across from her. “How about you?”

Iris sighed dramatically. “Oh, I’m good, but it’s been so slow, Barry.” She stirred her coffee absently. “No interesting assignments, no big stories. I wish something would happen in Central City.” She leaned in conspiratorially. “I mean, in Gotham, they’ve got this Bat-

vigilante, and over in Metropolis, Lois Lane is reporting on this Superman. But me? Do I get anything exciting?” She scoffed. “Nope. Just bland assignments.”

Barry raised an eyebrow. “Bat-vigilante? Superman?”

Iris’s eyes widened. “Oh yeah, you missed a lot while you were in that coma. There are real-life superheroes out there now.”

Barry exhaled. “The world changes when you’re unconscious, I guess.” He smirked. “What else is new? Been by CCPD lately?”

Iris chuckled. “Not much reason to now that my favorite CSI isn’t there to give me a statement.”

Barry, oblivious, shrugged. “There are other CSIs, you know. Forrest is knowledgeable, Patty would probably give you a statement. Heck, even Albert might, if you ask nicely, he loves hearing himself talk.”

Iris hesitated, eyeing him carefully. “Barry... are you and Patty... do you guys have a thing?”

Barry nearly choked on his drink. “Me and Patty? No way. She’s like a sister to me. We’re just good friends.”

Iris hummed, as if unconvinced. “Hmm. Well, she did visit you a lot in the hospital. I thought maybe there was something there.”

Barry frowned. “How do you know she was there a lot?”

Iris’s cheeks reddened slightly. “I may have been there a few times myself...”

Before Barry could respond, screams erupted from across the street. Iris and Barry snap their heads toward the Central City Bank, where people are rushing out, panic-stricken.

“What was that?” Iris muttered.

Barry shot to his feet. “Stay here. I’m gonna check it out.”

“Is that safe?” she asked, turning back but Barry was already gone.

Inside, Barry ducked behind a wall, scanning the scene. Two masked robbers stood inside the vault, stuffing bags with cash. Two more held guns, keeping the terrified patrons at bay.

One of them, a jittery man gripping his weapon too tightly, barked, “Hey! Shut up! Quiet!!”

Barry exhaled. Then he moved. In the span of a heartbeat, he ran at super speed, closing the distance between him and the gunmen. With precise strikes, he punched them both, causing them to stumble backward. At the same time, he yanked down their pants,

sending them crashing to the floor. Before they could react, he snatched their weapons and placed them into the hands of the bank security officers. And then, just as fast, he ducked back behind the wall.

One of the stunned crooks rubbed his jaw. “Huh?”

The other blinked in confusion. “What?”

They turned only to see the security guards now armed with their own guns. Panic set in. They tried to run but tripped on their own pants.

Barry chuckled quietly. Then, shifting his attention to the two inside the vault, he rushed in, swiped their guns, and slammed the heavy door shut behind them.

A muffled thud followed by frantic shouting came from inside. “Hey! The door’s locked! We can’t get out!”, one of the crooks shouted. “And where are our guns?!”

“You idiot, we’re trapped now!”, the other crook inside said.

Barry smirked, watching from a distance knowing that he helped stop a bank robbery.

...

Patrons flooded out, some shaken, others muttering about what had happened inside. Iris wasted no time, pulling out her recorder and approaching a woman leaving the scene. “Ma’am, I’m with Picture News. Could you tell me what happened in there?”

The woman, still visibly rattled, shook her head. “There were these guys, all holding us at gunpoint.” She gestured toward the bank. “We were trapped... and then suddenly, the crooks had their pants down, and the security guards had their guns.” She blinked. “And then the vault shut on the others.”

Iris furrowed her brow. “And you didn’t see anyone do this?”

The woman shook her head again.

“No. It all happened in a flash. Blink and you miss it.”

Iris’s lips parted slightly as realization hit her.

“Thank you, ma’am.”

Barry strolls up behind Iris, feigning innocence and trying to act like he had nothing to hide.

“Oh man, I’m glad the cops got here. I couldn’t get close enough.” He sighed. “I went back to Jitters, and you weren’t there.”



Iris turned to him, arms crossed. "I wasn't just gonna sit there when there was a story unfolding outside." She glanced back at the bank. "But... it was over so fast."

Barry's gaze drifts to his feet as she talks. His shoes were still smoking slightly.

"Seems like Central City might have its own guardian angel after all."

Barry smiles, glad he was able to give Iris something.

As they walked away from the scene, he stole one last glance back at the bank, his mind racing. Maybe Iris had gotten her wish. Maybe Central City had found its hero.

# Epilogue

Inside a dimly lit cell, the two crooks from the bank robbery sat on their bunks, frustration thick in the air. One of them, still fuming, leaned forward, his fingers laced together.

“I can’t figure it out,” he muttered. “I had it planned to the last detail.”

The other, more resigned, chuckled bitterly. “Oh, give it up. Even the great Leonard Snart can make a mistake.”

The first crook’s eyes darkened. “You don’t understand.” He shook his head. “No one should have been able to stop us. Not the cops, not security. No one. But someone did.” He clenched his fists. “Someone fast. And I’m going to find them... and make them pay.”

# *The* FLASH

## MIRROR-REFLECTION



# Chapter One

The store owner let out a tired sigh as he turned off the last set of lights, ready to close up for the night. The shop had been quiet that evening and quiet was not good for business.

On his way out, he passed the display cases, giving them a casual glance. The jewelry inside sparkled under the dim light, untouched. Satisfied, he turned toward the door, but something caught his eye. He froze, one of the cases, perfectly intact, was now missing a single necklace.

His heartbeat quickened, had he miscounted earlier? He leaned in closer, peering into the reflective glass, and then the glass shimmered.

A distorted reflection stared back at him, shifting and twisting in unnatural waves.

The store owner gasped, stumbling backward. His own image warped, the reflection stretching out of the case toward him. Before he could scream, the glass rippled like water, and an invisible force yanked him inside. His final, muffled cry was swallowed by the silent hum of the store.

The jewelry cases remained intact. The shop was empty. The door was locked and the night passed without a sound.

The next morning, the scene was a chaos of flashing lights and police tape. Officers moved in and out of the taped-off storefront, talking in hushed tones. A small crowd had gathered outside. Standing among them, Patty Spivot crossed her arms as she surveyed the scene.

She turned to the nearest officer. "Has anyone seen Allen?"

Before the cop could answer...

"Sorry! Sorry! I'm here!" Barry Allen jogged up behind her, out of breath. He barely stopped before ducking under the tape to stand beside her. "What happened?" he asked, catching his breath.

Patty motioned toward the store as they walked inside.

Barry stepped inside, his sharp eyes scanning the display cases. Every single case was empty. Not a single piece of jewelry remained and yet... there was no sign of a break-in.

He frowned. "None of the cases are broken..."

Patty nodded. "It's a weird one, Barry." She gestured toward the cases again. "No shattered glass. No tampering. The locks weren't forced. And the security system never went off."

“Security tape?” Barry asked.

“Haven’t got it yet.” Patty says.

Barry’s brow furrowed. “So why are we involved?”

Patty hesitated. “The morning shift employee came in to open up—found everything missing. But that’s not all.”

Barry glanced at her. “What else?”

Patty exhaled. “She couldn’t find her boss.”

Barry’s expression darkened. “The owner?”

Patty nodded. “Detectives think he stole the jewelry and ran.”

Barry frowned, “In an investigation, assumptions but good people away for a long time.” He said pulling on a pair of gloves.

Kneeling down, he pressed his fingers to the floor, focusing. Something wasn’t right. Nothing was ever evidence-less sometimes you just had to look for things you wouldn’t consider help, which is how he saw it.

A footprint. But not just any footprint. The weight distribution was wrong. As if the man had been pulled off his feet, not walked off with jewelry.

Barry’s gaze sharpened. “He didn’t steal the jewelry.”

Patty’s eyes narrowed. “Then what happened?”

Barry’s voice was calm but firm. “Let’s check the security footage. If I’m right... we’ll see him get pulled off his feet.” His jaw clenched as Patty went to go secure the video from the detectives.

Patty came back with a tablet and a worried look. “You’re right about him being missing.” She turned the screen toward Barry.

His stomach dropped.

“But you’re gonna want to see this.”

Barry analyzed the video on the tablet, his eyes locked on the grainy footage playing back before him. The store owner stood over a jewelry case, inspecting its contents. Then—movement. A pair of gloved hands reached up from inside the glass. Barry froze, his heart skipping a beat. The hands latched onto the owner’s arms, yanking him downward. The man vanished into the case, swallowed by the reflection without a sound.

Then, the hands reappeared, creeping back over the glittering jewelry—one by one, the valuables sank into the glass, vanishing as if they had never existed.

Barry hit pause, staring at the frame in disbelief. “Wait... were those hands?” His voice was barely above a whisper. He rewound the tape, slowing it down frame by frame.

The hands emerged again, more visible this time—green gloves reaching from the glass, pulling the jewelry into its depths.

Barry exhaled. “So, what we have here is a mystery... how did these hands get into the case?”

Leaving the screen frozen on the eerie image, he moved toward the display case, signaling for help to lift the glass covering. He turned it over in his hands, running his fingers across the surface, checking for abnormalities. It was just glass. Perfectly ordinary glass.

Patty crossed her arms, watching him work. “So now we have a missing person case and a mystery robbery. Great.”

Before Barry could respond, a familiar voice cut in. “What do we have here?” Iris West had effortlessly slipped under the police tape, flashing a confident smile as she approached.

Barry let out a sigh. “Iris, come on. You know the rules. You can’t be here during an open investigation.”

Iris gave him a playful look. “Oh, come on, Barry. Maybe you could just... give me something?”

Patty, who had been watching the exchange closely, felt a sudden twinge of jealousy. Her expression hardened. “Ms. West, I’m going to have to escort you from the scene.”

Iris blinked, amused. “Oh, no one calls me Ms. West. It’s just Iris.”

Patty’s tone didn’t waver. “Ms. West.” Firm. Unyielding. Before Iris could protest further, Patty grabbed her by the arm, attempting to pull her away from the scene.

Barry immediately stepped in. “Oh, come on, Patty. Iris will leave. You don’t have to force her.”

He walked over to Iris, lowering his voice. “Come on. I’ll walk you out.”

As soon as they stepped past the police tape, Iris smirked. “So... nothing is going on with you and Patty, huh?” She raised an eyebrow. “Because I could cut that tension with a knife.”

Barry blushed, caught off guard. “Iris, I told you, there’s nothing between Patty and me.” He rubbed the back of his neck. “I’m sure she just wanted to preserve the crime scene. She’s strict about that stuff.”

Iris hummed, unconvinced, but let it slide.

They had walked a fair distance away from the scene now, the flashing police lights fading behind them.

She turned to him, her voice softer this time. “In other terms—how are you doing? Back at work already?”

Barry shrugged. “Yeah. I was getting bored just sitting around. Figured I needed to get my hands busy.”

Iris shook her head, laughing. “Oh, Barry. You should’ve called me—we could’ve had a great time.”

Barry smirked. “I’ll keep that in mind. Coffee later?”

Iris grinned. “I’d love that.” With that, she walked off, disappearing into the city crowd.

Barry took a deep breath, glancing back toward the crime scene. Something about this case wasn’t right. He turned on his heel and headed back inside. Once he got back inside, Patty was waving a spectrometer over the glass, where they saw the hands on the security camera.

“Barry, come check this out.” Patty said, handing the device to Barry. “I am some weird readings off of this.”

Barry takes the device from Patty and analyzes the readings. At first glance, the glass appears chemically inert and structurally unchanged. However, the spectral analysis reveals molecular alterations, suggesting a latent phase-transition capability. The material exhibits properties indicative of a metastable state, implying it can shift to a more adaptable configuration under specific conditions. The key question remains though what external stimulus is required to trigger the transformation, Barry wondered to himself.

“Something was able to activate a molecular alteration. That caused the glass to act like a door instead of a window. The phrase you make better door than window actually applies here.” Barry tells Patty handing the spectrometer back to her.

“Oh, the dad jokes, Barry your killing me.” Patty says chuckling putting the device away into her satchel. “But what does that tell us, I mean how does this help us catch the person that did this?”



“The tech needed to do this is very highly and I am not 100 percent convinced it exists yet, but we need to have the detectives compile a list of tech break-ins that have occurred in the last few weeks. We need to identify if this was the thief’s first time or if there were attempts in the past where he may have been more sloppy. I will take this to the lab.” Barry takes a laser cutter from his bag and cuts a piece of glass from the countertop.

“Okay, sounds good. I will let the detectives know what we are looking for some kind of *‘Mirror Master’*, good work Barry,” Patty says as she walks away.

“Just doing my job” he mutters to himself. He looks over the piece of glass considering the ramifications, Central City might have its first full on super villain here. It’s only fitting that Barry is the one to help take him down as the Speed. No um, the Lighting Runner. Ugh, no. Maybe the Streak. Well, he hadn’t come up with a good name yet, but it seems that heroes don’t give themselves names. The press does that for you.

## Chapter Two

Sam Scudder sat in his abandoned mirror factory admiring all of the jewels and wealth that he had acquired since his accident. Accident being a general term to describe an event that changed the course of his life forever and he could remember it just like it was yesterday.

### Weeks Earlier

He had always been a low-level crook, one that always took what he could and tried not to get too big for his britches. He knew what happened to guys who got too big and started challenging people for control. He kept that as rule, reflect what others are doing and you’ll never put yourself in trouble.

That was all good and dandy until his go with the flow attitude led him to accrue some massive debt with all the wrong people. He owed them a lot of money, and they wanted it all back. Scudder didn’t know what to do, there was no way with the small jobs he pulled he could make enough, and he certainly wasn’t going to try and rob a bank. He had heard about what happened to those guys who tried to rob that bank and suddenly they had their pants down and cops surrounding them.

So, he decided to pull something big but unexpected, robbing a tech firm. He figured that if he went during the night and didn’t cause a scene than the mysterious figure that had been stopping crimes wouldn’t be aware of it. That’s how he set his eyes onto Mercury Labs, an up-and-coming tech conglomerate in Central City. He figured they would be less tight with their security than other places like Star Labs or Kord Tech.

That night, he broke into Mercury Labs, he didn't care what he got as long as it looked fancy and expensive. As he made his way up to the floor, he passed a few security guards patrolling the floors. No worries, he just needed to stay hidden until they passed. When they did, he made his way to the top floors. He saw a door marked project storage, and it only had a small keypad for entry. He bypassed the security code on the door and made his way. There were so many boxes that lined up on the shelves, the problem was what was valuable in here.

He opened one of the boxes and in it he saw a gray device shaped like a gun, but at the end of it was an apparatus that looked like four mirrors coming from the center that looked like a box opening. He took it out and felt the heft in his hand, it was slightly heavy, and he could see the several mechanism on it to adjust the device. He pointed the gun away from himself and pulled the trigger.

Nothing happened.

He started to mess with the buttons on the side and that's when he heard the door swing open. Standing there was a security guard, with a gun trained on him.

"What are you doing here?" the guard shouted. "Get over here." The guard pulled some handcuffs out of his pocket and walked over to Scudder.

Scudder backed away from the guard trying to develop an exit strategy. The guard was blocking the only entrance, and the storage facility had a central hallway that didn't allow him to get around the guard. He also didn't have any weapons on him because he didn't want them to slow him down. But then he realized he had the gun he pulled out of the case still in his hand.

"Get back here!" The guard said blocking him in even further.

Scudder closed his eyes, pointed the gun at the guard and pulled the trigger. He saw a bright flash through his eyelids and then when he opened them everything was different.

He was no longer in the storage facility, instead he was in a dark place with several reflective surfaces floating around him. In front of him was a round circle where he could see a distorted reflection of the security guard, looking around the storage room. On his right he could see a rectangular reflection, on one side of it he could see the hall where he had entered into the facility and on the other, he could see a different angle of the security guard still searching for him, until the guard eventually gave up. As he left the room, his face grew in size until it was almost filling the hole space.

Scudder gasped, he realized what this was, it was the glass window that looked into the storage room, and the round circle must be the round mirror that shows the aisles for security purposes. So how he was on the other side of these reflective surface. He looked down and noticed the gun still in hands, it hummed, and the aperture glowed slightly. The gun somehow sent him into this mirror world.

A flood of panic set in, what if he was trapped here, slowing starving to death away from everything only able to see reflections of things but never have the real thing. He sank to his knees, dropping the gun as he did so. He closed his eyes shaking, the panic washing over him. He took a few deep breaths and opened his eyes again. He looked at the gun, it had flipped a switch when he dropped it and one of the mirrors was shimmering.

He took his hand and touched the mirror and felt he could place his hand into it, his hand felt the cool air in the hallway. He had somehow opened a portal out of here, excited to be free, he tried to stick his head through, but it was too big to make it through. He needed to find a mirror he could fit through.

He looked around him and he spotted the large windows of the outside of the building, but he was still more than 20 floors up. He had to figure out how to get down, he looked around him and found that there was a silver path winding from mirror to mirror. The path went up to the top floors, but it also went down to the ground level. He worked his way down to the windows on the ground level and after firing the gun at the reflection. He was able to step through and walk out of the building.

He was finally outside, and he had a plan, he was going to use this mirror gun to access valuables and make back his debt easily. Then, he was going to make a name for himself and not even this mystery hero could stop him.

## **Present Day**

Scudder shook himself from his memories as muffled screams echoed out. He walked over to a mirror covered by a tarp. He pulled off the tarp and looked at the man screaming from the mirror.

“Now now, Mr. Johnson, its not time for dinner yet. When you saw me at your jewelry shop, I knew I couldn’t let you spoil my fun. Now be quiet and you will be just fine.” Scudder tells him condescendingly.

“!!tuo em teL ?em ot siht gniod uoy era yhW” the man yells but the sound is distorted through the mirror.

“Oh hush,” Scudder throws the tarp back over the mirror muffling the sound. He was going to need to deal with him but first he set his eyes on his next prize. A high value auction house was showcasing a collection of rare gems, and he was going to take them all.

# Chapter Three

Barry sat in his lab looking over the analysis from the spectrometer. He knew that this criminal was using a device that put glass into a flux state. He wondered what other materials the device would work on, and from studying the glass he could tell that the glass had been altered so that the reflection of light was in flux. He surmised that this device could work on anything that had the ability to act as a reflective surface. Glass, metal, even water could be affected based off its ability to reflect images.

This “*Mirror Master*” was dangerous, and Barry had to stop him, but he couldn’t do that as Barry Allen CSI but as his secret identity, an identity he didn’t have a name for yet. But he had hobbled together a uniform to wear to protect his identity.

He had taken one of his old shirts from college at Sun City University and spray painted a white circle with a yellow lighting bolt cutting through it. Although he would be moving to fast for anyone to register his face, he constructed a pair of goggles to cover his eyes and earpieces to cover his ears. In the earpieces, he placed a short-wave radio that could pick up on police signals and also cut out the air sound of running at fast speeds. Of course, he had his yellow boots that he created from the research on friction proof material from WayneTech, that stopped him from burning up his shoes.

A news article popped up on his computer, he had set up an alert that updated him if anything relating to jewelry or expensive stones went public like museum displays or new stock in jewelry stores. The alert was for an auction house that was putting on display a collection of rare gems. Barry knew that this Mirror Master wouldn’t pass up the chance to steal these gems beneath everyone’s noses. It was up to him to stop him.

...

Barry ran into the auction house at super speed checking out the scene, he noticed a man standing over the case of gems. He was wearing a green helmet and his suit was like looking through an orange clear mannequin. He could see where the joints overlapped with each other and even though he was looking at him from he could see the shadow his gloves created on the front side of his arm.

At his side, his belt held a gray gun that had mirrors on the end of it. He touched a few buttons on the side of the gun and then reached his hands straight through the glass, not setting off any alarms or shattering the glass.

Before he could pull his hands out, Barry was on him in an instant. He threw a well-aimed punch meant to throw him off balance long enough for Barry to disable his tech and get him to the cops. But as his fist connected, the man shattered. He fell apart like glass, the pieces covering the floor in a tinkling sound. He couldn't believe this, had the mirror gun permanently altered this man's state as well, resulting in him becoming as fragile as glass.

Barry got his answers soon enough as a voice echoed behind him.

"Oh far to slow, for someone so fast." The voice said, taunting him.

Barry looked around and he couldn't see anyone, a quick search of the complex told him the same, that he was all alone here. No one was around. "Where are you?" Barry said hoping the man would reveal himself.

"Oh, that's the best part, I'm all around." The voice said as Barry suddenly felt a blast hit from behind.

He turned quickly but no one was behind just the glass cases, but the blasts continued to come at him from all angles and Barry knew that statistically no matter how fast he was one was bound to hit him eventually.

"You know I heard about you. The speedster. Rushing in to save those in need, stopping the criminals before they knew what hit them. I knew I needed to be better I couldn't stay a small-time crook anymore. I was going to be the one to take you down and then everyone would celebrate me."

"I suppose you don't know what happens if you count your eggs before they hatch." Barry said trying to taunt him into the light.

"You see that's funny thing about mirrors, they are great at reflecting what you think you should see. They are key to misdirection, because to be quite honest I could care less about the gems." The voice said.

While the voice spouted his rhetoric, Barry reached the side of the room. He hadn't noticed when he ran in but the collection room had glass walls to showcase the collection to everyone that walked by. He turned the thief back in when he heard him say that it was never about the jewels. As he did he felt a push from behind and he fell into the wall but instead of shattering it, he went through it.

Barry landed on a cold hard silver platform, in a place with thousands of objects, some were big and some were small. It seemed to stretch on forever and ever, but he couldn't let

that distract him. He picked himself back up and ran at the entrance he came through, at full speed he made contact with but he bounced right off crashing to the floor as an aftermath effect.

“Now what good would it do to trap you here, if you could get out that easily,” The man stood before him, a look of glee flashed across his face. “I call it the Mirrorworld. Do you like it? I hope you do because you’re gonna be spending a lot of time in here. Well, I’m off. I know I said this wasn’t about the gems but, well, now that I have you what’s the point in not taking them as a reward to myself.”

“I’m gonna get out and then I am gonna stop you.” Barry said handing clutching his side, certainly something was broken.

“Good luck with that speedy. These mirrors portals only activate at a particular frequency that only this gun can generate.” He waved the gun in my face and then as I lurched at him he stepped backwards melding with the mirror and disappearing from view.

The Mirror Master had trapped Barry here and he didn’t what to do. He tried pounding his fists on the mirror to no luck. Barry slumped down against the cold surface. He was trapped, how was he going to get out of here.

As he sat head in his hands, he heard a voice, “Oh no, he got you too.”

Barry looked up to see the owner of the jewelry store standing in front of the store. “He pulled me in here a few days ago. Manages to feed me but always in the cruelest ways. I’m sorry you’re trapped here with me. I wouldn’t wish this on my worst enemy.”

“You say he comes back to feed us?”

The man looks downtrodden as he speaks, “I know what your thinking and no we couldn’t rush him. He always drop the food in through a reflection to small for us to fit through. Yesterday, he sprinkled crumbs into a pocket mirror, and I had to collect them off the ground. Even if he does appear fully, the gun establishes a safety field when he is in here. It exacts as a tether that can instantly close a portal, based on proximity of others.”

“I don’t know if you’ve heard but I’m pretty fast. I could do it.” Barry says proudly trying to induce some optimism into the situation.

“Can you move faster than light, because that’s how fast the signal moves from the field to the gun and the gun to the portal,” the man says shaking his head.



“No, I can’t my top speed is only around 200 mph. The speed of light is approximately 670,616,629 mph. Way faster than I could ever dream of being. I can’t even break the sound barrier.” Barry says slumping back down to the ground.

“Well then, your stuck with me here then, sorry I’m not better company.” The mans says as he sits down on the ground as well.

Barry holds his head in his hands unsure of what to do, until he hears a screeching and garbled noise coming through his earpieces. “Wə hɒvə ɒ dʒəʊn ɒʃ ðə ɒʃtʃən l ɪəʊənt wə hɒvə ɒ dʒəʊn ɪn ɒʃ ðə ɒʃtʃən haʊzə.”

He looks over at the man slumped against the wall, “Hey sound can get in here but its all garbled. Why?”

“My best guess is its just the audio but mirrored. Something to do with how the mirrors transmit the sound.” He said closing his eyes again and leaning against the wall.

Audio could get in and that was just a frequency, but the mirror flipped it when it went through, but the Mirror Master did say that the gun activated the portals using a certain kind of frequency. He thought back on the times he had vibrated, usually always uncontrollably but he had been practicing. If he could match the vibration of the gun, he could trick the portal into opening. Last time he tried matching a frequency he caused an explosion. With nowhere for the force to go it would most certainly reverberate back into his own body. So, he just couldn’t blow up.

Barry placed his hands on the cool reflection that represented the glass wall on the other side. He closed his eyes and tried to feel the hum of the molecules. They were in an otherworldly place but everything was made up of atoms and they all had to vibrate. The key would be not to match the frequency of the glass, because that would only put him on the other side of the disk but keep him in this mirror world.

Instead, he had to match the frequency that the gun generated which put the reflection into a flux state. This would allow him to walk through just like Mirror Master did. As he closed his eyes, he could feel the lightning coursing through his veins. It was powerful and strong and it guided him as he modulated his frequency, up and down trying to find the right one.

After a few minutes he felt his hand fall through the mirror, he opened his eyes. He had successfully activated the mirror’s flux state. He looked at the man, his eyes closed in despair. “Hey lets go, I’m getting us out.”

The man despaired said, "I told there is no getting out only he can get...". The man stops mid-sentence as he looks up and sees the man in the goggles has his hand in the mirror. "How?" the man asks astounded.

"Science" Barry replies, "Now take my hand, we are getting out of here."

With that Barry took the man's hand and stepped through to the other side, safely exiting the mirror world.

## Chapter Four

Barry gets back to his apartment later that night and flops down onto the bed. He can't believe what he just did, he activated a portal using a frequency generated by his own speed that was nuts. But it was exhausting, and he needed some shut eye.

The next morning, Barry woke up to see a text from the lovely Iris West. He was ecstatic, she had actually texted him. The text read, "*Coffee?*"

Barry typed back a response, "I would love to".

Barry headed to Jitters to meet up with Iris and when he walked in he saw working away diligently at her computer. "Iris, you busy?" He asks her part teasing, part hoping he is not interrupting.

She looks up, a look of delight crossing her face. "Barry, good to see you. But no not really this is normal for me," she said pointing to the stacks of paper around her and the empty cups. "This just the life of a journalist. You thought you had it bad with paperwork."

"Usually, our paperwork is kept in folders and boxes, not like this." He says as he moves a stack off the chair next to him. "But you live a totally different world than me."

"Hopefully not too different, Barry." Iris says with a flirtatious wink.

Barry blushes, unable to compose his next sentence, "So, uh, um whatcha ya know. What are you doing?"

Iris chuckles as Barry stumbles over his words, "Oh Barry, never change. But as you asked, I've got two projects. One, I was assigned by my editor he wants me to dig deep into any connection we can make on these crimes." She looks straight at him, "Any chance for a comment?"

"Iris, you know I can't comment on a open investigation. If, I'm just here as a source I can leav..."

"Woah, stable those horses. I'm sorry, I promise no getting quotes when your not acting in an official capacity." Iris said, clearly embarrassed by her forwardness.

"It's alright, I like how direct you are, but I think this friendship will work much better if we decide to be friends first and sources second."

"I agree." Iris says nodding her head.

"So", Barry grabs a small muffin from the table, "you mentioned a second thing. What is that?"

"Oh, I am working on an article on this new hero in Central City."

"You mean the Zoomer?"

"That's a terrible name Barry, did you just come up with that?" She scoffs looking back at her computer screen.

"Yeah I did, but anyways I doubt he actually exists. I mean a man that can move at super speed, I mean come on. What's next Atlantis is real?" Barry says trying to lead suspicion away from himself.

"Come on, Barry. I have several eyewitness accounts saying that something whooshed in and stopped the bad guys. Those guys at the bank a few weeks ago didn't drop their own pants and trip themselves. Besides, it's not too far-fetched, Metropolis has a man that can literally fly and they say he's faster than a locomotive."

"Locomotive? What is this? The 30's? Maybe this Superman character is doing double duty?"

"You see I thought that too," Iris says grabbing a couple articles out of a pile. "But here Superman is stopping a crime at the same time, the hero of Central City is stopping one here. Also multiple witness accounts recall seeing yellow lightning flashing in front of their eyes before the thief's demise. A phenomenon never seen with Superman."

Although unsteady with Iris' closeness to learning about his secret identity, Barry resists pushing back against her. "Well, you got me convinced, The Woosher is real."

Iris rolls her eyes, "Barry all your names suck. Leave it to a professional."

"You want to be the one to name him?"

"Yeah, it would be a big moment for me and really put me up there with the greats like Lois Lane." Iris says finishing her coffee. "But what about you? Not asking for a comment just general question but how is work going?"

"Thank you, Iris. Um, work is good. We can't seem to get any pattern on this guy's M.O. or where he is going to hit next. He didn't leave much at the crime scene."

“Well, free of charge maybe I can help. While writing my article on this Mirror Master, I got access to some interesting footage from Mercury Labs. It shows a man breaking into their project storage, a security guard walks in to confront him, there is a white flash and then he disappears. The security guard looks around confused where he went before he checks the room one last time and leaves.

Barry pauses, he knows that face, “Wait do we have any info on him.”

“Yes,” Iris says pulling a paper from her stack, “it says here that the face in the tape matches a man by the name of Sam Scudder. Oh, Barry, Patty helped put this guy away.”

“What?” Barry leans over and glances at the paper, “She did?”

“Yeah, it says here that he was convicted of beating a woman with a mirror and she helped gather the evidence to guarantee his conviction.”

“That means that she might be in danger from an attack,” Barry stands up and then looks at Iris. “I’m so sorry, I really had fun here tonight but I gotta go.”

Iris rolls her eyes, “Well you owe me one. “

“I owe you a ton” Barry says as he leaves Jitters.

As Barry walks away from Jitters, he heads to CCPD where Patty will be on shift today. He needs to let her know what Iris found and that she may be in danger. He goes into the office and sees Patty at her desk.

“Hey, Barry. You, ok?” Patty says looking up from her desk. “You kinda came in here like the station was on fire.”

“Yeah, it’s just that I was talking with Iris...”

“Oh, Iris,” Patty says looking back down at her desk.

“Yeah, Iris. Anyways, she was looking at some security footage and she thinks that this robber using the mirrors is someone that you put away.” Barry tells her.

“Someone I put away? Who?”

“Sam Scudder.”

Patty gasps, “Scudder is this Mirror Master?”

“Yeah, and I think he might come for you.”

“Why? His M.O. has always been jewels and precious stones.”

Barry takes a seat next to Patty, “I think that this was all to set himself up. He probably had some debts he needed to pay off but now I think he is checking boxes off of his bucket list.”

The moment Barry says that the computer monitor shimmers and a hand sticks it out of it. The word slows down and Barry sees Mirror Master step into the CCPD crime lab. His body contorts at weird angles as he exits the monitor and his body snaps back into place.

“Hello, Miss Spivot. You may not remember me but you put me away for a very long time. Thanks to some friends, I was able to get out early and work on my revenge plan. First, I trapped the speedster in the Mirror World, a discovery of mine. Once he was dealt with you were next. Sadly, the speedster somehow escaped so now instead of killing you right away I have to use you as bait.” Scudder looks at Barry. “And who do we have here, an innocent bystander. Too bad. Wrong place wrong time.” Scudder blasts Barry with his mirror gun and at super speed, Barry is able to roll slightly away and fall to the ground.

“BARRY!!!” Patty yells.

“Oh, you seem to care for him. Well, that’s too bad. You’ll never see him again. I am taking you to my mirror workshop to set a trap for the speedster, after he is dealt with I am going to trap you in the Mirror World and you will never see him again.” Scudder says as he pulls Patty through the glass doors, transporting her away from CCPD.

After, Scudder leaves Barry slowly gets to his feet, looking at the singe marks on his shirt where the blast passed right by him. Scudder must be experimenting with his gun, it didn’t have an energy blast capability last time. As he walks to the door, two beat cops come rushing up.

“Barry, what happened we heard screams.” One of them asks him.

Barry clutches his side as if in pain, “The mirror thief broke in here and kidnapped Patty, he also shot me with his Mirror gun. I heard him say he was taking her to an abandoned mirror factory to lay a trap for the speedster that has been running around town recently. Let’s get SWAT and our best detectives on finding Patty right now. I need to get this wound checked out.”

“Yes, sir.” The beat cops leave heading downstairs, Barry can hear the flurry of motion happening downstairs.

He walks over to his locker and opens it and pulls off a hidden wall to reveal a duffel bag. Barry stashed his costume here so he could have access to it if he needed it. Barry unzipped the bag and at super speed suited up. As much as he believed in this precinct's ability, they couldn't handle someone like the Mirror Master. It was time for him to get involved, Barry sped out of CCPD heading for his apartment to come up with a plan.

Barry knew he couldn't jump in without a plan this time, so while he was running search on mirror factories, he was fixing up some chemicals in his lab. He needed to create a chemical spritzer that could negate reflectiveness, this would stop Scudder from escaping into his mirror world. The next step was to find the real him and stop him before he hurt Patty.

As he finished up on the spritzer, his computer beeped at him. He had found the location that Mirror Master was hiding out at. He bolted from his apartment and ran across town, spritzer in hand ready to take down Scudder once and for all.

...

Barry made it to the mirror factory and before he did anything, he poured on the speed and covered every surface he could find with the chemical lacquer. This ruined all of the reflections in the factory, but it was abandoned anyway so he didn't think any one would miss the mirrors.

Barry looked around and could see Patty tied to a chair. She had a gag in her mouth and was tied up, stopping her from moving or letting out any sound.

"Mmmph", Patty said as she struggled at her restraints.

Behind Barry, he heard a voice, "Oh, I was so very disappointed when I learned that you had gotten out. You also released my other captive which come on not cool man. So I had to lure you in to trap you again in my beautiful Mirror Wor... Wait no what have you done? I can't access the mirrors." Scudder let out a cry of anguish as he realizes that he can't use the mirrors.

"Come out now, Scudder and I will go easy on you. The cops will be here soon and we can wait for them or you can wait unconscious." Barry tells him knowing he's got Mirror Master right where he wants him.

From the shadows, a dozen Mirror Masters stepped forward, identical in every way, their eerie smirks reflecting in the dim light. Barry's eyes darted between them, his instincts screaming that they were mere decoys—but that didn't make them any less dangerous.

Without warning, they attacked. The first lunged, a blur of motion. Barry struck out, his fist connecting—only for the figure to explode into shards of glass, vanishing like a trick of the light. Another came at him from the left. He pivoted, striking again—another illusion.

A boot crashed into his side. This one was real.

Barry stumbled but caught himself, barely dodging another blow from behind. His opponents were shifting constantly, illusions and reality blending together. Every time he turned, he faced another duplicate. Every time he landed a hit, it was nothing but a hollow reflection.

He had to change tactics. Slamming his foot down, Barry sent a shockwave through the floor, shattering several clones at once. But the real Mirror Master wasn't among them. A cruel laugh echoed through the room.

"Getting tired, Flash?"

Barry gritted his teeth. He couldn't win by playing their game—he had to change the battlefield.

Then it clicked. He blurred into motion, weaving through the attackers, intentionally missing strikes, forcing them to shift and reposition. As expected, some phased through his blows while others dodged. And that was the key. The real Mirror Master had to dodge.

Barry stopped abruptly, twisting his body mid-motion—just as one of the figures instinctively flinched instead of shattering.

Got you. Before Mirror Master could react, Barry lunged, grabbing him by the collar and slamming him into the nearest reflective surface. The remaining clones shattered instantly, leaving only the real Sam Scudder, groaning from the impact.

Barry tightened his grip. "You can't hide behind smoke and mirrors forever. It's over Scudder." With Barry delivers another blow to knocking him unconscious.

As Scudder lay slumped on the ground, Barry sped over to Patty and undid her binds at super speed. After that he threw Scudder down at her feet, and in a modulated voice while vibrating his image he said, "The cops are on their way. I would handcuff him if I were you." With that he sped from the building, leaving Patty to wonder what she thought about this new hero in Central City.



# Epilogue

Barry sat at his workbench, the soft hum of the desk lamp casting long shadows across the room. His duffel bag lay open on the floor beside him, revealing his tattered, makeshift costume—stitched together in haste, barely holding up after his last encounter. It wasn't enough. He needed something better. Something faster.

He exhaled, rubbing his fingers over the edge of a worn sketchpad before flipping to a page he'd been working on for weeks. A simple design stared back at him: a gold ring, sleek and unassuming—until it opened. Inside, a compressed suit, ready to deploy in an instant.

His thumb traced the rough pencil lines of the lightning bolt insignia etched onto the ring's surface. If he could make this work, if he could crack the mechanics behind it... it would change everything.

Barry leaned back, staring at the blueprint. The science, the engineering—it was daunting. But that had never stopped him before.

A slow smile crept across his face.

He'd figure it out.

He had to.