



Birds of Prey #4

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Birds of Prey
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Adrian Chase climbed out of his car and gently shut the door behind him, locking it with a flick of his wrist. He turned and stepped forward, pushing open the intricately designed gate and striding through the front garden. He inhaled deeply, allowing a content smile to spread along his face as the scents of the various flowers wafted to him.

"Ah, the summer air," he whispered to himself, and dropped to one knee to pluck a rose from one of the flowerbeds. Rising again, he stepped up to the door and slid his key into the lock, turning it and stepping inside.

He set his briefcase down and removed his shoes as he smoothly cooed his wife's name. "Anabel! Anabel!"

"I'm in here, Adrian," his wife said softly.

Adrian followed her voice and pressed the rose into her hand as he entered the living room. "Fresh from the garden," he murmured with a laugh.

Anabel breathed out in pleasure as she inhaled the rose's scent. "It's wonderful," she whispered. "But remember to keep your voice down..."

"Why?" Adrian enquired.

"Don't act dumb, Ade," Anabel said playfully, slapping his arm lightly. "Nathan's asleep..." She gestured to the cot in the corner of the room.

Adrian gulped as he saw the small child deep in slumber within.

His child...

"Perfect...just..."

"...Perfect."

Omen stood silently beside her shadowed master, her hood down and her breath ragged. She pushed back a few fiery locks of matted hair and gazed down upon her latest victims, and her most persistent. Her eyes wandered back to the Overmaster as he stepped into the light, grandly illuminating himself with a malicious smile tainting his lips. His skin was imbued with a yellowish tint contrasting deeply with the startling damson of his eyes and the sheer mass of ebony hair trailing down to his knees.

"This is perfection," he stated simply. "This is what life is meant to be. I, with my servant at my seat, my latest conquests before me and completely in my hypnotic thrall."

"Indeed," Omen said softly. A frown creased her brow. "But...something feels wrong."

The Overmaster gestured, and his lackey's eyes glazed over momentarily. "That was all you needed. A small dose of my power, and the promise of achieving that someday."

"Indeed," she repeated, raising her hood to once again cast darkness across her features. A pause. "Indeed."

With that, she turned away.

Barbara pulled away from the embrace, rising to her feet and turning away with a heavy sigh. Dick placed a hand on her shoulder and gripped lightly, comfortingly. She couldn't help but smile. He moved forward, linking his arm with hers and gazing into her eyes.

"What's wrong, Babs?" he asked gently.

"This isn't real, Dick. You aren't real." She motioned to the green expanse around them, and then to the Sun in the sky above. "None of it is real."

"What are you talking about?"

Barbara shook her head, grunting in frustration. "I don't know, Dick! I can't remember! But I know that I can't get sucked in!"

She yanked her arm free and broke into a run, her legs pumping as she darted across the field towards the horizon. Dick was instantly after her, calling her name worriedly with a frantic desperation. She ignored him however, placing her fingers over her ears and silently pleading for him not to continue. The experience was painful enough already.

Everything was just so perfect.

But perfection, she knew, was nothing without freedom.

Black Canary

There's something about Central Park in autumn. The beautiful blend of rusty brown and golden yellow never ceases to amaze me. The firm breeze, asserting itself in a bitter, yet fresh gust that takes my breath away... I just love it. I look across the park and pull my suede jacket tighter around me. I hear a voice calling my name, and I quickly turn. A smile forces itself onto my face as I instantly recognize the caller.

"Ollie! You're on time for once!" I exclaim as he embraces me and plants a kiss on my forehead.

Ollie grins and, bracing his arm around my shoulder, begins to lead us on a stroll around the park. "Anything for my pretty-bird. But, straight to the point...how did the scan go?"

I tense, and I know he feels it. It's all in a good way, though. At first I was a little hesitant to go through with the scan, but I thought it was for the best. "It went pretty darn fine."

"Aw, come on."

"What?" I smirk coyly. Is that even a word? Well if it is, then I did. If not...then I just smirked.

Ollie gives me a glare. "Pretty bird..." he mutters warningly.

"Okay, okay!" I giggle. "It's...well...it's what we thought it would be. What we hoped for."

Ollie is dumfounded. "Really?"

I nod. Ollie yelps in delight, and places a hand on my chest. I place my own on top of his.

"Our own little daughter," he murmurs, the sunlight reflecting off his wedding ring.

"What do they call themselves, again?" the Overmaster demanded

"The New Outsiders," Omen replied, poised at her master's back. "No one has ever conquered them like this before."

The Overmaster moved from tube to tube, admiring his captives. "That's because no one like me has faced them before."

"Perhaps."

The Overmaster froze, his gaze slowly turning to Omen. "Were those traces of doubt I heard in your tone, my servant?"

Omen defiantly remained silent, merely gazing through one of the stasis tubes to the battered Vigilante.

Omen

I find the frozen faces of the New Outsiders strangely calming in times of stress.

That is why I press my hand up against the glass casing separating me from the Vigilante. The Overmaster is poised behind me, and I can't help but feel the back of my neck prickle. It's a long time since I've felt that. I wonder whether it's because it's a long time since I've been human. There's definitely a connection between the two.

I've been so dosed up on Overmaster's power, I have been more alien than anything.

Weird memories drift back into my head, all vague and fuzzy. Beads of sweat trickle down my cheeks; I suppose they're not unlike tears. Guilt touches my mind, and, for a second, all the fuzz that's blocked up my brain since I got 'taken in' by the Overmaster clears away. I can see clearly for just a second... before his presence is back.

"Are you beginning to rebel against me?" he hisses.

I know I can't do anything alone. He's the source of my power, and although he can't take it away anymore, he can tear me apart with his own. I have to figure out what to do...and quickly. As I begin to calculate, my heart beating quicker and quicker, my life flashes before my eyes. My mother and father divorcing. Myself becoming a junkie, with my brother's dead body beside me in an alleyway.

And then my powers emerging...and then him...and now this...

I struggle to remember my real name, but I manage to dredge it up.

I am Lilith Clay, and I know what I have to do.

Omen swiveled on her heel, her hands pulsing with unearthly telekinetic energy as she projected a force blast that sent the Overmaster sprawling. Resisting the strain of deflecting the energy as he instinctively struck back, she dove towards the three most recent captives, not yet in stasis tubes. Overmaster was upon her, however, tossing her back with an almost casual lunge. She grunted as she collided with the wall, her efforts to break her unwilling journey ineffective against such raw might.

“Foolish child!” Overmaster barked.

“Get away from me!” she shrieked, releasing another burst that clipped her opponent’s hip. He twisted with the blow, spinning into the wall as Omen darted forward... only to be sent to the ground by a fierce back-hand swipe. Overmaster motioned, and she tore through the door, smashing through the casino and out onto the street.

A moment later, he was before her, his eyes blazing with raw hatred.

And, in that same fraction of a second, the Huntress’ eyes snapped open.

Batgirl

I finally fall after a few minutes, tumbling head over heel in the grass with a strangled cry. For a millisecond, I feel weightless as I begin the long roll down the hill...but then I’m in Dick’s arms, and he gently sets me down on flat ground. It feels like an eternity since either of us speak, the silence broken only by our desperate gasps for air.

“Babs...Barbara...are you okay?”

He hasn’t called me Barbara since the first time I met him. But then again, this isn’t the real him. I keep having to remind myself of that. He’s exactly the same...not one thing that tells me he’s not Dick, not one thing that makes me doubt him. Except, of course, my gut instinct. If there’s one thing I ever learned from Bruce, it’s to always trust your gut instinct. But, for some reason, I don’t quite know who Bruce is. The name rolls off my tongue, but...

“Babs?” he presses.

“I don’t know, Dick,” I confess. “There’s something I’ve got to tell you, but I don’t know how I can tell you when I don’t know what I’m going to say, or whether it’ll even make sense.”

“I don’t care. I just want you to be yourself again.”

How can I resist that puppy-dog look? Thing is, it isn’t even intentional. I begin to play with my hair, what I always do when I’m nervous. He’s waiting. I can

hear his breathing. He almost resembles Bruce in that light...Bruce! I keep thinking of him! Maybe, just maybe, I can use him as my anchor to reality...

"You're not real," I blurt out, mentally focusing on the name 'Bruce'. "None of this is, except me."

"What the – ?"

I interject. I don't have time for this. I don't want to get too attached. "Something's going on. This is too perfect. Way too perfect. There's stuff that happened to me, that I can't remember. But, if I'm gonna get out of this, I'm gonna need to remember."

"You're right," he snarls. "You're not making any sense. Are you trying to break up with me, Babs?"

"No!" I press against my temples in the hopes of increasing my concentration. "We are not even together, so we can't break up! Damnit, Dick, listen to me!"

"Why don't you listen to me, Barbara?" he shoots back.

I feel everything beginning to fade at that moment, and my life rushes back at me. Bruce, Batman. Dick, Nightwing. The New Outsiders. Dinah, Helena. Omen. Vegas. I've got a lot to do. As the field begins to crumble around me, I pull Dick in for one last kiss...but he's already gone.

"Batgirl. You're awake." Huntress turned away from Canary's limp form to face her companion. "It took you longer than I expected."

"Helena?" Batgirl pulled herself into a sitting position. "How did we break the illusion? Why aren't we frozen like —"

"As far as I can tell," Huntress interrupted, "those tubes strengthen their 'dreams'. I'm trying to awaken Black Canary now, but I'm not having much luck." She lightly brought her gloved hand across the blonde's face repeatedly. "Maybe I should slap her harder."

Batgirl rose shakily to her feet and drew her cape around her, stalking

towards Green Arrow's tube. "We should work on freeing the others."

"There's no time. We don't know if freeing them would hurt them, and Omen is battling someone above."

"Point. I can't wait to get my own back on her," Batgirl responded, glancing to Canary.

"I don't think it's her we're going to be aiming for," Huntress replied stoically.

"What do you mean?"

"When I woke up, I think Omen was actually trying to free us."

Batgirl snorted. "Impossible."

"We've both seen stranger things."

Black Canary

"Ow."

That single word sends Ollie into a near-frenzy. "What is it, pretty bird? Is it the baby? Is she okay? Is she kicking?"

"Ow." I rub my cheek. "I feel like someone's slapping me."

Ollie frowns. "Um...so I don't know what I should do with that...you know what? I'm gonna call the doctor and see if—"

"Ow!" I stumble back with the force of the non-existent blow.

Ollie cries out, his voice blurred as I hit the water. It envelops all of my senses, and everything goes black. My hand goes to my chest, to my unborn child. Panic floods me, and I begin to flail wildly. I feel Ollie grasp my hand and he pulls me to the surface with a splutter. At least, I was expecting him to. All of a sudden, I'm in a rusty old basement with a black-haired Italian girl leaning over me.

My circumstances and memories return, and, this time, it's real when I bring my hand to my cheek.

"Ow."

"Way to wake a girl up," Canary quipped dryly, managing to conceal the disappointment in her tone.

"We're back in the casino," Batgirl revealed. "And we can't release the others yet."

"Why not?" Canary said desperately.

"We could hurt them." Batgirl moved to the stairs. "Which is why we have to take down whoever we need to, as soon as we can."

Canary ascended the staircase in several steps, but Batgirl barred Huntress' way.

"Helena...I've got to know a few things," she stated. "How were you able to escape your perfect life so quickly?"

"Let's just say perfection isn't all it's cracked up to be." Huntress primed her crossbow. "Next?"

"Why were you trying to wake Canary up, and not me?" Batgirl didn't mean it in a derogatory or jealous way...she was genuinely curious.

Huntress slipped past her and cast a glance back down at her bat-clad friend. "Why? Because I trusted you to get out of it alone. There are some things that you don't need to get involved in."

Maybe there is some hope left for her, after all.

The Overmaster barely paid heed to the three heroines announcing their presence at first. He was far too busy holding the limp form of his former

servant in his hands, and releasing malicious chuckles at her pained groans. It was only when he winced at a sharp sonic burst from the mouth of the Black Canary that he turned to face them, a look of pure horror adorning his face.

“You three escaped? You truly are more resilient than I believed.” He shrugged his mammoth shoulders. “But since you had trouble dealing with my insignificant trouble-maker here, you should be no trouble for me.”

A silence fell over the battlefield as each combatant readied themselves for battle. The Birds of Prey, Batgirl in the center, began to advance.

“This is it,” Batgirl intoned. “This is our last stand. For Vegas. For our friends. For ourselves. Our actions today will decide our fate. It’s time.”

Both women launched into a run after their fiery-haired leader, and the battle began.

The Overmaster propelled himself forward towards his oncoming opponents, telekinetic energy rippling outwards from his palm and slamming into the Huntress’ chest. She let out an agonizing scream and fell back. Batgirl jumped back and caught her, leaving Canary to leap forward, utilizing all of her athletic skills to hurl her body into a lopsided somersault over the Overmaster, releasing a sonic cry as she swung herself.

Batgirl and Huntress dove into the fray, batarangs and crossbow darts assaulting the Overmaster. He swatted most away with his power, but a single explosive batarang erupted on his stomach and he roared in pain. Huntress brought her foot upwards in a sharp kick that caught his jaw. He lunged for her but she rolled aside, leaving the way open for a flash globe from Batgirl propelled by yet another sonic attack from Canary.

It was an obvious yet devastating plan: all they had to do was attack his senses all at once. The blinding white light that the flash globe emitted would have been debilitating alone, but accompanied with the high pitch of Canary’s assault...at least, that’s what they all assumed. In actuality,

the tactics didn't work as well as they'd presumed. The Overmaster batted the flash globe back against the flow of the sonic scream and it impacted on Dinah's forehead, whilst he sidestepped the concentrated beam of sound and used his telekinesis to floor Batgirl with Canary's puppet-like body.

Huntress blinked away the residual spots from the flash globe and finally unsheathed the blade she had been waiting to use for so long. She dashed forward, bringing the sword down upon the Overmaster. A crimson liquid she knew oh-so-well sprayed in every direction, coating her costume and the pavement as she wildly swung the sword with wild abandon. The Overmaster's bellows were mingled with pain and rage, his muscles bulging as he released his frustration in a vicious right hook that sent the Huntress to the ground with a sickening, bloody *thump*.

Of the Birds, only Batgirl was on her feet, evidently enraged by the strangled moans of her comrades.

"This is your last stand," the Overmaster hissed, clenching the fallen Huntress' blade in his hand. "Come now, so you will be the first to die... impaled by your own friend's blade."

"It'd be an honor to die by that blade," Batgirl retorted through gritted teeth, "but not when it is wielded by you. You throw your insults and your quips, but I couldn't care less because I know that we're gonna beat you. No matter what, no matter how, we are never going to give up."

"Brave words for such a pitiful creature," the Overmaster concluded, as Batgirl charged at him.

She easily ducked beneath his first swing, embedding a batarang into his wrist as she came up. Her fists flew to his nose, bruising and swelling appearing almost instantly as her balled hands rammed into his face. He took the blows with a casual flutter of his eyelids, gripping her wrists and twisting them in one fluid motion. Ear-splitting cracks were drowned out by a yelp of terrible and abrupt pain, and he effortlessly tossed her aside unceremoniously. Huntress staggered to her feet, her jaw hanging limply, but he had already brought the hilt of the sword down upon her head.

"The New Outsiders...finally defeated," he mumbled wearily.

"Not quite." Omen rose to her feet, her entire body seeming to radiate power. He cast out one hand, energy spraying from his fingertips, but she blinked and the attack turned back on himself.

"How...?"

"You didn't give me my power, Overmaster," Omen announced, her voice taking on an eerie, tinny quality. "You deluded me and tricked me, but you did not give me my power. All you did was *unlock* it."

A faint blue light engulfed the fallen heroes, lifting their lifeless bodies to their feet and levitating them at Omen's back. She began to move forward, the Overmaster's attacks merely bouncing away from her. He whimpered in desperation as his size seemed to reduce, and his eyes widened in realization as the truth dawned on him.

"That's right, Overmaster," she snarled. "I realized that all of that time you were making me sick with doses of your power... you just gave me the potential to tap into its flow. And as I drain that flow... you become a normal man once again."

Police sirens flashed around them as the rest of the New Outsiders, all imbued with the same strange light, hovered behind the empowered Omen. The Overmaster's size decreased... decreased... tears streamed down his whitened cheeks as the yellow tarnish vanished.

"The damage you reaped has been undone... for the most part," Omen revealed, her last comment directed towards the battered bodies of the New Outsiders. "The city is back to normal... but you will never be."

"Put your hands up!" an officer barked in vain.

"I'm sorry, officer," Omen said sincerely, "but jail is far too good for this man. I'd rather take care of him...myself."

"So...she just teleported away?"

Batgirl nodded in response to Canary's question, pacing around the hospital chamber with the other Outsiders, all of their respective wounds bandaged. Green Arrow's hand was holding Canary's, whilst Zatanna was slouched on a chair with Vigilante propped up against the doorframe. In the bed was Dinah, her eyes hidden by a white blindfold. Huntress peered out onto the reeling and recovering city.

"It was a close call," Arrow admitted. "But you three faced it like a team. I'm impressed."

"You shouldn't be," Huntress responded. "It was Omen who saved the city, and we don't even know what truly happened."

"She never would have saved the day if not for you lot battling them every step of the day," Arrow insisted. "It's okay to take praise without shooting it down, Helena."

"While crime lives," she murmured, dropping out of the window with a casual nonchalance, "none of us deserves praise."

The End

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Birds of Prey #1 (2006)

Birds of Prey, Part One (of Four): Elimination Process.

The New Outsiders have fallen. A mysterious prophecy is at hand. Las Vegas is under threat. An Omen has struck. And there's only a trio of heroines that can prevent disaster... if they don't kill each other first. Black Canary. Batgirl. Huntress. The Birds of Prey.

Birds of Prey #2 (2006)

Birds of Prey, Part Two (of Four): Dissension in the Ranks.

The Outsiders are defeated, content with their greatest desires...but hope has not yet faded. Batgirl, Black Canary, and the Huntress attempt to rescue their teammates, but find themselves at odds with each other, as well as cornered by their strangest foes yet! Meanwhile the mysterious Omen hatches another plan...

Birds of Prey #3 (2006)

Birds of Prey, Part Three (of Four): Divided We Fall.

Batgirl, Black Canary, and the Huntress are helpless to do anything, as the 'Omen virus' is unleashed upon Las Vegas! As the city's inhabitants begin to fall prey to the disease, the superhero trio finally cracks from the pressure.

Teen Titans #3 (2006)

Teen Titans: The Killing Game, Part 1: Clubbed.

The Titans are pushed to their limits when one of their own is beaten into a coma, with only a black club spray-painted on the victim's chest as a clue. But the mysterious assassin has now targeted the rest of the team...

Teen Titans #7 (2006)

Teen Titans: Fading Star.

Determined to trace his lineage, Speedy embarks on a journey of mystery and self-discovery as he strives to find his real mother and be part of a family again. This emotional and brutal tale tells the true story of Roy Harper's heritage...and helps him to reconnect with an old friend.

Teen Titans #4 (2006)

Teen Titans: The Killing Game, Part Two: One by One.
Deathstroke has announced the Titans' death sentence...now, he is going to eliminate them, at any cost! He has the perfect strategy for each and every one of them...But has he planned for the blinding rage of Nightwing?

Teen Titans #5 (2006)

Teen Titans: The Beast Within, Part 1.

Starfire reaches Miami, only to find herself facing deadly danger with a strange new ally! Meanwhile, the Titans search out the mysterious telepath that attacked Speedy last issue, and Kid Flash ponders his future...Featuring the first-ever appearance of a new DC2 character, as well as guest-starring the Flash!

Teen Titans #6 (2006)

Teen Titans: The Beast Within, Part 2.

With Speedy's life hanging in the balance, Nightwing, Donna Troy, and Raven face down the terrible might of the Royal Flush Gang! Garfield Logan confronts his fears as the Gordanians approach the new Citadel homeworld...and plan the execution of Starfire! Also: Kid Flash has a heart-to-heart with his aunt and gets comfortable in a familiar costume...

Teen Titans #8 (2006)

Teen Titans: Fatal Attractions, Part One.

As a drug ring spreads throughout the city, the Titans intensify their attempts to break it up and find the ever-elusive answer to a mystery of missing contraband. Meanwhile, two teens grow closer, whilst another two grow apart...

Teen Titans #9 (2006)

Teen Titans: Fatal Attractions, Part Two.

Starfire is devastated by her shocking discovery at the end of last issue, and struggles to cope with the deadly new knowledge she holds...before it destroys her fast-growing relationship with Nightwing. Also: Wonder Girl develops a mystery crush, and Kid Flash attempts to assuage Raven's fears.



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