

The Sprintress #10 - "Running Amok"

Written by Steven Bland

All across town, banks and armored cars were being robbed in broad daylight by a human blur moving at superhuman speed. In seconds, the banks and armored cars were all cleaned out.

At police headquarters, Detectives Sal Infantino and Jim Bellows argued over the case. Bellows was new to the department.

"I'm tellin' ya, Sal," Jim said. "It *had* to be the Sprintress. I mean, who *else* could've robbed all those banks and armored cars in the blink of an eye?"

"I don't believe that for a minute, Jim," Sal responded. "You're new here, but I've met and worked with the Sprintress before. She has always worked within the law."

"Well, if she didn't do it," Jim said. "Then, who did?"

"Good question," Sal said. "I just *wish* I knew."

At Garrett Laboratories, Kay Garrett and Nellie North listened to the cable television news while working on an experiment.

"All across town, banks and armored cars were just robbed in the blink of an eye by one human-sized blue," the television reporter said. "Some are speculating that the Sprintress has turned to crime."

I *couldn't have* robbed those banks and armored cars, Nellie thought. Am I going mad? Am I being corrupted by my own power? I can't bear to think that!

Overhearing the newscast from the next room was Veronica Van de Camp

Steven
Bland

The Sprintress #10 - "Running Amok"

I hope it's not true, Veronica thought. If the Sprintress *has* turned bad, it would be hard to stop her, because of her superhuman speed.

At Simon Kirby's laboratory, he and Patriot Prime were also watching the same news reports.

"If the Sprintress has indeed started using her powers to commit crimes, it's a sad day for all of us," Simon said.

"She has been a valued ally and I have been proud to work with her," Patriot Prime said. "But if it comes down to me having to take her down, - - I'll *do* it!"

At Garrett Laboratories, Kay and Nellie continued to listen to the news.

"In other news," the newscaster said. "Billionaire Aron Hightower has announced that he will create and fund a new team of superheroes much like the recently formed 'Freedom's Foursome!'"

The newscaster then cut to Aron Hightower himself.

"I want to assure everyone that my new team of superheroes will assist Freedom's Foursome, not to compete with them," Hightower said. "I will be holding a membership drive for any and all superheroes and superheroines who are interested in joining."

The Sprintress #10 - "Running Amok"

"I will also provide the team with a headquarters which will have state-of-the-art equipment," Hightower added. "The headquarters will be located on an island near New York Harbor."

I'm sure Aron Hightower won't want me to join his superhero team, because of the super-speed robberies and everyone blaming the Sprintress for them, Nellie thought. But, even if I was cleared of those crimes, I would probably pass up the opportunity. I may be able to run and move at Mach 3 speed, but even I can't be in two or more places at once.

The creation of a new team of superheroes and superheroines? An excited Veronica wondered. I will *definitely* sign up.

Inside Simon Kirby's laboratory, he and Patriot Prime also continued to watch the news.

"What d'you think, Dean?" Simon asked his friend. "Do you plan to take part in the membership drive for the creation of Aron Hightower's new superhero team?"

"I think I will," a smiling Patriot Prime answered.

Later, the Sprintress was racing through the city at superhuman speed.

Figured I'd use my ten minute break to search the city for whoever committed, and is probably *still* committing, those super-speed robberies and, *hopefully*, clear my good name, the superheroine thought. But so far, I haven't seen hide nor hair of the crook.

Steven

Bland

The Sprintress #10 - "Running Amok"

Soon, the Empress of Acceleration saw the human blur carrying a sack full of money in each hand.

Aha, that must be my quarry, she thought as she raced after the human blur.

In an instant, the Sprintress caught up to the human blur, who was a woman with long blond hair who was wearing a form-fitting red bodysuit with the image of a speedometer as her chest insignia. She was also wearing gold boots, a gold belt, red gloves with gold cuffs, and a gold mask which exposed her nose, mouth, and hair.

"Hold it, lady," the Sprintress said as she punched the blond costumed woman, who dropped her sacks of money and fell to the ground beside her.

"OOOFFF," the blond costumed woman cried out.

Unbeknownst to the two costumed combatants, they were being watched by a few bystanders who were recording them with their video phones.

"Those sacks of stolen money are going back to the banks where *they* belong," the superheroine said. "And *you're* going to jail, where *you* belong!"

"Someone perceived me," said the blond female criminal in the scarlet costume as she started picking herself back up. But, that's *impossible*. Unless that *someone* is - -"

The blond female costumed criminal soon glanced toward the Queen of Quickness.

"- - THE SPRINTRESS," the blond villainess exclaimed.

"Yes," the Lady of Locomotion said to the female criminal. "And who are you?"

Steven

Bland

The Sprintress #10 - "Running Amok"

"I'M *RUNAMOK*," the blond villainess answered as she used the power of her suit to charge at superhuman speed toward the Sprintress. Soon, a lightning-fast battle began and punches were thrown with superhuman speed. The bystanders were still recording the costumed antagonists.

"This is *awesome*," one of the bystanders said to the others.

"Truly *epic*," said another.

A few minutes later, a warning signal beeped inside Runamok's suit. The signal was faint but the Sprintress was able to hear it.

Blast, Runamok thought. My suit's low on power. I need to recharge it soon. Cleaning Sprintress's clock will have to wait.

But for now, I'll settle with distracting her, Runamok thought as she snapped her fingers with her enhanced speed.

"BOOM!"

The shockwave rendered the Queen of Quickness unconscious.

"We'll meet again, Sprintress," Runamok said as she zoomed off.

Minutes later, the Lady of Locomotion recovered consciousness and was helped up by the bystanders who had recorded the battle.

"Ooohh," she moaned.

"Are you okay, Sprintress?" One of the bystanders asked.

"Yeah, I'm fine," the superheroine answered.

Steven

Bland

The Sprintress #10 - "Running Amok"

"We're sorry we thought you were behind the bank and armored car robberies," another bystander said.

"Thank you," the Queen of Quickness said. "But, by sticking around her, you could have been hurt during my battle with Runamok."

"If we hadn't stuck around to record your battle with Runamok," another bystander said. "The public would still believe you turned bad and your reputation as a superheroine would have been tarnished forever."

"Point taken," the Empress of Acceleration said.

She looked around and seeing that her adversary was long gone.

Runamok escaped, the Sprintress thought. Well, I'll get her next time. I'd better get back to Garrett Laboratories. My ten-minute break is probably up already.

The Queen of Quickness raced off at superhuman speed.

In minutes, the Sprintress arrived at her destination, where she quickly changed out of her costume and into her civilian clothes to resume her identity of Nellie North.

Runamok caught me off guard this time, Nellie thought. But, next time, I'll make sure it won't happen again.

Soon, Nellie was greeted by an ecstatic Kay.

"Nellie," Kay said. "Come with me. You must hear this."

Kay led Nellie to the room in the lab where the cable news is playing on the television.

Steven

Bland

The Sprintress #10 - "Running Amok"

"We have just received proof that the Sprintress was not responsible for the super-speed bank and armored car robberies," the newscaster reported. "This video, which has just gone viral, shows the Sprintress fighting a new super-villainess who calls herself Runamok, who was the true thief.

Overhearing the news report in the next room, Veronica Van de Camp breathed a huge sigh of relief.

Nellie turned to Kay.

"You look worried," Kay said.

"I am," Nellie answered. "Runamok is still out there and she will continue to use the super-speed her suit provides her to commit more crimes. I have to stop her because no one will be able to.

"Did you say her super-speed comes from her suit?" Kay asked.

"Yes," Nellie answered. "I heard a faint beeping signal from inside Runamok's suit while we fought. She ended the battle by distracting me with a sonic boom. Then, she used the distraction to flee, possibly so that she could get away to recharge her suit.

Inside, Simon Kirby's laboratory, he and Patriot Prime were also pleased with the newscast.

"Now that the Sprintress has been exonerated from those super-speed robberies, do you think she might participate in Hightower's membership drive?" Simon asked.

"I don't know," Patriot Prime answered. "But if she does, I will be honored to work with her again."

Steven

Bland

The Sprintress #10 - "Running Amok"

Meanwhile, Runamok arrived at and entered an apartment building. Once she was inside, she entered one of the apartments, closing the door behind her.

Everything used to work *perfectly*, Runamok thought as she changed out of her costume and into everyday clothes.

My speed suit slows time around me to an absolute crawl, allowing me to simulate superhuman speed with which I was able to commit my robberies, she thought as she plugged her special suit into a powerful battery. But, yet, the Sprintress was somehow able to perceive me. And because she can perceive me, she poses a threat to me and my plans. She must not be allowed to thwart me.

I must fully recharge my suit so that I can be at my peak the next time we meet. And when we do meet, I will squash the Sprintress once and for all.

Later, that afternoon, the Sprintress raced through the city looking for Runamok.

She must be around her somewhere, the Queen of Quickness thought.

Suddenly, she heard a loud noise nearby to her left.

"BOOM!"

That sounded like a sonic boom, the super-fast heroine thought as she turned left and raced at superhuman speed.

In an instant, the Empress of Acceleration arrived at the source of the loud noise, the Chase Manhattan Bank.

Steven

Bland

The Sprintress #10 - "Running Amok"

It came from here, she thought as she raced inside. The Sprintress saw Runamok inside, near a vault with its doors blown off. The villainess was filling up her bags with as much of the money as she could.

"It's over, Runamok," the Lady of Locomotion said. "I've got you now."

"On the contrary, Sprintress. You haven't got me," Runamok said as she dropped her bags full of money and moved at superhuman speed to charge at the superheroine.

"*I'VE GOT YOU,*" Runamok said as she delivered a punch to the Queen of Quickness who used her own superhuman speed to dodge it.

"Y'know, Runamok," Sprintress said. "That was a real neat trick you used on me last time, snapping your fingers quickly to create a sonic boom to distract me"

"I have a feeling you're going to love *my* new trick," the Sprintress said.

"What are you talking about, fool?" Runamok asked.

"I call this my '*supersonic punch*!," the superheroine said as she swung her fist at superhuman speed, creating a sonic boom and generating a small mass of air that knocked Runamok unconscious.

It worked. She's out cold, the Queen of Quickness thought as she picked up her unconscious opponent and zoomed out of the building.

In a short time, the Sprintress and her prisoner arrived at her Sing Sing and entered the prison.

Once inside, the Lady of Locomotion took her unconscious captive into a room with prison uniforms and closed the door behind them for privacy.

Steven

Bland

The Sprintress #10 - "Running Amok"

I've got to work *quickly*, the superheroine thought. She'll regain consciousness in a few minutes.

Using her superhuman speed, the Sprintress stripped Runamok of her speed suit.

Soon, the Queen of Quickness emerged from the room with her still-unconscious captive, clad in one of the prison uniforms. The discarded speed suit was draped over the superheroine's right shoulder.

"See that she gets taken care of," the Empress of Acceleration told two of the guards.

"We sure will, Sprintress. Thanks," one of the guards said as he and his partner took the unconscious new prisoner from the superheroine, who then took the discarded speed suit off her shoulder.

"What's that in your hand?" The other guard asked.

"It's a special suit she wore which allowed her to move at superhuman speed like I can," the Sprintress answered. "Now that I've stripped her of it, she's just an ordinary person, so she shouldn't be any trouble now."

The captured female criminal started regaining consciousness.

"Unnhh," she moaned.

"Come along, lady," one of the guards said. "We've got a nice, warm cell waiting for you."

As the guards escorted their new prisoner away, the Sprintress zoomed out of the prison building, carrying the speed suit she had confiscated.

Steven

Bland

The Sprintress #10 - "Running Amok"

I'm sure Kay will want to examine this suit and find out how it works, the Queen of Quickness thought as she continued to race through the streets.

In minutes, the Sprintress arrived at and entered Garrett Laboratories. Once inside, she raced inside Kay's lab, where Kay greeted her.

"Kay," the superheroine said. "I defeated Runamok and took her to Sing Sing."

"Here is the super-suit I confiscated from her. This was what gave her the superhuman speed she used to commit all those bank and armored car robberies," the Sprintress said as she handed the suit to her mentor.

Kay took the suit to an examination table where she ran some tests on the costume. A few hours later, she got the results.

"It's amazing," Kay said. "This suit is - - was - - a prototype which uses advanced technology which is capable of speeding up the wearer's molecules, creating the illusion that time has slowed to a crawl from the wearer's perspective."

"Who could have created it?" The Sprintress asked.

"Only *one* person," Kay answered as she showed the superheroine a past photograph of a female scientist with long blond hair who matched Runamok's physical appearance. "Dr. Erica Chastain. She was the *first person* to make that discovery and incorporate that into a high-tech suit of her own design."

Steven

Bland

The Sprintress #10 - "Running Amok"

"Then, Erica Chastain *herself* was Runamok," the Sprintress reasoned.

"Correct. She wanted to make more of the speed-suits and get rich, so she applied for a grant to make her dream a reality," Kay continued. "However, everyone else, including me, in the science community, were concerned about the possibility that her speed-suit could tear a hole in the fabric of time. So, she was denied the grant she wanted.

"She still desired to be rich, so she decided that if she couldn't mass produce her prototype speed-suit and sell it, she would use it to begin her career robbing banks and armored cars," Kay added.

"Well, now she's *doing* time," the Lady of Locomotion said.

"Yes," Kay said. "You could say that."

Later, the Sprintress visited Detective Sal Infantino at police headquarters.

"Detective Infantino," the Queen of Quickness said. "I was hoping to find you here."

"I'm satisfied that you're innocent of the super-fast bank and armored car robberies, Sprintress," Sal said. "I never believed you would have turned to a life of crime."

"Thank you, Sal," the Empress of Acceleration said.

"I want you to meet someone," Sal said as he took the Sprintress to see Jim Bellows.

"Sprintress, this is Detective Jim Bellows," Sal said as he introduced the superheroine to the new detective. "Jim, this is the Sprintress."

"Hello, Jim," said the Sprintress as she and the new detective shook hands.

*Steven
Bland*

The Sprintress #10 - "Running Amok"

"Hello, Sprintress," Jim said. "I thought and believed that you were responsible for the robberies. I'm glad I was proven wrong."

"No harm done, Jim," the Empress of Acceleration said.

"After all, we're on the same side. I look forward to helping you and Sal again real soon," she said before zooming out of building.

Later, Patriot Prime and Beehive both arrived, along with the Deliverer and Njord, to see Aron Hightower.

"Mr. Hightower, sir," Patriot Prime said. "I would like to join your superhero team."

"Me, too," Beehive added.

"You can count me in," the Deliverer added.

"And me, as well," Njord added.

"Lady and gentlemen," Hightower said with a warm smile. "Welcome to the Justifiers."

THE END

- 13 -

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