

Author's Note: *This chapter follows on from Chapter 6: Panther Claws of my other story: Fusion: Los Angeles.*

Wednesday, November 30th, 2016

Juno was having the time of her life.

She may have only been cleaning weapons, but she enjoyed the work and it kept her mind focused. She was fully aware that Guinevere was keeping her busy so that she could not focus on the bad events from the previous week. As far as Juno could tell, Guinevere, Nicholas, and Logan were very serious about past events and she figured that was because of their training as professional assassins. The three of them would talk into the night, discussing tactics and tactical operations. It was all way beyond anything which Juno could take part in. Not that she felt left out; she just helped where was qualified and left it at that.

"Thanks, Juno - you've been a big help," Guinevere said with genuine praise.

Juno grinned happily.

"So, what's happening next?" she asked.

"We keep up the pressure on those cunts who tried to ambush us. We have the resources, and we have the people," Guinevere replied. "You up for it, Lilim?"

"Bring it on, Lilith!"

Juno was so happy, but in a little over twenty-four hours, she would be anything but.

The following evening

Thursday, December 1st

Morale was high and all four were ready for action.

The girls wore their combat suits while the boys wore body armour. It would be the first night out for Riptide, but only in a support role. He would be coordinating the night's operations from his Nitric Orange Honda CB500X with a secure tablet. He could monitor the locations and the communications of the team, guiding them as required. The city was dangerous for four youngsters, even with their training. As before, Trauma would hang back, leaving the girls on point. He would intervene only when needed with Riptide as backup.

After mounting up, the four of them headed west, towards Mission beach.

..._...

As they rode, the team discussed the night's plan.

The plan had previously been discussed in exquisite detail, back at Haven, but it was good to go over everything again - especially for the newbie! Intelligence acquired by Riptide and Trauma had informed them about a gathering of undesirable reprobates who were making a play against some of the local drug dealers. The reprobates were in the employ of their new friend, Dieter. That could not be allowed to happen. Dieter Mannheim could not be allowed to increase his control over the nefarious gangs and drug dealers within San Diego. Once the bastard got his feet comfortably under the table, it would take a minor miracle to shift him. They had inflicted a hefty bill on him in lost

men and equipment. It was merely a drop in the ocean to someone as important as Dieter, but he would not take kindly to having his nose bloodied. Due to the damage and destruction from the previous week, large sections were cordoned off for repairs, so the team had to divert around the obstacles.

Unfortunately, none of them had noticed the watchers.

..._...

They picked up Mission Boulevard and headed south.

"I got a bad feeling about this," Trauma radioed from a few hundred yards back. His senses were going haywire and everything told him that they were standing into danger.

"We have a job to do, let's just keep an eye out for trouble," Lilith countered.

Lilith was in command, so Trauma kept his eyes peeled. A block over, Riptide had similar feelings, but he followed Trauma and Lilith as both were older and more experienced than he was. He also knew that, as a team, they had to take risks if they were going to take down those who would do San Diego harm. It was a tall order - a very tall order, he thought - but that was what they had each committed to. Apart from Lilim, who was a veritable novice, the rest of them had reasonable experience with combat and they had their *Predator* training which they could use to keep themselves out of too much danger. Trauma moved closer to the two girls, keeping Lilim in sight at all times.

As they approached Belmont Park, the action began when Lilith came off her motorcycle. There had been a loud crack - Trauma had instantly registered the unmistakable sound of a high-powered rifle - and then the front tyre of Lilith's machine had shredded, flipping the motorcycle. Lilith narrowly avoided having her head squished as she rolled into the curb, leaving her motorcycle to wrap itself around a light pole. As she pulled off her dented crash helmet, she saw Lilim running towards her, but before the girl could reach her mentor, she was shot, full in the chest, blasting the youngster onto her back in the centre of the street.

Trauma skidded to a halt, barely able to comprehend what was happening as first one and then the other girl went down.

..._...

Lilim was struggling to breathe as her body struggled to cope with the concussive strike to her chest.

The wind had been quite literally knocked from her lungs and between the lack of oxygen, the pain was extreme. Her body armour had prevented her from being killed outright, but as the girl writhed on the street, she was very close to dying if she could not make her lungs operate again. Yet again, Lilim's life was saved by Lilith as the older girl struck the younger girl in the chest prompting her collapsed lungs to re-inflate. Lilim took a deep, deep breath as she fought back her tears beneath her mask. Her entire life - all thirteen years of it - had flashed before her eyes and she had been certain that she was dead. She struggled to her feet, grimacing against the intense pain in her chest.

"Come on - we have inbound!" Lilith warned and they both drew their batons.

Large men were converging on them from all directions and they were armed with various items from machetes to baseball bats. As they began to surround the two

vigilantes, another joined the fray. Lilim's courage leapt as Trauma stood beside them. She was still scared by the men advancing on them, but Trauma exuded presence and she knew that she would always be safe with him around. It did not take long for the fighting to begin. The men attacking them were not there just to intimidate, they were there to put the three of them down, although Lilith saw something else, but not what. Lilim was kicked in the right thigh, very hard, and the girl screamed out in pain as her leg gave way and she sank to one knee. It took her a few seconds to recover enough to regain her feet, but she received another kick to her chest and a punch to the side of her head. She sagged against a column, her head spinning from the strike and her chest burning even more from the kick. Any more strikes were blocked as Trauma shot Lilim's attacker dead with a bullet to the head. Lilim never felt the spray of warm blood which struck her mask and upper body. She struggled to regain her focus and she suddenly found Trauma yelling at her from just inches away.

"You okay?" he bellowed over the cacophony of sound from the fighting which was all around them. "Lilim!"

"Yes . . . I'm okay . . . I just need a few seconds."

"That's all you're going to get - now, move!"

..._...

A few yards distant, Lilith was in the thick of the action.

At the back of her mind, she worried about Lilim, but she knew that Trauma was keeping an eye on the youngster. Besides, Lilith had quite enough to be dealing with right at that moment. She was fighting four on one which would normally not be too bad, only every time she put a cunt down, another would take his place. She was tiring, and she knew that she had to get a moment to rest or she was a gonna.

"Team, this is Riptide, you need to get out of there - right the fuck now!"

"What's going on, Riptide?"

"The fucking Hounds of Hell are coming down on us in two fucking minutes!"

"Care to elaborate on that?"

"About a dozen men . . . and dogs."

"Dogs!" Lilith exclaimed.

A dozen men - a walk in the park . . . dogs; they scared the living daylights out of her. She was trained to handle attack dogs, as was Trauma, but Lilim - she would be, quite literally, eaten alive.

"Err - something new just whizzed past me. . ."

"Like what . . . never mind!" Lilith replied as she caught sight of a motorcycle approaching from the north.

The men attacking them appeared to part, as if by magic. The powerful machine came to a very rapid halt a dozen yards from the three vigilantes. The Kawasaki Ninja ZX-10R ABS was matt black all over. The rider was clad in a very similar colour scheme from head to toe. It was a female, possibly a young adult. Without haste the rider removed her black helmet, handing it to one of the men surrounding them. Lilith understood - the men had been the warmup. Her and Lilim were the key targets - that bastard was playing with them. Now, they had

someone new to deal with. Lilith hated unknowns - they scared her. She always wanted to know what was going on and why - it was her training.

The combat suit was top-notch, Lilith noticed as the woman dismounted from the motorcycle. No skin was visible, but it was definitely a woman - the curves and the visible breasts demonstrated that - and she was well-toned, definitely able to fight from the obvious muscles in all the right places. Lilith took a few carefully focussed deep breaths before she turned to face the new arrival. Lilim did the same, adjusting her stance and position to backup her mentor. Trauma was a few feet off. He lacked the outward body armour of his colleagues, but he wore a mask and he had a conformal combat suit under his clothing. He made to backup Lilith and Lilim, but he found his path blocked by the new arrival's minions.

"You stay here, pretty boy," a deep voice growled, and Trauma glared up at a man who was almost as wide as he was tall.

"You die first, big boy - your muscles are obviously compensating for the tiddler in your shorts," Trauma responded. "I'm *more* than manly enough to take down a little dick like you."

"You boys can see who can pee furthest on your own time," a new voice called out.

..._...

Their opponent had spoken.

The combat suit was black but there appeared to be some subtle dark grey and dark red highlighting around the seams. Compact pistols - maybe Berettas - were visible in holsters on each hip along with a brace of throwing knives on each thigh. She bore a single sword, the hilt of which was visible over her left shoulder. However, her utility belt bore a pouch reminiscent of that which the *Fusion* vigilante Mist utilised for her chain whip. There was no indication at that point of what might be residing in that pouch.

"What do you want?" Lilith demanded.

"For you to die, honey."

"Not tonight, bitch!"

"I don't think you or your pint-sized . . . whatever . . . have any say in that."

Lilith growled, and her eyes burnt a severe orange colour as she took several steps to one side with Lilim two feet behind. The woman was intimidating them - or trying to. Obviously, she wanted the kudos for taking her and Lilim down. It was almost chivalrous, but there had to be more to it than that. However, until Lilith could figure it out, she would take advantage of the lull in the fighting. She was allowing her muscles to rest, if only for a few minutes - whatever it took to regain some of her strength. She knew that Lilim would be doing the same - Trauma too.

"Who are you?" Lilith continued, dragging things out.

"I am Tornado."

"All wind - thought so," Lilith chuckled.

A nerve had just been touched, or so it seemed as Tornado drew her Ko-Katana and charged at Lilith. With a decisive movement, Lilith brought up her fourteen-inch carbon-fibre batons and placed them end to end, joining them as

one staff before depressing two sections of the staff and a twelve-inch blade deployed from each end of what had quickly become a lethal double-ended bō-staff. Tornado nodded approvingly as her first strike was parried by Lilith who made a counterstrike with her opposing blade, missing Tornado's stomach by a whisker. Lilith was in her element, focussing on the opponent and her movements - she was good . . . highly skilled even. She had been taught by someone good, that was obvious, but Lilith had her own skills, many of which had not yet seen the light of day.

Lilim was worried - she did not have anything like the skills to fight somebody who appeared to a seasoned martial arts fighter like Tornado.

..._...

Tornado was a strong fighter, that was obvious, Lilith knew.

She was also strategically minded. Lilith had very good situational awareness - maintaining a three-dimensional image in her mind of everything around her. It was difficult and complex, taking concentration and brain power, but there was no choice if you did not want to be surprised. In her mind, she noticed that her opponent was edging closer and closer to Lilim. That was Tornado's strategy - divide Lilith's tasks. Lilith would have to decide on protecting herself, protecting Lilim, or fighting Tornado. There was no way in which she could do it all, but she had no choice. Lilim would have to fight to the very best of her ability and Lilith would have to watch Lilim's back as well as her own.

"Lilim - she's coming for you; strike now!" Lilith hissed over the comms.

"Lilim, trigger your blades," Trauma radioed, catching on. *"You have to attack, but keep Tornado at arm's length - understand?"*

Lilim was more frightened than she had ever been, but Lilith needed her help and she was not about to back down. She triggered her own blades which locked into place at the end of her batons. She took a deep breath as she felt the warmth of her own urine in her groin as she peed herself with fear. She bolted forwards and she concentrated on her target and focussing on a point to bury her blades. She came in from Tornado's left side, just as Lilith took her attention away from Lilim's direction. Lilim was able to slash the enemy across her left side, the razor-sharp blade striking the body armour but not penetrating. However, the strike had been strong enough to cause bruising and the surprised Tornado spring into action, altering her stance.

"You get that one as a freebie, little one - no more," Tornado growled. "You die first, little one."

As Tornado moved, the two vigilantes kept on either side of her as much as possible, limiting her actions. Trauma continued to feed Lilim guidance as she moved, correcting her stance and position. He knew that the youngster was totally outmatched, but he also knew that she had no choice but to fight.

"Lilim, take off a few legs of these fat bastards - it'll confuse things for Tornado."

Lilim moved like lightning, her blades lashing out and severing a man's legs just above the knees. The man yelled out as he fell into the ever-growing pool of his own blood, landing on his severed limbs. Tornado had to jump up to miss the writhing body and she momentarily lost her own situational awareness, allowing Lilith to get in her own strike, sending Tornado to the ground in a heap. Not that Tornado stayed down, she rapidly rolled back to her feet in time to block the next strike. Tornado was getting annoyed as she noticed that her opponents were working as a team and that was causing her a problem. The attack

on her minions was unexpected, but ultimately a good tactic. A second man went down, his stomach ripped open and his guts spilling onto the street. The man was reaching out for anything and he managed to grab Tornado's passing ankle, felling the black-clad vigilante. Tornado smashed her fist into the man's face and he let go of her ankle.

A strike from Lilith onto her right wrist forced her to drop her blade and she rolled away, reaching into her pouch.

..._...

Lilith raised an eyebrow beneath her mask as Tornado began to spin her meteor hammer with increasing speed.

The spherical hammer was attached to about five metres of chain-link. Then the hammer was released, and it flew unerringly in Lilith's direction. Lilith dived to her left, dodging the lethal device which at closer inspection had barbs and spikes adorning the sphere. Tornado was an expert with the weapon as she quickly brought the hammer back under her control and ready for another strike. She let fly and Lilith dodged again, however, one of Tornado's minions received the hammer full in his face, destroying said face completely and killing the face-less man instantly. As a result, the minions took several paces back from the fight.

"Own goal!" Lilith chuckled.

..._...

The sharpshooter was ensconced atop a building which gave him a commanding view over the target zone.

He had already taken out the front tyre of Lilith's motorcycle - shame about the bike, he had thought - he cared less about the human inside the combat suit. He had strict orders not to kill either of the two main targets: Lilith and Lilim. He was just to ensure that they did not escape before Tornado dealt with them.

He momentarily took his eye from the scope of his rifle as he heard movement behind him. He had a watcher . . . 'had' being the operative word as the man crashed to the rooftop beside him, his throat ripped open by what appeared to be claws. The sharpshooter rolled as he reached for his pistol, then he felt fear like he had never felt before as he looked up into the face of death. He never felt the claws which tore apart his throat. He just felt the warmth of his own blood as his life flowed out onto the rooftop before he lost consciousness forever.

He never noticed somebody else taking their place behind his rifle.

..._...

Despite the fight not quite going her way, Tornado was having the time of her life.

She was fighting a pair of serious vigilantes - only one of whom appeared to have any serious skills, though. Lilith was a decisive fighter and despite the fact that the vigilante had endured a motorcycle crash, she was still fighting without any sign of injury. Her subordinate, Lilim, knew enough to be a pain in the ass, but that was it. Tornado cared less for her minions - they were expendable and there were plenty more where they came from, anyway. Admittedly, she had been playing with her food for the first few rounds, but it was time to put an end to the San Diego vigilantes and earn her fee. The next strike with her meteor hammer was a devious one which, outwardly at least, was aimed at the

taller vigilante, Lilith. However, Tornado was able to alter the trajectory of her hammer at the very last second, and the heavy ball struck Lilim in the chest, knocking her down.

That was too much for Trauma - he smashed his elbows into the faces of the nearest men and he drew two throwing knives, driving them into the groins of both men, severing their carotid arteries. Amidst the confusion, he drew his combat machetes and attacked anything within reach. Blood spilled into the gutter as Trauma fought towards the fallen Lilim and Lilith. Lilith, too, had seen Lilim go down, but there was nothing that she could do about it while she was battling against Tornado, she would just have to trust to Trauma. Tornado did not appear to be enjoying her brief success as Lilith drove on her, harder and harder. Tornado took the opportunity to stow her meteor hammer and she swept up her fallen blade, parrying away Lilith's strikes.

While the focus was on the two major players, another was able to move into position.

..._...

Riptide had kept well out of the fighting, as he was supposed to.

He was Overwatch, checking for problems, and providing tactical support to the team. He had seen things go bad. He had seen Lilith crash, and Lilim being shot. His heart had been in his mouth as he had waited for them both to regain their feet. He had seen Trauma being kept to the sidelines as the new arrival had joined the fight - he had heard her name over the comms: Tornado. The general chaos around the site of the fight had allowed him to get closer - and just in time, too. He saw Lilim go down hard as the hammer struck her in the chest. He had heard the scream over the open comms. He had parked his motorcycle just a few yards away from the fight, and he kept his helmet in place. As the men surrounding the fight zone began to disperse as they came under attack from Trauma, Riptide moved in and he found Lilim still on the ground.

She was struggling to move as she got trampled and kicked in the melee.

..._...

Lilim could not believe how much pain she had endured that evening.

She could feel the tears beneath her mask, soaking her face. Her hands were shaking as was the rest of her body. Her chest was so painful. It hurt to breathe. It hurt to not breathe. It hurt to move. It hurt to not move. Then she felt a hand on her left arm and she brought her right baton around but stopped dead as she recognised Riptide in his helmet.

"Thanks for not chopping my head off!" Riptide stated. "Let's get you the fuck outta here!"

The boy hauled Lilim away from the stampeding feet and hence to her feet.

"Jeez, you're heavy!" Riptide exclaimed.

"Fuck you!" Lilim growled through gritted teeth as she struggled to support herself with Riptide's help.

"Can you ride?"

"Yes, I can."

Riptide helped Lilim over to where her motorcycle was still standing, and he helped her climb on. Gently, he eased on her crash helmet before pointing her towards home.

"I have Lilim and I'm gonna escort her home," Riptide radioed.

"Copy Lilim safe and heading home," Trauma replied. "I'll be right behind you once I have extricated Lilith from this mess."

With that, Riptide headed after Lilim and they both took a devious route back to Haven.

..._...

Lilith and Tornado were still fighting.

The swords clashed, and punches were thrown. Neither appeared to be winning, and neither appeared to be losing. For Lilith, she felt relief that Lilim was safe and being escorted to safety. She could hear Trauma fighting his way towards her through the mass of cunts. Lilith was exhausted and there was not much left in the tank, so to speak. But then, out of nowhere, Lilith and Trauma registered a loud crack, followed by another, and then another. First one and then a second head exploded, and the cunts scattered as fast as their legs could carry them. As for the third bullet, Tornado was blasted onto her back as a bullet struck her a little to the right of her chest. Lilith decided it was time to leave and she quickly ran over to her motorcycle. Trauma regained his own wheels and he slammed on the brakes beside Lilith who was fiddling with something down by the engine of her destroyed motorcycle.

"Go!" Lilith ordered as she jumped up behind him.

Seconds later, the Honda CRF1000L Africa Twin DCT in deep red exploded as a thermite charge burnt through the fuel tank, setting fire to the entire framework and destroying any forensic evidence which may exist. It did not take long for Trauma to catch up with Lilim and Riptide.

Together, they made for home and safety.

The Haven

The ride back had been complete torture and Lilim struggled to walk as she was helped off her motorcycle.

The girl was in a lot of pain as she sank onto a couch and she pulled off her helmet and mask, sweat and tears covering her skin. Logan helped Juno to remove her body armour, so he could assess her injuries. Trauma yanked off his own helmet and mask as he guided Lilith over to another couch. Thought a part of Nicholas enjoyed the idea of undressing Guinevere, he took no joy in it as he knew she was injured.

Neither girl had done much more than unzip the top of their combat suits when Guinevere's cell rang - she recognised the incoming number and she accepted the call.

"Hello."

"*This is a Marching Order - get the hell out of Haven!*"

Guinevere froze for a microsecond as her exhausted mind pieced together the words. Then, finally, the code phrase 'Marching Order' set off flashing red lights and klaxons in her mind.

"Marching Order acknowledged!" she responded as she dropped the call.

"We need to go!" Guinevere yelled. "Haven is compromised!"

Nicholas jumped up and he grabbed up his weapons. Juno shook her head to clear the drowsiness and she followed suit. Juno and Guinevere pulled on their masks, and they zipped up their combat suits. Trauma, his own mask in place, helped Lilim out of the side entrance, followed by Lilith.

"Move it, Riptide!" Trauma bellowed.

"Coming!" Riptide responded from inside Haven.

The three of them headed out of Haven, making for the storage locker across the way. They were maybe thirty yards from Haven when there came the staccato report of machinegun fire. The gunfire used intermittent green tracers which cut through the night like a laser beam as the high-intensity gunfire cut into Haven's brickwork. Everything moved fast - too fast - as there was a bright flash of light from the darkness. The rocket tore through the night, unerringly straight on its trajectory.

"Riptide!" Trauma yelled. "Get the hell out of there!"

But it was too late.

The single-story building bulged outwards for a micro-second before its concrete walls were shattered as they were blasted apart by the concussive force of the rocket exploding deep inside the structure. Lilith, Lilim, and Trauma looked on aghast as they saw their refuge tear itself apart before their very eyes. Lilim stared at the blossoming flames and a single word passed her lips.

"Logan."

*That is the end for **Creatures of the Night** . . . or is it?*

*This storyline continues in **Chapter 8: Escape from San Diego** of my other story: **Fusion: Los Angeles**.*