

Saturday, 18th June

Mid-afternoon

Safehouse F

As the three girls filed out and headed down to the mat, I was talking with Keira when I was interrupted by a voice.

“Mommy!”

I looked up in surprise to see it was Stephanie – she was faking an appalling American accent. I knew that she was perfectly capable of producing a very convincing accent when required – she would often mimic Anne-Marie, much to the younger girl’s annoyance.

“Could we have a *Predator* sleep over, please?”

“That sounds like a disaster waiting to happen!” I commented.

Stephanie grinned.

“I want to spend some time with the girls.”

“Only ‘cause they worship Psyche!” Saoirse commented.

“They do not!”

“Stephanie, your head has swelled along with your ego, ever since they arrived.”

“It has not!”

“Stephanie, I know you. I know everything about you,” Saoirse went on. “I know that you love the attention . . . you know something, Steph? You are so much like Mindy that you really could be her daughter.”

Stephanie beamed with pride at the compliment and I had to admit that I was beaming too.

The Mat

“What ‘fun’ are we going to have?” Naomi asked.

“I suppose you could all try out my new *Fusion* Training Centre,” I mused.

“What’s that?” Stephanie asked in surprise.

“Something that the senior staff have been cooking up,” Mindy commented with a sly grin towards Chloe.

“Where is it?” Stephanie continued.

“Saoirse will show you.”

“She knows and I don’t?” Stephanie bristled.

“I wanted it to be a surprise, Steph,” I replied evenly.

“Phase 3!” Saoirse reminded her tetchy friend and the younger girls all snickered.

“One of these days, SD . . .” Stephanie warned and the older Predator just smirked.

“Steph, please take the three Brits with you. Get them changed and equipped for their baptism of fire,” I ordered.

Stephanie smiled and she led the girls over to the changing rooms where she found Lauren and Megan awaiting them.

“Okay, girls,” Megan announced. “Strip out of them clothes and we’ll dress you for battle.”

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Forty minutes later, the four *Predators* reappeared from the changing rooms.

Each of the four girls was equipped with a flak jacket, integrated communications, an ASP, and a pistol loaded with blank rounds plus several spare magazines. The three younger girls each wore a plain mask while Stephanie wore her own, Psyche, mask.

The girls were led across the Safehouse towards the opposite corner, then through the shield and into the Engineering Store. They passed through a large steel hatchway and then down a long concrete corridor.

“Where, are we being taken?” Kaitlin asked.

“I dread to think,” Stephanie complained.

Finally, they were stopped before a hatch and they found Abby waiting for them. She opened the hatch and waved them through.

“Welcome!” Abby grinned. “Welcome to Hit Girl’s House of Horrors!”

Fusion Training Center

Beyond the hatch, they found a large space with a comfortable seating and a briefing area.

Mindy was there to greet them.

“Please sit down, girls, and you can remove your masks – you too, Steph. Harper, you will be team leader with Stephanie as your number two. Stephanie will stop you if anything dangerous occurs and you will defer to her in that situation, *is that understood?*”

“Yes, Mindy.”

“I do so hate having to dispose of bodies . . .”

Kaitlin grinned.

“Who are we fighting and what is the mission?” she asked.

“This is not training,” Mindy replied. “This is just to see what you can really do as a team. Show off your skills, if you like. Kaitlin, I know that you are younger and less experienced so defer to the other girls and enjoy yourself. I will not tell you what is ahead – I want to see how you respond to the unexpected. You will be attacked; I can promise you that. Now go and have some fun, girls!”

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The four girls pulled on their masks and Mindy pointed them towards a red hatchway. Just before they passed through the door, Stephanie pulled the three girls to one side.

“A word of warning to each of you. Remember who set this place up and who is pulling the strings.”

“It’s just for fun, isn’t it?” Kaitlin asked innocently.

Stephanie laughed sardonically.

“Hit Girl’s idea of fun is very different than what even us *Predators* see as fun!” Stephanie pointed out.

“Such as . . .” Naomi hinted.

“Live bombs during training, for one . . . I also ended up stark naked during one little episode . . .”

“You gotta tell us *that* story!” Harper chuckled.

“If we’re still alive after Hit Girl’s had her fun, then I’ll tell you tonight.”

Harper breathed in deeply before she gave her first order of the day.

“Form up – keep in touch and cover each other’s backs. Prowl, take point.”

The four girls pulled out their pistols and stood in line with Prowl at the front of the line, Polaris behind, followed by Glide, and then Psyche. Prowl heaved open the door and the four girls moved into the dark void that was Hit Girl’s personal hell . . .

Fusion Training Center

Control Room

Once the four girls had vanished through the red hatch, Keira, Sarah, and Chloe appeared.

“Come and see what a *Predator* can really do, Keira. Sarah, come and see your sister in action.”

Mindy led them through a secured hatch which required a swipe card to open. Inside was a large room with an array of large monitors. Abby was seated at a control console off to the right-hand side of the room.

“The training zone is spread over two levels and eighteen compartments. Every compartment is different depending on the scenario. We can have darkness, dazzling light, heat, cold . . . even rain. There are trap-doors, concealed hatch, hidden passageways. ‘Enemy’ can appear and disappear at will and we can raise hell wherever we wish,” Mindy explained. “We call it ‘The Bunker’.”

“Is it dangerous?” Sarah asked as she watched the four girls moving through almost total darkness on a screen before her.

“Oh, yes – most definitely,” Mindy replied with an evil grin.

Sarah grimaced, as did Keira.

The Bunker

“I don’t like this . . .”

“Where’s your fucking balls, Glide?” Polaris growled.

“I left them in my locker,” Glide replied and Prowl giggled.

“Focus, people!” Psyche suggested.

The corridor they were in was a hundred yards long and bathed in dull green illumination. They kept a good eye ahead and behind, especially Psyche; she knew how much of an evil bitch Hit Girl was . . .

BANG! BANG! BANG!

The four girls ran for their lives as the three loud bangs were set off a few yards behind them filling the corridor with an opaque smoke. At the end of the corridor, to their left, they found a large steel hatch which was partially open. Ahead was a concrete wall. Prowl raised her left hand which was clenched in a fist – ‘STOP!’. The other three girls stopped while Psyche covered their rear with her pistol pointing into the smoke which worked its way towards them. Prowl examined the hatch carefully for any sign of trip wires or explosives. Prowl turned to Polaris and nodded that all was clear. Polaris passed that all was clear and they began to move through the hatch.

First Prowl, then Polaris were through. Just as Glide put a foot through, Prowl screamed out as somebody grabbed her left arm and yanked her into the shadows.

Polaris turned towards her friend and yelled out a warning to the rest of her team.

A shape came out of the darkness towards her and Polaris simply squeezed the trigger of her pistol twice and the ‘shape’ dropped to the ground. In the flashes of her gunshots, Prowl could be seen on the floor clambering back to her feet.

“You okay?” Polaris asked as she kicked the ‘dead’ body and elicited a yell of pain.

“I’m still alive no thanks to fuck face down there!” Prowl retorted as she purposefully stepped on the same ‘dead’ body.

Fusion Training Center Control Room

“I’d stay down a bit longer, Jackal!”

“Not fucking funny, Hit Bitch – I’m gonna kill that fucking Polaris!” Jackal growled with humour in his voice.

“Yay!” Keira grinned as he sister rapidly took charge of the team and formed them back up again.

“First blood to Polaris,” Hal announced from the console.

As Keira watched the screens, the four *Predators* moved deeper into the facility. The first door to the left was locked but they paused as they found a set of double doors blocking their progress forward.

“Hold position, Petra!” Hit Girl ordered with a smirk. “They’re just on the other side of the door . . .”

“What’s Psyche found?” Sarah asked as the vigilante picked something up off the ground. “Is that a shotgun?”

“Mossberg 400 Tactical – Chainsaw,” Hit Girl advised. “Should take the hinges off if she’s careful. Only two breaching rounds are loaded.”

“Did you just say breaching rounds?” Petra demanded.

“I’d keep that pretty little head down, Petra!” Hal suggested as Psyche raised the shotgun and blew out the top hinge and then did the same to the lower hinge.

The heavy door fell on top of Petra who yelled obscenities to anybody who would listen, “I fucking hate you, Hit Girl!”

Prowl led the team onwards as Psyche dropped the empty shotgun beside the hapless Petra.

The Bunker

The lights in the corridor flickered in an apparently random sequence of flashes.

The corridor was long and dark in places. While Prowl kept an eye open on the forbidding corridor ahead, Polaris turned her attentions to the next set of double doors to the left. The doors were partially ajar and the nine-year-old took her time to peer through into the room beyond. It was a dormitory with about ten beds, five to a side. The lights flickered just as they were in the corridor outside.

“I go in, followed by Psyche and Glide,” Polaris ordered and she received nods in response.

Polaris turned back to the trapped Petra who was playing ‘dead’. Polaris spied a pair of flashbangs on the vigilante’s belt which she quickly appropriated. She was not falling for another of Hit Girl’s traps . . .

“Fire in the hole!” Polaris hissed as she pulled a pin and threw one of the elongated canisters into the dormitory. Everybody turned away and hid their eyes.

There was a loud bang and a bright flash of white light.

“Go!”

Polaris pushed through the doors followed by Psyche and Glide. As they passed the second pair of beds, the first pair seemed to rise into the air as they were thrown to one side and two dark forms stepped out and span a pair of wooden jō-staffs around in a decidedly disconcerting manner.

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Polaris deployed her ASP and immediately went on the offensive attacking the form to her left. Psyche and Glide both followed suit with their own ASPs. They attacked the girl to the right just as a yell was heard in the corridor outside and Prowl was attacked by another armoured form armed with a bokken. All four Predators were fighting as hard as they could to defeat the unexpected attacks that had come out of the darkness.

Out in the corridor, alone, Prowl felt no fear as she deployed her ASP and fended off the attack from the unknown form. To Prowl, it was business, as she took in her attacker’s movements and examined her skill level. The attacker was not a professional fighter by any means, maybe an early-level Phase 1 equivalent. Prowl quickly gauged her attacker and thrust forwards.

Back in the dormitory, Glide was having the time of her life. So what, if her attacker was over a foot taller than her and armed with a five-foot weapon longer than she was tall; she used her speed and agility to attack with the ASP and more than once she heard a yell of pain from the attacker. Psyche

dodged around the fleeting Glide to strike against the unknown assailant. Psyche was *not* happy; who were these two, they were not members of *Fusion*. Where'd the bloody hell did they come from; 1-800-rent-a-vigilante? Whatever . . . they were going down!

Polaris was letting everything out as she fought her attacker single-handed. Her ASP flashed in the lights and struck hard and with meaning. Polaris ducked to avoid the equally painful jō-staff as it was wielded with extreme skill. Who the heck was the person behind the jō-staff; they were damn good! The fight was turning in Polaris' favour but then, out of nowhere, there was a flash of light and smoke spread throughout the dormitory.

"Sound off!" Polaris ordered.

"Prowl intact and out of contact!"

"Glide intact and out of contact!"

"Psyche confused but out of contact . . ."

As the smoke dissipated the Predators were very much alone.

Fusion Training Center
Control Room

"This fucking sucks!" Glide yelled out.

"Little girls had enough, yet?" Hit Girl said calmly into the microphone.

"Just wait till I get my hands on you, you fucking . . ." Glide began before Prowl put a hand over the younger girl's mouth.

"Eat this, Hit Girl!" Polaris growled as she raised a single finger into the air. "I'm going to enjoy shoving this ASP up your tight dripping . . ."

"Time to move!" Psyche suggested loudly and the four girls ran out of the dormitory.

"Colourful . . ." Keira mused as Hit Girl laughed out loud.

"Now for the good part, Sarah . . ." Hit Girl mused. "The *Predator's* Nemesis awaits them . . ."

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The four girls moved together down the corridor into the darkness; their pistols raised before them, the ASPs stowed.

"Come hither, little *Predators* . . . I'm going to slice you and I'm going to fuck you up . . ."

A dark shadow emerged into the light ahead. The light reflected on the dull yellow highlights while the dark grey armour blended into the darkness. The girls began to open fire with their pistols but the armoured assassin simply flipped sideways into a doorway. The girls feverishly reloaded and they each turned their attentions to a door on their right. The room was in darkness.

"Come hither, little *Predators* . . . I'm gonna make you run . . . I'm gonna show how fucking useless you pussy *Predators* are . . ."

Glide bolted forwards as the anger surged within her.

“No!” Polaris yelled out but to no avail.

The remaining members of the team ran after their comrade-in-arms; they had no choice.

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It all began to go wrong – for the *Predators* . . .

Glide was kicked down and she fell backwards into some chairs as Nemesis emerged from the darkness. She yelled out, shocked that she had been put down so easily. Prowl covered for Glide as Psyche pulled the fallen *Predator* to her feet. Prowl kicked and punched for all she was worth. Hardly any strikes got through. The longer arms of Nemesis allowed her to strike but keep the younger girls at arms-length. Nemesis barely noticed Polaris outflanking her to the right, an ASP raised in each hand.

Nemesis kicked Prowl away and she drew a long, thin, bokken from her back. Polaris struck with both ASPs and Nemesis skilfully deflected the nine-year-old Phase 2 *Predator*. Psyche joined the action and attacked with her own ASP. Nemesis drew a shorter bokken from her left boot and fended off the strike before she kicked Polaris into Psyche and both went down hard and collided with a group of tables and chairs. Prowl and Glide came in hard and together, they worked as a team, attacking and dodging as they jumped over the tables and chairs, using them to good effect as they went.

Prowl heaved a chair at Nemesis who smashed it to one side with her armoured gauntlet. Glide made a good effort to distract Nemesis while Prowl went in hard and fast striking at Nemesis in every way that she could. The nine-year-old landed strike after strike on the nineteen-year-old vigilante as Glide kept moving in and out of Nemesis’ reach. Then Nemesis struck out and she kicked Prowl and Glide to the floor. Polaris and Psyche came in for an attack which Nemesis dodged . . . and then she was gone only to be replaced by a hissing voice from the corridor.

“Oh, little *Predators* . . . the bitch has arrived to bring about the endgame . . .”

The Bunker

Psyche groaned – it *had* to be Hit Girl!

Polaris reassembled her team and after a brief check for injuries, they moved off but they paused at the door to the passageway. Prowl used a mirror from her jacket to peer down the passageway to the right. A single shape was visible.

“The little *Predators* are scared . . .” the electronically enhanced voice taunted.

“Fuck this!” Polaris growled. “Everybody ready?”

“Let’s get the fucking bitch!” Glide responded.

“Ready?” Psyche enquired.

“Let’s do it!” Prowl finished.

Fusion Training Center Control Room

The four girls exploded out of the doorway mere seconds after Polaris threw the remaining flash-bang into the passageway.

Once the camera had readjusted from the bright flash, the *Predators* were seen to be advancing on the single armoured vigilante who stood alone in the corridor. The individual was not tall and she had her arms crossed over her chest with the armoured gauntlets resting on her shoulder-blades. Hal manipulated the lighting in the corridor to illuminate the upper half of the vigilante's body. There was a brief flash as the bright lights reflected off two triple sets of lethal-looking claws which deployed from either gauntlet.

"Fuck!" Psyche was heard to growl. "Wildcat!"

"Isn't that dangerous – her using those claws?" Sarah asked with a worried voice.

"Nah," Hal responded. "Wildcat is using her training gauntlets – not that the other girls have any idea; they're brand new!"

Wildcat stood her ground as the *Predators* advanced.

Polaris

I was a little scared.

Wildcat had a reputation. Good or bad? That depended on whether or not you were her friend or an enemy. Those claws looked lethal and I was surprised that Hit Girl allowed them to be used in training – but Psyche had warned us of Hit Girl's 'training' ideas.

"Psyche – take Glide and attack from the left. Prowl and I will come from the right."

"Copy that!" came the three responses.

"Time for some kitty behaviour training!" I growled out loud as I approached.

"Time for little pussy *Predators* to be put in their fucking places before they hurt themselves!" Wildcat taunted.

With a yell, I bolted forwards and jumped to the right. I planted my right foot onto the corridor wall and pushed off. I swung past Wildcat and took my ASP across her left shoulder blade. Prowl struck her ASP into Wildcat's left lower arm as she moved her claws to intercept. Simultaneously, Psyche and Glide attacked from the left. Glide used her small size to slide between Wildcat's legs and strike from the rear with her ASP. She struck the insides of both thighs plus an additional swipe at a more sensitive region.

Wildcat yelled out – not from pain; she was sufficiently armoured where it mattered but she was incensed that the littlest *Predator* would attack her snatch.

Psyche

"Good shot, Glide!" I yelled out as I saw the third strike hit home.

The kitty was not amused and the language was bordering on that which would make Hit Girl blush. I took my ASP across Wildcat's right shoulder blade and kicked my knee into her right side. The lethal

claws whipped past my eyes as Wildcat struck out at me but then her right elbow shoved me into the wall and I collapsed to the ground.

I heard a scream and I saw Glide kicked to one side and then a double scream as Prowl landed on top of Glide. I ran to pull the two girls back to their feet as Polaris covered but she was quickly flipped over onto her back and brought down hard. We moved away to regroup while Wildcat just stood her ground and watched.

I nodded at Polaris, Prowl, and Glide. We all ran forwards with Polaris and me in front. We had just started to run towards Wildcat when to my surprise, Wildcat began to charge *us*!

Glide

Wildcat was charging and I had a feeling that she was pissed – might have been something to do with me taking the ASP across her twat . . . just maybe.

Polaris and Psyche were just feet from the charging Wildcat when the feline vigilante dived *over* us all – I was stunned and my awe pretty much killed me as Wildcat grabbed me and ‘blew my brains out across the corridor’ with her pistol.

“*Glide is dead!*” came a voice from the Control Room.

“Fuck!” I growled as I ‘played dead’.

Prowl

My cousin had just been killed and I outlived her by about forty-five seconds as Wildcat took the claws of her left hand across my throat.

I thought I was a gonna for real, but the claws were a tough rubber and not their usual titanium. Nonetheless, I ‘died’.

“*Prowl is dead!*”

Fusion Training Center

Control Room

“Two down, two to go . . .,” Hit Girl chuckled.

As Sarah and Keira watched the screens in stunned silence, Wildcat expertly backflipped away from Psyche and Polaris.

“Her signature move,” Hit Girl commented.

“Nice!” Keira replied.

Before either Psyche or Polaris could respond, two dark shapes emerged from nowhere and the throats of both *Predators* were ‘cut’ from behind.

“Thank you – the training session is over,” Hit Girl called over the comms. “All *Predators* please report back to the start.”

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Psyche and Polaris felt the 'knives' removed from their necks and they turned to find an empty corridor.

"What the fuck?" Polaris growled.

"Told you this place was fucking nuts!" Psyche chuckled.

"It was fun . . ." Glide commented.

"I'm gonna be sore in a few hours . . ." Prowl added.

A minute later, the four Predators stood in the darkness near to the start of The Bunker and they pulled off their masks. There were four bright flashes and then four gunshots rang out and the four girls fell backwards onto the floor. They all sat up rubbing their chests and looking very annoyed. Mindy, Keira, Sarah, and Cassie, all lowered their pistols and smirked at the girls.

"That was for the annoying behaviour on the plane!" Keira commented with a smile for her sister.

"Not fair!" Harper muttered as she glared daggers at her big sister.

"What have I ever done to any of you?" Kaitlin pouted as she stood up.

"You opened your mouth!" Naomi laughed. "That was fun . . . can we do it again?"

"I hate you, Mum!" Stephanie growled from the floor.

"I did nothing," Mindy said sweetly and Stephanie scowled.

Bang!

Stephanie yelled out as another bullet hit her armour. Mindy casually blew away the muzzle smoke from her pistol.

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As the four girls were helped to their feet, two more individuals entered the room. Both were tall and masked. They wore dark grey body armour and each had a pistol in a holster plus a wooden jō-staff in their left hands. The two new arrivals pulled off their masks to reveal the smirking faces of two near identical teenaged girls.

"Everybody, please meet Sky and Chrissy, otherwise known as Venom and Bane," Mindy explained.

"Venom and Bane were both Phase 3 *Predators*."

"Hi," the four girls said together.

"Hi – you all fought well," Sky offered with a friendly smile.

"Well fought, Psyche; we've heard a lot about you," Chrissy smiled.

"Well fought the both of you," Stephanie replied with a grin. "Where'd you both come from, anyway?"

"A story for later, Steph," Mindy replied. "Let's get cleaned up and we can debrief over some food."

"I'm starving!" Harper complained.

“What’s new!” Keira grunted.