

Sunday, June 26th, 2016

Lizzie Edwards saw herself as one of *Fusion's* biggest fans.

The bedroom which she shared with her big sister, Lauren, was liberally plastered with posters and photos of the Chicago Vigilantes. Currently, her favourite was a relative newcomer to the scene. Various photos of the female vigilante were prominently visible alongside the likes of Hit Girl, Kick-Ass, and Shadow. Lizzie had no idea that her dream, and much more besides, was about to come true.

That vigilante was known as Nightmare.

That evening

The Edwards Home

“What is this?”

Lizzie Edwards was scared, however, something in the back of her mind told her that she was safe from harm. The female vigilante standing before her was a good few inches taller than her and she had a slim build, despite the teal and dark grey tiger stripes that liberally covered the combat suit which bulked out her figure. On her right hip was a holster carrying a SIG Sauer P239 Tactical pistol in 9-millimetre. Around her waist was a utility belt that carried various pouches as well as a 7-inch knife over her left thigh – Lizzie knew all about her favourite vigilante and the version before her matched the posters on the walls of her bedroom.

The vigilante was standing in that same bedroom having climbed in through the window, just moments before. She knew that the vigilante was known as Nightmare, she also had a shrewd idea who the vigilante really was beneath all the armour, but there was every chance that she was very, very wrong. Lizzie Edwards began to cry, but the vigilante reached out with her left hand and she took hold of Lizzie's right.

“Don't be afraid. . .” the electronically altered voice said.

“I – I'm not. If only my sister could see this. . .”

“She's here, my dear Lizzie, she's here.”

Lizzie was very confused and more than a little worried as with her right hand, the Chicago vigilante reached up and she pulled off her mask. For a moment, Lizzie blinked, scared to look but she then took in the face before her. She took an enormous intake of breath as her eyes struggled to comprehend what, or rather *who*, was standing before her.

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The twelve-year-old girl stopped crying and she smiled.

“*I knew it!*” Lizzie exclaimed. “*I knew it was you!*”

“Thank you for keeping it quiet,” Lauren replied as she hugged her younger sister. “I had a feeling that you knew what was going on.”

“This is so awesome – my sister's a vigilante!”

Then came the expected host of questions and comments.

“I saw you on TV – you were awesome!”

“What was it like to kill people?”

“Does Mom know?”

“When you climbed that tower at the silos – you were so brave!”

“Do you know who Hit Girl really is?”

“What will Mom say?”

“Were you scared that night?”

Then she lapsed into silence and the twelve-year-old just flopped backwards onto her bed, stunned by the evening’s revelations. But she bolted upright a minute later when their mother pushed open the bedroom door.

“Lizzie, what have I told you about leaving your dirty clothes on the landing. . . oh . . . hi, Lauren – what have I told *you* about bringing firearms into the house?”

Lizzie’s mouth dropped open in shock.

“You *know!*”

“Of course, honey; I’m her mother!”

Lauren grinned.

“Sorry, *Athena!*”

“*What!*” Lizzie exclaimed. She glared at her mother and elder sister. “You, too?”

Emily Edwards glared at her youngest daughter and she shrugged.

“Sorry. . .”

“This sucks!”

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The rest of the evening was spent with Lizzie examining each and every part of Lauren’s combat suit as her sister undressed. The weapons were placed securely inside a locked container which in turn was bolted to the bedroom floor and the combat suit went into a locked, Kevlar holdall.

Lauren was very pleased that she did not have to withhold the secret any more. Lauren had been certain that Lizzie was figuring things out and after talking with Mindy and her mother, Lauren was told to come over, in ‘uniform’. Both Lauren and her mother had sworn Lizzie to the utmost secrecy and she had nodded her ascent. Lizzie kept lapsing between moments of non-stop chatter and questions to total silence as she struggled to comprehend all she had learnt.

Lauren found her sister’s confusion funny and she went to sleep with a big smile on her face.

A few hours later

“What’s going on . . .?”

Lizzie struggled to sit up in her bed, her hands rubbing her eyes. Lauren was doing the same thing but then she suddenly came alert and she could hear shouting.

“Get out!” their mother screamed from downstairs.

“No!” came an answering bellow.

“Dad!” Lauren growled angrily as she jumped out of the bed and ran for the bedroom door. “Stay here, Lizzie!”

Lizzie made to move.

“I said to *stay!*”

Lizzie flinched away from her sister, scared by the dark expression on her face. She complied and slipped back under the covers.

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“You fucking, bitch – those are my daughters, up there . . . and I want to see them!”

“It’s two o’clock in the fucking morning, you drunk bastard!”

“I’ve seen what you’ve done to Lauren; she hates me . . .”

“You made her hate you all by yourself.”

“You fucking whore . . . I’m gonna . . .”

The hand moved through the air, the palm of the hand open. Only it was intercepted and brought down smartly before a hand wrapped around Bill Edwards’ throat. The arm squeezed and a voice hissed into his ear.

“One quick squeeze and you will never breath again . . .”

Bill Edwards did not recognise the voice which hissed in his ear and he would never have guessed that his daughter could scare him so badly. A hand grabbed hold of his throat and he felt the nails digging in.

“Do you want me to rip your fucking gutless throat out?”

Bill Edwards did his best to shake his head.

“People like you make me sick – I think you need to be taught a lesson; something that you will *never* forget . . .”

With that, Bill Edwards felt the arm release but as he attempted to turn, something hard collided with the side of his head and he lost consciousness before he hit the living room floor.

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“Mom? Are you okay?”

“Yes, honey – I wish you didn’t have to see him like that, but thank you for coming to my aid.”

“I warned him . . . when he found me at the cinema.”

“Yes, honey, you did – he was never one to take subtle suggestions. So, what do you have planned?”

“I have an idea but I’m going to need some help.”

The Willis Tower

95th Floor

Bill Edwards was not a happy man – not by any stretch of the imagination.

His head hurt and for some reason, he did not feel right. As he opened his eyes . . .

“Holy fuck!” he yelled.

Everything was upside down and he had a remarkable view of Chicago at night. Then fear gripped him as he realised that he was upside down and hanging from a building, very, very high in the air. He looked around in a panic and at first, he thought he was alone. But no, just a few feet away, he could see the silhouette of somebody close by.

“Enjoying the view?” the electronically enhanced voice asked.

“Scary, ain’t it?” another electronic voice asked and Edwards span around to see another form.

“Where am I?” he demanded.

“The 95th floor of the Willis Tower – I’ve been where you are and it sucks.”

“Who are you?”

“My name is Psyche. My pal over there, that’s Nightmare – she’s a bit crazy, by the way.”

“Why . . .?”

“Let’s just say that we’re friends of your daughter and she is not happy with what you’re doing to her mother. They want you to stay out of their lives – *for good!*” Psyche went on.

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Edwards struggled with his hands but they were secured, tightly, behind his back. His feet were secured as were his lower legs, almost to the knees. As he struggled, he began to swing from side to side. As his eyes adjusted to the darkness, he saw that the two armour-clad individuals were wearing harnesses and hanging off the side of the building, quite comfortably, the right way up.

“What are going to do to me?”

Edwards was determined not to give in to vigilantes but his voice betrayed him and wavered slightly.

“Don’t know yet . . .” Psyche replied.

Edwards never saw the fist which swung from the other side and struck him hard in the stomach. Edwards struggled to regain his breath and his inverted position did not help.

“You’ve pissed us off,” Nightmare growled as she kicked him in the face and sent him slamming into the tempered glass of the empty office behind.

Edwards screamed at the pain both from his smashed nose and his bruised head from the collision with the glass.

“I won’t go near those girls again . . .”

“Don’t fucking believe you!” Psyche drawled.

“You need to suffer a bit more,” Nightmare growled as she brought out a knife and cut away his shirt allowing the wrecked garment to drift away, over a thousand feet, to the street below.

Nightmare then cut the belt of Edwards pants and slit up his right side while Psyche did the same on the left side. Each leg was then cut and the pants joined the shirt below. Nightmare seemed to hesitate but Psyche moved in and cut away the man’s underwear leaving him naked from the knees up.

“Bit pathetic, really,” Psyche commented as she ran the tip of her knife along the man’s genitals. “I thought men were supposed to have bigger dicks.”

Edwards was shaking with both fear, and the cold.

Nightmare giggled behind her mask at Psyche’s comment.

After a brief phone call to Mindy, Dave and Stephanie had appeared at her house to remove the unconscious Mr Edwards. It had been Stephanie’s idea to use the same place where she had been left dangling a few months previously. Kick-Ass was above them, in control of the ropes with Jackal and Shadow to assist.

While she had no love for the man who was dangling all but naked before her, she had been a little freaked out about removing his underwear but Psyche had jumped in to cover her unintended hesitation. While she was still squeamish at seeing men naked – in fact, she had never seen any *completely* naked – seeing her own father naked was something else completely. She steeled herself for what was to come; it had to be done to give her, her sister, and her mother some much-needed peace.

Psyche nodded at her; it was time.

“You . . . are . . . going . . . to . . . fucking . . . learn . . . you . . . piece . . . of . . . worthless . . . shit!”

As Nightmare yelled at Edwards, she punctuated each pause with a kick to some part of his body. The final kick went to somewhere delicate and the man screamed out in pain as blood from some of the kicks ran down his body.

“Time to go, bye bye!” Psyche growled and she began to cut the ropes binding his legs.

“No . . . please . . .”

The man was begging and he began to weep.

“You can’t . . .”

“Oh, yes we can,” Nightmare chuckled.

Psyche cut the final rope and Bill Edwards screamed as he began to plummet earthwards.

As he fell, the single rope binding Edwards' ankles together came taught after several feet and he was jerked to a rapid halt.

Terror was etched across his face and Nightmare cringed as she witnessed her father piss himself a thousand feet above the City of Chicago.

"Hope nobody's looking up!" Psyche quipped before she looked at Mr Edwards. "I'd keep my mouth shut, too, if I were you!"

As Bill Edwards watched, Psyche and Nightmare were hauled up the side of the building and onto the rooftop above.

"Don't leave me!"

There was no response as he was left to swing from side to side staring down at the dark city below.

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"You think we should pull the fucker up?" Jackal asked.

"Nah – he's enjoying the view too much," Shadow chuckled.

"Pull me up – please . . ."

"Don't think he's enjoying *anything*, to be honest," Psyche commented dryly as she peered over the edge of the tower. "Mind you, I think his dick's getting smaller."

Nightmare laughed out loud and she blushed behind her mask.

"Thank you, all of you. I hate that man for what he's done to my Mom . . . but he is my Dad and while I want him out of our lives, I don't want him dead."

"That's your decision and your decision alone," Kick-Ass said.

"I want to go back to my family now."

"Pull him up!" Kick-Ass ordered and Jackal heaved on the rope.

The Edwards Home

"Lauren!"

"I'm back, Mom."

"I was so worried – your father?"

"He won't trouble us any more . . ."

"You didn't . . ."

"He's alive."

The following morning
Sunday, June 26th, 2016

The Edwards Home

“Mom!”

“What Lauren?”

“You may want to see this news item . . . “

‘... In other news, a naked man was found wandering around the 95th floor of the Willis Tower in the early hours of the morning. The man, believed to be in his forties, was unable to explain why he was atop the tower but he kept saying that he had to leave Chicago. No charges were filed against the unknown man who appeared to have lost his mind but Police said that he had been provided with clothing and given a bus ticket out of the city...’

“Was that . . .?” Emily asked, a big smile spreading across her face

Lauren simply nodded.

Glenview

Mindy turned away from the TV and she looked over at her husband and daughter as they ate breakfast.

“You two appeared to have had fun, last night,” she commented with a grin.

“Nothing to do with me,” Stephanie offered. “Ask Psyche and Nightmare – they went a little nuts, last night . . .”

Dave simply shrugged and winked at his daughter who giggled as she dug into her cereal.

“I’ll give you both points for creativity. Now, I need to go have words with Emily and I have a feeling that she is *not* going to like my idea.”

“She’ll give in – we all do . . . eventually,” Dave replied sardonically.

That evening

1908 Wagner Rd, Glenview

“Mindy . . . I know some say that you are totally nuts . . .,” Mindy rolled her eyes, “and I would not normally agree with them, but right now . . . no, we can’t!”

“Emily – I insist . . . and you don’t want to cross me; *I’m nuts!*” Mindy warned with a smirk.

“It’s far too much. Really, Mindy, we can’t . . .”

“Why not?” Lizzie demanded.

“It’s a little much, Mindy . . .” Lauren said in agreement with her mother.

“I just want you all to be safe – besides, you’ll be closer to everybody else,” Mindy pointed out reasonably.

“I’m not going to win this argument, am I?” Emily said.

“No – I’m a pushy bitch!”

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The house had six bedrooms across three floors and was over 5,000 square-feet in size. Each girl would have their own bedroom and a private en-suite bathroom for the first time in their lives.

“I love it, Mindy – it also means I don’t have to put up with Lauren farting all night!” Lizzie laughed as Lauren scowled at her younger sister.

“Okay!” Emily said as she finally gave in and gave Mindy a big hug.

Mindy grimaced but she went along with the hug as she was very glad Emily had taken her up on her offer.

Wednesday, 29th June
Evening

Safehouse F

“Oh, wow!”

Lauren giggled at her sister’s reaction which was much the same as her own first visit. Lauren recognised the expressions that flitted across her sister’s face as she recognised the many familiar faces from either school or D-JAK. There was also some jealousy when Lizzie had first seen Lauren’s on-duty uniform.

“Don’t worry, Lizzie,” Mindy chuckled. “We’ll get you one, too.”

“Me?”

“We know you can look after yourself – we’ve seen you in action at D-JAK. If you want in then we have a place for you . . . Torment.”

“Torment. . .” Lizzie breathed. “I like it.”

“Does that mean you won’t be breaking into any more houses?” Hailee asked with a smirk.

“Sorry about that – I was going through a phase. . .” Lizzie explained shyly.

“No harm done.”

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“Let’s see what you can do, Lizzie,” Stephanie suggested. “Remember, this is *not* D-JAK. Down here, anything goes, okay?”

“Okay. . .”

With that, Stephanie began to circle the twelve-year-old girl. Lizzie had picked up her skills quickly at D-JAK so Stephanie was expecting something approaching a passable attack. . . Instead, Lizzie launched into a succession of Taekwondo patterns which had Stephanie rapidly retreating in surprise before she fell over backwards as Lizzie planted her right foot into the younger girl’s chest.

“You been holding out on us, Lizzie?” Stephanie demanded as she rubbed her chest.

It was the grinning Lauren who replied for her sister.

“Lizzie practices every minute she can. Mom has to keep moving shit to stop it getting broken. Lizzie has also been trawling the internet for moves which D-JAK doesn’t teach.”

“Thanks for the heads up, *partner!*” Stephanie growled. “Well done, Lizzie; you’re full of surprises.”

“Thanks, Stephanie . . . *ooopfh!*”

Stephanie smiled down at Lizzie as she lay on the mat, her arms wrapped around her stomach.

“Never let your guard down.”

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It was a very happy trio that left Safehouse F and headed north to their new home. Emily Edwards was very pleased with how her daughters were turning out and very impressed with her younger daughter’s skills. It made her feel more relaxed knowing that both of her girls could look after themselves. Having her husband run out of town was a dream come true, but for the ‘sheriff’ to have been her own daughter. . .

For the Edwards family, life had finally improved in every way.