

Saturday, July 9th, 2016

Two miles west of the explosion

The man smiled as the sound of the explosion rumbled across the city.

He pressed play on an old cassette tape machine and the martial drumbeat of the Irish band, U2, rang out: *'I can't believe the news today. . .'* as he went back to crushing the RDX crystals into a fine powder with a rolling pin. A few minutes later, the man emptied the resulting fine powder into a bowl which he placed next to another bowl containing a similar amount of PETN powder. The two powders were poured into a jar and shaken for a good five minutes before the resultant mixture was poured into a bowl of liquid which contained among other things, petroleum jelly.

The man demonstrated great skill as he mixed the powder and liquid into a paste; he had obviously made the dangerous mixture many times before. He moulded the resultant paste into a brick which was then covered with wax paper and sealed with plastic film. He placed the freshly made brick of Semtex explosive onto the growing pile concealed inside a kitchen cupboard.

He returned to the kitchen table and reached for more PETN crystals.

South-eastern Chicago

Battle Guy and Hal had both hit the panic alarm together.

Even before that, Hit Girl had braced up as she had climbed onto her Panigale, as the sound of the explosion rumbled past the gathered vigilantes. She pulled on her helmet and started her engine. Hit Girl then spun the rear wheel of her motorcycle and skidded around in a smoky one-eighty before she raced off down the street. Kick-Ass, Petra, Jackal, and Raven followed suit. In their visors, a red cross-hair had appeared indicating an emergency but to make things worse, a flashing *Fusion* symbol indicated a vigilante at risk: Foxtail.

The night was starting to heat up.

Firehouse 51

The two-tone alarm sounded, followed by a klaxon.

"Explosion . . . South Racine and West Harrison . . . Engine 51 . . . Truck 81 . . . Squad 3 . . . Ambulance 61"

They had all heard the explosion and were all but ready when the alarm came. The Engine and the Truck rolled first, followed by the brand-new Ambulance 61 and then Squad 3.

Douglas Park

Leon, Shadow, and their escorts were scouting out the park when the call came in.

The rear wheels of the Trans-Am sent up a pair of chirps as the car accelerated with the two motorcycles following close behind. They did not get far as they found their route blocked and Leon stomped on the brake pedal.

“What the fuck!” Shadow exclaimed.

Mid-April, 2014

An unknown location in the USA

The Cage

After twenty minutes, Stephanie sat up and looked over at the yellow dweeb on the chair.

“What’s your name?”

“Electra Harmon.”

“Seven?”

“Yeah.”

The girl looked very young and she wore glasses. Her hair was short and dark brown. Stephanie was about to ask some more questions when the door opened and an instructor strode in. Electra hit a button which released the door to Stephanie’s cage and Stephanie jumped to her feet, her face displaying confusion and fear. The instructor said nothing as he seized the naked girl by the upper left arm and dragged her out of the cage and out into the maze of corridors which made up the training facility.

Stephanie was scared. She had no idea where she was being taken or why – but it had to be bad. Then after a few more turns she braced up and she felt a wave of humiliation and fear as she was thrust through the double doors which led into the main dining room. Silence quickly descended on the large open space as almost two-hundred pairs of eyes focused on the naked eight-year-old. Stephanie was hauled towards an ominously empty table where a pair of instructors waited – one held a leather strap in his right hand.

“Lie on the table – face down!”

Stephanie did as she was instructed – she had no choice. She started to shake with the fear of what lay ahead as an instructor grabbed hold of her wrists while another grabbed hold of her ankles – she was pinned. Then the instructor with the strap began to speak – loudly.

“This little bitch attacked an instructor. That behaviour *WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!* You will all witness what happens if you do something so stupid – the next two weeks will be hell for this example of human detritus.”

The strapping began. Five hard cracks resounded around the dining room. The only other sounds were the screams and sobs emanating from Stephanie Walker as she was beaten.

..._...

When it was over, Stephanie was in unbelievable pain. The pain from her existing injuries had mixed with the new and she shook violently as she sobbed.

“Stay there, you little bast’d – you will not move ‘til someone comes for yer. Don’t move a fuckin’ muscle and keep that nose to the table!”

The instructors left and everybody went back to their breakfast. Stephanie was aware of the hushed sounds of whispering and she knew that many were still watching her and making comments about

her beating. After a little over twenty minutes, the dining room began to empty and almost every *Predator* walked past the prone, shaking form on their way out the door. Stephanie felt humiliated at being displayed so openly but then it got worse as she was slapped on her bruised buttocks and she was hit on the head by others and slapped elsewhere on her body. As well as the physical abuse, the verbal abuse was dished out.

“... you deserved every strike ...”

“... stupid idiot ...”

“... loved the show ...”

“... you should have gotten more ...”

“... hope you suffered, bitch ...”

“... we're gonna love the next two weeks ...”

“... bet that smarted ...”

“... that'll leave a mark ...”

“... worthless fucker ...”

“... fuckin' stupid Brit ...”

Stephanie just sobbed as the pain and humiliation grew. She grimaced through it all – she believed in what was taught in one of her earliest classes as a *Predator*: ‘*what doesn't kill you makes you stronger*’ – a quote from Friedrich Nietzsche. She was determined to live through everything they could throw at her.

It wasn't long before she was alone, the final Predators having headed to their first class of the day. After that, it felt like a lifetime before she finally felt a hand on her arm.

“Walker – come with me back to your cage.”

It was Electra. Stephanie struggled to sit up, but she could not due to the pain. She fell off the table and was helped to her feet by the younger girl. Once back in her cage, Stephanie collapsed onto the mattress and she sobbed herself to sleep.

Saturday, July 9th, 2016

South Racine Avenue and West Harrison Street

The first on the scene was *Mirage*.

They parked up in an alleyway and dismounted. Mist, along with Splinter and Nightmare ran towards the devastated intersection. Eisenhower bounded along behind. There were three burning cars, the centre one of which was totally devastated.

“Eisenhower – find Foxtail!” Mist ordered and the dog ran off, dodging the walking wounded and leaping over the dead as she sniffed out Foxtail.

“This is bad,” Nightmare commented as she just stared at the devastation.

“Come on – we need to help!” Splinter announced.

Mist followed Splinter but she then ran towards the barking of Eisenhower. She could see the animal's tail behind a wrecked Buick and as she came around the car, she saw Foxtail on the ground.

"Foxtail!" she called out.

There was a groan in response followed by some movement.

"My head . . . it feels like Psyche's been pounding on it. . ."

"Well, if you can joke at a time like this, you're either alive or Hit Girl!" Mist commented dryly.

"I heard that!"

"Foxtail's okay by the looks of it – the shockwave caught her but her armour protected her from the worst," Mist reported.

Foxtail sat up with Mist's help and the young vigilante sat on the sidewalk clutching her legs against her chest. Mist heard the chime of her cell in her earpiece and she answered the call.

"Erika?"

"Toni? You okay?"

"Erika . . . I need help . . . explosion . . ."

"Toni?"

The call went dead. Mist was horror-struck. Please no – not Toni. . . Was she here somewhere bleeding to death? Mist stood up and looked around – Toni could be anywhere.

"Toni!" she yelled out.

***Northwestern Memorial Hospital
Room 28***

It was actually the first time that Stephanie had seen Cathy since her 'incarceration', as she thought of it, in the hospital.

"What are you lot doing here?" she said sternly.

"How come you've not been to see me?" Stephanie pouted in response.

"I have, several times. You've either been asleep or unconscious. I have to be careful not to tread on the toes of the attending physicians."

That was reasonable, Stephanie thought . . . then she saw Cathy's expression.

"What's happened?"

"Saoirse's been hurt. . ."

"What!"

"Nothing bad – it was a bomb. . ."

"A bomb!"

Cathy glared at Stephanie.

“Sorry – please continue.”

“A bomb exploded . . . down town, and she was caught in the explosion – her suit saved her life. A concussion and a lot of bruises only.”

“All because of me. . .”

“Steph – don’t be like that, please.”

“I know – I just feel responsible.”

“We all get hurt from time to time. . .” Dr Bennett said pointedly.

“She’s right,” Sky acknowledged. “We’ve all been there.”

Douglas Park

Six men stood before the car.

“What are you fucking assholes doing?” Wildcat demanded.

“We have a message,” one man said.

“A message?” Trojan echoed.

“A message from Vito Genovese.”

Shadow had an unwelcome flashback to the Uptown Theatre, several months before.

“This the Angie D’Amico revenge thing?” she demanded as she climbed out of the Pontiac.

The man ignored her as he continued.

“Hit Girl and her vigilantes have ninety days to leave Chicago.”

“Come again. . .” Wildcat demanded incredulously.

“Hit Girl and her vigilantes have ninety days to leave Chicago,” the man repeated.

“Or what?” Shadow demanded.

“Or hell on earth will descend on both Chicago and *Fusion*.”

“We’ll be sure to pass the message on . . . see ya!” Shadow growled as the men drifted into the darkness and the vigilantes all headed for the site of the explosion.

South Racine Avenue and West Harrison Street

Mist was beside herself with worry as she ran from body to body.

“What’s going on, Mist?” Splinter demanded.

“I’ve gotta find her. . .”

“Find who?” Nightmare asked.

Mist never replied as she dodged around the walking wounded. Police and ambulances were arriving en masse and seemingly adding to the confusion. Splinter helped police officers pull survivors from beneath piles of wreckage so paramedics could see to them. Nightmare did her part holding a drip up as a victim was placed onto a stretcher before being rushed towards a waiting ambulance. Nightmare then moved onto the next wounded person and kept going. Eisenhower was able to lead rescuers to trapped people otherwise hidden beneath collapsed walls or other wreckage from the explosion.

People were yelling out in pain and calling for their loved ones. Sirens screamed as vehicles arrived and departed. Police and fire crews yelled instructions and the rush of water from hoses grew deafening as fires were brought under control and extinguished.

..._...

“Help me!”

Mist recognised the voice instantly, it was weak but just loud enough to be heard over the yells, screams, and other background noise. She ran down the street towards where Toni’s yell had originated.

“Toni!”

Mist stopped dead. Toni was lying against the wall of a building. Her legs were buried under rubble while her torso was impaled by a sharp piece of steel that had entered the girl’s abdomen just below the ribcage. The young woman was shaking, deep in shock from the trauma of her injuries. Blood seeped from one side of her mouth. Mist knelt down as close as she could to her girlfriend.

“Toni – it’s me. . .”

“Who. . .?”

Mist deactivated the voice changing technology on her mask.

“Toni – it’s me. . .”

“I don’t know you . . . you sound like. . .”

The vigilante known as Mist reached up and she removed her mask. Toni was incredulous as she saw her friend and lover emerge from behind the mask.

“Erika. . .”

“Hold on, Toni, the ambulance is almost here . . . *I need help, please!*”

Early the following morning

Sunday, 10th July

Safehouse F

“Play it again.”

Abby hit play for the fifteenth time. Mindy was seething as she watched the ultimatum which had been recorded by Z.O.E. and the cameras on the two accompanying motorcycles. She was very tired having spent hours helping at the scene of the explosion, as had all of *Fusion*. Marty had broken the

news about the ultimatum on her return to the Safehouse. On top of that, Mindy was livid about Saoirse getting hurt and about another good friend, Toni.

Erika was at the hospital with Toni but the prognosis did *not* look good.

***Northwestern Memorial Hospital
Room 28***

When Stephanie awoke, and looked around, she smiled.

There, sitting in a chair beside the bed was her best friend. Saoirse was fast asleep clad in her usual jeans and a blouse. Her head rested on her leather jacket, scrunched up as a pillow. She looked exhausted and Stephanie noticed that she wasn't wearing a bra – bruises, Stephanie figured. Despite her own injuries, Stephanie hated being on the sidelines while her friends were out getting hurt.

She had been over the moon when the other *Predators* had visited. Remembering past events had been hard and even the older girls, Chrissy and Sky, had been stunned by Stephanie's experiences but having somebody with her while the memories flowed had helped.

..._...

"Good morning, Stephanie, may we come in?"

It was Doctor Charles and Doctor Reese. Stephanie nodded and the two doctors sat down on the opposite side of the bed to the sleeping Saoirse.

"A friend of yours?" Doctor Reese asked, indicating the sleeping teenager.

"Yes – Saoirse; she's my best friend."

"I've been having a good think about our last chat, the other day."

"Oh. . ." Stephanie replied cautiously.

"We know that you're not a normal girl," Doctor Reese said carefully. "Normally, you are fearless and you can handle just about anything that is thrown at you – except you got shot and you found yourself in a world that you knew nothing about. You're frightened and out of your depth."

"I'm *not* frightened. . ." Stephanie responded defensively.

"There's nothing wrong with being frightened. It's a normal human reaction and no matter what you are at night, you are still a human being, Stephanie."

"I'm normally in control. I don't let anything get me down – at least not normally. I've been hurt before but never anything like this. I've lost control of situations before but this is different – having to rely on somebody else to eat, crap, wash; it sucks."

"Yes, it would," Doctor Charles agreed.

"I wish this would just end so I could get back to my normal life."

"Normal?"

"Yes; my life is perfectly normal."

"The human soul is a difficult thing to understand."

“Huh?”

“The human *psyche*. . .”

“What *are* you talking about?”

Everybody turned to look at Saoirse who had just awoken. Her expression was one of deep concern. She glared at Stephanie and then at the two doctors.

“So, you’re one, just like Stephanie,” Doctor Charles commented. “Have no fear – your secret is safe with us; we believe in what you do for this city.”

“Yes, we do,” Doctor Reese confirmed.

Saoirse stood up and she looked directly at the two doctors.

“We have absolutely no idea what you are talking about,” she stated simply.

Glenview

“Thank you, Saoirse – we’ll take it from here. Yes, you go home and get some rest.”

Dave’s eyebrow was raised as Mindy put the cell back down on the kitchen side.

“The shrinks were in chatting with Steph. Saoirse heard some of the conversation and she is convinced that they know Steph is a Chicago vigilante,” Mindy explained.

“Oh – a problem?”

“There is doctor-patient confidentiality – but, we shall see when we get there, later on.”

“We’re going to see Steph?” Anne-Marie asked excitedly from the archway into the living room.

“Yes, nosy bitch!” Mindy grinned.

Northwestern Memorial Hospital

Room 28

The drugs keeping the pain at bay fogged up Stephanie’s brain – even more when they were freshly in her system.

She was very much aware of her surroundings just not as sharply as her *Predator* training had taught her. There were always nurses and the odd doctor coming and going, plus visitors – ‘like the damn M25 at rush hour’, Stephanie had growled at one stage. She never acknowledged the current nurse as she entered her room. She never bothered to look over at the nurse as she fiddled with the drip. She never noticed the nurse reach into her pocket for something. However, the next few minutes flew like a blur.

“Who are you?” another nurse demanded from the doorway. “What are you. . .?”

The real nurse never finished her question as the fake nurse shot her down with a silenced pistol. Stephanie braced up at the sight of the pistol and then at the sight of the nurse falling to the floor. The door had closed automatically as the second nurse had fallen so nobody was any the wiser of events as they began to unfold in Room 28. The fake nurse turned towards Stephanie and she

smiled. Stephanie recognised the smile as one she used herself when she killed. Her mind began to speed up as she figured out that she was facing a killer – an assassin who was there for one reason and one reason only.

To kill Stephanie Lizewski . . . to finish the job.

The Parking Lot

“I hope she’s happy to see us,” Dave chuckled as he locked the Audi.

“Of course, she will be,” Mindy replied.

“She loves us,” Anne-Marie insisted.

“She’s going nuts up there,” Danny commented. “One of these days, she’s gonna kill somebody!”

“I know how she feels being forced to stay in bed – it sucks!” Mindy acknowledged.

“Well, let’s get up there before the girl *does* kill somebody!” Dave suggested.

“Yippee!” Anne-Marie squealed in her excitement as she dragged her brother towards the entrance.

Room 28

Stephanie just reacted, her trained brain took over her weakened body and as the fake nurse brought the pistol up, she took a momentary glance at what she held in her left hand – it was a loaded syringe with a clear liquid inside.

The sheet was loose and Stephanie was able to use her left leg to kick the fake nurse in her left side. Not a debilitating blow; Stephanie was too weak for that. Instead, the nurse absorbed the blow without much effort before she reached out and jabbed Stephanie in her ribs. Stephanie roared out in pain and doubled over. The pain and the adrenaline flooding her system briefly overrode the drugs and suddenly Stephanie could think just as clearly as she ever could and options began to pass through her mind at breakneck speed.

Her left arm dived out, but not at the assassin – the arm dived out and grabbed something from the bedside table.

Second Floor Passageway

“When’ll she be ready to come home, Mom?”

“Not for another couple of weeks, honey,” Mindy replied.

“Security to Room 28! Doctor Manning to Room 28!”

“What the hell now?” Dave growled as they all broke into a run and then joined the various doctors, nurses, and security officers rushing into Room 28.

“Well, that’s a new way to die!” Mindy exclaimed as she studied the scene before her.

The room was a state.

Stephanie's bed had been shoved over towards the window and the contents of her bedside table – a jug of water, a plastic cup, and her empty bowl of oatmeal from breakfast – were scattered across the floor. Three bodies were scattered untidily around the tiled floor. One, a nurse lay on the floor, her hands holding an obvious gunshot injury to her left shoulder. Another nurse lay on the floor – obviously dead with a pool of bright red blood spreading from the ruptured carotid artery in the neck. The cause of the rupture was equally obvious as the business end of a spoon stuck out of the side of her neck. In her right hand, was a small black pistol with a suppressor attached to the barrel. Her left hand held a syringe. Stephanie lay on the floor beside the dead nurse, she smiled up at her visitors.

“God, it’s boring in hospital. . .!” Stephanie complained before she lost consciousness.

Two hours later

Northwestern Memorial Hospital

Marcus was apoplectic with anger and Mindy was concerned he might burst a blood vessel as he raged – at least he was in the right place for an embolism, she reasoned.

The CPD officer guarding Room 28 had returned a few minutes after the fight was over and he had apologised for leaving his post. Marcus, though, was having none of it and over a period of twenty minutes, he reduced the young officer to a smouldering amoeba as he ranted.

“ . . . You almost cost my granddaughter her life, officer – you have *not* heard the end of this, I can promise you that. Now, get the hell out of my sight and if I ever see you again. . .”

Two other officers were now on duty outside Room 32 – Stephanie's new accommodation on the third floor. They had heard their Captain's rant and they knew better than to *dare* leave their post like their unfortunate colleague. Stephanie was still unconscious – mainly due to the extra drugs in her IV. She had not been injured in the fight but she had overstressed herself and probably added a few more days to her stay in the hospital as a result. The injured nurse was recovering – the bullet had been a through-and-through with no lasting damage caused.

As for the dead assassin – Voight was running her prints through various databases. He had also provided the same prints to Mindy: Marty was also running his own searches.

The following afternoon

Northwestern Memorial Hospital

Room 32

Mindy was busy making notes on her tablet when Stephanie began to stir.

She looked up to see Stephanie's eyes open and the young girl looked around the room in a panic. Mindy squeezed her hand gently and reassuringly as she spoke.

“You're safe, Steph. You're in a different room, in the same hospital.”

Stephanie's eyes stopped their wild scanning around the room and they focussed on Mindy's face.

"It hurts . . . it really hurts . . ."

"I know, honey."

"Why, am I in a different room?"

"Well, if you will insist on killing an assassin with a spoon and letting your room get covered in blood and nurses with bullet wounds. You know, I was in this very same room after I took my Land Rover swimming."

Stephanie considered that and as the memories returned, she scowled, "Ha, bloody, ha!"

"Can't leave you anywhere!" Mindy chuckled.

"You're one to talk – Marcus thinks you're a disaster waiting to happen whenever you leave Chicago."

Mindy's cheeks went pink at that.

"My failings are not the point of conversation, here, young lady."

"What? You going to ground your eldest daughter for killing an assassin with a spoon, now?"

"Considered it. . ."

"My life sucks!" Stephanie complained.

That evening

"So, young Stephanie, you've had a trying week."

"You could say that – who are you?"

"Detective Erin Lindsay. I work with Sergeant Hank Voight. Mrs Lizewski, would you please let your daughter know how far the questioning is allowed to go?"

"Mum?" Stephanie asked, a little confused.

"Stephanie, Erin is aware of who you are – who you are when you are out with Hit Girl."

"What!?"

"Erin is a friend, as is Hank Voight. They do not, however, know what you were before you came to Chicago."

"Oh."

..._...

"What can you tell me about the attack, Stephanie?"

"Not much. I wasn't paying any attention – not until that bitch shot the nurse – she okay?"

"Yes, she is – please, continue."

"She called me by my name. . ."

"Lizewski?"

“No – the name I was born with: Reeman.”

Mindy looked stunned.

“Who could have known. . .” Mindy began.

“May I finish?”

“Sorry, Steph.”

“She also said something else: ‘for Kara’.”

“Who is Kara?” Erin asked.

“I have no idea,” Stephanie replied with a shrug.

An hour later
Safehouse Zulu

Mindy was in the Command Centre with Dave and Marty.

Two of the many computer screens had Mindy’s attention. A set of finger prints were visible, including a picture of the dead assassin’s face. A computer search was underway for the owner of the fingerprints. There was also another conundrum – the assassin had use the name Reeman. . . On the second screen was a digital copy of Stephanie’s *Urban Predator* file.

A seven-year-old Stephanie Reeman stared down at them a large ‘TERMINATED’ stamp across her photo. According to the file, she had begun her Phase 1 training on October 12th, 2013. That meant the assassin either knew of her before then, or they had access to *Urban Predator* documents. Neither appeared likely.

“Who is ‘Kara’?” Marty asked.

“There’s no mention of the name in her file,” Dave commented. “Marty – how many Kara’s were there in *Urban Predator*?”

Marty punched some details into his keyboard before turning back to Dave.

“Fourteen.”

“Any at Stephanie’s training centre?”

Again, Marty punched away at his keyboard.

“Thirteen.”

“Fuck!” Mindy groaned.

“What does it say about that girl,” Abby enquired as she entered the Command Centre. “The one Steph killed?”

“Nothing,” Marty replied. “All it says is that she killed a girl in March, 2014. No further details are mentioned apart from: ‘see Incident Report in Restricted Appendix’.”

“We got that?” Mindy asked.

“Not so far.”

Mid-April, 2014

An unknown location in the USA

The Cage

I awoke a few hours later, aching from head to toe.

When I opened my eyes, I saw a grinning face through the bars – it was a boy; another *Predator*. He was just as naked as I was – about twelve at a guess.

“Typical, I get thrown in here and the naked girl next door has *nothing* worth looking at!”

“Neither have you – have you actually got a dick?”

I heard a giggle from outside the cage as Electra laughed at the boy who had slunk back to his mattress and now lay on his front. I smiled and struggled to sit up – I also found that I needed to make use of the ‘facilities’ as they were.

..._...

Becoming a *Predator* had involved many privations and levels of humiliation but nothing could prepare you for having to wee, completely naked, in front of a smiling twelve-year-old boy and a seven-year-old girl. Being naked was bad enough but I was used to that – besides, as the boy had mentioned, I had nothing for anybody to see. Squatting over the bucket had taken a lot of willpower and even more willpower had been required to force myself to wee with two beady eyes on my twat.

The bastard actually grinned throughout the whole humiliating episode!

..._...

They left me alone for the rest of the day and believe me, I needed the rest.

Electra had provided me with a sandwich and more water – and a promise of more if I behaved. The following morning, I was kicked awake by an instructor who handed me a red jumpsuit. I was dragged off – without any breakfast, I might add – to the range where I spent the next eight hours picking up brass, cleaning weapons, and generally being abused by all and sundry.

I was exhausted and dirty by the end of my ‘shift’ and my muscles ached.

..._...

As I was ‘dropped off’ at The Cage, I was received by Electra who was all business as she ordered me to strip out of my clothes and re-enter my lodgings. I followed orders – I was very hungry and I knew that bad behaviour meant no food. It was only after I had weed in the bucket – that bastard watched the whole damn thing – that I noticed the black eye on Electra.

“What happened?” I asked as I wiped and then threw the resultant dirty tissues at the boy who dived out of the way in horror.

“Another yellow. . . I – I don’t wanna talk about it.”

“A boy?”

"I don't . . . yes."

"When somebody tries to hit you – protect your face at all costs. . ."

"He's bigger than me – they all are. . ."

"Okay – when he hits you, drop down into a ball . . . pretend you're scared, protect yourself. He's going to move in to have another go . . . keep your elbows in – protect your spleen, your liver, and other important organs. Then, when he is directly over you, stand up fast and your head will strike his chin. He will be dazed – punch the fucking bastard and keep punching him till he goes down!"

Electra thought about my instructions for a moment and then she smiled.

"Thanks – I think you deserve these," she said as she handed me *two* sandwiches which I wolfed down like they were the finest steak.

"Hey, yellow bitch – where's mine?" the boy demanded.

"Walker just ate it!" Electra replied with a smile as she raised the middle finger of her right hand towards the boy.

Tuesday, July 12th, 2016

Northwestern Memorial Hospital

"No – there's gotta be something else you can do. . ."

"I'm sorry, Erika," Doctor Cathy Bennett said quietly. "The damage to her legs, combined to the damage in her abdomen are just too much."

"Toni's my life – what am I going to do, Cathy?"

"I am so sorry, Erika, I really am."

..._...

"I love you Erika – I love you so much."

"I wish we could have had more time, Toni. . ."

"I'm sorry; I should never have been there . . . but, if I had not then I would never have known about you. Mist – you're amazing . . . just keep doing what you do and don't mourn me for too long."

"Please . . . you've gotta hang on . . . please, don't leave me. . ."

"Erika. I love you very much and I know you love me . . . none of us live forever and this is my time. I know you'll be fine – you're the strongest person I know – and you're a Chicago vigilante which is so awesome . . ."

"Toni. . ."

"I love you, Erika."

"I love you, too, so very much. . ."

Erika gave her lover a final kiss and she held Toni's hand until the hand went limp for the final time.