

Saturday, August 20th, 2016

Early Afternoon

Glenview - The British Sector

"Well?"

"Well, what?" Stephanie replied to Harper.

"What happened after that?" Harper pushed and Naomi and Kaitlin could be seen nodding expectantly.

Stephanie looked over at Electra who smiled and nodded. Anne-Marie and Danny grinned in eager expectation.

"Okay - the next bit started well, but kind of ended on a rather sour note," Stephanie conceded.

"Tell me about it," Electra commented.

Stephanie scowled at the grimacing nine-year-old.

Early June 2014

The State of Virginia

About forty miles, east-south-east of Richmond

"You killed him."

"Was I not supposed to?" Electra growled back as they both trudged through the woods in the pouring rain as the thunder boomed and lightning flashed.

"You're a Yellow."

"So?"

"Thank you, for saving my life."

"I had to. Without you, I'd be dead, not to mention that if you had died, Blaze would have chopped me into little pieces," Electra pointed out.

"Very true!" Stephanie replied as she sat down under some bushes.

Electra squeezed in under the same bushes and she sat down between Stephanie's legs and they kept each other warm as they shivered in their wet clothing.

"You've really impressed me, Electra. You need a codename."

"I'm a . . . actually, I don't know what I am, right now . . . but I am not a Phase 3, Steph."

"Well, I am going to call you 'Rigour' and to hell with what any other fucker thinks!"

"Rigour?"

"Rigour - you are thorough and careful about what you do, amongst many other, equally good qualities, Electra."

"Thank you, Stephanie - that means a lot coming from the famous Psyche."

Stephanie grinned enormously.

"Have no fear, 'lectra; you can shower with me anytime without me killing you."

"Thanks - I think. . ."

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By four o'clock, that morning, both girls were frozen. The rain had eased and the sky was beginning to lighten very slightly as the dawn began its never-ending daily ritual of forcing the nighttime darkness to retreat. They were huddling together under yet another bush, trying to keep warm and not get any wetter. The mud on their clothing had dried in parts but felt horrible on their flesh.

There was intense relief, two hours later, as the siren blew, indicating the next one-hour pause in hostilities. As the girls emerged into the sunlight which streamed through the trees, they felt the warmth of the sun and the humid heat.

"That feels so much better!" Stephanie breathed as she pulled off her webbing and her jacket.

The warmth on her skin felt like nothing on earth and she glared at the sodden jacket which lay on a patch of damp grass. Electra followed her mentor's example as she did the same and then enjoyed the same sun. They each chomped on a chocolate bar, for their breakfast, and then drank some water as they dried off. They made the most of the time to rest and prepare for what they seriously hoped was the last round.

They were not the only ones . . . apparently.

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As they walked in the sun, the girls' morale had improved significantly after the night's lows. It was amazing what a few minutes in the sun could do. Despite the feeling of relative happiness, both girls kept their eyes and ears open, knowing that they were both still in mortal danger. The calm was nagging at Stephanie and she knew that, as a general rule, the calm came before the storm. She was not wrong, as a few minutes later, Stephanie stopped dead and she extended an arm to stop Electra.

There, just a couple of dozen yards away, stood Fury. She glared at Stephanie and Stephanie glared back. They continued to glare as a referee crossed the path, equidistant between the two girls. He threw out a pair of objects, in either direction, then he vanished into the undergrowth. Stephanie and Fury looked at the objects, both girls full of curiosity. Then their eyes went wide as they both

recognised the combat wakizashi swords which lay on the path, about six yards apart. Both began to move at the same time, sprinting for the advanced weapons.

The two girls were well matched, diving for the blades at the same time. Stephanie caught hold of the sword as she hit the ground, rolling forwards and bringing the blade up to protect herself, just as Fury swept up her blade and brought it down towards Stephanie's head. Electra stood watching in awe as the blades clashed and the sunlight glinted off the blades.

Instinctively, she knew that the fight was to be the decider - the final showdown.

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Seeing the swords flash in the sunlight reminded Electra of her actions only a few short hours previously. She had no idea what had possessed her to try something so dangerous. Had it been loyalty? Loyalty to whom? Stephanie Walker? She liked the girl, she really did - not that it would last. Walker was a Phase 2 *Predator* and *Predators* of any phase had no use for a Yellow - in fact, they detested Yellows, especially if they had had cause to be ordered about by one while naked in a cage.

Electra felt powerful when she was on duty in The Cage. She, a mere seven-year-old, was empowered to order about kids many years older than her - and not just eight-year-olds, she had had thirteen-year-old and fourteen-year-old girls and boys under her command. They would strip naked at her order and carry their urine and excrement in a bucket down a corridor to be emptied while she escorted them. She had seen the humiliation in their eyes, especially with the older kids. She had had real power - much more than any *Predator* ever had.

Electra worried about what was going to happen to her after the exercise. Was she to be cancelled or terminated? She knew that kids would be hauled out of classes and then there would be a solitary pistol shot, a few minutes later. The instructors did not exactly conceal when kids were terminated - presumably to reinforce in the other kids what might happen if they did not knuckle down to their training.

Was that why she had helped her new friend? Was Stephanie really her friend, or was she just being nice because she had to? There was something about Stephanie Walker which she had not seen in any other *Predator*; compassion. The naked Stephanie Walker had shown compassion to a Yellow in The Cage when all others had shown contempt. That Yellow had decided to do something in return.

She had pulled the sword from her webbing and without much thought, she had rolled out of the undergrowth and once back on her feet, she had approached the boy, trying to ignore the death throes of Stephanie Walker as her legs kicked from beneath the boy's own. Out of nowhere, Electra had felt anger surge up inside her and the hate

which she felt for the boy and what he was doing to her friend made her lose control for a split second, but just long enough for her to raise the sword high and plunge it down with all her strength and anger, into the boy's exposed back.

Strangely, the boy made no sound as he died. All she could hear was the rain pounding down, but then she smiled, as she heard Stephanie coughing and breathing in the life-giving air which had been choked out of her by the boy. Electra gave the sword a vicious twist and the boy fell to the side, away from Stephanie before rolling onto its front.

Electra stared down at the relieved Stephanie and the corpse which was no longer a living, breathing boy.

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"I understand that Blaze is dead - thank you; makes it so much easier for *me* to become the best."

"I am so pleased that I could be if assistance, you fucking dyke!" Stephanie yelled back as she parried the next strike and dodged an associated punch.

Fury's face was full of rage and hate. She was angry and she so much wanted the 'exercise' to be over. Mentally and physically, she was exhausted. Her body ached all over from cuts and bruises. She was annoyed that Psyche had managed to get the drop on Blaze, but nobody had said that they had to get both targets - they just had to both be very dead. Another thing that rankled was that Psyche appeared to have an assistant. Fury also wanted to meet this 'assistant'; the bitch had stabbed her in the hand and her hand was very, very sore. Therefore, Fury had made a deal during the previous pause in the action.

Stephanie paused as she heard a scream - Electra! The screaming was coming from a distance away but then the screaming was suddenly cut off.

"Say bye, bye to your little friend, Psyche!" Fury growled.

"Fuck you!" Stephanie retorted angrily as she swung the sword harder and harder at Fury.

Fury also moved harder and harder, beating the shorter girl down. Stephanie was just as mentally and physically exhausted as Fury but she did everything she could to push on. She had to destroy Fury to then go after Electra. Stephanie was so focused on Fury that she never noticed herself being manoeuvred by the other girl. It was only when Fury smiled and stopped that Stephanie smelt a rat. But before she could react, she felt her left foot falling with nothing to support it and she followed. She fell about ten feet before she hit the surface of the lake and the very chilly water. She came to the surface, just in time to look up at Fury.

"Dasvidaniya, whore!"

Fury vanished into the bushes as Stephanie struggled out of the water.

Electra was beside herself with fear.

Two boys had grabbed hold of her and dragged her away. They were very rough and they seemed to enjoy causing Electra pain. She found herself hauled into a clearing where she was thrown down at the base of a tree. She tried to escape but she was kicked in the chest and she screamed out with the pain. She barely resisted as she found the two boys, both of whom were about twelve-years-old, stripping the clothes off her.

By the time Fury arrived in the clearing, she found the two boys sitting on the ground enjoying the sun. Behind them, secured to a tree was Electra. She was naked, her clothing strewn around the clearing. Electra's face was full of hate and stained with tears. Fury chuckled as she examined her handy work.

"Not a bad wound, girl. What's your name?"

"Go to fuck!"

"Foul-mouthed, little Yellow, ain't you?"

Fury traced a finger over the wound dressings from top to bottom, pressing every few inches and causing Electra to cry out in pain.

"I need to reward you for what you did to my hand," Fury growled as she held up her right hand which was bandaged tightly. "Let's see how you like being stabbed."

With that proclamation, Fury pulled a small throwing knife from her webbing and she drove it into the front of Electra's right thigh.

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Stephanie looked up in a panic as she heard the unearthly scream coming from not too far ahead. What was Fury *doing* to Electra? Another scream rang out and Stephanie broke into a run, the combat wakizashi ready in her hand. She was out for blood and she was going to fucking get it!

She slowed as she heard talking and laughter and stopped on the edge of a clearing. She took in the two boys. She took in Fury. She took in the screaming Electra - she had a knife sticking out of her right thigh and Fury was holding another, identical, knife in her right hand.

There was no time to lose. Stephanie bounded out of the undergrowth and into the clearing. She fired three rubber bullets at the first boy - he fell backwards with a scream and hugged his stomach. The next boy received the wakizashi into his chest and he went down next to his colleague, screaming. Stephanie turned as another high-pitched scream ripped out across the clearing. Fury was grinning as

she stabbed Electra again, this time at the top of her left shoulder, just below the collar bone.

Stephanie did not pause, she drove forwards and she smashed the twin wakizashi to her own out of Electra's hands before smashing her in the face with her fist. Blood exploded from her nose and she tried to retaliate but missed as the wild-eyed Psyche dodged before kicking Fury in the stomach. Then the butt of the pistol was brought down on Fury's skull - she blacked out and collapsed to the ground.

Stephanie got to work. She released Electra and then helped her lie down on the ground. Stephanie left the knives in place, just placing field dressings around each blade and securing them in place - with Duct Tape, of course. By the time she was done, Electra had passed out from the pain.

The first boy was trying to regain his feet - his companion was dead. Stephanie placed the tip of the sword against the boy's neck, nicking it slightly.

"Stand up and if you want to live, you will do as I say."

The boy nodded - it was the same boy which she had stripped earlier on during that exercise. Stephanie directed him to drag the unconscious Fury towards the centre of the clearing. Then she began issuing rapid instructions to the boy.

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Fury regained consciousness to find herself staring up into the sun. She also felt different and as she looked around, she found that her hands were above her head and tied to the base of a bush. Her ankles were bound and she could feel the rope passing under her back and tying on to the same bush. The rope had been pulled tight so that her ankles were right back by her bottom and her legs were bent at the knees. She was also naked.

"Well, hello."

Fury glared as she recognised Psyche appear in her vision and then that Electra girl.

"We are going to have some fun. Yes, it involves knives - Electra's idea. Me, I just wanted *him* . . . to rape you."

Fury turned her head to see a naked boy kneeling beside her with his hands on his head. Any witty retort vanished as she considered what Psyche might make the boy do to her - Psyche had gone way too far.

"Hope this hurts!" Electra growled as she knelt down and sank a knife slowly into Fury's left side, just below her left breast.

Fury screamed out in agony as the knife stopped after sinking its point in barely half an inch. Then Electra drew the knife down Fury's body about eight inches.

"Hurts, doesn't it?" Electra hissed.

"Just fucking get on with it, Psyche!"

"You ready to be raped?" Psyche growled as she pushed the naked boy on top of the equally naked, and very exposed, Fury.

Fury screamed, "NO!"

Psyche gave it a minute before she pulled the boy off the screaming Fury and then told him to run, advice which he took readily and he ran off into the trees, naked.

"Unlike you, Fury, I am not a bitch who relishes in the suffering of others."

Fury was sobbing as she glared up at Stephanie.

"May Psyche know the name of the one she vanquished?"

Fury seethed for a moment before she spat out her name.

"Wilde . . . Abigail Wilde."

Stephanie and Electra left the clearing.

Within seconds, they were met by a referee who nodded his approval and he then arranged for transport back to their hut. Once the two knives had been removed from Electra by a medic, the two girls were told to rest for a few hours before they were called for their flight back home.

Stephanie and Electra both took the opportunity to take a shower, get some decent-ish food and then they both laid down on the camp bed together and very quickly, they fell asleep.

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Stephanie awoke with a start, four hours later, as somebody knocked on the door to the hut. Gently, Stephanie woke Electra up and then she walked over and unlocked the door, pulling it open.

"May we come in?" an instructor asked without awaiting a response.

Stephanie was surprised to see, a now dressed, Abigail Wilde being pulled inside by a second instructor. That instructor span Wilde around and glared down at her.

"You lose, Wilde - so now it's time for the victor to literally take a piece of your ass."

Wilde looked up at the two instructors and a very worried expression spread across her face. Before she could fully comprehend her fate, she was pushed up against the table by the instructors who then pulled down her trousers and underwear before pinning her face down across the table. One of the instructors turned to Stephanie - both had ignored Electra completely.

"Walker," he directed as he handed Stephanie a stout leather strap. "I think five should reward Wilde for coming second."

Stephanie ran her hands over the leather strap. She had felt a leather strap on her skin before - just not with her hands. The power which she held in her hands felt enormous to the eight-year-old, but as she stared down at the shaking nine-year-old, Stephanie paused.

"Get on with it, girl!" one of the instructors ordered.

"Do it!" Wilde growled, her voice shaking with fear as she tensed up.

Stephanie brought the strap down, hard.

Wilde screamed as the leather cut into her behind. Stephanie grimaced as she brought the strap down again, aiming for unblemished white skin. Again, Wilde screamed out in agony. Despite Stephanie's hatred for Wilde, Stephanie hated inflicting so much pain in a way that was normally reserved for the bastard instructors. It felt like an age before the fifth strike was administered and Stephanie dropped the strap onto the floor. Wilde was released and she fell to the floor where she shook from head to toe as she sobbed.

Stephanie made to say something to the sobbing girl, but an instructor ordered Stephanie and Electra out of the hut.

Meanwhile. . .

Saturday, August 20th, 2016

Safehouse E

The room was about nine feet by six feet in size and the walls were bare concrete, as was the ceiling and floor.

The door was steel, as were the two bed frames to either side of the centrally placed door. Each bed was made up with white sheets, pillows and duvets. But that was not all - each bed also contained a teenaged boy.

Both were sleeping soundly.

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Abigail's eyes moved across to the next screen. It was an almost identical room, except that only the one bed was occupied. The occupant was female and her long deep red hair was spread over the white pillow. Her face was marred by a piece of sterile gauze, taped to her right cheek. There were scratches and grazes on her forehead and on the left side of her jaw.

"They boys should be waking soon," Cathy commented as she entered the small control room.

"I'll send in the Kitty!" Abigail chuckled.

"*Why do I put up with this shit?*" Wildcat growled as she glared up at a camera in the corridor outside the two rooms.

Abigail looked up at the monitor which showed the boys' room. Both were beginning to stir.

"Just go get the boys," Cathy ordered and Wildcat threw a mock salute up at the camera before swiping her access card and pushing open the steel door.

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"Morning, boys!"

Connor turned his head and opened his eyes - at first, he thought he might be dreaming but then he focused on the person standing in the doorway. Whoever it was, she had nice curves and definite bumps on her chest beneath the tight-fitting, dark grey shirt. Her name tag read: **WILDCAT**. Lucas was doing the same as his friend, examining what he thought was a perfect figure.

"When you two have finished mentally undressing me, get the fuck out of those beds!" Wildcat ordered in her electronically enhanced voice.

The voice echoed around the concrete room and it made both boys jump out of their beds.

"Not bad, really," Wildcat mused as she checked out the two naked fourteen-year-old boys.

"Not fair!" Lucas yelled as he covered himself up.

Wildcat laughed as she threw each boy a bag.

"We had to strip you both to search your clothing - get dressed!"

Wildcat stepped out of the room, closing the door behind her. She couldn't resist giggling.

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Medic pushed open the door to the next room and she walked over to the bed where the girl was sleeping.

"Trinity? Trinity?"

"Wh . . . what?"

"Trinity, wake up, honey."

The fourteen-year-old girl opened her eyes and she tried to sit up, but she paused, covering herself with the duvet.

"I'm naked."

"Yeah - well, your pants were around your ankles already, so we kinda finished the job," Medic commented.

"I was trying to take a pee - then everything went black . . . I think."

"The tunnel you were in - it collapsed. You were rescued from the rubble and brought to safety."

"Where are my friends? They'll be looking for me."

"They're fine. What are their names?"

"The blond one; that's Lucas. The other, him with brown hair; that's Connor. Who are you?"

"I am Medic."

Trinity looked stunned and her mind was working fast. Then fear spread across her face. She looked up at the masked woman.

"Fusion?"

"You got it, honey!"

"Am I in trouble - am I going to die?"

"No - you're perfectly safe here."

"I don't believe you."

"Will you believe me?"

Trinity went pale as another woman entered the room - the colours on the mask identified the vigilante without needed to read the name tag.

"You are my guest and I give you my word that nothing will happen to you, nor your hapless friends."

Trinity breathed a sigh of relief. Hit Girl was renowned for keeping her word.

"Can I get dressed?"

"Let me check you over and make sure your wounds are okay, then yes, you can," Medic replied.

Hit Girl vanished and Trinity lay back down.

Safehouse F

The galley

"I'm starving!" Lucas commented between mouthfuls of sausages.

"Me too," Connor added.

"Did either of you take a moment to consider what was happening to me?"

"Trinity!" both boys called out.

"They said you was okay," Lucas pointed out.

"Thanks for caring, Lucas."

"They're boys - food comes first!" Wildcat growled as she leaned against the wall of the galley.

Trinity gave the female vigilante the once over.

"You been entertaining the boys?" Trinity grinned.

"Nah - they've been entertaining me."

"She saw us naked," Connor explained.

"I can't take you two, anywhere!"

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After breakfast, the three friends found themselves sitting on comfortable chairs in a large open room. The walls were covered by curtains and before them sat Hit Girl and Wildcat.

"You three have seen a lot - too much, to be honest," Hit Girl began.

"It was an accident - we didn't mean to," Lucas tried.

"Please - we won't say anything," Connor added.

"Thank you for rescuing me and fixing me up," Trinity said with a smile.

Hit Girl nodded.

"You will each be blindfolded and then placed in the back of a car. You will each be taken to your own home where a Police Officer will speak with your parents."

"Police!" Lucas and Connor said together.

"None of you are in trouble, you have my word."