D-JAK Prime

"I expected you sooner," Paige commented as she checked her watch.

"Mindy stuck to the speed limits!" Megan complained.

"Oh!" Paige sounded surprised.

"Must be sore after having her ass handed to her by a ten-year-old!" Megan grinned.

"Language, Megan!" her mother cautioned.

"Is 'ass' a swearword now?"

"For you, yes."

"Oh, brother!"

"Stephanie's assessment?" Paige asked Mindy while ignoring her petulant daughter.

"Yeah – she passed!" Mindy chuckled.

"Brilliant! Bet she's happy."

"That's an understatement," Mindy admitted.

"Mindy got kicked down – it was so awesome!" Megan grinned.

"I mean this in the nicest possible way, dear daughter: fuck off, you little shit!" Paige said and Megan's mouth dropped open.

Mindy spun the speechless eleven-year-old around and pushed her out the door.

"Now, Boss – how about this getting your ass handed to you by a ten-year-old!"

Mindy rolled her eyes and pushed the door shut.

"As Megan said; it was awesome. . ."

...–...

"Do I have to?"

"Yes, Zoe, your Aunt Kim suggested that it might help you settle in – you know, meet some other kids your own age and maybe learn some useful skills."

"But I know some of that stuff – Aunt Kim taught me some stuff when I was eight."

"Please?"

"Okay, Mom – I'll give it a try."

"Zoe!" came a loud voice as Kim Eisenburg came running over.

"Hi, Aunt Kim."

"Let's get you into a class – but first, I'll let a friend of mine see how good you are."

Kim led her niece across the floor and over to where a young girl, not much older than Zoe was kicking a punchbag while a boy of very similar age held it steady. The girl and the boy both wore a Gi in blue with a green belt.

"Megan, this is my niece, Zoe."

"Hi, Zoe."

"Hi, Megan."

"Megan, could you check out Zoe and see where her skill level lies, please?"

"She know anything?" Megan asked.

"I've taught her one or two things," Kim offered with a smile.

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"Taught her one or two things, huh!" Megan growled ten minutes later as she lay flat on her back.

"Yeah – one or two things," Zoe grinned as she held out a hand to Megan.

"You fight well, Zoe – damn well!"

"Well, a girl needs to be able to defend herself – am I right?"

"Damn right!" Megan replied as she allowed Zoe to help her to her feet. "Come and meet Curtis."

"He's you boyfriend, right?"

"Kind of."

"Aunt Kim says you and him mess about in bed, naked."

Megan's cheeks went very pink.

"A little – we've known each other for about two years."

"You two done it yet?"

"Huh?"

"Has Curtis stuck his dick inside you, yet?"

"You ask a lot of very personal questions, Zoe – no, we have not had sex. How about you?"

Zoe's face went pink.

"I've never been with a boy."

"Well, hands off Curtis – assuming you don't want your hands chopped off," Megan advised sweetly. "Curtis – this is Zoe; Kim's niece."

Curtis studied the new arrival.

"Hi, Zoe. Nice moves on Megan, over there."

"She has some nice moves, I'll agree – just don't applaud her too much, Curtis, or you'll be pleasuring yourself, tonight." Megan retorted.

There was the sound of sardonic laughter from behind the three youngsters.

"I don't see Megan passing up playing with Curtis' dick!" Nikki Hutchens laughed.

"Thanks, Nikki – tasteful," Megan growled.

"Oh, she tastes his dick, too!" Nikki laughed and Zoe giggled.

Central Chicago
North Michigan Avenue

Chloe was over the moon that Stephanie had passed her assessment.

Chloe knew what it meant to be side-lined due to injury. Admittedly, Stephanie had taken it a lot better than she herself had, but then Stephanie had been younger and she had had much more support. Chloe was pleased that she had been able to help the young girl. Stephanie was like a niece to her, just as Mindy was like a sister. It was even better that Stephanie had been able to put Hit Girl down. Chloe knew full well that Mindy had not put her heart and soul into the fight – if she had, then Stephanie would have died within two seconds of the fight beginning!

So much was going on in everybody's lives. School, Fusion . . . a baby. Joshua had been stunned, but within seconds his face had exploded into a massive smile. He had hugged her so tightly, Chloe had actually had to use their safe word – yes, they had a safe word, and never mind why! They had sat and talked for hours while Joshua had gently rubbed his hands across Chloe's stomach. It was a weird feeling, knowing that there was something growing inside of her – a new life. Between them, they had discussed how they might bring the child up – would he or she follow their parents into a life of vigilantism, or would he or she be allowed a childhood.

It was an awesome responsibility and Chloe was scared of what was to come. Joshua too had fears of his own. He loved Chloe more than anything else in the world and he would support her through anything. However, the thought of being responsible for a miniature human being was a daunting thought. Would he be a good father? Would they be able to cope? They *were* both very young – *very* young. No – they would receive help from their friends; whether they liked it or

not, Chloe knew. A baby! Her mind was still struggling to come to terms with her new condition.

'Oh, Chloe! You do get yourself into some pretty wild situations!' she thought to herself.

Her next problem was spreading the news. That afternoon she had intended on telling Riley and Avery, her two best friends – but what might they think of her? Chloe already had a certain reputation around the school – and not the violent one, either. Some called her a slut – not to her face, of course – they were wrong; she only had eyes for Joshua and as far as she knew, she had only had sex with Joshua. What might people think and say when they found out that she was pregnant at sixteen? Chloe did not normally care what people thought about her but somehow, she felt incredibly vulnerable and she didn't want to become an embarrassment for her parents.

"Chloe – you okay?"

"Yeah, Avery; I've just got a lot on my mind."

"Thinking about some new sex positions?" Riley teased.

"There can't be all that many left for you two to try!" Avery added.

"Funny – so funny!" Chloe grinned. "I have something to tell you guys."

"You sound serious," Avery commented.

"Yeah – it is serious; I'm . . ."

Chloe suddenly stopped dead and Avery almost bumped into her. Then as Avery and Riley watched in horror, Chloe doubled over, gripping her stomach and she fell to the sidewalk screaming out in agony.

"It hurts! It hurts so much!"

Two hours later

Northwestern Memorial Hospital

Chloe felt numb.

Her happiness from earlier was gone as if it had never been. It wasn't the only thing that was gone as if it had never been. Her baby was gone. The new life that had been growing inside of her for a number of weeks – it was gone. The word that the nurse had used still echoed in her mind: miscarriage. A horrible word as far as women were concerned. Devastating for a mother-to-be. Her mother had been there with her for most of it and then Joshua had burst in just fifteen minutes previously. He shared her devastation; he had wanted the baby just as much as she had. They had both lost something very special.

The young man had not known what to say – in fact he had not said a word since his arrival. He just sat there, stunned, but holding Chloe's hand tightly. His being there was enough for Chloe. She needed him there. Words were unnecessary; she knew how he felt. She could sense his feelings, just as he could hers. They both had a link which was unbreakable and to others, unfathomable. Cathy called it love and maybe she was right. It was one of the very few times that Chloe had ever seen Joshua cry. Chloe worried about him, just as much as he worried about her. Cathy had called Mindy to advise her of what had happened, but nobody else had been informed – most did not even know that she had been pregnant in the first place.

Sitting outside the room were two very miserable teenagers. Riley and Avery had been very upset with what was happening to their friend. Cathy had done her best to explain everything to them and assure them that Chloe was fine. True, there were no medical complications and Chloe would be free to go home in a matter of hours, but it would be the mental scars which would be difficult if not impossible to eradicate and Chloe would carry them for the rest of her life – Joshua too. Cathy had mixed feelings – maybe it was for the best; they were both too young to have children, but Cathy still felt for her daughter and a boy who Cathy cared for as if he was her own.

From purely a medical standpoint, it was a miscarriage – a fact of nature. Chloe's body had decided that the foetus was unviable and therefore ejected the unborn and undeveloped human being. Chloe was tough – very tough. It would be difficult but she would survive. The bleeding had been heavy, so Chloe was weak but a few days of rest would help her body to recover.

That evening

Glenview

Mindy looked out of the kitchen window.

Her mood was mixed. She was happy for Stephanie who was currently running around the garden with Razor and Horatio. Horatio was just getting in the way, but he loved a bit of rough and tumble with his canine friend. Anne-Marie was out as well, with Kiara. Sophia was a few feet away from Mindy keeping her company. On the flipside, Mindy was miserable – her best friend was struggling to cope with the loss of something very special.

Mindy had to come to a decision. She was putting together a team to go to Europe and normally, Chloe would be at the very top of that list. There were times that difficult decisions had to be made and Mindy hated them with a passion – it was always the bane of every leader. Mindy had been to see Cathy and had sought her opinion on her daughter's condition. Cathy had expected the visit and she had, as always, been prepared. Yes, Chloe was okay to travel – physically

at least. Mindy decided to leave it to Chloe to come to a mature decision.

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Chloe arrived with Joshua in tow a little after nine that night. Cathy had driven them both over and left them as they would both spend the night at Glenview.

"Okay, Chloe – you know what I am going to say."

"I have to come, Mindy – I'm okay; I just need some heavier tampons is all."

"Chloe – you're my best friend; I know a little of what you're going through. . ."

"What the fuck would you know about losing a child?" Chloe blurted out but then her expression of anger changed instantly to one of horror at what she had just said. "Oh, God, Mindy – I am so sorry; I should never have said that."

"Chloe, you're allowed to be angry. . ."

"Not with you and not with something like that. I know from a very personal point of view the personal hell that you endured when Anne-Marie was taken and then when Stephanie was shot and each time she died. I just want to be there; you need me."

Chloe hugged Mindy tightly. They had both been through a lot together and Chloe needed Mindy, just as Mindy had needed her before.

Stephanie stopped at the entrance to the living room.

Mindy was on the couch with Chloe, only Chloe was cuddled into Mindy and sobbing her eyes out. Mindy just shook her head and Stephanie backed off. Instead, she headed into the kitchen where she found a morose looking Joshua sitting opposite Dave.

"What the fuck is going on?" she demanded.

Joshua stood up and he guided the ten-year-old through into the living room. He sat her down on the opposite couch to the two girls and then sat down beside her.

"Chloe has had a miscarriage," he explained. "Do you know what that is?"

Stephanie was horrified – she knew exactly what a miscarriage was. Her eyes filled with tears and she her heart went out to both Chloe and Joshua.

"Yes – I do, but I never even knew that Chloe was pregnant."

"We hadn't announced it. . ."

Stephanie saw the tears spilling down Joshua's cheeks and she hugged her friend. He had always been there for her – now it was her turn to be there for him.