

**Wednesday, September 14<sup>th</sup>**  
**Early evening**

**Chicago, USA**

"Look at what we have here - two little kitties in the *wrong* part of town."

"They look so cute."

"Get out of our way," Tigercat growled in an electronically enhanced growl.

"Or what, you little freak?"

"Or we'll kick your fuckin' asses!" Hellcat growled in her own electronically enhanced voice as she deployed her claws.

"Ooh, she has claws - I'm so scared!"

Hellcat dived forwards, driving her claws into the man's left side before spinning off and striking with her other set of claws. The man yelled out in agony as his torn side spilt blood down his leg. His partner fared little better as Tigercat attacked with his own claws. With a final punch in the face, Hellcat stood back to admire her handy work.

"Let's move!" her brother suggested.

"Why - we killed them," Hellcat responded.

"We need to go!" Tigercat persisted.

"You should have listened, kid," a voice purred.

Hellcat felt fear coursing through her as she turned to face her fear. Tigercat did the same, his legs feeling weak beneath him.

"Two more hides for my wall," FEAR drawled as she drew her battle sword.

The two pint-sized vigilantes drew their Wakizashi swords and took up fighting stances.

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**Two miles to the east**

"You noticed that the streets tend to be quieter when Hit Girl is out of town?"

"She'll kill you for saying that, Splinter," Trojan laughed as they patrolled. "You missing your girlfriend?"

Splinter did not reply. It was not a goad; he knew Trojan better than that. Yes, he missed Stephanie but he did not want to admit it.

"Your silence speaks volumes," Trojan commented.

"I miss her a lot more than I thought I would," he admitted grudgingly.

"It gets worse, pal - I feel horrible inside whenever Wildcat goes out of town without me."

"You mean you have to wank yourself?"

Trojan laughed.

"You're picking up some of Stephanie's crude language!" Trojan laughed. "I have no problem with getting myself off. Do you and Steph . . . err?"

"No - I haven't even started puberty, yet, and Stephanie would cut my hands off if I so much as touched her near her snatch."

"It'll be worth the wait, pal - I assure you."

"Trojan - FEAR has been spotted two miles to the west of you; take care," Battle Guy radioed. "Petra and Mist are inbound."

"Copy that, Battle Guy - am on the way with Splinter."

The two youngsters ran off down the street, towards their motorcycles.

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### ***Hellcat and Tigercat***

They knew that facing off against FEAR was suicidal but their escape had been cut off by her minions.

The fight started easy as FEAR appeared to toy with them and she easily fended off the two apprentice vigilantes. They used their combined skills to attack FEAR from two sides - only she was too good for them and she appeared to have no issues avoiding their thrusts.

"Hellcat, Tigercat - what the hell, do you think you are doing?"

"We're not fighting her by choice, Audacious," Hellcat responded as she dived out of the way of the huge battle sword.

"Withdraw as soon as you can."

"We will!"

Hellcat was very scared - facing off against thieves and rapists was one thing, facing off against the arch-villain known as FEAR was something very different. Were their lives about to come to a very abrupt end at the hands of FEAR? The youngster's thoughts were cut off as gunfire ripped out and FEAR's minions began to drop by the wayside. FEAR herself span around as she was struck by what appeared to be a chain whip which cut into her body armour but did not penetrate.

"Why don't you pick on somebody your own size?" an electronically enhanced voice suggested.

Hellcat instantly recognised Petra and Mist as they faced off against FEAR. Before she could see any more, she and her brother were pulled out of the combat zone and they found themselves facing Splinter and Trojan.

"Get back to your rides and get the hell outta here!" Splinter ordered.

Neither vigilante needed telling twice as they stowed their Wakizashi's and they ran down an alleyway.

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### ***Unknown location***

#### ***Northern Chicago***

"Hurry up, you two - we have to get home."

Hellcat pulled off her mask and growled. Normally, they were allowed plenty of time to get themselves cleaned up. Her brother appeared from beneath his own mask looking dejected after their narrow escape.

"What about getting cleaned up?" Annabelle Millar demanded.

"You can both shower when we get home - in fact, I insist on it!" Taylor Millar grinned.

"Gee, thanks, Mom!" Iain Millar replied as he pulled off his combat suit.

"I'll be in the car."

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### ***Sheridan Road***

Shannon Millar was very scared as her father stopped the car on the drive.

"You're gonna be fine, Shannon," Patrick Millar said as he took his daughter's shaking hand.

"Will I recognise them? Will they recognise me?"

"Yes."

Patrick had to go around to open the door for his daughter as she was frozen with real fear. The house was new to her and unfamiliar - as would be the people inside.

"Just hold my hand and you'll be fine."

They walked up the drive and Patrick opened the front door. He waved his daughter inside but she wouldn't move until Patrick guided her

inside. Taylor Millar appeared from the kitchen and she froze as she saw her husband and the tall girl who stood beside him.

"Shannon!"

"Mommy. . ."

Shannon released her father's hand and she bolted forwards hugging her mother for the first time in five years. They both cried openly, out of sheer happiness as they renewed the broken bond that had existed between mother and daughter. Patrick stepped forwards and he wrapped his arms around mother and daughter, completing the parental circle for Shannon.

"It is so good to see again, Shannon," Taylor said happily as she stepped back to look over her daughter.

Shannon was no longer the skinny nine-year-old. She was much taller with long, shapely legs, a feminine waistline and gently curving thighs. A major difference was that Shannon had a chest which had not been there before. Shannon was very much a young woman. For Taylor Millar, she would have recognised her daughter anywhere, no matter how much time had passed - the eyes were unmistakable.

Shannon had barely wiped away her tears when there was the sound of pounding feet from upstairs which quickly descended the stairs.

"Is Dad back?" came a girl's voice.

"We saw the car," a boy's voice added.

Shannon began to shake again as a boy and a girl came into view. The girl was tall, with flaming orange hair. The girl was showing the signs of puberty with gentle swellings on her chest and spreading hips. Shannon guessed her age to be twelve. The girl was examining Shannon very closely as was the boy. The boy was a couple of inches shorter than his sister and typically for a boy of his age which Shannon estimated to be about ten. He also bore a cheeky grin.

"Mom?" came the worried query from Annabelle, her voice shaking.

"Shan?" Iain Millar burst into tears as he ran to hug his big sister.

The boy had only been five when he had last seen her but again, it was the piercing blue eyes which gave Shannon away. Annabelle quickly followed her brother as she joined in the welcome. Her mind went back to when she was seven and had last seen her older sister. The happiness was overwhelming for the entire family and the tears flowed steadily. Ten minutes passed before the three siblings separated and Shannon found herself being dragged into the living room and pushed onto a couch with sibling on either arm. Shannon was still overwhelmed by it all as she studied her new surroundings and the two youngsters who held onto her arms.

Shannon was finally able to pull her arms away from Annabelle and Iain and she then turned to them both, studying each child. She

could remember them both - only they had been much smaller. The cheeky grin for Iain was still the same, as was the cheeky smirk for Annabelle.

Then Shannon noticed something and she felt the anger welling up inside her as she stood back up and turned to her father and mother.

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Patrick caught it first - he was more familiar with young assassins and he saw the darkness cloud his daughter's face.

"What is it, Shannon?" he asked carefully with a warning look thrown at his wife.

"What have you done to them?" she demanded with malice in her tone.

Shannon had picked up several tell-tales. The two kids had both come downstairs fresh from a shower - nothing untoward there. However, Shannon had noticed her siblings' skin. Annabelle had significant bruising on her stomach and on her chest which had been visible to the much taller Shannon beneath the loose pyjama top. Iain had bruises visible on his legs - the same with his sister as both wore pyjama shorts. Shannon took hold of Annabelle's hand.

"You been cleaning weapons, tonight?"

"Huh?" Annabelle responded.

"I can smell the gun oil - it's under your fingernails - and don't tell me you've been doing Taekwondo or some other shit. Those bruises are from combat," Shannon stated as she lifted her sister's top to reveal the bruising. "You turning them into vigilantes, Daddy?"

Patrick could see that his daughter was furious and he opted to tell the truth.

"We wanted to break it to you, honey - but only when we thought that you were ready. Annabelle and Iain are vigilantes - they were out, tonight."

Shannon took her brother by the jaw and she studied his eyes. She glared at her mother and father.

"You've turned them into killers - just like me. How could you do that? You fucked up with me - that was bad enough - but to do the same thing with them?"

"We knew that you would come back a veteran and that you might find it difficult to adjust. We thought that you could take command of your siblings and all three of you could go out together, using your skills for good," Taylor responded. "It all started as self-defence. After you went missing, I insisted that they learnt the skills needed to protect themselves. Your father and I chose to teach them so more unorthodox fighting styles as well as offensive fighting

styles. They both learnt weapons and they both learnt to ride a motorcycle before they were eight."

"Do they know what I am?"

"No," Taylor admitted.

"Mom?" Annabelle asked.

"Shannon, honey, please sit down," her father directed.

Once everyone was seated, Patrick Millar spoke and he did not stop for a little over two hours. Shannon interceded to add her own views and by the end, both youngsters were shocked by what was revealed about a program called *Urban Predator* and by what their sister had subsequently endured over five years of hell. By the time the truth had come out, everybody was tired and there was a lot to think about as everybody headed upstairs to bed a little after midnight.

The second floor, Shannon discovered, was occupied by her parents in the Master Bedroom and their father's office. Two further bedrooms were kept available for guests. Annabelle and Iain dragged their sister up to the third floor to where they both lived.

"This is my room - looking out over the back yard," Annabelle explained proudly.

"My room is just at the top of the stairs, looking out over the front and side," Iain added.

"Your room is in between," Taylor explained.

Shannon gingerly pushed open the door to find a large bedroom with a window looking out over the front of the house and another to the side. There was a double bed tastefully made up with pink bedding and a pile of pillows. There was a dressing table, fully equipped with accoutrements. A built-in wardrobe lay empty, as did a stack of drawers.

"We'll go shopping in the morning," Patrick suggested.

Atop the stack of drawers, Shannon saw all the soft toys which she had not seen since the day when she had been taken. The girl sat down on the bed and she cried. She was so happy to be home and safe with her family.

"Goodnight, sweetheart," Taylor said as she hugged her daughter, handing her a large T-shirt to use as a nighty. "I love you so much."

"Sleep well, Shannon. Love you," Patrick added.

"I wish I could say the same thing, only a lot has come out tonight that's got me worried. I hope you can understand that while I do love you inside, I can't bring myself to say it right now."

Shannon stripped off once everybody was heading off to their own bedrooms and she pulled on the T-shirt. The bed was amazingly comfortable and she could hear giggling coming from the bedroom that belonged to her little sister.

"Night, Shannon!" Annabelle called out.

"Night, Annabelle."

"Night, Shan!" Iain added.

"Night, Iain."

Despite her anger, Shannon smiled as she swiftly fell asleep.

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***The following morning***  
***Thursday, September 16<sup>th</sup>***

"Shan?"

"Come in, Annabelle."

"I didn't want to intrude."

"Never used to bother you."

"You're older now."

"So are you, and you look amazing."

Annabelle blushed.

"You're angry with Mom and Dad."

"Yes, I am."

"We both know what we are doing, Shan."

"That isn't the point. I've seen hell, Annabelle, and it really hurt to find that you've been trained like I was."

"Our training was nothing like yours, Shan. You went through hell while we were pushed but not forced. I may have only just turned twelve but I know what I am getting myself into."

"I can tell by your eyes that you've taken a life."

"That was hard. It was just a month ago - a man. I've killed three times since then. Iain was a week later - just one since."

"I've killed so many times it scares me. I've tortured people but I've always put them out of their misery. You never forget those kills. To take a life tears at your soul in a way that can never be repaired."

"I understand. Will you be a part of it?"

"I don't know. I just want it to be over. . ."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be. You are my sister and my door is always open to you, Annabelle. I really do love you."

Shannon hugged her little sister tightly.

"What about me?"

"You too, brat!" Shannon grinned as she pulled her brother into the hug.

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***Later that morning***

Once Annabelle and Iain had left for school, Shannon settled down on the couch in the living room to watch some TV.

A little after ten, she heard her mother answering the front door. She had been avoiding her parents but they had respected that and given her the space that she needed to think. Shannon was, however, surprised at who the visitor was.

"Hi, Mrs Millar. I'm Saoirse and this is Marc - we've come to see Shannon."

"Come in, Saoirse. My husband told me about you."

Marc? No - it couldn't be. . . Shannon stood up to welcome Saoirse but just behind the girl, Shannon laid eyes on. . . No words passed her lips as she shoved Saoirse off to one side and she seized hold of the smirking boy. He never got a chance to say a word as Shannon pulled him into a firm embrace, lips joined like they were welded together. After thirty seconds, Taylor spoke.

"I take it they know one another. . ." she commented dryly.

"Oh, yeah!" Saoirse replied.

"Well?"

"Oh, they've gone way beyond kissing."

"How far?" Mrs Millar enquired with a scowl.

"Penis, vagina - the whole nine yards!" Saoirse confirmed.

"They stay connected, somebody is going to pass out," Taylor Millar chuckled before she raised her voice. "Hey! Love birds!"

Marc pulled away from Shannon who looked very annoyed.

"If you two are going to be making out, I do hope you've brought condoms, young man," Shannon's mother commented.

Marc went bright red, as did Shannon, who giggled.

"For fuck's sake!" Shannon growled. "Here's two."

Shannon almost took Saoirse's fingers off as she snatched the condoms out of her hand and she dragged Marc up the stairs. Saoirse



and Taylor exchanged a look as they heard a door slamming far above them.

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Fifteen minutes later, Shannon returned, wrapped in just a towel and with a very sheepish look on her face.

"That was quick," Saoirse commented with an evil grin.

"Marc struggled to control himself but considering neither of us has had sex in months - we both went off like a damn rocket."

"We heard the screaming!" Taylor laughed as her daughter shrank onto the couch her face threatening to set fire to something.

Marc appeared, just then. He was dressed and he bore a very satisfied look on his face.

"You both reconnected, then?" Saoirse chuckled as Marc blushed.

"Her boobs have grown," Marc commented with a grin.

"So's his dick," Shannon countered with a giggle.

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### ***That same morning***

#### ***Morton Grove***

The little girl was very nervous as the car pulled up outside the house.

Naturally, as they entered the house, with Becky gripping Joshua's hand tightly, Chloe was ambushed by her mother and then her cousin. Then, after the hugs had ceased, including Cathy hugging Joshua, Cathy noticed another little person present and she raised an eyebrow.

"Mom, Curtis - this is Rebecca and she is going to be staying with me and Josh for a while. She prefers to be called: Becky"

Cathy looked at Joshua who just shook his head and Cathy saved the inevitable questions for a later moment.

"Hi, Becky. My name is Cathy and I am Chloe's mother."

"Hello, Mrs Bennett," Becky said politely.

"A Brit?" Cathy commented, a little surprised. "Please call me, Cathy, Becky."

"I will."

"Hello, Becky. I'm Curtis, Chloe's cousin - I live here."

"Hello, Curtis. You're nice."

"If only you really knew him like I do!" Chloe chuckled.

"You a *Predator*?" Curtis asked.

"You a vigilante?" Becky countered.

Chloe nodded at Curtis.

"Trojan at your service."

"Wow!"

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While Becky got to know Curtis, Cathy took her daughter and Joshua off to talk.

Chloe wilted before her mother's piercing stare as she built up the courage to say what she needed to say.

"Mom, before you begin . . . I've already had Josh go through me about Becky and while I won't say that she has nothing to do with losing our baby, that little girl is not a replacement. We are doing this out of love for the girl. She has no home and she has suffered so much. Yes, she is a *Predator* and as far as I know, she has killed twice. I want you to check her over, Mom. She's been beaten and there is barely a square inch of her skin which isn't cut or bruised."

Cathy smiled at her wayward daughter.

"I am going to give you both the benefit of the doubt as I trust you both. Don't think that this is getting you out of school, either. That applies to the both of you."

"Yes, ma'am!" both replied in unison.

"So, am I to be 'grandma'?" Cathy grinned.

Chloe just smiled.

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Joshua found Becky talking to Curtis in the living room. The two appeared to be getting on very well. Then Chloe knocked over her coffee with the expected response.

"Oh, fuck!"

Joshua heard a quick intake of breath and he turned back to see an astonished Becky with a hand over her mouth.

"You said a bad word!" she exclaimed.

"Sorry!" Chloe replied. "How long were you a *Predator*? Two months? I would have thought that you would have heard many bad words and phrases."

"I did. Just 'cause others use 'em, does *not* mean that *I* should."

"Okay. . ." Chloe replied, a little surprised.

"I love this girl!" Joshua chuckled. "You wanna be my girlfriend?"

Chloe glared at Joshua.

"Not a chance!" Becky replied. "You are way too old - almost ancient."

"Ancient?" Joshua enquired. "I'm sixteen, for Heavens' sake."

"Yes, and that's *twice* my age," Becky reasoned.

"Your loss. . ." Joshua mused with a grin and a wink at Chloe.

Curtis laughed. He thought that Becky was awesome and as far as he could glean, it looked like he was to become her uncle or something like that.

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### ***Later that afternoon***

#### ***Glenview***

Another youngster was feeling just as nervous as Dave turned into the drive and stopped.

"We're both here with you, Jamie - so don't worry," Abigail offered supportively.

As they all walked towards the house, Stephanie paused and she turned to her brother.

"I forgot to mention - you've now got a younger brother and sister. . ."

The twins came out of the living room, almost the moment the door had opened with Megan close behind.

"Jamie, this is Danny and Anne-Marie, they are now your younger brother and sister," Stephanie said. "The other girl is Megan; she's our auntie."

"Danny, Anne-Marie - this is my brother, Jamie. This girl here, she's called Abigail and she is a friend"

There was barely a flicker of surprise on both youngsters faces as they took in the news about Stephanie having a brother. It appeared that Paige had already broken the news as Mindy had requested. Paige had also sorted out sleeping accommodation for everybody.

"Hi, Jamie - you wanna go see your room?" Danny asked after he and his sister had hugged their parents.

I saw Stephanie squeeze Jamie's hand. The boy smiled and he let go of Stephanie's hand for the first time since they had left the plane.

"Okay."

Anne-Marie and Danny vanished up the stairs, Danny dragging Jamie with him while Anne-Marie dragged Abigail with her.

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After Mindy had hugged Marcus and Paige, she gave her attentions to her little sister and hugged her too. Mindy raised an eyebrow as she saw the brace on Megan's right wrist. Megan saw the look and she quickly tried to hide the offending wrist. Mindy smirked.

"Did you get that jerking Curtis off?"

"No!" Megan retorted in an exasperated tone. "Why does everybody think that we grope each other, morning, noon, and night?"

"Do you?" Mindy asked.

"Well, yes, but that's not the point!"

"Did you get that fending off hordes of cunts?"

"No."

"Doing something valiant?"

"No."

Marcus could not take it any longer.

"Megan, tell her - she'll find out anyway," he pointed out with a huge grin.

Megan's face went bright pink as she gave in.

"I tripped over the sodding dog!" Megan exclaimed reluctantly as she gave Piper a nasty look.

"Sodding?" Mindy inquired.

"I got it from Stephanie - it means. . ."

"I know what it means but I've never heard it spoken by an American," Mindy cut in with a chuckle. "Still - very funny!"

"Laugh it up, purple bitch!" Megan growled.

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### ***That night***

Jamie had been allocated the space above Danny's room.

Both boys were of comparable ages, with only six months between them and Jamie being the eldest of the pair. The two boys had hit it off at once and even Anne-Marie had latched onto the boy. Nobody had had any idea how Jamie might fare in his new surroundings; the boy had been thrust into not just a new family but he had also been reunited with a sister that he had thought to be long dead, and one that he had thought to have been murdered at his own hands.

On his first night at Glenview, Mindy had gone to check on the kids before she turned in and she had found Jamie's bed empty. For a moment, Mindy had begun to panic - then she had headed over to Stephanie's bedroom where she had found Jamie cuddled up with his big sister. Abigail was on the other side of him and all three were sleeping soundly.

Mindy had just smiled and left the two siblings sleeping.

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***The next day***

***Friday, September 16<sup>th</sup>***

***Glenview***

That first morning - it was busy, to put it mildly!

There were five kids to get up, showered, and dressed before breakfast. Everybody had a busy day ahead of them - Jamie and Abigail were about to meet their new world. Standing in the kitchen and watching the five kids eat their cereal at the counter, you could tell that Stephanie and Jamie were related. Their expressions as they smiled, smirked, and laughed were almost identical. Despite the joviality over breakfast, Mindy could tell that while Jamie was happy, he was still haunted and troubled by his past - as was Abigail.

The only person who seemed to have noticed, other than Dave and Mindy, was Anne-Marie - that girl could be super-perceptive at times. Anytime that Jamie seemed to be getting buried by his big sister's almost overbearing love and attention, Anne-Marie would dive in with a joke or something to break the tension. Stephanie had been unable to let her brother out of her sight - which, while understandable, seemed to be too much for the young boy.

Still, it was early days.