

This night, my world was quite literally blasted apart.

These chapters are the account of the action which led to me losing the most important person in my life. I am broken and even now, I have no idea how I can continue.

Saturday, October 15th, 2016

22:28

South Wentworth Avenue

Diamond Alpha Team: Hit Girl, Discord, Bane, Tigercat, Eisenhower

Diamond Bravo Team: Foxtail, Venom, Rage, Fury

"Titan, Hit Girl, over. . ."

"Titan, Hit Girl, over. . ."

"Titan, Hit Girl, over. . ."

The silence over the radio was deafening, almost as bad as the collapsing rubble a few yards away, not to mention the screeching of brakes and grinding of metalwork as vehicles collided on the Dan Ryan while they tried to avoid the rubble which had crashed down amongst the traffic - thankfully thin for the time of night. Hit Girl was in a quandary. Buried under tons of rubble was a vehicle belonging to her and deep within that armoured beast, her mentor, her son, and her best-friend's daughter. Also, a few hundred yards away, her sister, best-friend, and others were in mortal danger fighting some new foe.

Not to mention that a valuable member of her team was badly hurt, if not killed by the collapse.

TITAN

The explosion had been dulled by the heavy armour, but the crashing of masonry onto the hull had been deafening and for the two youngsters onboard, terrifying.

Ravage had hugged Scamp tightly as she had shaken with fear. Medic had dived out of the driver's seat, the moment that the route became blocked and the vehicle buried. She had grabbed both kids and covered them with her own body. All three wore body armour, but hers was the heaviest. The crashing and banging went on and on. The massive vehicle shook on its suspension as the hull was knocked from side to side and from above. When the noise finally ceased, Medic was astounded to find that they were each still alive and totally unhurt. The vehicle was intact, even the armoured windscreen showed little more than scratches from the crashing brickwork.

"You guys okay?" she asked.

"I'm good," Scamp replied. "Ravage - let me go."

"Sorry - just looking after my friend," the boy responded as he released the girl and allowed her to get back to her feet. "Are we buried?"

"Seems so," Medic replied as she went from viewport to viewport and she found every viewport blocked by masonry. "Let's . . ."

Medic paused as she heard a metallic clanking sound from near the base of the rear hatch.

"Somebody's come to get us!" Scamp announced happily.

"I don't think so," Ravage replied. "Nobody's moved the rubble yet."

South Wentworth Avenue

An SUV sped on South Wentworth Avenue from West Garfield Boulevard, siren screaming and a blue light flashing on the dashboard.

The SUV stopped beside *Sentinel* and a woman appeared - she bore a large red cross on a white background worn prominently on her flask vest.

"Doctor Staite - you got wounded?"

Hit Girl studied the new arrival.

"We don't know," she replied simply.

Fusion members were feverously digging through the immense pile of rubble and they had been at it for nearly ten minutes since the explosion. Then the rubble began to shift on its own as a deep-throated roar could be heard from beneath the shaking pile. More masonry shifted and something big, black, and very ugly began to emerge. With a monstrous roar from the titanic 6.7-litre V8 turbo diesel, the monstrous truck heaved itself out of the masonry, crunching over broken glass and brickwork before it came to a stop on a clear stretch of road. The paintwork was scratched and gouged, but the bodywork was otherwise intact.

Not so, for Foxtail - she was in a very bad way.

..._...

When Hit Girl hauled open the rear hatch, she was aghast at the sight before her.

Foxtail was lying on her back with most of her armour removed. To say she was bruised would have been a major understatement. Almost every inch of the teen's body was bruised. Beside her, Scamp and Ravage were keeping an eye on the unconscious vigilante. Medic climbed out from behind the wheel and she made her way towards Hit Girl.

"Heavy bruising across front, back, and sides of her body. Her helmet protected her head, but she has a considerable concussion. I think her left thigh has been injured in some way, not to mention what might be a broken tibia - there may be more."

"Can I help?"

Hit Girl growled at the doctor who had appeared behind her. Medic nodded, and Hit Girl waved Doctor Staite forwards.

"The mask stays on," Hit Girl growled. "We have somewhere to be."

With that remark, Hit Girl nodded to Ravage and Scamp before she dived out of the vehicle.

South Normal Boulevard

Ruby Alpha: Shadow, Hellcat, Fortune

Ruby Bravo: Mist, Piranha, Trojan

Opal Alpha: Jackal, Tempest, Cut-Throat

Opal Bravo: Raven, Wildcat, Nightmare

Diamond Alpha Team: Hit Girl, Discord, Bane, Tigercat, Eisenhower
Diamond Bravo Team: Foxtail, Venom, Rage, Fury

The situation sucked!

Hit Girl could see exhausted vigilantes fighting fresh . . . Shinobi. Damn! Shinobi were bad news - a variation on the ninja theme, only much deadlier. The new enemy were oriental, too; another bad sign. No way could FEAR have them teamed up with her. Venom took over command of Diamond Bravo and the seven fresher vigilantes tore into the enemy, relieving the beleaguered Ruby and Opal teams. The enemy did not openly show any concern with the numbers of their opposition rising to twenty, not including the rabid mutts. The odds had evened in Fusion's favour and their new enemy were dropping, just much more slowly than in a normal fight against brawn and muscle, rather than brains.

Hit Girl found herself fighting one of the men. He wore a dark-coloured set of loose-fitting overalls - they might have been dark blue or even black; it was difficult to tell in the semi-darkness. His swordsmanship was dignified and disciplined - a ninja trait. He showed no outward emotion - another ninja trait. He used smooth, planned movements - the ninja way, too. Then, Hit Girl identified the sign of the man's 'office', so to speak. The highly-polished wooden riveted hilt of what could only be a meat cleaver sat in a custom leather holster on his left hip beside what appeared to be the butt of a Beretta pistol.

For a moment, her mind drifted.

February 9th, 2008

Safehouse A, New York

The ten-year-old girl was getting bored . . . the lesson had been going on for nearly two hours.

"Daddy. . ."

"Yes, child."

"We finished, yet?"

"Now, look here, Mindy - you need to know what you might come up against. This is real important, child."

"Okay - we have Japanese ninjas and they can be bad - so, I just kill 'em."

"As God is my witness, you push things, child. Yes, the Japanese ninja is very disciplined and very good at what they do - you have to be better, Mindy. But there is a worse ninja - those from China. They are ruthless, and they are incredibly disciplined."

"I'm disciplined," Mindy pointed out.

"Not always, child - you have been known to slip up."

Mindy rolled her eyes, then her shoulders slumped.

"I didn't see the cunt in the darkness - I bumped into him."

"While a Japanese ninja might allow you to bump into him before killing you, the Chinese version, the Shinobi - well, they would have killed you long before you were close enough to 'bump' into them."

"They that bad?" Mindy asked as she cringed at the news.

"I would never want to face one - they are stealthier than the most silent cat stalking its prey. They are rare, though, and that is good."

"How so?" the ever-inquisitive pig-tailed Mindy asked.

"Only one organisation uses them today - can you guess what that might be?"

Mindy thought for a moment.

"Mafia?"

"Worse."

"The Sicilian Mafia?"

"Damned Italian ponces!" Damon chuckled as Mindy screwed up her face in concentration for a few moments before giving up.

"No idea."

"The Chinese Triads."

Mindy paled at their mention.

"The Hong Kong Triad known as the 14K is believed to use Shinobi - that is unconfirmed as nobody who has met the Shinobi has actually survived to talk about it. While it is bad to have *any* Chinese Triad on your tail - the 14K are by far the worst, and the largest. If you ever find yourself fighting a Shinobi, child, you be damn careful, and you better have eyes in the back of your skull - they are devious, and they often work in pairs."

"I'll remember, Daddy, have no fear."

Saturday, October 15th, 2016

23:14

South Normal Boulevard, Chicago

Ruby Alpha: Shadow, Hellcat, Fortune

Ruby Bravo: Mist, Piranha, Trojan

Opal Alpha: Jackal, Tempest, Cut-Throat

Opal Bravo: Raven, Wildcat, Nightmare

Diamond Alpha Team: Hit Girl, Discord, Bane, Tigercat, Eisenhower

Diamond Bravo Team: Foxtail, Venom, Rage, Fury

As the Safehouse dissolved in her mind and the dark street materialised around her, full of people fighting, her Daddy's comments came to the fore and they saved her life as she instinctively drew her second blade and checked her six.

She was being stalked. While her attention had been on her single attacker, his partner was closing in for the kill, a razor-sharp meat-cleaver poised to hack off her head at the neck. The man showed a moment's irritation at being found out but that did not prevent him from attacking, along with his partner. Hit Girl put everything she had into defending herself from the two attackers. She had to put them down as other members of her team needed help. She could see three armoured shapes on the ground - were they . . . she couldn't even bring herself to *think* the fateful word.

What the hell, was happening in their city?

..._...

Nightmare was lying on the ground.

She was exhausted and the man whom she had been fighting had fairly easily put her down - he was highly skilled, and she was not. Only, he had not killed her as she had expected but simply stepped over her and moved onto the next vigilante. A few feet away, she could see Trojan and Tempest on the ground too - injured, but alive, just like her. Nightmare had felt the Katana blade strike her left shoulder, and while the armour had held, the pain of the strike had been like nothing she had ever endured before. As far as she could tell, Trojan and Tempest were similarly struggling with painful injuries.

Hit Girl's arrival had been both fortuitous and very welcome.

Safehouse K

"Christ!" Stephanie exclaimed as she ran into the medical bay.

Her friend was lying on a table, stripped of her combat suit and underwear. Cathy was busy tending to the visible injuries which seemed to be mostly heavy bruising.

"Is she going to be okay?" Stephanie asked.

"I had help from another doctor, on the scene. We managed to stabilise her, but she has a serious concussion and we have internal bleeding which has been contained. She will be a very sick girl for quite a while and I am sure you understand what that means," Cathy replied.

"I do," Stephanie replied as she remembered her own recovery. "She's got hell ahead of her. Is she going to hospital?"

"Yes, in the next few minutes."

..._...

Once Saoirse had been taken off to hospital by Emily, Ryan appeared, and he hugged his wife briefly.

"*Fusion* is taking a hammering," he said.

"The night is not over," Cathy cautioned. "Plenty of time for everything to turn about."

"I hate not being involved," Stephanie complained.

"I know, you do," Ryan offered calmly. "You still played your part, Steph."

"I know, I know."

"I need to get back out there," Medic said as she pulled her mask into place. "Ravage and Scamp are waiting in *Titan*."

South Normal Boulevard, Chicago

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Wildcat could not understand it.

They were beaten, only they were still alive - why? The thirty attackers had withered - eight were dead - the attack faltering once Hit Girl had arrived with fresh blood, but even so, the attackers could have caused much more damage than they had. Wildcat was struggling with the pain of two nasty slashes which had not penetrated her suit, but were painful, nonetheless. Then, as if by a single command, they vanished into the darkness, just as stealthily as they had arrived.

"What the fuck!?" the girl exclaimed.

Bane stared at Wildcat, unnerved by the vanishing act. Hit Girl strode over.

"Where did they go?" she demanded.

"Fuck knows!" Bane responded angrily.

"They took their dead," Venom pointed out.

"Who the bloody hell does that?" Fury wanted to know.

"A fucking mystery," Shadow finished.

"I want everybody back to Safehouse K - now!" Hit Girl growled.

An undisclosed location in Chicago

Lieutenant Vicky Richards glared at the eleven miscreants kneeling before her.

They were all kids. Their ages varied from ten to sixteen. Six were girls, the remaining five, boys. While most appeared relieved at their change in circumstances, at least four still showed vehement anger at their capture. None were to be trusted, and as such, they were still secured with various physical restraints.

"You will each be taken, one by one, onto the next room. There you will be stripped, searched, and you will receive a brief interview. You are no longer *Marauders*. You are no longer *Predators*. You are just kids in the wrong place at the wrong time. None of you are in any great trouble and should you cooperate, you will all get new lives. If you do not cooperate, then you will not enjoy your new home," Vicky announced. "We are not here to hurt you - we want to help you."

"Go fuck yourself, lady!" a fourteen-year-old girl shouted out.

Vicky turned and faced the delinquent teenager.

"You must be Firebrand," Vicky began and there was a hint of surprise in the teenager's eyes. "You will follow instructions, young lady."

"No - I won't!"

"Take her," Vicky ordered, and a pair of female police officers seized the girl.

Firebrand resisted, fighting the two officers, however, both were bigger than the fourteen-year-old and they easily dragged her through into the next room where the door was shut, and the girl was held down on the floor.

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Eight minutes, and a lot of screaming and yelling later, Firebrand emerged.

The girl was more subdued, and she was wearing a set of matching grey jogging top and bottoms with white running shoes on her feet. Her long hair was a mess and she was struggling to put it back up in a ponytail.

"You done?" Vicky asked the girl who nodded more meekly than before.

Once the girl was ready, the restraints were secured, and the girl was allowed to sit against the far wall of the warehouse. Vicky then pointed at one of the boys.

"Inciter - you're next."

The boy who had been kneeling beside Firebrand was seized and taken through into the next room. His shouts ceased very quickly. On the boy's return, wearing the same set of joggers as Firebrand, he was restrained as before and with a rather dejected look, he was sent to sit beside Firebrand. Vicky waved at her colleague, Sergeant Trudy Platt.

"How did you subdue them?" she asked with genuine curiosity.

"Simple," Trudy replied. "I explained the facts of their situations to them in plain language and I then told them in explicit detail what I would do to them if they did not obey."

"Ouch!"

Safehouse K

While Mindy was pleased to see everybody alive, there were injuries.

Titan sat in the middle of the first-floor level of the Safehouse with injured vigilantes receiving medical attention, sitting on the ground around the mammoth vehicle. The wounds were superficial but very painful. Lauren, Curtis, and Marc all bore nasty elongated bruises on their upper bodies - the bruising would hurt for many days, Mindy knew.

"Mum!"

Mindy turned to see Stephanie running towards her. They both hugged.

"Are you. . ." Mindy began.

"I'm uninjured - just some bruising."

"When I heard about. . ."

"I know."

"I cannot lose you," Mindy said as she knelt down to look into her eldest daughter's eyes.

"She has nine lives," Jamie commented as he came over to give his sister a hug.

"She must be overdrawn by now," Shannon commented as she walked past with her arm wrapped around her father.

Stephanie grimaced.

Razor came bounding over and he almost knocked his owner over. Stephanie giggled as she was licked by the overexcited animal. Anne-Marie and Danny were sitting with Dave and they watched the antics from a few yards away. Next, to that group, Chloe, Joshua, and Becky were sitting together, glad to be alive. Becky was giving an animated presentation on her brush with death in *Titan*, just an hour previously. Chloe was trying to put a brave face on, but she

failed miserably, and she was exchanging dark looks with Joshua. The attack had scared Becky, at the time, however, the little girl was very brave and considering she was unhurt, she had brushed off the attack and now thought of the event as just a bit of fun. Mind you, she looked very unhappy when she began to describe how Foxtail had climbed aboard *Titan* and then collapsed.

"You appear to have enjoyed yourself," Chloe conceded with a look of concern.

"Between you and me, Mum, a little wee did escape," Becky whispered into Chloe's ear.

Chloe chuckled as the eight-year-old blushed furiously.

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Forty minutes later, Mindy looked around at the despondent vigilantes.

Morale had quite literally plummeted, and their fighting spirit was ebbing.

"We can do this. . ." Mindy began but her words appeared to be having very little effect.

Mindy herself was feeling just as despondent which meant that she was unable to produce a rousing speech, encouraging her people into battle. Joshua rested his hand on Mindy's shoulder and Mindy pressed her own hand on top of his, glad of the human contact. Then Joshua began to whistle - the tune was familiar, Mindy thought. A few ears perked up and then Stephanie grinned, as did Abigail. Both girls began to mutter the words with encouragement from Joshua.

*Some things in life are bad
They can really make you mad
Other things just make you swear and curse
When you're chewing on life's gristle
Don't grumble, give a whistle
And this'll help things turn out for the best
And . . .*

Always look on the bright side of life

Others joined in with the whistling, smirking as they did so.

Always look on the light side of life

The whistling became infectious.

*If life seems jolly rotten
There's something you've forgotten
And that's to laugh and smile and dance and sing
When you're feeling in the dumps
Don't be silly chumps
Just purse your lips and whistle - that's the thing
And...*

Always look on the bright side of life

More were joining in with the singing and the whistling.

Always look on the light side of life

"Come on!" Joshua shouted as tired vigilantes began to get to their feet, smiles spreading - the despondent, dazed looks vanishing.

The whistling was filling the Safehouse and Mindy was loving it.

*For life is quite absurd
And death's the final word
You must always face the curtain with a bow
Forget about your sin
Give the audience a grin
Enjoy it - it's your last chance anyhow*

*So always look on the bright side of death
A-Just before you draw your terminal breath*

*Life's a piece of shit
When you look at it
Life's a laugh and death's a joke, it's true
You'll see it's all a show
Keep 'em laughin' as you go
Just remember that the last laugh is on you
And...*

Always look on the bright side of life

Always look on the light side of life

"Come on!" Joshua yelled. "Cheer up, you old buggers!"

Always look on the bright side of life

Always look on the light side of life

"Worse things happen at sea, you know," Joshua commented as he looked over at Stephanie and winked.

Ryan just shook his head while Stephanie rolled her eyes. Everybody finished off their food and drink, whistling and laughing as they did so. Masks were pulled back on and weapons were checked. The *Fusion* fighting force was back and ready for action. Hit Girl gave Jackal a big hug, followed by a hard punch before she began directing her forces.

"You lot are fucking crazy!" Lucy growled as she pulled on her mask.

01:05

They had barely left the Safehouse, when the alert came through.

"*Fusion* - we have a major situation alert," Hal announced to all. "*Synthesis* has detected the enemy massing at: South Wacker Drive, Lower Wacker Drive, West Harrison Street, South Wells Street, and West Jackson Boulevard."

That was a first - normally, all the disturbances took place well away from the centre of the city, but FEAR had escalated things somewhat. Hit Girl could sense the endgame approaching. It was just after one in the morning and she knew that by dawn, it would be all but over - but who would be the victor?

Assignments were issued, and the massed forces of *Fusion* altered course towards the centre of the windy city . . . and towards potential oblivion. Battle Guy had already adjusted the courses of his airborne drones, redirecting them over the designated battle zone. He was not happy with what he found, and it matched up with what *Synthesis* had discovered. There were thermal blooms in the darkness at all locations - except for Lower Wacker Drive, of course - which matched up with the images being received from traffic cameras.

FEAR's forces were out in force - *Corsairs*, *Marauders*, *Russians*, and *Sicilians*.

02:04

The battle was raging.

The CPD had initially been overwhelmed in the opening attacks - they had not expected such a gathering of force in the normally quieter part of Chicago. To add to the problems, there were still many civilians around as they poured out of bars and clubs, looking to make their way home to bed. Bullets flew in all directions, striking buildings and shattering glass. *Fusion* had arrived on the scene within twenty minutes, just minutes after the first shots had been fired. Their first task was to protect the CPD and get the injured officers to safety along with a few civilians who had strayed into the line of fire. While protecting the innocent, *Fusion* had one hand tied behind their proverbial backs. It was another tactic of FEAR's to hobble *Fusion* in their attacks on her people.

There was still no sign of the bitch and Hit Girl was very keen to put an end to the woman - to put an end to the entire sordid affair which had ultimately culminated in the current night of action. Hit Girl was angry; she had missed seeing Saoirse before she was taken to hospital. The girl was one of her senior operators and she had been badly hurt - Medic had not been gentle in her appraisal of Saoirse's chances when she had suggested that Saoirse may not survive her internal injuries.

Fighting in amongst the skyscrapers posed a problem for both the drones and the sharpshooters. CPD snipers and Leon were having issues finding hood perches from where to cover the fighting. Hit Girl was certain that FEAR had chosen the site for this battle with care and planning. It did not help that FEAR appeared to have fighters pre-sited with high-powered rifles at strategic points along Wacker Drive. Armoured shields were much in evidence as police officers, medics, and civilians were protected by *Fusion* operators. The area echoed with the sounds of gunfire, small explosions, and the screaming of the terrified and the wounded - of which there were many. Ambulances were deploying to the scene, only to be targeted before they got close to the wounded. CPD armoured SWAT vehicles and *Fusion* vehicles were being used as makeshift ambulances, ferrying the wounded to safe zones where paramedics could take over and take the wounded to hospital. However, for many, the options for escape were limited as they were pinned down within the 'red zone' as it was being called.

For the immediate moment, FEAR was in control of the borders surrounding the 'red zone'.

At the east end of the West Harrison Street Bridge, a man lay dying.

Medic ignored the gunfire that flew all around her and she pushed the ever-present danger out of her mind as she concentrated on the tasks before her. To her left, a female CFD paramedic had her hands pressing deep into the gunshot wound of a uniformed CPD officer. Medic was busy suturing ruptured organs and fighting to stop the internal bleeding so that the man could be moved. The CFD ambulance had been immobilised by the gunfire and it had been abandoned. The paramedic and the vigilante were working side-by-side in the lee of the wrecked ambulance, using it as a shield. Ten feet away, the other paramedic from the same wrecked ambulance was working alongside another uniformed CPD officer who was seeing to a fallen civilian.

A few yards away, Raven and Hellcat were firing on gunmen, across the far side of the Harrison/Wacker intersection. They were well-stocked with spare

magazines but even so, they husbanded their rounds as the morning was still very young. For both vigilantes, it was a new style of fighting. Street fighting was their thing, not combat that was fresh out of a computer game. Both of them were also very tired - they had already been 'on shift' for almost eight hours. Adrenalin was keeping them going and neither wanted to let down the rest of the team. A little over 170 yards to the east, at the next intersection, Petra, Stormtide, and Tigercat were engaged in their own gun fight. Eight Russians were using a parking lot as cover while they engaged the three vigilantes. Beyond them, at least three sharpshooting Corsairs were atop the La Salle Street Station.

They sent lead down towards the three vigilantes, adding to the danger at the intersection.

La Salle Street Station

Hit Girl and Shadow ran along the three-hundred-yard roof towards the sharpshooters.

"Two to one - I think we have things in our favour for once," Shadow commented as they ran.

A hatch opened, fifty yards or so ahead of them - six . . . no, seven . . . eight - men climbed out of said hatch and they moved to protect their sharpshooters.

"Why do have to open your big mouth?" Hit Girl groaned.

"So, what - two to one, six to one; what's the difference?" Shadow retorted.

"Just remember, Shadow, *you're* taking down your own fair share."

"Bet I get more than you do, Hit Girl - you're getting old!"

"Fuck you, half-pint!"

"I'm almost the same height as you."

"You saying that I'm short?"

"Yeah!"

Shadow bolted ahead and kicked an assault rifle out of the hands of the nearest Sicilian. She followed up the kick with a punch to his face, breaking his nose.

"I got first blood!" Shadow yelled.

Hit Girl ignored her annoying Lieutenant as she proceeded to put a bullet in one man and then kicked another off the roof.

"Two down. . ." Hit Girl growled.

"Hey!" a voice called out over the radio. "*What fucker dropped a body almost on top of me?*"

"Quit your fucking moaning, Jackal, women working here!" Shadow chuckled as she broke the arm of a large Sicilian before breaking his trachea with the heel of her boot.

"*What, you and Hit Girl?*" Jackal called back derisively. "*Don't make me laugh!*"

"That's not what you were muttering as you licked me out, the other night."

"So disgusting!" Hit Girl commented as she slashed open a man's throat with her Tanto before kicking him off the station roof.

"Like Kick-Ass never licked you out," Shadow retorted.

"*Time and a place for labia licking, girls,*" Mist commented from down below.

"True," Shadow replied as she fought off a pair of mafia scum.

"Let's get them!" Hit Girl called out and the last pair of men moved back, towards the sharpshooters.

One turned, and he fired a high-powered bullet directly at Hit Girl. Shadow was horrified to see her mentor stagger backwards before she tumbled backwards over the edge of the roof and plunged forty feet to the roadway below.

Lower Wacker Drive

Kick-Ass charged forwards, his Ko-Wakizashi glinting in the lighting.

Behind him, came Eisenhower leading Loki, Dart, Kes, Ardent, Siren, Sampson, and Blade. They were followed by Discord, Bane, Rage, and Fury. Ahead of them, sprinting full tilt towards them, were two dozen *Corsairs* and maybe eight *Marauders*. On the far side of the subterranean drive, Fortune, Relentless, Torment, and Venom moved to flank the attacking *Corsairs* and *Marauders*. When the opposing forces came together, there was an almighty explosion of yelling, the clashing of metal against metal, and the snarling of rabid canines.

Most of the *Corsairs* were unnerved by the presence of the armour-clad dogs - many of them were ex-military, and they knew only too well what attack dogs were capable of accomplishing with their pearly-whites. The dogs moved fast and in pairs, attacking *Corsairs* as they went. Bane and Venom went for the *Marauders* with the single aim of putting them out cold with as little injury to their persons as possible. It was not easy for them to fight without maiming, or killing, but they had no choice; they wanted those kids to have a chance at a new life, just as they both had.

Kick-Ass in comparison was out for blood. Those *Corsairs* were accepting money to hurt people in Chicago and they had been part of hurting Foxtail - that was unforgiveable. The veteran vigilante cut through the armour-clad mercenaries taking blows on his armour and fending off blows from batons and swords with his own blades. He was angry and every blow against one of the bastards chipped away at his anger, bit by bit.

As far as Kick-Ass was concerned, no *Corsair* was going survive the fight.

La Salle Street Station

Jackal heard the yell from Hit Girl as she fell.

He looked up and he tried not to laugh. Hit Girl hung by her legs from the horizontal section of a lamppost.

"Just hang around, don't mind me," Jackal chuckled as he, Cut-Throat, and Fortune covered the other team's back.

The verbal response from Hit Girl was very unladylike as she built up momentum and swung around the horizontal pole, swinging herself upwards until she was able to stand on the pole. From there, she threw herself forwards, landing on the station roof and jumping over Shadow who appeared to be fighting two of the

sharpshooters, hand to hand. The other two sharpshooters were aiming their weapons at Shadow, ready to take her down, only they each received two bullets in the forehead, courtesy of Hit Girl.

"Always having to clear up after you, Shadow!"

"I was doing fine!" Shadow growled as she punched out the last man, and shoving him out of her way.

"Pull the other sword, it's got bells on," Hit Girl growled as she ran and dived off the rooftop, swinging on the same light pole and somersaulting to a casual touchdown on the street below.

"Very pretty," Jackal conceded.

Hit Girl chuckled. Very few could openly tease Hit Girl, but Jackal was one of those - besides, she'd get the Brit back later. . .

Off West Jackson Boulevard

The tripartite agreement and the ensuing battles, along with the violence and destruction, the disinformation, the propaganda; it had all gone a long way to discredit *Fusion*. As a direct result, many of the 2.7 million citizens openly admitted to *Fusion* being bad for the city and questioned their future existence.

Wildcat was having the time of her young life. Maybe not so much on the part of Nightmare and Piranha. Nightmare was still very sore from her earlier injuries while Piranha was very tired and a little unsure of herself as a result, much to her surprise. The fighting was fun, but very tiring, and she was not conditioned for the type of fighting that *Fusion* went in for. Wildcat, well, she was not easy to keep up with as she appeared to have unlimited energy, as did Nightmare. Nevertheless, Wildcat was in charge, and Piranha deferred to the younger girl in action.

Wildcat made short work of anybody who challenged her, either with her Katana, or the companion Wakizashi. One thing Piranha had noticed about the youngster was that Wildcat was fanatical about being a vigilante and in many respects, Wildcat was a mirror image of Hit Girl, herself. However, Piranha recognised a troubled girl when she saw one, and the very first time Piranha had seen Megan as herself, she had recognised something dark within the twelve-year-old's eyes . . . not to mention the bizarre haircut - but it was something which the seasoned *Predator* could not broach with the much younger girl who she barely knew.

As Piranha took on her own Russian Brotherhood soldier, Wildcat was performing some amazing somersaults as she used her speed and manoeuvrability to outfox the much stronger Russians who would be able to snap the girl's frame in two, should they get their muscular hands on her body. Wildcat was like an angry bird as she bounced from shoulder to shoulder, driving one of her blades down into the same shoulder and killing the man before diving towards the next target. As for Nightmare, that girl was disturbed in a seemingly different way to Wildcat, although Nightmare also had a darkness to her eyes.

Nightmare fought well for such a slightly built young girl with a barely concealed bloodlust and a small amount of recklessness which would never have been tolerated within *Urban Predator*. Piranha moved to protect Nightmare's back as the girl appeared very preoccupied with drawing blood with her jungle sword. Then Piranha jumped a mile when the head of a man exploded a few feet away, the pistol aimed at her head dropping to the ground.

"Overwatch has your back, Piranha!" Leon called over the communications as she selected a new target.

Lower Wacker Drive

Carnage.

That was the only word for it. Bodies, the remains of bodies, blood - it was all there. Standing in amongst it all, the dogs sniffed at anything which moved - they growled - and someone, usually Bane or Venom, would put a bullet into the head, speeding them along on the dark road to hell. There appeared to be but one serious injury on the part of Fusion, beyond the myriad of bruises. Fury sat on a concrete partition, cradling her left arm.

"You get yourself off with your right hand, right?" Venom teased.

"Fuck you!" Fury replied, raising the middle finger of her right hand.

"I use that finger, too," Venom persisted.

"I can help," Rage suggested.

Fury glared at the boy deciding whether or not to stab him with her bō-staff. Kick-Ass chuckled, pleased to see morale soaring. He was certain that the writing was on the wall for FEAR and her fucked up Axis of Evil. It had to end, and soon, before *Fusion*, the CPD, and everybody else was too tired, or injured, to fight.

"Let's move!" Kick-Ass yelled, and he waved at the animals who quickly bolted up the roadway, towards the open air.

02:38

Wildcat was appalled to see a man with his young family emerging from between two buildings.

What the hell, were they doing out at almost three in the morning!? She moved towards them at almost the same moment that a pair of *Corsairs* saw the same family. Nightmare and Piranha were over the far side of the block and out of position to help Wildcat who ran forwards only to find herself flipped into the air by a baton. She crashed onto her back, yelling out in pain, but quickly regaining her feet. She found herself facing *another* pair of *Corsairs* armed with machete-style swords. Wildcat threw down her shield and she unsheathed both of her swords, showing her teeth. The *Corsairs* moved apart, making *their* job easier, but the young vigilante's job *much* harder.

There was a small crowd gathering, watching the fighting. A few of them were actually cheering on the *Corsairs*, instead of cheering on the *Fusion* vigilante. It did not help that a group of firefighters were there putting out a small fire caused by the fighting. The civilians were fed up with the fighting, the damage, the injuries. Many had come to the conclusion that *Fusion* were no longer in control and nobody wanted a vigilante civil war, demolishing the city and taking down innocent citizens as collateral damage. It was deemed better to throw in with the more powerful, even if it was organised crime. Wildcat hated being jeered - she was there to *protect* the city from people like the Russians, FEAR, and the Sicilians.

There was actually a loud groan from the assembled watchers when Wildcat skewered a *Corsair*, killing him. A firefighter's glare said it all - contempt .

. . for *her*. That just made Wildcat angrier and she attacked the second *Corsair* even harder, then, as Wildcat put down the second *Corsair* with a blade to his heart, she saw something that made her blood run cold. The other pair of *Corsairs* were looking to raise the stakes and one of them pulled out a small cylindrical device. He proceeded to pull out the cotter pin before chucking the grenade towards Wildcat. The grenade was aimed at Wildcat, but it would also take out the civilians including the young family when it exploded. The grenade rolled across the sidewalk towards the crowd of civilians, none of whom had properly understood the danger which was just seconds away.

Without a moment's hesitation, the twelve-year-old female vigilante leapt forward, swept up her shield and she covered the grenade with the armoured shield. Barely a second later, the high-explosive grenade exploded, the explosive force striking the shield and forcing the lightweight vigilante into the air. The shield took the full force of the blast, protecting the man and his young family. The vigilante flew through the air before she collided with the unyielding concrete wall of the nearest building. A second later, she hit the ground hard and lay still.

The two masked *Corsairs* approached the fallen vigilante.