

**Later that evening**

**Monday, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Northwestern Memorial Hospital  
Room 32**

"Are you both enjoying the view, girls?"

Shannon and Stephanie both looked up from where they were observing the removal of Saoirse's urinary catheter. They were both captivated by how it functioned - however, Saoirse was not.

"The only thing that should be passing my labia is a tampon or a penis," Saoirse growled as she felt the thin plastic tube being removed from her urethra.

"Sorry - we were just curious," Shannon offered with a grin.

"Nothing wrong with curiosity, girls," Nurse Kittiwake commented with a chuckle as she covered up Saoirse's remaining dignity with her gown. "Okay, Saoirse, let's try and get you off the bed and onto your feet. It will be sore and remember that your right lower leg is encased in a cast, okay?"

Saoirse nodded, her face full of apprehension.

"We're here to support you, SD - no matter what," Stephanie grinned supportively.

"Okay," Nurse Kittiwake directed. "Let's get you facing the edge of the bed."

Saoirse grimaced as she twisted herself around the face her friends and the nurse. Nurse Kittiwake eased the cast over the side of the bed allowing Saoirse to slowly take the weight of the item attached to her lower right leg. The movements were painful for Saoirse and tears were visible on her face. Her face also showed determination and each of her hands was held by the hand of one of her best friends.

"Now, ease yourself forwards . . . good. Rest your weight on the good leg first."

"Ow!" Saoirse exclaimed as her left leg took her weight for the first time in a month. "That's sore . . . aaaah!"

"Focus, SD," Stephanie directed. "Look at me."

Saoirse looked directly into her friends' eyes as she stood up properly before tentatively resting weight on her damaged right leg. Saoirse almost fell forwards as her right leg buckled but the fifteen-year-old found herself supported by a ten-year-old to her left and a fourteen-year-old to her right.

"Thanks, guys," Saoirse grinned as more tears spilled down her face.

The tears turned into sobbing as Stephanie recognised the *Predator* inside coming to the fore. Shannon recognised the extreme determination which meant that Saoirse would try, try, and try again until she completed the task - or she would die trying. Saoirse moved her left leg and she took a small step. After a short pause, there came her other leg with another step, it was a smaller step, but it was still a step.

"Keep it coming, Saoirse," Shannon whispered encouragingly as she supported her friend. "Every journey begins with the first step."

"I can't - it's really sore."

"And I thought that *I* was the loser!" Stephanie growled. "Move!"

Saoirse growled, praying for the willpower to not throttle the annoying girl to her left. Stephanie would willingly allow Saoirse to ring her scrawny little neck if it helped her friend to get back on her feet.

"You want more words of motivation, you soft bitch?" Shannon added.

"Fuck!" Saoirse breathed as she forced her legs to move, tolerating the pain. "I hate you both!"

Stephanie and Shannon exchanged a grin as they supported their friend over several difficult steps.

"You've down very well, Saoirse," Nurse Kittiwake commented with a smile for all three girls. "Let's get you back onto the bed before you fall and cause yourself some more damage."

After Saoirse was settled back in her bed, Nurse Kittiwake left the three girls alone. Saoirse smiled up at her friends.

"Thanks, guys."

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**Three days later**

**Thursday, November 17<sup>th</sup>**

**Glenview**

"You didn't do anything special for the anniversary of *us* coming into your home," Anne-Marie grouched.

"Why would anybody want to celebrate *you* coming to stay?" Danny pointed out, quite reasonably, he thought.

"Why don't you go fu. . ."

"Anne-Marie!" Dave challenged and the fiery little eight-year-old simply glared at her twin brother.

"Okay!" Mindy exclaimed. "You know that we love you all - equally! Stephanie quite literally fell into our lap after being shot as collateral damage during a *Fusion* firefight. We took her to Safehouse F and she was checked over by Cathy and Chloe."

"Yeah," Stephanie muttered. "I discovered Wildcat's claws, too!"

"Yes, you did - you had a bad time, too, that night."

"The next day, Joshua gave me Marmite - first time in a while. Then I met you two. You were really nice to me, Anne-Marie."

"You looked like you needed a friend," the youngster admitted with a smile.

"Mindy slept with a pistol under her pillow that first night," Dave chuckled.

"Don't blame her, really," Stephanie admitted. "I was an unknown."

"I'm glad you came, Steph," Danny said. "You became our big sister and we never regretted it."

"Yeah - we love you," Anne-Marie admitted as she hugged Stephanie.

She was quickly joined by Anne-Marie.

"That was a special day," Jamie commented. "It was the beginning of the end for *Urban Predator*."

"That it was, Jamie, and the beginning of the hunt for my brother," Stephanie grinned as she pulled her brother into the hug.

Mindy was next before Dave wrapped them all in his muscular arms.

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***The following afternoon***

***Friday, November 18<sup>th</sup>***

***Safehouse F***

Mindy hated leaving Chicago.

She also hated seeing her teams going out without her. But, she had an appointment many miles away in Los Angeles. She and several others were due to fly out that very night. Mindy was to be joined by Anne-Marie, Danny, Megan, Curtis, Paige, Abby, and Hailee. There was also the problem of her separation from Dave, but she knew that she could survive for a few days.

"Stephanie, Jamie - listen to Dave and do not blow anything up," Mindy cautioned as she gave each a hug.

"I am in full control of my emotions and I don't cause accidental explosions," Stephanie pointed out.

"I do not blow things up without reason," Mindy countered.

"Not from what I've heard," Jamie chuckled.

"Just behave, right?"

"Love you, Mum."

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***Safehouse E***

***Level 8 - Detention Level***

Stephanie was determined to continue her task and prove to Mindy that she was Hit Girl's daughter in every way.

It had been all but two weeks since the *Marauders* had come into their custody and things were progressing well. With the assistance of Doctor Daniel Charles and Doctor Sarah Reese, a clinically accurate psychological profile had been built up for each *Marauder*. Doctor Reese was coldly clinical with her questions and she had reduced several of the older *Marauders* to tears in no time at all. It was cruel - to a point - but it was necessary to understand what was going on inside their heads. *Predators* by design were programmed to hide their emotions, so those emotions had to be dug out and inspected to find out how the child within was really feeling. Most importantly, it helped to identify those who were expected to be recoverable and those who might not be. Five *Marauders* had been identified as being honestly remorseful and those five were destined to receive special treatment to help them along. On the flip side, three had been identified as having deep psychotic issues, with another suffering from a severe case of self-loathing and anxiety.

That evening, the *Marauders* were all at the point of virtual collapse from having been kept on the go continuously. The harsh regime had been important to condition the youngsters so that they could be properly vetted. Stephanie and Lucy had some special events planned for the next day which they hoped might help the offenders want to succeed. One task which Stephanie had not been relishing was about to happen. After the evening meal, Stephanie had taken custody of sixteen-year-old Willow and escorted her back to her hidey-hole.

Only, there was somebody waiting there for them.

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## **Level 7 - Room 708**

### **The Psyche Den**

Willow scowled as she laid eyes on Rachel for the first time in many weeks.

"Willow - before you explode, please help yourself to some Coke," Stephanie directed.

Willow complied, somewhat reluctantly, and sat down without being asked.

"Why isn't she in hack with us?" Willow demanded.

"Rachel suffered for the part she played in hurting me. Believe me, Willow, Rachel spent time two doors away from you while her injuries healed. My friends beat the living crap out of her before I stopped them. Since then, Rachel has shown us that she can be trusted. She has also shown remorse to the extent that she stole a pistol from me and tried to blow her brains out."

Willow thought that one through for a few minutes.

"The bitch shot me."

"I'm sorry, Bandit, but I was not about to let you carry through your attack on Stephanie."

"Don't call me that - ever!" Willow growled dangerously.

"Would you prefer we call you, Rampart?" Stephanie asked.

"I don't deserve that name - not yet."

Stephanie was about to speak, but Rachel raised her hand.

"Willow . . . I . . . we both got involved with a bad crowd and we got caught out," Rachel said. "Life for us has been shit, but its time to put that behind us and move on. It's not easy - I can vouch for that. I have people who care about me - no idea why - but that helps. You are alone. . ."

"NO!"

"Willow. . ."

"NO! Don't think that you know me! That little bitch tried that . . . oh, fuck. . ."

Willow began to grasp her head and her face went very red.

"What is it?" Stephanie asked.

"My head - it hurts."

Stephanie hit an alarm button by the door before she grabbed up a radio. Alarm klaxons sounded throughout Safehouse E.

"Surgeon to Level 7 - medical emergency!"

By the time Surgeon appeared minutes later, Willow had collapsed onto the floor. Behind Surgeon came Kick-Ass and Stormtide. After a few moments of examination, Surgeon proclaimed Willow fit to be moved and Kick-Ass swept her up and carried her off to the Medical Centre.

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***The following morning***  
***Saturday, November 19<sup>th</sup>***

***Training Facility Echo***  
***Level 1 - Medical Centre***

Willow Hartman opened her eyes to find herself somewhere new.

It took a moment to understand where she was but then she remembered her head hurting and then collapsing in Psyche's den. What was wrong with her? She braced up as the curtain around her bed moved and Surgeon walked in accompanied by Stephanie and Rachel.

"Hi, Willow," Surgeon said. "How are we feeling?"

"Better - my head hurts, just not as much."

"It appears that you had a swelling in your brain which was causing the headaches. We're treating that, and the swelling is already subsiding."

"Told you she was brain damaged," Rachel quipped.

Willow scowled.

"Just kidding," Rachel said quickly with genuine concern. "I'm just glad you're okay - you scared the crap out of us."

"Why do you care about me - after all I have done?"

"Until you figure that out, you are going to be down here a very long time," Stephanie replied darkly.

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***Later that morning***

***Level 4 - Exercise Area***

"What have you done with Hartman?"

"Is she dead?"

"Did you fuck her up?"

"Are we each going to vanish, one by one?"

"Good riddance?"

Stephanie shook her head.

"Willow Hartman collapsed, yesterday, as a result of her previous injury. She is being treated in the Medical Centre."

"Right, back to today's agenda," Lucy said loudly. "Today, we are going to fight."

"Huh?" Dakota asked.

Lucy threw a pair of thirty-inch-long Escrima sticks at the girl's feet. Dakota did not move - she saw it as a trick.

"As I remember, you were very good with these, Arbiter," Lucy pushed.

"I don't fight anymore, Piranha."

"Your loss!"

Piranha dived forwards, the other *Marauders* scattering as the solid sticks came around towards Arbiter's head. As expected, Piranha's strike was met with force and her sticks clashed against those of Arbiter who had deftly swept up the weapons and blocked the strike.

"So, you *do* have some spirit left," Piranha grinned as she stepped back before sticking again.

The fight became more and more heated as the two girls span and struck at one another. Yes, Dakota Warlow-Davies, AKA Arbiter, was an accomplished Martial Arts fighter as would be expected from a Phase 3 graduate who had endured four years of intensive *Urban Predator* training. Stephanie could see the anger in Dakota's eyes. She had been unwilling to fight, but when forced, she would fight. There was also some hatred there, as could be expected by Lucy's former status as their direct overseer. It was a calculated risk giving them weapons, but it was also a method of monitoring their progress, while also seeing who still had an inclination to fighting.

While the two girls sparred, Stephanie handed a pair of sticks to Charlotte Grey who stood there looking stupid until Fury slapped her on the arse with her own sticks - they began to spar, slowly, working up to a steady pace. Lin Lau was paired off with her younger sister, Xiāngxìn, and they began to spar together. As for the rest, Stephanie pointed them all to a pile of Escrima Sticks and they readily paired off. Stephanie, herself, faced off against Jake Wistrum, a boy two years her senior - in age, but not in skill level, Stephanie thought.

"Move it, arsehole!" Stephanie growled as she brandished her Escrima sticks.

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"What do you want out of all this, Jakey?" Stephanie asked as they circled one another.

"I don't know, Stephy?" the boy replied with a grin.

Stephanie rapped Jake across the knuckles with one of her sticks, causing the boy to yell out in pain. He still grinned, though. The boy was tough, Stephanie had to give him that. He was a Phase 2, just as she had been, only he had been in the program for a lot longer than Stephanie had. His file indicated his strengths were Martial Arts and subterfuge - he was also a joker and he loved to make people laugh. In another life, Stephanie might have liked him, but he got on her nerves and there was something about him which freaked her out a bit. Without Stephanie's knowledge, Lucy and Abigail had hatched a plan which was unfolding around Stephanie, right at that moment.

Stephanie noticed the people around her moving subtly to box her in. She noticed the grin on Lucy's face - she was being set up and so was Jake. Without warning, Fury and Charlotte came at Stephanie and Jake, attacking hard. Jake instantly moved onto the defensive, as did Stephanie. They both joined as a team, automatically, without conversation, as was their training. Threats changed and that was something which was hammered into the newest *Predators* during Phase 1 training. Very smoothly, Jake attacked Fury while Stephanie took on Charlotte. There were yells of support from the *Marauders* and from the *Predators* present. Some supported their own, others just supported whomever they thought might win.

Stephanie fought well, landing several strikes on the older girl who was taller and stronger. Charlotte got her own strikes in, however, much to the enjoyment of the watchers. But Charlotte was tired, and she soon fell prey to Stephanie's underhand tactics as she was tripped and slammed to the floor. Jake managed to

get entangled with Fury and they both crashed to the floor with a grinning Jake on top of Fury.

"Do I get a kiss from the magnificent, Fury?" he muttered.

For a moment, Fury did not know what to say, but she was glad that her mask hid her blushes.

"Get your little dick away from me, arsehole!" Fury growled as she kneed the boy in his groin.

There was laughter as the boy rolled around with his hands clutching at his boyhood. Stephanie helped Charlotte back to her feet and she then congratulated the twelve-year-old on her fighting style.

"That was fun," Charlotte admitted. "Thanks, Fury."

"We all like to gang up on Psyche, once in a while," Fury chuckled.

"I can take it - I'm not a pussy like some," Stephanie replied. "Jakey - get up. Stop playing with your dick; it'll be fine. You fought well, Jake - well done."

"Thanks," the boy groaned from the floor.

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### ***That afternoon***

After lunch, the Marauders were asked to remain at their tables.

Stephanie, Lucy, Shannon, and Marc sat down before them all. Willow had re-joined her compatriots and she was sulking at the back.

"We want to hear what you think," Stephanie began. "Ask us anything you like, and we will do our best to answer your questions. Let's put aside our animosity towards one another for a while, okay? This time is for you guys."

"Who wants to go first?" Shannon asked. "Okay, Jake - go ahead."

"What size bra does Stephanie wear?" Jake asked with a cheeky grin.

"I wear a 30-AA; happy?" Stephanie offered, and Jake stammered a surprised thank you. "That shut *him* up! Any *serious* questions?"

After a rippled of laughter at the pink-faced Jake's expense, the *Marauders* conferred amongst themselves for a few moments before Charlotte Grey stood up.

"What's going to happen to us?"

"I'm sure that is a question on all your minds," Shannon replied. "You will all be rehomed somewhere. You have a choice, all of you. We can find you a family to live with - especially you younger kids. The older kids may not want that, and we can arrange for you to have your own apartment in a secure environment. If you want to leave Chicago, then we can arrange something. All of this depends on when we think you have been suitably reformed. All of you have made significant improvements and some of you are showing remorse for your actions."

"Everything we do to you tells us what is going on in your vivid minds," Lucy explained. "You have all had your privacy taken away and suffered humiliations since you have been here, but it is all for your safety. We don't want anything to happen to any of you. I know you all find it difficult to understand, but we all care. I for one was unsure when I first came to Chicago looking for help. Nobody was happy to see me, and I suffered, but the past is the past, and my time here has been amazing since I came in from the cold. Is till have my

skills, but I am now using them for good as opposed to what *Urban Predator* wanted."

"I only kill when I want to," Marc said. "Only those who I think deserve to die, die. If I don't want to fight, I don't want to. But I enjoy having a purpose. I am among friends who care for me. I have adults who guide me and care for me. I have a wonderful girlfriend who loves me."

Shannon blushed furiously.

"I remember you two - at a sex demo," Jay Hilton commented. "You were amazing, Shannon."

Shannon's blush somehow went even redder and there was a lot of laughter.

"All joking aside," Marc went on, "I put my life into the hands of *Fusion*, and they looked after me. I did bad things - ask Wildcat - and so did Sarah, but they welcomed us and they now I have the best life ever."

"Forty of you have been rescued," Stephanie concluded. "We want that number to rise. We still have no idea how many died as part of *Urban Predator*. I saw some die before my very eyes, even as we tried to rescue them. We are not doing this to recruit more into *Fusion*, we are doing this to save the lives of kids who were ripped from their families and put through hell. I know many of you hate me, but you all know that I went through hell and endured pain and humiliation like nobody should ever have to endure. I am only ten-years-old, but I have seen and suffered things that would scare most adults. I know what you have all been through - and I care."

"Thanks for telling us that," Kate Fincham said. "I know that some here would rather break out on their own, but you are all putting your time into helping us, and I for one thank you for that. I hope we don't let you down. I am almost seventeen and I really want to have a life. I want to get married and I want to have a family. If I am in prison, I won't get that. But here, I have a chance, and I won't pass that up."

"Me, too," Charlotte Grey agreed.

"Me, too," Dakota Warlow-Davies added.

"Us, as well," Lin Lau said for her and her sister.

Jesse Dolan, Joel Burnell, and James Todd each added their own comments in agreement. Lucy nodded her acceptance of the comments.

"How long are we going to be here?" Jay Hilton asked.

"As long as it takes," Stephanie replied. "It could be as little as a month, or it could be much longer. We will keep this going as long as necessary to keep you all out of the adult prison system."

"If we do well, what happens?" fourteen-year-old Dylan Page wanted to know.

"If we believe that you are honest in your remorse and that you are not a flight risk, then we may allow you to live outside of this bunker, but under house arrest. Those tags on your ankles will be there for many months until we are one hundred percent convinced that you are safe to join civilised society," Stephanie explained, and she saw many expressions of guilt and shame, but also of desire.

That evening, seven of them would be given a ray of hope.

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**Training Facility Echo**  
**Level 1 - Dining Room**

The seven *Marauders* were dumbfounded.

"Where are we?" Dakota asked.

"You are in the dining room for the Fusion Training Facility," Shannon commented.

The space had been cleared and only the seven *Marauders* and the four *Predators* were present. A selection of food was laid out on a table for them.

"Please, dig in," Marc said.

Charlotte Grey, Dakota Warlow-Davies, Kate Fincham, Lin Lau, Xiāngxìn Lau, James Todd, and Jesse Dolan grabbed a plate of food and then they sat down at one of the large tables. Stephanie grabbed her own plate of food before joining them along with Lucy, Shannon, and Marc.

"You seven are the first to be offered hope," Shannon explained. "Should you each stay out of trouble for the next two weeks, then you will all be allowed to move out of your dungeon and into a house, in the real world. You will get a chance to decide what you want from your lives and we will do what we can to accommodate you. As Stephanie mentioned, earlier, those fashionable accessories on your ankles will remain as a reminder to avoid temptation."

"It is advised that you do not go back to your colleagues and start bragging about this. Keeping quiet may be a good idea," Lucy advised. "However, between now and then, start to think about what you want to do. Do you want a family? Do you want to live in peace as normal people? Do you want to put your skills to use for good? Do you want to stay in Chicago? Four of you are British - do you want to return to the UK? These are all questions that only you, personally, can answer. We will help, and we are here whenever you need us, but we cannot make these decisions for you, beyond providing guidance."

"The most crucial thing here is that you are in control of your destiny," Shannon went on. "Only you can decide what happens to your lives from this moment on."

The seven youngsters finished their evening meal with limited chatter as they contemplated what they had been told.

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**The following day**  
**Sunday, November 20<sup>th</sup>**

**Glenview**

Dave was happy for Stephanie and Jamie to have some friends over.

Therefore, Lizzie, Leo, Hunter, Tommy, and Abigail had come over for lunch. Dave was a little concerned with having so many youngsters on hand - especially as most were of the unpredictable *Predator* variety. However, after they had consumed a pile of cheeseburgers, they all chatted merrily before the three girls and four boys ran off to change for swimming. Lizzie, being the only female non-*Predator*, was not all that comfortable with stripping before others, despite Stephanie and Abigail pulling off their clothes and then chatting while still naked before they pulled on their costumes. Lizzie was twelve and not all that comfortable with the new bumps and other things that her body had sprouted over the previous year. Unfortunately for Lizzie, the other two girls had noticed.

"I don't know what you are worried about," Abigail commented. "You've got boobs and you've got the beginnings of hair down there - I have nothing!"

Just to make Lizzie even more uncomfortable, Abigail dropped her swimsuit and held out her arms so that Lizzie could see that Abigail had nothing to see. Lizzie grimaced.

"I just feel awkward."

"I'm comfortable with my body," Abigail commented. "I am what I am - Stephanie doesn't care either."

Stephanie's expression said otherwise but she simply shrugged, wondering what Abigail was up to.

"Give me those," Abigail said as she grabbed all three swimsuits, throwing them to one side.

"What are you doing?" Stephanie groaned, having a shrewd idea.

Abigail simply grinned as she then grabbed the hands of the other two girls and pulled them out of Stephanie's room and out onto the landing.

"What are you doing!?" Lizzie exclaimed as she yanked her hand back to cover her bumps while the other hand went between her legs.

"I don't care who sees me naked, and neither does Stephanie. Learn to be comfortable with your body."

Lizzie looked over at Stephanie who seemed anything but uncaring. Stephanie simply shrugged and rolled her eyes. Nonetheless, she grabbed Lizzie's left hand, pulling it away from her chest while Abigail grabbed Lizzie's right hand from lower down. Lizzie moaned as she was walked towards the stairs and then down to the hallway and through into the pool. Dave turned to see their arrival - he groaned.

"Whose clever idea was this?" he asked the three naked girls.

"Not mine," Lizzie replied as she tried to cover herself up.

"You think I'd go naked voluntarily?" Stephanie asked.

Dave just shook his head as Abigail grinned enormously.

"Oh my God!" came a voice and the three girls turned to see the four boys standing a few feet away.

It was Tommy who had spoken, and he was grinning as he checked out each girl in turn before levelling his eyes on Stephanie's chest and then her groin. Hunter seemed transfixed by Lizzie and her own equipment which was on display before his eyes.

"Really, Stephanie?" Jamie groaned.

"This was not thought out very well, Abigail," Stephanie announced as she ran past the wide-eyed boys and scampered up the stairs - Tommy watched her all the way with a hand covering the bulge in his crotch.

Stephanie reappeared a few seconds later, and she threw a swimsuit at Abigail and Lizzie before she pulled on her own. There was a collective groan from the boys as the girls' bodies quickly vanished.

"We had enough of the Full Monty crap?" Dave enquired.

"Yeah," Stephanie growled as she shoved Abigail into the pool.

About twenty minutes later, Dave noticed that there did not appear to be a lot of swimming going on for Stephanie and Lizzie.

Stephanie was loitering around the middle of the pool with Tommy and they appeared to be kissing and Tommy's hands were not readily visible. The same could be said for Lizzie and Hunter. They had exchanged kisses and then a few more. Lizzie was giggling as they talked, and Lizzie appeared to have her hand in Hunter's groin. Stephanie giggled at random moments as Tommy whispered into her ear. The other kids were happily swimming and playing, although Leo, Abigail, and Jamie were giving the cavorting youngsters a very wide berth . . . as well as some very dirty looks.

Oh well, Dave thought, the kids of today.

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### ***That evening***

#### ***South Chicago***

Chloe, Joshua, and Becky were on the way to Safehouse W to pickup Shannon who had been on duty guarding Sunset Phoenix and Chloe would remain overnight.

They were only a few miles away when the cell phones for Chloe and Joshua began to beep. Chloe was driving, so Joshua checked his cell. His face frowned.

"Step on it!" he ordered. "Security breach at Whiskey."

Chloe stamped her foot to the floor and her Mini accelerated hard. A few minutes later, she slammed on the brakes, skidding to a halt in the darkness. The wire-mesh access gate was partially open, indicating a problem. Mindy grabbed a pistol, as did Joshua and Becky. All three moved slowly through the darkness after locking the car, with pistols raised. They found the actual building secure, the main access door closed, however Marty had advised that the access door had been opened and then closed, about two minutes previously. Unfortunately, the Safehouse was designed to keep people out - not in. As they moved through the Safehouse, they found all the watercraft present and accounted for. As they approached the room being used as a cell for their prisoner, they found Shannon lying in the doorway. Shannon was nursing a large bump on the head.

"I don't know how she got out of her restraints - she got the better of me. . ."

Joshua and Chloe dashed off while Becky remained with Shannon, her pistol covering them both. They both returned a few minutes later. Joshua shook his head angrily.

Summer Frasier aka Sunset Phoenix was gone.

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*Mindy's trip to Los Angeles is covered in **Chapter 5: D-JAK Heads West** of my other story: **Fusion: Los Angeles**.*