

Washington Navy Yard
Washington D.C.

Naval Criminal Investigative Service

The girl was perhaps thirteen-years-old.

Tears streamed down her face. It was a typical 'proof of life' video and it was typically disturbing. The youngster held up a newspaper for the camera: *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* - and it was dated: *THURSDAY, DEC 9, 2016* - the previous day. The girl turned away from the camera and the video stopped.

"Why do we have this?" NCIS Special Agent Timothy McGee asked as he turned away from the large stand-mounted screen.

"Came through in the mail," NCIS Special Agent Leroy Jethro Gibbs responded from his desk. "No idea why."

"It's not Navy, so we pass it onto the FBI?" NCIS Special Agent Ellie Bishop asked as she replayed the video before stopping it as the young girl turned away from the camera.

"Suppose so," Special Agent Gibbs responded.

"What is that?" Forensics Specialist Abby Sciuto asked as she stepped closer to the screen. "McGee - can you zoom in and enhance?"

"One sec."

The image blurred, then zoomed and sharpened.

"The girl has a tattoo!" Special Agent Bishop commented with a surprised tone.

"A dagger behind her right ear," Abby mused.

"I've seen something on that - a BOLO from a few months back - let me see. . ."

Special Agent Bishop said as she ran over to her computer and she began to type. "Got it! We need to notify a Captain Williams in Chicago."

"Chicago!" Abby grinned. "The plot thickens. . ."

August 2014

Somewhere in the
United States of America

The little scrap of a girl was huddled in the corner of the gym.

To the eleven-year-old, the little eight-year-old was the very image of herself at that very tender age. While the little girl had only been part of the program for a year, Lily O'Brien had endured three years of it. She was a rising star and she was progressing through Phase 2 training with little problem. However, compared to many other *Predators*, she had retained some of who she had been. A large part of that was her compassion for others. For three years she had hidden it, dishing it out only where nobody else would see it. Many *Predators* did not give a shit about their fellow trainees. It was not their fault; it was just the way in which their drug-induced mentality and training had decreed. However, certain *Predators* did not see compassion as a weakness as others saw it. In fact, Lily saw compassion as an asset. She hated humiliation like that which she had suffered on her very first day.

"Hello - what's your name, girl?"

The little scrap of a girl looked up at the older girl with the Irish accent.

"Stephanie Walker."

"I'm Lily O'Brien. I've seen you about."

"I've seen you, too. So?"

"You want to survive in this shithole, Stephanie Walker, then you need to get on your fucking feet and get with the fucking program, now."

The little scrap of a girl rose to her feet. She wore the usual T-shirt and shorts as were expected of her in the gym. Her thin pale arms were bruised, as were the equally thin and pale legs. As with most younger *Predators*, she was developing muscles in her thighs and biceps as her training progressed. Lily dragged the younger girl onto a training mat.

"Hit me!" Lily ordered.

She did - it was pathetic. Lily did not see the girl lasting much longer. How the little scrap had even gained her dagger, she had no idea. However, she was not the first child in that place to begin losing the will to live. Lily did not really give a crap about the other children - it was live and let live, to a point, but Lily saw no point in unnecessary nastiness. She saw it as counter-productive to what the instructors wanted. They wanted killers, but the way they beat the children under their care, they were creating monsters. Lily was doing her best not to become a monster, but the training, the drugs, the regimen - she had no choice but to comply or face the nine-millimetre alternative. If Stephanie Walker did not sort her life out, she would be meeting that alternative very soon.

"Hit me like you fucking mean it!" Lily yelled. "Hit me! Keep hitting me until I go down - fight like your shitty life depends on it; because it fucking does!"

Lily smiled as the gun-metal blue eyes began to shine and the girl took up a proper fighting stance - just like she had been taught.

The Present Day

Sunday, December 11th, 2016

The Battle Bunker

Chicago

Mindy had stayed at the safehouse.

She had been joined by Dave and Stephanie - yes, the girl had wanted to help and that had apparently overridden her fear of being murdered by some vengeful *Predator*, however, Stephanie had hinted at a simple postponement of her self-imposed house arrest. There had also been 'stipulated conditions' - more on that later. Therefore, along with Dave, Stephanie, and some select others, Mindy had wanted to be on hand to see what Lucas was up to. She had also received an unwanted visit from an angry Captain Williams. Naturally, he had been very unhappy about the three police officers who had been injured by Mindy's prisoner during his escape to freedom. The escape had also been seen as guilt on the part of Lucas until Mindy had pointed out that the boy had volunteered his guilt in the first place. Marcus had growled and grumbled his way home once Mindy had reassured him that the boy would be recovered in due course. Marcus had given Mindy thirty-six hours before he would put out a full BOLO for the boy.

According to the computer tracking system, the boy had headed northwest to the city of Madison and he had loitered around the central portion of the city for about an hour before the signal had been lost, completely, and never regained.

"Fuck!" Mindy had exclaimed.

Marty had simply chuckled.

"Mindy - you know a million ways to block a GPS signal; just admit it."

"Okay - I admit it!"

"Stephanie, I assume a Phase 2 munchkin like you would know how to block a GPS signal," Dave suggested.

Stephanie gave Dave a patronising look before rolling her eyes.

"In a fucking heartbeat," she growled.

"Don't forget," Marty reminded them. "We have a fourteen-year-old Hit Girl running around out there - well, one with a dick."

Mindy scowled while Stephanie giggled.

"Don't worry, honey," Dave said soothingly as he ran a hand over Mindy's groin. "I know you don't have a dick."

"Get off!" Mindy growled as her cheeks went very pink under the gaze of her daughter.

"So," Stephanie wondered. "If he's a fourteen-year-old Hit Girl . . . with a dick . . ." Mindy growled at the comment. ". . . does that mean that I am a ten-year-old Hit Girl?"

Dave laughed.

"Not even close, short fry!" he replied. "You're nowhere near as psychotic, foul-mouthed, or self-loathing."

"Or scary, angry, and downright cruel," Marty added.

"Cunts!" Mindy scowled.

"So, we've lost him," Marty said, getting the conversation back on track.

"No," Mindy said as she covered up her groin from Dave's hand. "We know where he is headed."

"Where?"

"Atlanta."

That afternoon

Atlanta

Stephanie closed her eyes and she focussed her mind.

She had last been in Atlanta, exactly 1,181 days ago - almost three years and three months. It had been the last time she had been free as Stephanie Reeman. It had been the day when her life had changed forever.

"I know, Stephanie," Mindy said, seeing her daughter's apprehensiveness.

Their flight had landed just an hour previously and they were driving into the city, about ten miles to the north. Along with Mindy and Stephanie, the vehicle

was also occupied by Dave, Megan, Abigail, Lucy, and Shannon. Mindy had not wanted Abigail along, but the young girl had insisted - considering that she was 'involved'. Lucy was coming along due to her intimate knowledge of most *Predators*; knowledge that might prove useful. As for Megan and Shannon . . . well, they were on protection detail. It had been one of Stephanie's 'stipulated conditions' for leaving the 'perceived safety' of her bedroom. She had insisted on having her own personal protection detail.

"Told you she'd taken on royal airs!" Saoirse had laughed derisively when Mindy had mentioned Stephanie's demand. "Princess Stephanie!"

However, Saoirse had understood Stephanie's worries and she had suggested Shannon while Mindy had suggested Megan. Both girls were highly skilled, very resourceful, and totally trustworthy. Stephanie had agreed on the spot, although Megan and Shannon had had other ideas, despite having accepted their protection postings without hesitation.

By the time they had reached Atlanta on the G6, Stephanie was beginning to regret her demand for protection.

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"Hold on, Stephanie," Megan had said as she had seen Stephanie grab a bag of peanuts on the jet, "We need to check that the peanuts aren't poisoned."

Megan had then proceeded to down the entire pack and then the next one.

"I think she's safe," Shannon commented as she downed a third pack of peanuts. "We'd better strap her in - wouldn't want anything to happen to her."

"I'll check out the Cokes," Megan suggested as she reached for the fridge.

Shannon had then proceeded to fasten Stephanie's lap belt, much to the younger girl's annoyance and humiliation. Abigail had seen all this as extremely funny - until Mindy had swiftly put an end to Megan's and Shannon's fun. After take-off, Stephanie had made for the toilet, only to be intercepted by Shannon.

"What?" Stephanie had demanded.

"Just keeping my protectee under my watchful eye," Shannon had grinned.

"You going to watch me wee?"

"Can you manage that without getting killed?" Megan had quipped.

"I know who is going to get killed, and it ain't fucking me!" Stephanie had growled as she had slammed the door to the toilet behind her.

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Dave pulled in alongside the curb on Martin Street South East.

Stephanie made to climb out of the large GMC SUV, but Shannon shoved her back into the seat. Mindy chuckled as Shannon and Megan made a big show of pretending to be Secret Service agents guarding the President of the United States of America. Mindy left them to it as she checked around the area herself.

"Ten months - is that all you could manage?"

"Gibbs!" Mindy chuckled, recognising the voice instantly.

"You could not even make it through a whole year without dragging us back into one of your dubious schemes."

"It wasn't intentional," Mindy responded as she saw three more agents climb out of the Federal sedan.

"You remember Abby," NCIS Special Agent Leroy Jethro Gibbs announced, indicating NCIS Forensics Specialist Abigail 'Abby' Sciuto.

"Of course," Mindy replied, as Abby came running up.

"Hi, Mindy!" Abby exclaimed as she hugged the vigilante.

"Abby."

"Hello, Mindy," NCIS Special Agent Timothy McGee said, extending his hand.

"Hi, Tim. Ellie."

"Hello, Mindy," NCIS Special Agent Ellie Bishop said with a grin.

"Okay," Dave grinned. "This is Stephanie, as you probably remember. Then we have Lucy, Shannon, and Abigail."

"I am Commander Patrick Haig, Special Branch."

"A Brit, huh," Special Agent Gibbs observed. "Welcome."

Once all the pleasantries were over, Mindy briefly went over the events involving Lucas without mentioning Abigail by name.

"So," Abby concluded. "The boy is guilty of rape, but it was under the influence of alcohol and he was probably forced to do it. But, you want to give him a second chance?"

Abby did not appear amused.

"We all make mistakes and sometimes we find ourselves forced down a road we do not want to follow," Gibbs commented. "Okay, Mindy, you want to give the boy a second chance - we can help you with that, but first, we need to find him."

"He's going after that girl in the video - hence, Atlanta," Mindy replied.

"Hence?" Stephanie laughed. "Big word for you!"

"Shannon, if you please," Mindy directed.

"Yeow!" Stephanie exclaimed as Shannon slapped her around the head. "I thought you were supposed to be protecting me?"

"We are - we're preventing you from encouraging somebody to kill you," Shannon replied.

"A Gibbs slap!" McGee chuckled, ignoring the disapproving look from Gibbs.

"So, how do we find this boy," Gibbs asked impatiently.

"We don't," Mindy replied.

"You lost me, Mindy," Gibbs commented.

"He's too well trained," Stephanie cut in. "You could search the world from now until eternity and never find him."

"For once, gobby bitch is right," Mindy growled. "The boy ran after seeing that video. He is coming after the girl - that is why we are in Atlanta. Some think I took leave of my senses a long time ago, but I am as sane as Gibbs here."

Gibbs raised an eyebrow at that comment, but he let it pass.

"The boy will come to Atlanta - he has to. The girl should prove easier to find."

"Okay," Patrick said slowly. "We need to find the girl - so, where do we start?"

"We contact the kidnapers and arrange a meet," Bishop suggested.

"I'm still concerned as to why the video was sent to NCIS," McGee commented.

"As am I," Patrick replied. "It doesn't make any sense to contact a Federal Agency and ask for a ransom. Could they be drawing us out?"

"A nasty thought," Gibbs agreed. "NCIS has enemies and so does Mindy."

"A kidnapper's video gets sent to NCIS," Bishop summed up. "We check it out and follow protocol when we see the tattoo which is very obvious, to be honest, and we notify Chicago PD - everybody with me?"

"I think you've just hit it on the head, Ellie," Lucy said, speaking for the first time. "She's calling for help."

Everybody looked at Lucy like she was totally nuts.

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Lucy went into instructor mode.

"Her name is Lily O'Brien. She was part of the Third Intake. Back then, part of the basic training covered what to do when everything went to shit and one of the methods was to do exactly what she has done. You create a bogus ransom video and ensure that the Predator dagger is prominently displayed. The plan was that the video, or the image of the dagger, should find its way to somebody who was part of *Urban Predator*. The idea was scrubbed from training after a few months and nobody after the Third Intake was taught it," Lucy explained. "Looks like it worked - kind of."

"So that girl *isn't* in trouble?" Abby enquired.

"Yes - and no," Lucy replied helpfully.

Gibbs gave her an annoyed glare and Lucy flinched slightly.

"Yes, she could be calling for help - or she's in with somebody else (her 'kidnappers') and they are setting a trap for somebody."

"You a so full of good news!" Mindy growled.

"You insisted on bringing me," Lucy retorted.

"Anyway!" Dave cut in before Lucy and Mindy started fighting it out in broad daylight on the streets of Atlanta. "You two can bitch-fight later on. Where do we start bitch one and bitch two?"

Mindy and Lucy both glared at Dave who simply shrugged it off which annoyed both girls who were very used to others bowing before them. Dave chuckled.

"Girls?" Mindy said, directing her comments at Shannon, Stephanie, and Abigail. "Where might your delinquent kind hide out, should they want to keep a low profile?"

The three girls grinned at the unintended compliment before they began conferring between themselves.

"Anytime now," Mindy suggested.

"Gimme a map!" Shannon ordered, and McGee brought up Atlanta on a tablet before passing it to the thirteen-year-old girl.

Shannon ran her fingers over the screen, moving the map around as Abigail and Stephanie whispered in her ear. Then Shannon stopped, and she zoomed in on a section of the east side of Atlanta.

"Krog Street Tunnel," Abigail announced happily. "I'll bet Stephanie's weapons cache it has drainage tunnels extending under the container yard."

Stephanie scowled at Abigail.

"You're on," Mindy chuckled.

Lakewood Heights, South Atlanta

***Jonesboro Road South East
& Lethea Street South East***

It was getting very dark and cold as the afternoon turned into evening.

Everything had gone wrong in a very short period of time. The young girl ran through the melee and destruction which rained down all around her. What had started as a minor altercation over a simple arrest for a minor traffic stop had exploded into a major riot and the girl was caught up in the very centre of it. She should not have even been there, but she needed to find a better place to hide. She had no one to help her. She was scared. She was barely alive. She was only alive because she willed it. She kept telling herself that she was unstoppable - it was all that had kept her going for the past several months. However, she also had responsibilities - two of them - and she had to get back. The damn bus stop was just there, a dozen yards away, but no buses were running thanks to the damn riot. Her confidence willed herself forwards, dodging the fighting and the detritus of the riot as she made a valiant effort and fled to safety.

The thirteen-year-old had not run so hard in a long time. Her body had always been trim and fit, but months of hard living and neglect made the running painful as she dodged debris and people. A car burst into flames, just a few yards away and the girl fell to the ground, instinctively balling herself for the landing, rolling on the pavement and regaining her feet, still moving steadily forward. Only positive thoughts in her mind and the need to return to her lair gave her the ability to keep moving. Her keen eyes identified threats around her and she prioritised them quicker than an AEGIS computer aboard a navy warship could prioritise inbound missiles. A man falling to the ground - she leapt over him with ease before dodging left to avoid a cop with a raised baton who was striking out at anything moving, fear causing the rookie police officer to lose sight of his task. The noise was epic; people shouting, things crashing to the ground, the wounded screaming. The scared screaming just as loudly. Every now and then, a gun would go off and a bullet would fly through the air.

She took a flying leap on to the hood of a wrecked car and she bounded onto the roof of the next. Her eyes selected an opening in the battle lines and she hoped to escape through that opening and make it back to the city five miles north of her. Something grabbed her jacket and she lost balance, crashing to the ground and she rolled into a car, screaming out in pain. Whatever had grabbed her was gone and she scrambled back to her feet. She elbowed a woman out of her way before flipping over the top of a black man who appeared just as

scared as she was. Then she saw several items flying through the air - rocks, bricks, glass bottles . . . she could not avoid all of them.

Then out of nowhere, something cannoned into her and she felt herself being enclosed in strong arms as she and her rescuer crashed down to the ground.

Krog Street Tunnel

"Nice graffiti," Shannon commented as they looked around the tunnel.

The tunnel was a magnet for the city's graffiti artists and it made for a colourful tunnel which would otherwise be just boring concrete. The lighting sucked as many of the light fittings were dark. That just made the tunnel more appealing for people who wanted to be invisible.

"I like this place," Abigail commented. "Kind of reminds me of some of the tube lines I used in London to hide in."

"It is appealing," Stephanie agreed.

"Great place to get mugged," Ellie commented as she fingered the butt of her service pistol.

"The raised walkway," Lucy said as she leapt over the rail, dashed across the road and then over the opposite rail along the walkway.

She was followed by the posse of people across the subterranean street.

"Bingo!" Lucy grinned as she pointed down at a horizontal steel drain cover.

There were scratches on the concrete indicating recent movement of the cover. Mindy grinned, and she waved everyone out of the tunnel. As they walked back towards the parked cars, Mindy outlined her plans for that evening.

"Are you nuts?" Gibbs asked. "Never mind."

Lakewood Heights

Whoever it was, they quickly scooped her off the ground and almost dragged her down a side street which ultimately led towards an auto salvage yard.

Finally, they stopped, and the girl was shoved down behind a dumpster onto a soft blanket.

"Get the fuck off me!"

The girl glared up at her assailant/rescuer.

"Lucas! What the fuck!?"

"Lily - thank God!"

The two youngsters hugged each other before they sat back, and Lucas spoke again.

"What are you doing here?"

"I found out you were here, and I had to come find you."

"How did you find out that I was here?"

"I saw your face in some video on a screen at a Chicago police station and I came after you," Lucas explained.

Lily's eyes narrowed, and she looked worried.

"Why were you in a Chicago police station and what was my video doing on a Chicago police station screen - this whole thing fucking stinks!"

"I got myself in the shit again."

Lily's eyes narrowed even further, and she stood up, reaching behind her back.

"What sort of shit are you in?"

"This sort of shit!" an electronically enhanced voice responded.

Lily turned around in shock, but she recovered quickly as her hand came around from behind her back.

"No!" she yelled.

"No!" Lucas yelled for a totally different reason as Lily produced a pistol and she fired off seven rounds into Hit Girl's torso, sending the famed vigilante flying backwards. "What the fuck!?"

Lily had bolted, and Lucas ran after her.

"What the hell, Lily!?"

"I just killed Hit Girl - not a good idea to hang about," Lily retorted angrily.

"Ha! Yeah, right!" Lucas exclaimed. "What you did do, was piss off the one person who could give you a new life."

"Hit Girl - like fuck, Lucas; she's here to kill us."

"You are so fucking stupid!"

Hit Girl

"Well, it wasn't exactly a trap."

"Did you get yourself shot again?" Psyche enquired over the radio from two hundred yards away.

"Seven fucking times!" Hit Girl growled unhappily.

"Bet that stung!" Psyche quipped with a sly snigger.

"I am perfectly happy for you to experience the seven bullets," Hit Girl responded as she regained her feet while rubbing her chest and wishing that she had mounted her heavier chest armour.

"I'll pass!"

Five miles north Cabbagetown

"Are they always like this?" Gibbs asked impatiently as he listened to the bickering over the radio.

"More or less," Kick-Ass conceded "Actually, more."

"Where are they headed?" Hit Girl asked.

"As we expected, the tracker is moving north, back into the city," Abby responded as she examined her tablet. "Bit surprised he kid allowed it to transmit again."

"Not really," Stormtide suggested. "He just wanted us off his back while he found Lily. He found her, so he's kind of calling in the cavalry."

"Only, Lily don't want no cavalry," Fury added.

"That was a good idea, getting facial rec.," Abby conceded. "Once we could limit the cameras that we needed to search, finding the girl was easy. The boy helping us pinpoint his position was a big help."

"What was the girl doing in the southside?" Gibbs wanted to know.

Abby looked a little uncomfortable as she turned the tablet around and she passed it over to her boss. The still image showed the young girl talking to a man and Gibbs flicked to the next still image - the girl handed the man a package and she received a smaller package in return.

"Who is he?" Patrick asked. "A druggie?"

"Yeah," Abby confirmed. "Tony Ramon - he's the lieutenant for a drug dealer who calls himself 'Magic'. He's the biggest in Atlanta."

"Oh, *shit!*" Piranha growled over the radio.

"She didn't," Stormtide countered.

"She fucking did," Psyche confirmed.

"Stupid bitch!" Fury added.

"*What are you damn Predator Princesses fucking on about?*" Hit Girl demanded as she jumped into her rental.

Hit Girl

The 2015 Ford Mustang in gloss black burnt rubber as Hit Girl accelerated hard, working up through the six-speed manual gearbox connected to the five-litre B8 motor.

Hit Girl had to take a slight detour to get around the simmering riot and onto the main route heading north. She sensed danger and Piranha's explanation made her blood run cold.

"*Straight out of the fucking Predator Playbook,*" Lucy groaned. "*You rip off drug dealers and sell their dope straight back to them before they even know it is missing. Gets you a lot of cash - but it can also piss of said drug dealer when he finds out he's just been fucked over.*"

"So, Lily is in danger - and by extension, Lucas," Hit Girl growled as she put her foot down.

"What's new," Kick-Ass threw in. "Damn *Predators!*"

Lily and Lucas

"You're not telling me everything, Lucas," Lily growled unhappily.

"I was Hit Girl's prisoner and I escaped," Lucas replied.

"How did she find you - she obviously wasn't looking for me."

"Look, Lily - I thought I might never see you again. When I saw you in that video, I just legged it and came to find you. Okay - time to come clean . . . I have a tracker."

Lucas stopped, and he pulled up his trouser leg.

"You fucking traitor!" Lily exclaimed as she threw a punch at Lucas, bloodying his nose. "Stay aware from me!"

Lily ran ahead with Lucas running behind.

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Lily was too busy running away from Lucas to see the danger only a few yards away.

She was not far from her hidden lair and she was beginning to feel safe. Her mind was on the shock of coming across Lucas, rather than on her safety. She never saw the parked SUV. She never saw the six men moving towards her.

"Lily!"

As the girl turned her head towards the sound of the yell, she saw the men. Her pistol came out and she fired off a single shot before a tirade of gunfire raged in her direction. Lily had no choice but to run for safety and she bolted for the alternative entrance to her lair, dodging the bullets as she scrambled up a tree to the right of the tunnel entrance and she dove over the concrete wall into the container terminal.

She continued running until she vanished beneath a row of container cars.

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The boy turned as he heard the roar of a V8 motor approaching.

The Mustang turned broadside across the road, sending one of the gunmen flying as the back fender smacked into him. Lucas froze as the car skidded to a halt just a foot away from him and a voice yelled at him out of the open window.

"Get the fuck in, asshole!"

Lucas felt raw fear as he hauled open the door and dived into the car, trying to ignore the bullets and the thought of what lay ahead from him, unsure of what was worse - the bullets, or facing Hit Girl. He had barely slammed the car door when Hit Girl slammed her right foot to the floor and the vehicle slithered on the blacktop, before diving into the tunnel, bullets striking the rear of the car, smashing the rear window. They drove hard for less than half a mile before Hit Girl took a hard right into a parking lot and slamming on the brakes, cutting the engine.

"What are doing, Lucas?"

"I had to come after her - you must understand."

"Why didn't you come to me?"

"I couldn't take the risk that you'd stop me."

"What is she to you?"

Lucas paused as he took a deep breath.

"She's my half-sister."

"There's nothing in her file . . . or yours."

"We never let on - they'd have killed one or both of us."

"Not easy to keep such a secret, huh?"

"I'm sorry about the officers I hurt. I just lost it when I saw her face on the video."

"What I am I going to do with you, Lucas?" Hit Girl growled. "I'd slap you, but it looks like somebody already has."

Lucas looked very low as his eyes dropped.

"I need to help her - she's in shit."

"Yeah - she's been stealing from those drug dealers and selling their shit right back to them."

Lucas groaned.

"Stupid bitch!" he growled, echoing Fury's sentiment.

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Hit Girl started the engine and she headed away from the tunnel before pulling into another parking lot a short distance down the road.

There, Lucas found a pair of SUVs parked up and a group of people waiting - some of them masked. Hit Girl stopped and turned off the engine before opening her door.

"Get out."

Lucas climbed out and he walked towards the group. He was approached by a short female in body armour who pulled off her mask.

"Hello, Lucas."

Lucas froze for a moment and as he studied the girl before him, his eyes lowered, and he would not look at her.

"I'm Abigail Wilde."

"They would not tell me your name."

"I don't blame you, Lucas - we both went through hell of every kind."

"I deserve to die for what I did."

Abigail looked up at Hit Girl who nodded. Abigail then knelt down and with the assistance of a small tool, she removed Lucas' ankle monitor.

"I will not allow you to be treated like a criminal," Abigail said as she handed the device to Lucas.

They all stopped speaking as a tow truck pulled into the parking lot and stopped a few yards away. A man climbed down, and he called out.

"This here is private property - I have to boot your vehicles if you don't leave."

"Fucking hell!" Hit Girl growled as she turned towards the man.

"Holy shit!" the man exclaimed. "I - err . . . fuck!"

"We were never here," Hit Girl growled.

"Yeah - I mean no, I never saw you," the man stammered as she scrambled for his truck.

Hit Girl chuckled as the tow truck performed a shaky U-turn before shooting out of the parking lot and down the street.

Lily O'Brien

The lair was dank, smelly, and not all that appealing.

Lily sat on a pile of dirty newspapers which were a makeshift seat for the thirteen-year-old girl. She knew that she had fucked up, but she had had no choice - she had needed the money. Then Lucas had appeared and, yes, he had saved her from certain injury, but then *she* had appeared! The fucking traitor had led her straight to him. The video had been created with much effort for somebody from the CIA who could help her, but somehow the Chicago PD had got their hands on it. There was so much at stake - much more than her simple life.

"Not a bad place."

Lily jumped up, her pistol aimed at the intruder. It was a girl - maybe ten-years-old and the face was familiar.

"Stephanie Walker?"

"That's me, Lily O'Brien."

"How are you doing, Lily?" came another voice.

"Lucy," Lily growled as another girl appeared.

"We are not your enemy, Lily," Lucy said. "Trust us, please?"

"I don't have a damn choice, do I?"

"Yes, you do," Stephanie replied. "You have a choice - I just hope you make the correct one."

Lily tried to process all that was happening, but her mind was overloaded already, and it could not cope with these faces from her past.

"I need to know that I can trust you both."

"You helped me to survive, Lily," Stephanie admitted. "I owe you for that."

"I know we've had our differences, Lily," Lucy said. "But I always had your best interests at heart. I am not going to apologise for stripping you that first day. Nor am I going to apologise for the times after that when I humiliated or hurt you. The very fact that you are alive now, tells me that I did the right thing by you."

Reluctantly, Lily nodded.

"I'm going nowhere without Mackenzie."

"What, or who is a Mackenzie?" Stephanie asked.

"Lily?" came a small, timid voice.

Stephanie and Lucy were stunned to see a small girl of about nine-years-old emerging from a steel culvert.

"This is Mackenzie," Lily said. "She and her brother are homeless and I am responsible for them."

"Brother?" Lucy enquired.

"Who's that, 'kenzie?"

Lucy and Stephanie were stunned to see small boy appearing from out of the same steel culvert. The boy was covered in dirt as was the girl.

"Bloody hell!" Stephanie exclaimed.

The boy was tiny and he could have been only about four, maybe five-years-old.

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Lily agreed to speak with Hit Girl and while Stephanie remained with the two youngsters, Lucy led Lily above ground.

"So, you found my little hideout, huh?" Lily said, making conversation as they walked.

"We think alike, Lily - that's how we found it and tracked you," Lucy explained.

"It takes a *Predator* to hunt a *Predator*, right?"

Lily stopped talking as she saw Lucas waiting beside Hit Girl. Lily forced a smile and she approached the boy who would not look her in the face. Lily gave the boy a hug which was lamely returned.

"Hug me, or I slap you again," Lily whispered and Lucas did so. "I'm sorry for striking you."

"That's okay," Lucas replied. "You had good reason."

"Enough of the sibling bonding," Hit Girl growled. "It's time to leave before your drug dealing friends attack."

"I did kinda cause that - sorry."

"Never say you're sorry; it's a sign of weakness," Special Agent Gibbs suggested.

"Rule number six," Special Agent McGee clarified.

"NCIS?" Lily asked.

"We are," Gibbs replied. "Why us?"

"My Mum and Dad were in the Royal Navy - I couldn't exactly send the video to the Admiralty in London, could I?" Lily replied. "I knew that I could trust NCIS - and I was right, I suppose."

"We got problems!" Abby Sciuto announced as she studied her tablet. "Men - many men - approaching from all directions."

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They all scattered into defensive positions.

There was no time to run - it was fight or die. For Hit Girl and Kick-Ass, it was business as usual - just as it was for the *Predators*. Hit Girl rummaged in the trunk of the damaged Mustang and she produced a Glock 19 pistol along with a pouch of magazines.

"Lucas!"

"Yes, Hit Girl."

"You know how to use one of these?" she grinned.

Lucas expertly cleared the weapon before loading it and preparing it for use.

"Good," Hit Girl growled. "What about you, Styx?"

"Not heard that moniker in a while," Lily chuckled. "Yes, I have a weapon and a few spare magazines."

"Here!" Piranha called out as she threw a ballistic vest to Lily and Lucas.

"Do you need a piece, Commander?" Special Agent Gibbs asked.

"No need, Special Agent Gibbs," Commander Haig replied as he pulled out a pistol from beneath his jacket.

Gibbs nodded approvingly at the FN Browning Hi-Power semi-automatic pistol.

"I figured you for a .38 revolver," Gibbs chuckled.

"I am not that old, Special Agent! I fell in love with the Hi-Power during my army days and I've always preferred one. Many bastards have met their end at the muzzle of this very weapon."

Gibbs grinned as he drew his SIG Sauer P228 pistol.

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The drug dealers were not used to taking on experts.

The first men into the kill-zone died violently with bullets to the head. Commander Haig was enjoying himself as he put one down with ease. Gibbs grunted and dropped a pair. Commander Haig was having none of it as he dropped another, then another. The attacking drug dealers quickly altered their attack before they lost too many and the incoming gunfire became more accurate causing McGee and Bishop to duck.

"Warming up, just nicely," Commander Haig commented.

"Not the best, are they?" Gibbs commented as a bullet struck the roof of the SUV a foot from his head.

Hit Girl just shook her head as she fired aimed shots at anything that moved and somethings that did not. Kick-Ass kept overall watch, ensuring that nobody attempted to outflank them. He saw Lucas and Lily expertly firing their weapons at the enemy. They both behaved just like any other *Predator* which he had witnessed fighting. Professional. Coolheaded. Dangerous. Lethal. Lily and Lucas fought alongside Piranha, Stormtide, and Fury like they had been doing it forever. He lost sight of Lucas and then Lily as the fighting progressed and cooled. The attack began to dissipate as the surviving gunmen chose to abandon the fight before silence descended on the area as the last gun went quiet. Kick-Ass sighed with intense relief as he realised that it was over, and he strolled over towards his wife. He looked around and then his face went pale beneath his mask.

He could see a body on the ground.

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Hit Girl and Kick-Ass knelt down beside the body.

"Fuck!" Hit Girl growled.

"The fucking bastard took the bullets for me," Lily growled, tears flooding down her face as Lucy tried to treat the bullet wounds with help from Ellie Bishop.

"I deserve to die; my life is forfeit, Lily - you stay safe, you hear?"

"Lucas. . ."

"Hit Girl - promise me that as I die, you will look after my kin. She is good, despite what she was taught to be. Save her."

"You have my word as Hit Girl, Lucas."

The boy's expression changed, and Hit Girl saw momentary relief on his face before it contorted in obvious pain.

"Oh, God - it hurts . . . it hurts." The expression quickly changed to one of fear. "I'm so scared . . . please."

Hit Girl held one hand while Lily held the other. The boy squeezed tightly, then he smiled up at Lily for one last time before he fell back, dead. Lily bent down, sobbing steadily as she hugged her half-brother. Hit Girl stared down at the boy for a moment before she stood up. Kick-Ass saw the body language and he stepped back, giving his wife her space.

"I am sick to death of innocent people dying," Hit Girl breathed angrily, her fists balling and flexing open as she turned to Lily and the others. "Go with Piranha, Lily - you are safe; I guarantee it. But for now, somebody is going to die. Lucas may have done some bad things, but he was not a bad kid - he deserved to live. Gibbs, please see that Lucas' body is recovered and taken back to Chicago. Stormtide, Fury - we have work to do before the dawn."

"What's she going to do?" Lily asked through her tears. "Take on the whole damn organisation?"

Fury chuckled as she responded coldly.

"The streets will run with blood, tonight, Styx."