

**Sunday, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Los Angeles**

The three men on motorcycles appeared to have been caught off guard.

Maybe they had not expected to see them there, or maybe they had been on the way to ambush Alpha Team. Either way, they were history. Petra closed from the right, astride her borrowed Ducati Multistrada while Trojan took the left flank on his Ducati Monster 821. Both were clad in black leathers and black motorcycles helmets with little to betray their identities. Petra pulled a Glock 22 Gen4 pistol and sent .40-calibre rounds downrange causing the opposing riders to scramble for their own weapons. One went down hard as he tried to ride, shoot, dodge incoming bullets, and avoid the inbound Trojan, all at the same time. Another was taken off his machine by two .40-calibre bullets and he hit the street, rolling off to one side while the third rider succeeded in causing Petra to change course or get shot by bullets from his own pistol. Trojan came to a rapid halt and then he turned to follow the escaping rider, but Petra waved him down - a road race through Los Angeles was not on the cards.

Instead, they had a living body to talk to.

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The burning cars were just that, burning cars - it was L.A. after all!

Venom and Bane scanned the immediate area, but they could see nothing until bullets began to strike the blacktop around them. Mist fired off a half-dozen rounds from her Walther P99C, covering the twins as they reversed course and accelerated down Graham Avenue away from the park and in a southerly direction, before following after them at speed. They took a right onto Nadeau Street and then another right onto Maie Avenue where they found Bravo Team slapping the fuck out of a large biker. Venom and Bane moved to cover their comrades while Mist went to find out what the hell was going on.

"Three men - think they were on the way to intercept you while you were playing with cars," Petra commented from beneath her helmet.

"I wouldn't call it playing, exactly," Mist commented dryly.

"Come out to the coast; we'll get together, have a few laughs. . ." Trojan growled.

"Sorry - I'll arrange for the funny bastards with guns to stay at home, next time!" Mist retorted. "Anything from this bastard?"

"Nothing yet - he seems very untalkative - for now."

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**San Diego**

The smell of petrol was strong in the air and the heat from the flames was extreme.

There were civilians everywhere desperate to escape the blooming fireballs. The gunfire had come as a rude surprise to those running to escape the fire. Hit Girl scrambled towards where Lilim was cowering behind an as yet intact car. The metalwork was already getting hot from the nearby flames and Hit Girl knew that it was only time before the gas tank overheated and exploded. Lilim found herself grabbed and pulled towards safety.

"My motorcycle!" she wailed.

"Honey - we can replace your motorcycle, but we cannot replace you!" Hit Girl yelled as reasonably as she could, yanking Lilim away from the car and her cherished motorcycle.

They made it a dozen yards before they came under fire. Lilim pulled her twin Glock 42 pistols and looked for armed targets, fully aware of the civilian non-combatants who flooded the area, not to mention the arriving firefighters and police. Those same firefighters and police instantly came under fire from what appeared to be over a dozen gunmen in body armour.

"No!" Hit Girl growled as she ran for her own motorcycle and she pulled out her own twin Katana swords, pulling off her helmet to reveal her mask.

With Lilim covering her back, Hit Girl made for the nearest fire truck and she began to take on the attackers who tried to attack the firemen with clubs the size of baseball bats. A fireman started as he saw death coming towards him but then he blinked as the club appeared to fall to the street, a severed lower arm with its hand still gripping the weapon. He looked up to see a man falling to the ground beside his severed limb, and a leather-clad, masked female yanking a pair of giant swords out of his chest.

"You have a fire to fight, I think," came an electronically enhanced voice before the woman turned away and ran towards the next armed man.

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Lilith was unhappy at being separated from Lilim, but she had no choice, and she knew it.

She had Wildcat in close support and she could see Hit Girl with Lilim, so all seemed good. She had been stunned by the suddenness of the attack, but her *Predator* training had countered the initial shock and she quickly scanned the area for threats. Unfortunately, she had found many - and they had found her. Wildcat was keeping up accurate gunfire allowing frightened civilians to make their escape.

"Time to move!" Wildcat growled as she darted back to her motorcycle and dumped her helmet before she produced a wicked looking Wakizashi sword with a twenty-inch blade.

Despite the black leathers, Wildcat looked dangerous with her mask and the blade which shimmered in the reflected blaze behind them. They both ran forwards with Lilith firing off rounds from her twin Glock 19 Gen4 pistols while Wildcat struck out at anything which dared come within reach of her blade which soon dripped with blood. Very soon, Lilith found herself back-to-back with her knew friend as they fought through a melee of attackers. Lilith knew that Wildcat was no *Predator*, but she knew of the girl by reputation and she was damn good. They soon found themselves able to push towards the embattled firefighters and the police. Wildcat came face-to-face with a police officer who just grinned as he ran past, seeking the real enemy. Then Lilith was amazed to see the youngster really go to work as she hacked down two men who had all but killed a fireman. Wildcat then ran forwards, vaulting into the air and severing a head before she landed gently, like a cat, on the top of a fire truck.

She crouched there for a moment, surveying all around her, the Wakizashi held out to one side, dripping blood.

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***The following morning***  
***Monday, November 21<sup>st</sup>***

## **San Diego**

The night had been extreme, to say the least.

Hit Girl had pulled everybody out, including a reluctant Wildcat. Hit Girl did not like fighting a battle in which she had no clear idea who the enemy was, nor what the ultimate intentions of the battle were. They had regrouped at the Haven after midnight having taken a creatively circuitous route to check for any watchers. Lilim had been very scared by the night's shocking surprises and she had needed Wildcat to calm her down. For Lilith, it was nothing new and she had easily taken it in her stride, but she was surprised by the temerity of the bastard to attack San Diego and Los Angeles simultaneously. The Los Angeles teams had also withdrawn to regroup and better understand the tactical situation.

Though they had all gone to bed, not many had slept.

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## **San Diego International Airport**

Stephanie descended the steps from the jet and she grinned up at Mindy.

"We can't let you go anywhere, can we?" Stephanie lectured. "You just have to blow something up and cause shit."

Mindy could not exactly argue, but neither was she about to allow herself to be lectured by her ten-year-old daughter.

"I love you too, Stephanie - get your sorry butt in the truck."

Stephanie followed instructions, registering her mother's foul mood. She found Megan in the truck, grinning.

"Hello, Auntie Megan - you been having fun?" Stephanie chuckled as she held up the front page of the San Diego Union Tribune.

The full-page image was of Wildcat crouched on the fire truck, her Wakizashi dripping blood with the blaze raging behind her. She was silhouetted against the inferno and she appeared deadly. There was a simple three-word caption:

*'FUSION IN SAN DIEGO?'*

"I am awesome!" Megan responded. "I can't help it!"

"Let's not get ahead of ourselves," Mindy commented as she climbed into the driver's seat, popping Megan's ego bubble.

"Spoilsport!" Megan retorted, sticking out her tongue.

Mindy laughed as she dropped the truck into gear and they left the airport.

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Along with Stephanie, they were also joined by Kelly, Shannon, Mark, Tommy, Abigail, Lauren, and Shannon's father, Patrick.

By the time they had pulled into the Haven, Mindy was pacing backwards and forwards, threatening to wear out the floor. There was also an uncomfortable scene building which apparently just got worse as the others arrived. Guinevere sat on a couch with a face like thunder. Opposite her, sat the object of her pent-up anger.

"Oh - you two have a history, huh?" Lauren grimaced.

"Hello, Guinevere, Nicholas," Patrick commented.

"Instructor Millar?" Guinevere exclaimed.

"My Dad!" Shannon growled.

"Hi, Shannon," Logan said.

"Do I know you?"

"Shannon - it's Kai."

"Woah! New face-job!"

"Hello, Kai," Patrick said. "I remember you being taken away for your special mission."

"Never went ahead - but the surgery did," Logan growled. "I'm Logan Dark, now."

"Interesting choice of name," Shannon commented.

"Hello, Kai - good to see you again," Marc grinned. "Oh, this is Kelly and Tommy - the mouth is Lauren."

Guinevere stood up.

"Abigail."

"Hello, bitch!" Abigail growled.

"Okay - now the meet and greet is over, let's get back to work," Mindy growled. "Oh, and one more thing . . . I hear a single bit of nasty behaviour and I will break some heads."

Guinevere groaned as she slapped Stephanie on her back - hard.

"Good to see you . . . Walker, was it?"

"I go by Lizewski, now."

"Nice. Good to see you again, Abigail. . ."

"Enough!" Mindy exclaimed. "We have Dieter to fuck up."

"But first, we need to find out where his men are based," Guinevere said, turning her attention to the task at hand.

"The men were experienced - probably gangbangers or maybe mercs," Wildcat commented.

"It fits," Tommy commented.

"And your credentials are?" Nicholas growled.

"In 2012 I was taken from my parents by a gang pedalling kids. I spent two years with the Russian Mafia, fighting for food, fighting for their entertainment, fighting for my very existence. I learnt to kill with a knife at eight years old. I could kill with my bare hands by the time that I was nine. Now, if you want me to rip that grin off your fucking *Predator* face and stuff it down your fucking *Predator* throat, then I fucking will. I've seen how you and that bitch have been looking at my girlfriend - and I am *not* going to stand for it any longer!" Tommy growled back with enough latent menace to make the fifteen-year-old Nicholas take a step away from the twelve-year-old boy.

"Okay - your creds are good," Nicholas admitted with a look over at Guinevere. "I tend to forget that other kids get a shit childhood - sorry, Tommy."

"The past doesn't matter - it's what we do now that does," Tommy replied. "You guys got a good map of the city?"

"Right here," Juno said as she scrambled for said map.

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"Okay," Mindy said after examining the map for a few moments. "You *Predators* are all highly trained in this - what's your take?"

"You're asking us?" Nicholas sound astounded.

"My daughter is a *Predator*, and so is my son - I happen to know that neither of them is stupid. I value your experience and training. If you think that you're not up to the task, Nicholas, then you can go back to polishing Guinevere's snatch."

"I . . . I can . . . I . . ." the red-faced boy stammered.

"Boys!" Guinevere hissed as her own cheeks turned very pink. "The obvious locations are over by East Harbor Drive."

"Where you and Mindy did your nude thing?" Juno chuckled.

"You and Hit Girl were naked?" Nicholas asked. "Why am I only hearing about this now?"

"Juno - shut the fuck up!" Guinevere growled.

"Do you like having male genitalia?" Mindy muttered pointedly.

Nicholas kind of squeaked as he gripped his boyhood.

"Before I was so rudely interrupted," Guinevere continued. "East Harbor Drive would be the obvious, but Mannheim is not the sort to go for the obvious - I've figured out that much."

"Well said," Mindy replied, nodding approvingly.

"I would base myself here, here, or here," Nicholas said, pointing out three locations on the map. "Good exfil points and good access routes into the city to cause shit."

Megan looked at Nicholas and then, out of the blue, she grabbed the boy between the legs.

"Thought so - he's soft; obviously, having the blood in his brain instead of his dick makes a difference," she commented to general laughter as she looked over at Guinevere. "A good size, too."

Even Mindy laughed, but she nodded at the boy.

"Continue, Nicholas," she directed. "Which would be your selection?"

"Here," Nicholas said without hesitation. "Just off the 805. North of Division Street. If I had a large force - I would distribute them amongst the homes, here. There's an Army National Guard facility just here a quarter of a mile away - the advantage being that a few new beefy guys strutting around would be ignored as just being friendly soldiers."

Mindy again nodded her approval before she turned to Guinevere.

"This kid is good, Guinny," Mindy commented. "You keep a tight hold of him, now."

"I intend to," Guinevere grinned back.

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**Three hours later**

"Hi!"

"What is it, Abby?"

"I've found them."

"Found who?"

Abby sighed.

"Bugs Bunny!"

Mindy chuckled.

"Missing, was he?"

"Almost exactly where Nicholas suggested. CCTV match and everything."

"The boy is full of surprises!"

"I'll send the shit over."

"You do that - thanks, Abby."

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### ***That evening***

#### ***Gamma Street***

The house was rented and occupied a corner at the end of the street.

Strategically, it was well positioned for observing who came up the street, and it had a back way out. There were expected to be eight hostiles in the single-storey house. Logan had suggested just blowing up the house, but Mindy had countered that with the reminder that non-combatants would be living very close and ideally, they wanted to go in, terminate, and leave without disturbing the neighbours.

"You?" Stephanie had commented. "You want to go in 'without disturbing the neighbours'!?"

"Megan, would you please let your niece know what I think of that comment?" Mindy had growled in response.

"Ow!" Stephanie exclaimed as Megan had slapped her.

Therefore, at 11 P.M. that night, they had moved in from three different directions beginning from several hundred yards away so that nobody saw their vehicles. They had separated into four teams:

#### *Alpha Team*

Hit Girl, Psyche, Lilim, and Fury

#### *Bravo Team*

Lilith, Wildcat, Splinter, and Nightmare

#### *Charlie Team*

Stormtide, Fortune, and Tempest

#### *Delta Team*

Astute and Trauma

Overseeing the operation from the Haven would be Riptide, with Hal monitoring the situation from Los Angeles with Crypto. Each member of the team was armed with SIG Sauer MPX-SD nine-millimetre assault rifles and every pistol was fitted with a suppressor. Alpha Team would assault from the west while Bravo Team would assault from the south, leaving Charlie Team to assault from the north. Delta Team would cover the street to the east. Wildcat and Lilith had been in place since 9 P.M. and they had confirmed that eight hostiles were present at the property. CCTV had shown that there were six men and two women - all of whom appeared to have military backgrounds of some description. They had each also been positively linked to the Panther Organisation after receiving a visit from a nasty-looking man whom they had identified as Günther Schmidt, the Head of Security for the Panther Organisation. Apparently, he was not best pleased - which was perfectly understandable, considering that he had recently lost several men, just the previous evening.

The man had vanished during the late afternoon, and the attack order had gone out.

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For Wildcat and Lilith, the wait had been long, but for the two girls, it was also part of what they were.

Lilith was impressed by the professionalism shown by Wildcat - the girl was fun, but there was a darkness within her which was unfathomable. However, lying in the mud in the cold darkness was not the time for a heart to heart. Both had had their eyes glued to night-glasses and infra-red scopes since their arrival. Lilith reported in as the teams moved into position. Two hostiles had gone to bed, one in either of the back rooms. Two more were seated at a table in the kitchen, possibly playing cards.

The remaining four appeared to be gathered around a TV, watching a movie in the front room.

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Charlie Team approached the backdoor and Stormtide went to work on the door lock while Tempest and Fortune kept watch.

Lockpicking was an important part of Stormtide's skillset and it took only forty seconds for her to defeat the single Yale-type lock on the wooden door which led directly into the kitchen area. They knew that two people were present in the kitchen, but their raucous laughing and coarse language had covered any noise made by Stormtide as she expertly raked the lock. Beyond the kitchen, a door led into the dining room.

"Charlie Team is breaching!" Stormtide advised those listening into the radio.

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Bravo Team approached the front door to the property where Splinter had the door lock cracked in thirty-eight seconds.

The door would open into a small hallway with doorways leading off into the living room, dining room, a bathroom, and three bedrooms. After a brief check of the area from their fairly open position, Nightmare and Wildcat checked down the east-side of the property and then nodded the all-clear to Lilith.

"Bravo Team is breaching!" Lilith advised those listening into the radio.

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While Lilim and Psyche kept watch, Fury was pushed through the partially open top window by Hit Girl.

It was bad tradecraft to leave the window open, but the air-conditioning system had failed, earlier on that evening - with the assistance of Trauma. The hostiles inside were the usual cocksure military who thought that they were invincible. Professionals who had served for years in the military would never have made such mistakes when in Iraq or Afghanistan, but once they were mere civilians accepting large pay checks as mercenaries, they tended to forget the simple lifesaving measures which had kept them alive in some of the world's most hostile warzones.

"Alpha Team is breaching!" Hit Girl advised those listening into the radio.

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First blood went to Fury as first one man died, followed by the next, without either of them ever regaining consciousness.

The youngster opened up the larger window and the rest of her team leapt inside. Lilim saw the two dead men, large bloody gashes in their throats the obvious causes of their rapid demise. She steeled herself as she kept her focus on the task at hand. She raised her weapon up and provided cover for Fury and Psyche as they pulled open the closed bedroom door and looked out into the darkened hallway. Psyche raised a hand to halt as Bravo Team appeared from the left. While Psyche and Fury covered the doorways, which led to the living and dining rooms, Bravo Team checked out the other two bedrooms and the bathroom, quickly reporting them clear.

"Alpha and Bravo Teams are in the clear," Hit Girl advised. "Standing by to breach the living room and dining room."

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Stormtide gently pushed open the kitchen door as Fortune's suppressor slid through the opening.

The slight movement was caught by one of the men at the card table and he turned, lifting a pistol off the table top. Fortune did not hesitate as she put two bullets in his skull. The violent demolition of his partner's skull did not go unnoticed by the dead man's card-playing opponent. He too rose and attempted to attack his attackers, but Tempest quickly sealed his fate as three bullets stitched neatly across his chest.

"What the fuck!" came a voice from the open doorway to the dining room.

Stormtide looked up to see a man, two empty beer bottles in his left hand, standing in the doorway. The man dropped the beer bottles and he reached for his pistol. The man was dead before the beer bottles struck the floor as four titanium throwing knives tore apart his heart and lungs.

"Alpha and Bravo - go!" Stormtide ordered as she watched her target crash to the floor.

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For the one man and two women in the living room, everything went very wrong.

They had heard the voice from the dining room, but they had ignored it, at least until they had heard a ginormous crash. All three leapt to their feet, pistols out, and they turned for the kitchen just as the door from the hallway burst open and they were struck by bullets from Nightmare, Lilim, and Psyche before they could turn towards their attackers. As they bodies fell, all three

teams checked out the entire house from top to bottom, including the rear garden and the garage. It was just eight dead bodies.

"Charlie Team is clear!"

"Bravo Team is clear!"

"Alpha Team is clear!"

"Delta Team reports no activity!"

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***The following morning***

***Tuesday, November 22<sup>nd</sup>***

***Office of the CEO  
The Tomahawk Group***

***Central Los Angeles***

For Rosa, it was just another morning where her boss was more than a little angry.

He was getting very angry of late. She figured it had something to do with the reports which he was receiving from San Diego. Anton Renke had just endured a violent fifteen-minute tirade concerning eight dead bodies which had been discovered by the San Diego Police, that very morning. Renke was officially the Chief Operations Officer for the Tomahawk Group, but he filled the same position for the Panther Organisation. His subordinate, Günther Schmidt had returned from San Diego just the previous evening and he had brought good news, at that point, only for that good news to be destroyed - actually vaporised - by the very public news story concerning eight dead mercenaries who appeared to work for some, as yet unknown, clandestine organisation. Rosa did not care about Anton Renke, nor about Günther Schmidt. In her experience, both men were foul, and Renke was just downright creepy, and the man very much enjoyed his work to a point which was borderline pathological. However, Renke was an untouchable in the organisation, so a minor inconvenience such as eight dead men on top of the others would not upset his hold on the security and operations forces of the entire Panther Organisation.

"Rosa!"

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***The Haven***

***San Diego***

"Is that it?"

"No, Guinevere, it probably isn't. However, it should give him cause to rethink his operation in San Diego," Mindy replied.

"So, he'll come back?" Juno asked fearfully.

"I think so," Mindy replied with some reluctance. "But not for a while."

"So, we're going to have to look over our shoulder's now?" Logan wanted to know.

"My team in L.A. will keep the pressure on Dieter and his attentions on them."

"So, what about us?" Nicholas asked.

"You keep plugging Guinny, and Logan keeps plugging Juno," Megan laughed.

"Funny!" Nicholas growled.

"Guinevere?"

"Mindy?"

"I would suggest that you take your sex toy, and Juno's, to go see The Seamstress - they will both need to be properly equipped if Trauma and Riptide are to fight alongside Lilith and Lilim."

"I can arrange that," Guinevere confirmed.

"It was really good to properly meet you all," Mindy said. "You three *Predators* are in from the cold. You are no longer alone. You have friends. I know some of you have a history together - many of you do. Please think before going out for any form of revenge. I know Stephanie for one has rubbed many people up the wrong way over the years. You all had to do whatever it took to survive in that horrendous environment. None of is a part of that anymore. You want help, you call. You need to talk, you call. You need anything, you call."

"Thank you, Mindy," Nicholas stated. "It is good to know that we are not alone, and I thank you for protecting the one person in my life that I have ever loved. I also thank you for protecting Juno. I still don't think she really knows what she has got her sweet little self into, but I intend to be here to protect her and Guin. They both need a man to protect them."

"I will look after Juno, Nicholas," Logan bristled.

"Okay, boys!" Juno laughed. "No fighting over me, please."

Juno enjoyed the fact that while Logan was her boyfriend and partner in bed, Nicholas was like a big brother to her and she both trusted and respected him.

"It was good to fight alongside you all," Stephanie said. "I am just as glad as Mindy to see more of you alive. That makes forty-three *Predators* recovered, to this point."

"I'm pleased to hear that," Guinevere said stiffly.

"I would suggest keeping your heads down for a few weeks," Mindy suggested. "Your tame cop has found those men and that should hopefully have him looking out for further trouble which would help you guys, too."

"I'm still worried," Juno said quietly.

"So you should be, honey," Mindy replied. "That is the life that you have entered into. Vigilantes worry - they always worry. Right, Guinevere?"

"I hate to say it, but yes, it is part of the nastier side, Juno," Guinevere confirmed.

"That man is part of a worldwide criminal empire. They are out to cause mayhem wherever they go to make money. As long as the money keeps rolling in, they don't give a shit who they trample on to maintain their lifestyles," Mindy lectured. "He will not stop until we stop him. I don't see anybody else able to do the job and he is a major threat to everything we hold dear. You've seen how he put innocent citizens at risk, just to make his point. This is a war, make no mistake about it, and we are all in it up to our necks. I am leaving you a ton of reading material concerning the threats which are being faced by *Fusion* and our sister organisation in the UK: *Vengeance*. I promise to give proper attention to the west coast. Now things have calmed down in Chicago, I promise to send resources in your direction. That was partially why Erika and the twins

came out to L.A. - they needed a fresh start, but I wanted them close to Dieter Mannheim, the Tomahawk Group, and the Panther Organisation. You four are critical to everything, however, I will not force you to do anything against your will. I will freely give you my help, but I cannot force you to join us under the *Fusion* banner. You four have my seal of approval, no matter what you decide to do. I would suggest that you talk amongst yourselves about your future, and then let me know."

Guinevere felt relieved that she had the full support of arguably the most dangerous woman on the planet, but she also felt fear for what might lay waiting for them just around the proverbial bend in the road of life. They were at a crossroads. Should they take the road where they remained as their little group and hoped that they could survive, or maybe they should take the road which commits them to joining *Fusion*. There were other roads, too, all of which would have to be considered. But Guinevere was not about to make a unilateral decision on behalf of her friends.

No - they would have to come to that decision themselves.

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### ***Market Street***

There was one more task remaining.

Abby and Maddie had located a small warehouse which Dieter was using to stockpile weapons and supplies. It had been a relatively simple matter to track shipments and while Dieter was not using his own transport network, Marty had been able to identify a subsidiary of a subsidiary of a subsidiary, which was being used by Dieter to ship borderline illegal items from state to state. On the way out of town, Mindy and Stephanie decided to pay it a visit. Yes, it was a risk in broad daylight, but Mindy wanted to send Dieter Mannheim a clear, unequivocal, message.

For two old hands, such as Mindy and Stephanie, planting one or two - actually ten - small (actually large) explosive charges. The security was not brilliant around the building, neither were the rent-a-guards who pretended to look menacing as they guarded the anonymous building packed with God only knew what. Well, Mindy had a fairly good idea what was stacked in there and Stephanie had discovered several crates of military supplies - indeed, one of the explosive charges was nestled comfortably amongst a crate of M67 hand grenades, deep within a pile of crates full of sub-machineguns. Needless to say, they did not hang around and within minutes of completing their tasks, they were riding eastward down Market Street. Stephanie, seated behind Mindy, briefly released one hand from around her mother's waist and she flipped up a switch on a small black box before she pressed the pulsing red button beneath.

Less than a second later, the large anonymous building was seen to bulge for a moment before it came apart in a massive orange fireball - Mindy twisted the throttle and she increased speed.

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### ***Office of the CEO The Tomahawk Group***

#### ***Central Los Angeles***

Rosa was in the office while her boss was enjoying his late lunch and catching up on the day's news.

For a moment, Rosa thought that her boss may have got something stuck in his throat - he was turning red and with a deep shade of puce on the edges. Rosa turned to look at the TV - it was a news article concerning an explosion in San Diego. Dieter Mannheim had had enough, and he threw his plate, made from the finest British bone china, directly at the seventy-inch LED TV which exploded as the plate made contact.

"They want a war - then they will have a war!" he growled menacingly.

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### ***Later that night***

#### ***Glenview, Chicago***

The twins were fast asleep, Jamie was reading in his room, and Stephanie was unpacking.

Mindy looked in on her eldest child. She could see Razor lying on Stephanie's bed - the dog always missed his owner when she went away. Stephanie was humming away to herself and the most infuriating song that Mindy had ever heard was playing, yet again - they had suffered months of it! Mindy had decided that if she ever saw 'Mack Z', in the flesh, the girl might suffer an accident - just enough to prevent her from singing any more trash like 'I Gotta Dance', but nothing life-threatening, of course. Then Mindy scowled as her daughter pulled several devices out of her bag and she placed them on her desk. Mindy coughed, gently. Stephanie froze and looked around at Mindy, then over at the items lined up on her desk. Razor whined, and he hid his face.

"How many did you take?" Mindy asked.

Stephanie squirmed as she plucked a few more items from her bag, talking as she did so.

"One or two . . . maybe five . . . okay, dammit, I took eight M67 grenades - I thought that they might come in handy!"

Dave chuckled from the doorway.

"Like mother, like daughter!"