



TURBO LOVER  
BIRDS OF PREY  
FAN FICTION COLLECTION  
Volume 1

**T U R B O   L O V E R  
FAN FICTION  
COLLECTION**

**Volume 1**

---

---

**LITTLE HERO**

**MONEY MAKES THE WORLD GO 'ROUND**

**ROBBERY IN PROGRESS**

**THE HUNTED**

**I DON'T NEED ANYONE...SO I THOUGHT**

**AMPED**

**RUN!**

# T U R B O L O V E R FAN FICTION COLLECTION

Volume 1

---

---

## A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

As usual, I start with the standard disclaimer - I do not own the characters of the Birds of Prey. No copyright infringement is intended. No money is being made off of this collection of fan fiction.

The concepts belong to me and these stories are not to be copied or distributed in any way without written permission.

Since I have a good amount of stories, I thought it would be cool to put them together in little books so that readers could have all of the stories in one place, and be able to print them out if they wanted to.

As time goes on, I'm sure I'll have more stories to share with you. For now, I hope you enjoy what I have to offer.

## DEDICATIONS

I'd like to dedicate these works of fan fiction to my fellow fan fiction writers over at the [birdsofpreyonline.com](http://birdsofpreyonline.com) site! You guys and gals are an extremely talented group of writers! Your positive feedback and enthusiasm for the stories makes it worth while in carrying on where the show sadly left off. Thank you all!

~ TL

# LITTLE HERO

Written: 4/2003

## PART 1

Helena jumped onto the rooftop of an old building, her fists clenched by her sides. She took a deep breath and blew it out as she uncurled her fists. "Dammit, kid," she swore under her breath.

"I heard that," Dinah said as she appeared behind Helena.

Helena spun around to face her, "Good, because I could say a whole lot worse."

"What's your problem?" Dinah asked, walking closer to Helena.

"Uh, what's going on?" Barbara's voice asked through their com links.

"Nothing," Helena spat.

"Don't give me that..."

Helena didn't let her finish and turned off her com.

"Dinah, would you please tell..."

Dinah frowned at Helena as she too turned off her com. "Now will you tell me what the hell your problem is?"

"I can't believe you even have to ask me what my problem is. Are you that stupid or were you not just in that alley five minutes ago?"

"If I hadn't showed up that guy could have killed you!"

Helena laughed sarcastically. "Get real. You almost got us BOTH killed!"

"What are you talking about?!?"

"I didn't ask you to come along tonight and yet you show up out of nowhere. I can't have you popping up in the middle of a fight whenever you feel like it. I'm not going to have your dead body on my conscience because YOU don't know when to keep out of a dangerous situation."

"Huh? I can totally handle myself in..."

"No you can't!" Helena shouted, pointing her finger at her. "I've been on these streets a hell of a lot longer than you and I've seen and dealt with some bad shit. You're not ready to be out here with me. I need someone that can get my back, someone I don't have to worry about all the time. What I DON'T need is someone who is going to fold under pressure like you did and just stand there like an easy target!"

Dinah could feel the tears welling up in her eyes and she did her best to hold them back. "But..."

"But nothing! Go home, Dinah. Just go home." Helena walked towards the edge of the building and jumped off the roof, disappearing into the night.

## PART 2

Later that night, Helena returned to the Clocktower only to find Barbara waiting for her.

Helena strode right past her as if she wasn't even there, but Barbara followed right behind her. "What'd you say to her?"

Helena went into the kitchen and rifled through the refrigerator. "I told her the truth." She grabbed an apple and bit into it.

"She's been locked up in her room all night, crying. I know how harsh your truth can be, so what did you say?"

"I told her that she's not ready to be out on the streets with me."

Barbara sighed as she shook her head in frustration. "How do you expect her to be ready if you don't give her a chance? I gave you a chance."

"Oh don't go there with the whole I did it for you crap. She hasn't proved herself to me, not even once. I can't take a chance with her out there." Helena walked past Barbara and headed back to the elevator, but this time Barbara didn't follow her.

Neither Helena or Barbara noticed Dinah listening from the top of the staircase.

The following night, Helena sat on one of the rooftops keeping an eye on the streets below when Dinah showed up.

"What are you doing here?" Helena asked as she turned towards her.

Before Helena could react, Dinah had thrown a punch at Helena's face that connected with her jaw.

Stunned, Helena rubbed her jaw. "What the fuck are you doing?"

"Come on, let's fight," Dinah said, motioning for Helena to attack.

"I'm not fighting you," Helena said as she stepped back with her hands up in front of her.

Dinah's brow creased in anger as she looked at Helena. "Fight me!"

Before Helena could comment, Barbara's voice came booming through her com. "Huntress! We have a report of a disturbance about two blocks from where you are."

"I'm on it," Helena said as she turned and ran across the rooftop, jumping over to the next building.

"Dinah, I want you to hang back," Barbara instructed her.

Dinah didn't answer. Reaching up to her necklace she ripped it from her neck and smashed it onto the ground before running in Helena's direction.

Helena reached the area Barbara had described as she ran along the rooftops. Jumping down to street level, she scanned the area and found it deserted. "Are you sure your intel is right?"

"Why? What do you see?" Barbara asked.

"Nothing, it doesn't look like anyone's been here."

Barbara typed away at her computer, pulling up the information to double-check it. "I don't get it. My intel said there was reports of fighting and gunshots."

"Well, they must have been seeing things because there's no one around."

Barbara tapped her finger on the table and chewed on her bottom lip. "That's odd."

"I'm gonna call it a night, Huntress out." Helena turned off her com and started walking down the street.

As she past an alley she heard glass shattering. She backed up and went down into the alley to investigate.

Slowly, she made her way to the back of the alley. Suddenly, a cat jumped out of a dumpster and screeched past her.

"Damn cat," she said as she looked down and saw the broken glass bottle on the ground.

When Helena turned around she saw the silhouette of a man standing in the darkness at the other end of the alley. Before her mouth could form a word, she heard a loud bang and then felt a burning pain dig into her shoulder. The impact sent her crashing to the ground on her back, her head smacking against the concrete.

She had expected to find the man standing over her at this point, but to her surprise he was still standing at the end of the alley, unmoving.

With a bit of a struggle, she got to her feet, but was soon back down on the concrete when another bullet ripped into her other shoulder.

"Uhhhhh!" Helena screamed as the pain ravaged her senses.

Just as she was about to bring her hand up to activate her com, but the man appeared and tore it from her neck.

"Uh uh uh," he said in a raspy voice as he tossed it away.

Helena looked up at him, but a black hood covered most of his face. The dimly lit alley also made it hard to see his face.

In a quick movement, she attempted to kick him in the shin, but he was onto her. He caught her leg and then flipped her over onto her stomach. Quickly, he pressed his weight into her back and roughly pulled her arms behind her back.

"Get the fuck off of me!" she gasped through waves of pain.

She felt him ease off of her, but then felt the barrel of the gun jam into her spine.

"Do you think she liked it?" he asked her as he pulled the hammer back on the gun.

Helena's mind raced as she tried to place the voice and figure out what he was talking about.

He pressed the gun harder into her spine causing her to cry out slightly. "Why don't we go ask her? Shall we, Helena!"

The sound of her own name coming from his dreadful lips made her feel sick.

"You bastard!"

He got to his feet and gave her a swift kick in the ribs before rolling her onto her back with his foot. He moved his hood away, letting her see the ghoulish grin on his face. "You smell just like your mother," he said as he winked at her. He was about to kick her again, but suddenly found himself clutching his head in pain.

"Get away from her!" Dinah screamed as she stormed down the alley towards them.

"You bitch!" Joker yelled as he tried to straighten up.

Dinah tried to keep her focus on him in an attempt to knock him unconscious, but he was very strong. She could see Helena struggling on the ground, which caused gaps in her power. Taking advantage of one of those gaps, Joker lashed out towards Dinah, punching her in the stomach.

She reeled backwards, gasping for air as the wind had been knocked from her lungs.

Joker raised his gun and aimed it at Helena. "Get on your knees, Blondie, or else I put another one in her."

Dinah complied and sank to her knees. "Can I at least help her?"

"No, you can help me first. We're going for a little ride."

"I can't move her," Dinah said, looking at Helena and then back at Joker.

Joker put the gun up against the side of her head, "You CAN and you WILL. NOW MOVE!"

Dinah moved over to Helena and got her to her feet. Helena's cries of pain made tears fall from Dinah's eyes, she just couldn't hold them back. "I'm sorry, Helena," Dinah whispered to her as she tried to steady her wounded friend.

Joker opened the back of the van and pushed them both inside, quickly locking it behind them.

Helena lay on the floor of the van, breathing heavily from the pain that was coursing through her body.

Dinah cradled her head in her lap, stroking her hair. "Helena, stay with me, okay."

"Mmmhmm," Helena mumbled softly.

Dinah tried to check on Helena's wounds, but it was too dark.

Joker climbed into the driver's seat and peeked through the small, barred window behind him, "Awwww, isn't this just a Norman Rockwell painting come to life!" he said as he began laughing hysterically.

Dinah could feel Helena's body tense up and then felt her trying to get up. "No, no, stay still."

"Let...let me at him," Helena slurred.

Dinah put her arms around Helena in an attempt to keep her still. "Helena, please. Stay still!"

"Better do what Blondie here tells you. You and I will have another go-around when we reach our destination, you can count on it."

"Where are you taking us?" Dinah squealed.

Joker didn't answer as he stomped on the gas.

"Clocktower," Helena whispered.

Dinah felt her stomach drop to her feet as she heard the word.

Joker pulled up to the Clocktower and began laughing. "Ohhhh, this is gonna be good!" He hopped out of the van and went around to the back to open the doors. "Let's go, you're my tickets inside this joint."

Dinah got Helena out of the van, dragging her along as they went into the Clocktower.

"You go up first, Blondie, and no funny business."

"How do I know you're not going to kill her if I leave her with you?"

"Oh, I'm not going to kill her without an audience, PLEASE!" He started laughing again, which made her skin crawl.

Dinah got into the elevator, biting back tears as the doors closed behind her.

When she got to the lair, the doors opened and she stepped out. Barbara was at her computer and quickly looked up when Dinah entered the room.

"I told you never to turn your com off!" she said, scolding her as she wheeled towards her.

Dinah began hiccupping as she broke down in tears.

"Oh my God!" Barbara gasped as she got close to Dinah and saw all of the blood on her clothes and hands. "Dinah, you're hurt!" Barbara ushered her over to the couch and sat her down. She practically ripped her jacket off her, searching

frantically for the source of the blood.

"It's...it's not mine," Dinah mumbled through sobs.

"Oh shit," Barbara said as she realized who's blood it must be. "Where is she?"

Dinah continued to sob, but couldn't answer.

"Where, Dinah?"

"She's right here, Batgirl!" Joker said as he walked into the room dragging Helena by the lapel her jacket.

Barbara whipped around and couldn't believe what she was hearing and seeing. The words she wanted to say couldn't even make it out of her mouth.

"Nice place," Joker said as he looked around the room, still dragging Helena. Helena's blood left a smeared trail on the porcelain white floor, she moaned in pain with each tug.

For the first time in her life Barbara didn't know what to do. She was frozen with fear. She'd often thought about the day she'd come face-to-face with Joker, but never thought it would ever happen.

Joker motioned to her with his gun, "Come on over here and let me take a good look at you."

Barbara started to wheel over to him, but Dinah grabbed her arm. "Don't!"

Barbara pulled her arm away from her, "I have to," she said softly.

She cautiously wheeled over to him and got as close as she wanted to be.

Joker let go of Helena and she flopped onto the floor like a rag doll. "I gotta hand it to you, you're one tough Bat to crack. I thought for sure I'd killed you."

"Yeah, well, you didn't," Barbara said through gritted teeth.

"I had to come see it for myself." Joker watched as Barbara's eyes kept floating to Helena. "Oh, Helena here is going to need some medical attention, pronto!" He began cackling again, which made the hairs on the back of Barbara's neck stand up.

Barbara wanted to rush to Helena's side, but was afraid to move.

Joker studied Barbara's facial expression and smiled, "Whatsamatta? Bat got your tongue?" He laughed loudly as he reached down and grabbed Helena by the front of her jacket, hauling her up roughly.

Helena gasped in pain as she tried to fight him off, but the pain was too much.

Joker dragged Helena over in front of Barbara, kicking her behind her knees, making her kneel in front of her. He placed his arm around Helena's neck to keep her from falling over. "Take a good look at your poor little Helena Kyle," he taunted.

Barbara swallowed hard as she bit back tears. Helena's eyes rolled as she struggled to remain alert, but they locked onto Barbara's for a few moments, which tore Barbara apart inside.

"Helena?" Barbara whispered with a hitch in her voice.

Joker laughed at Barbara's concern for her friend. "Here, you take her. She's getting blood all over me." Joker pushed Helena forward, causing her head to land onto Barbara's lap.

Barbara put her arms around Helena and could hear small sobs of pain coming from her. "Helena?"

Helena's arms hung useless by her sides due to the wounds in her shoulders.

"Dinah!" Barbara yelled out.

Dinah jumped at the sound of her name and felt panic rising in her.

"Help me with her," Barbara said as she held onto Helena tightly, rubbing her back to soothe her.

Joker strolled off to take a look around the lair as Dinah rushed over to help Barbara. "What wonderful toys you have here."

Dinah put her hands around Helena's waist and eased her away from Barbara.

"Let's get her into the lab."

Joker's head snapped up, "Uh uh, no one leaves this room! This is MY party and I call the shots, so to speak." He broke into a fit of laughter as he plunked himself down on one of the chairs by the computers.

"Get her over to the couch so I can get a better look, and try and get her jacket off."

Dinah dragged Helena over to the couch and got her seated so Barbara could examine her wounds.

"I'm sssorry," Helena slurred as she looked at Barbara.

"For what?" Barbara asked as she ripped Helena's shirt to reveal the wounds.

"Him."

"Dinah, get me all of the medical supplies from the emergency cabinet by the Delphi."

Without hesitating, Dinah ran off.

Barbara grimaced as she got a good look at the wounds and shook her head. "Neither one went all the way through."

Dinah returned with an arm-full of supplies and set them next to Helena on the couch. "What's the matter?" Dinah asked as she looked at the worried expression on Barbara's face.

"The bullets could be anywhere in her body, she's been moved around too much. Without my scanner I'm not going to be able to find them."

"I can sneak into the lab," Dinah whispered.

"No way, it's too dangerous."

Barbara poured saline onto a wad of gauze and cleaned around the wounds. "Dammit," she swore under her breath as she looked at all of the blood that covered Helena's chest.

Dinah held onto Helena's hand, squeezing it. With what little strength Helena had she squeezed back.

"Having fun over there?" Joker asked. "Reminds me of an episode of ER, but with a lot less drama. Ho hum," he said as he pretended to yawn. "I'd surely turn the channel if..."

"Shut up!" Dinah yelled as she blasted him with a shot of her telekinesis.

Joker dropped his gun and held the sides of his head in pain as he fell onto the floor.

"Keep your focus on him!" Barbara spun around and zoomed to the platform where Joker was lying on the floor. Dinah followed, using all of her strength to inflict even more pain on him.

"Uhhhhh!!!" Joker screamed as she writhed on the floor.

Barbara grabbed a tranquilizer gun out of the cabinet and loaded it to the max. Quickly, she aimed at Joker's neck and shot out the dart.

He grabbed for the dart and pulled it out, but it was too late. The tranquilizer had already entered his system and within

seconds he fell unconscious onto the floor.

With a sigh of relief, Barbara put the gun on the table.

Dinah sat down on a nearby chair, putting her head in her hands for a moment.

"You okay?" Barbara asked as she wheeled over to her.

"Just a little dizzy. I've never used my powers that intensely before."

Barbara put a comforting hand on her shoulder. "Do you think you can help me with Helena?"

"Yeah, yeah, I'm fine," Dinah said as she got to her feet.

"Get her into the lab, I'll be right in. I just want to make sure Joker's secure before we leave him for too long."

Barbara wheeled back to the computer area where Joker was lying on the floor. She took out a special pair of handcuffs and leaned over to put them on his wrists when suddenly his eyes flew open and that hideous smile spread across his face.

"Boo!" he said as he grabbed at her chair, knocking it over and causing her to tumble out.

He stood over her and brushed off his jacket. "Come on, Barbara, you know me better than that. It ain't THAT easy to keep me down!" He gave her a swift kick to her ribs and placed his foot on neck, pressing down. "I believe I have some unfinished business to take care of," he said as he pulled out another gun from inside his jacket.

Dinah had heard the commotion and saw Joker standing over Barbara. "No!!!" she screamed as she let a Batarang fly towards Joker, hitting him in the temple. He bent over clutching his head and she threw another one, this time hitting the hand that held the gun. The Batarang sliced into his flesh and imbedded itself into bone. The gun crashed to the floor next to Barbara who didn't hesitate in grabbing it. Turning towards him, she squeezed the trigger, but instead of hearing a bang she heard a small pop and saw a flag come out of the barrel that said 'bang!'."

Joker clutched his bleeding hand and laughed hysterically. "You stupid bitch! Jokes on you!" He began kicking Barbara over and over, enjoying her screams of pain.

Dinah ran towards him and tackled him to the ground. She hit him in the face with a series of punches, but none seemed to have an effect on him.

In a swift movement he pushed her off of him, sending her crashing to the ground, smacking her head against the steel table.

"Silly little girl," he said as he stood up. He yanked the Batarang out of his hand and threw it by Barbara, splashing some of his blood onto her face.

Dinah rubbed the back of her head and shook off the dizziness as she tried to attack Joker with another dose of her telekinesis.

"Oh no you don't," he said as he took the small flower out of his lapel and threw it at her.

She dodged it and watched as it lodged into the back of a chair.

Joker frowned and flipped his hand towards her, sending small darts her way.

Dinah got down low on the floor, narrowly avoiding them.

Barbara began coughing up blood as she lay on the floor clutching her ribs. Turning her head, she spat the blood onto the floor. "D-Dinah," she tried to yell, but it came out only as a whisper.

Dinah got to her feet and ran into the training room.

Joker smiled and followed her. "I hadn't expected to come here to fight YOU, Blondie. This is a nice surprise...and I LOVE

surprises!”

Dinah picked up a metal pipe and charged at him, swinging it towards his head.

Joker grabbed the end of the pipe and pushed it towards her, catching her in the chin and knocking her to the floor.

“Oh, come on,” he said in disappointment, “give me all you’ve got.”

Dinah glanced over and grabbed a baseball bat. She flipped to her feet and charged at him again, swinging the bat towards his head. “I’m gonna split your head like a melon, you bastard!”

Joker laughed as he effortlessly ducked away from her swings.

Dinah continued swinging, but in a surprise move she kicked his legs out from under him. He fell to the ground and she swung down with the bat, connecting solidly with his chest.

“Uhhhhh!” he yelped.

Again and again she swung down on him, feeling his bones crack with each hit. “You Goddamn bastard!” she screamed as she swung out of control, his blood splattering all over her and the floor around him.

“Dinah! Stop!”

Dinah looked up mid-swing and saw Helena in the doorway, leaning on it for support.

“Stop! It’s over,” she walked towards Dinah.

Dinah’s brow creased as she turned back to Joker and swung again and again.

“Stop!” Helena said as she painfully wrapped her arms around Dinah and pulled her away from Joker’s broken body. Dinah dropped the bat as Helena lowered her to the floor, sitting her in front of her as she hugged her, resting her head on her back.

Dinah sobbed uncontrollably.

“It’s okay, kid,” Helena whispered.

Dinah sniffed and snuffed and then felt Helena’s grip loosen. “Helena, are you okay?” She turned around and saw that Helena was fading in and out of consciousness. “Helena?” Dinah touched Helena’s cheek as she checked her pulse, finding a slow, but steady one. “I have to go check on Barbara, I’ll be right back I promise.”

Dinah rushed off into the other room and heard the elevator doors open. She stopped in her tracks and saw Alfred step out.

“Alfred! Thank God!”

“Dinah, what in bloody hell happened here?” He surveyed the blood all over the floor and all over Dinah and then saw Barbara lying on the floor. “Oh God, no.”

He rushed over to Barbara’s side, kneeling beside her. “Barbara? Barbara can you hear me?”

“Al..fred,” Barbara whispered as she slowly opened her eyes.

He scooped her up into his arms and rushed her into the lab, laying her down on one of the metal tables.

“Helena’s hurt really bad too,” Dinah said as she began to cry.

“Where is she?”

“In the training room.”

Alfred's mind was racing as he tried to stay calm. "Okay, do you remember how to program these computers like Barbara showed you?"

Dinah nodded.

"Set them up for her while I go get Miss Helena."

Alfred dashed off to the training room and skidded to a stop as soon as he saw Joker's dead body only a few feet away from Helena's unconscious form.

"Dear God," he muttered to himself.

He gathered Helena up into his arms and rushed her into the lab, setting her on a table next to Barbara.

Barbara's head rolled to the side. "Hel...Helena," she said, reaching out to her.

"She's going to be fine, Barbara," Dinah assured her.

Barbara looked at Dinah and her eyes got wider. "Blood. You..."

"Shhh, don't talk."

"Joker. Where is he? We...we have to get...we have to get out of here." Barbara started to get up, but Dinah held her down.

"Barbara, it's okay. He's not going to hurt any of us ever again. Please, stay still."

Alfred went to work on administering pain medication to both Barbara and Helena.

"But..."

"He's dead," Dinah said flatly.

Barbara shut her eyes and began to cry, both from exhaustion, pain, and relief.

### **PART 3**

A few days had passed and both Barbara and Helena were still resting from their injuries.

Dinah entered Helena's room with a bowl full of soup. "You look better today."

Helena flashed a small smile through her haze of pain medication. "Thanks. Listen, I want to apologize for what I said that night about you not being ready to handle yourself. You more than proved yourself to me and I'm sorry."

Dinah smiled as she sat next to Helena on the bed. "No need to apologize. I just wish I'd gotten to that alley a little sooner and maybe you wouldn't have gotten shot. Maybe things would've been different."

"Stop. What happened happened and there's nothing we can do to change it. I admit though, I've thought about what I should have done differently. I let my guard down."

Dinah fed Helena a spoonful of soup. "Nobody's perfect."

"I'm afraid not. Hey, how's Barbara doing?"

"She's fine. Of course it's going to take her a lot longer to recoup since she's not meta, but she'll be okay."

"Three broken ribs and a punctured lung's gotta hurt like hell."

"Oh, and two bullet wounds to each shoulder doesn't?" Dinah chuckled as she fed more soup to Helena.

"True," Helena said with her mouthful.

In Barbara's room, Alfred checked and double-checked her vitals as she lay still in her bed.

"You don't have to fuss over me, I'm fine," Barbara said in a whisper, trying not to let the pain flare up in her ribs.

"You, Barbara, are far from being fine at this current time, and I would suggest that you just relax and rest."

"How's Helena?"

"She's resting, like you should be doing."

"You mean you got her to listen to you?" Barbara grimaced as she tried to laugh.

Alfred gave her a sarcastic look. "I'm going to make some tea. Get some rest."

Barbara sighed and shut her eyes, trying her best to get the Joker off her mind. She couldn't imagine Dinah having to deal with him all on her own and was extremely thankful that she wasn't seriously hurt.

He was finally dead. It sounded too good to be true as she repeated it over and over to herself, but it was indeed true.

## **PART 4**

A few hours passed and Helena was still sleeping off her meds, but she suddenly felt someone take her hand, a hand that didn't feel like Dinah's.

Slowly, she opened her eyes and gasped slightly at who sat before her.

"Hi, Helena."

"Daddy?"

"I came as soon as I could."

Helena wasn't sure whether to love him or hate him for being there.

Batman reached over and moved the hair out of her eyes and she could see him shaking. He noticed her looking at his hand. "Sorry, it's just that I'm... I'm not used to seeing you hurt."

Helena wanted to say how she really felt about him not being there for while she was growing up, but the tears in his eyes softened her up.

"I'm so glad you're okay," he said with a hint of emotion in his voice.

Helena reached for his hand and held it as tight as she was able to.

~ FIN

# MONEY MAKES THE WORLD GO 'ROUND

Written - 5/03

## PART 1

Harley sat in her office, alone, looking out the window at the city's skyline. Chewing on her pencil she thought about what it would be like to rule New Gotham – all the money, all the power.

The sound of office door opening broke her out of her trance.

Quickly, she took her feet off the window sill and turned her chair around to see who had barged in.

One of her men was standing in front of her desk, a smile spreading across his face.

"What? You don't knock? Did I ever say that it was okay to just barge on in here whenever you damn well please? No, I didn't."

"I'm sorry," the man said as he fidgeted a little bit. "I have some information that I know you'll find useful."

"Uh," Harley groaned as she slumped back in her chair, "this isn't another one of your dead-end schemes is it? Because you know we discussed your demise if it happened again."

"I...I swear this is good information," the man stammered. "A friend of mine was at the Dark Horse Bar the other night and he found someone."

Harley rolled her eyes, "Let me guess, he ran into this red hot babe, got her number..."

"Bruce Wayne's daughter," the man said flatly.

Harley was silent for a few moments as the words played around in her brain. "What?"

The man moved closer to her desk and placed a Polaroid in front of her. "He took this photo to prove it to me."

Harley's jaw dropped. "Wha...what the hell. This is Helena," she said as she looked up at him.

"Helena Wayne."

Harley held the photo in her hand and stared at it. "Holy shit!" she squealed as she began to laugh.

The man laughed along with her, satisfied that he'd done right by her and would live to see another day.

"Helena Kyle is Bruce Wayne's little girl, I'll be damned. Actually, I won't be damned because I'll be rich!" Harley began jumped up and down with excitement. "I'm going to be rich!!" she yelled.

The man smiled as he watched her, not knowing quite what to do.

"Oh Jacob, you've redeemed yourself with this one. Now, run along because I've got LOTS of work to do, LOTS of planning, LOTS of scheming." She broke into a fit of demonic laughter as Jacob left the office.

"Helena, Helena, Helena. Cha-ching!" she exclaimed as she threw her hands up in the air.

## **PART 2**

A FEW DAYS LATER

Helena walked past Barbara who was working at her computer.

“Hey, Helena, come here and look at this.”

Helena turned back around and walked over to Barbara’s side.

“Does that look like an ‘2’ or a ‘z’?” Barbara asked as she held up a photo of a dead man’s body that had burn marks on him.

“Hmmm, I’m going to say a ‘z’.” Helena handed the photo back to Barbara and headed back towards the elevator.

“Yeah, I think it’s a ‘z’ too.” Barbara looked up and saw that Helena was leaving. “Where are you going? You have sweeps in a little over an hour.”

“Dr. Quinzel had to change my appointment, I was supposed to go next week, but something must have come up.”

“Oh, well, let me know when your session is over so I can send Dinah out to meet you.”

Helena saluted to her as the elevator doors closed in front of her.

### **PART 3**

Helena arrived at Harley's office, knocking on the door lightly.

"Come in."

Helena entered the room and took a seat on the couch opposite Harley who was sitting in her usual chair, notepad in hand.

"I'm so glad you were able to reschedule without a problem," Harley said as she smiled at Helena.

"Yeah, no problem, but I do have to duck out of here in an hour, so..."

"Hot date?" Harley asked inquisitively.

"Something like that," Helena answered with a smile.

"Well, let's get started then, shall we?" Harley reached over and took Helena's hand into hers, turning it palm-side up. Reaching into her jacket, she pulled out a pencil.

Helena's eyes narrowed slightly in confusion.

"Your lifeline," Harley said as she began running the eraser of her pencil over it, "it seems a little...short."

Helena frowned and peered over at her hand. She was about to speak, but her vision became blurry and her head began to swim.

"Helena? Helena, are you alright?" Harley asked as she placed the pencil on the table next to her chair.

Helena put her hand to her head as she blinked a few times in an attempt to clear her vision. The dizziness intensified and Helena could feel beads of sweat running down her face. "I'm...so dizzy."

Harley let go of Helena's hand and walked over to her desk to get her car keys.

Helena swayed a bit and attempted to get to her feet, but she soon fell to the floor, smacking her head against the side of the coffee table on the way down.

Harley stood over Helena's unconscious form with a sarcastic grin on her face. "Let the games begin, Helena Wayne."

Barbara checked her watch and sighed. "Dinah!"

Dinah soon entered the room, dressed in her sweeps outfit.

"Helena hasn't reported in and she's a half hour late. Why don't you head out, but keep in constant contact."

"Is she okay?"

"She's still at her psychiatrist's office, I tracked her com." Barbara looked at her watch again and shook her head. "She knows that she's supposed to be out on sweeps right now."

"Maybe she's finally opening up and spilling her guts," Dinah said as she headed for the elevator.

"Yeah, maybe." Barbara said quietly.

## **PART 4**

A blow to her face is what finally awakened her.

"Helena, glad to see you're coming around," Harley said as she rubbed her sore knuckles.

Blood ran down the side of Helena's face from a cut above her eye. The blood stung her eye as some of it oozed into it.

Helena was still for a moment, waiting for the room to come into focus. When it did, she realized something was very wrong. She tried to move, but soon realized she was securely bound to the chair she was sitting in. Looking down, she saw that she was restrained with only rope, but it was thick and would take a while to get out of.

Harley reached over and grabbed Helena's chin, forcing her to look at her. "Don't even think about trying to escape." Harley held up a switchblade and ran it along Helena's neck lightly without drawing blood.

"What the hell are you doing?"

Harley let go of Helena's face and moved behind her, massaging her shoulders. "You see, Helena, there are leaders and followers in this world, and I'm a born leader. I am destined to rule New Gotham and you're going to assist me."

"What are you talking about?"

Harley moved back in front of Helena and bent over, resting her hands on her knees. "Your daddy's a billionaire and money equals power. With that money, I'll be the most powerful person in New Gotham, and therefore New Gotham will answer to ME!!" Harley began to laugh and jump up and down with excitement, her eyes wide with delight.

Helena felt her stomach tightening into a knot. She didn't really know what to say, so she lied. "What are you talking about? My father isn't rich?"

Harley stopped jumping, her brow creasing, "DON'T play games with me, Helena. I know who you are and I know how much you're worth."

Harley moved closer to Helena and dug the tip of the switchblade into Helena's side, causing her to gasp slightly as the metal bit into her flesh.

"And wouldn't it just kill Daddywaddy to see his little dumpling all bloody." Harley pushed on the blade slightly as she giggled.

"I don't know where he is," Helena said through clenched teeth, feeling the tip of the blade hit her rib.

Harley stopped pushing on the knife hearing Helena's answer. "Please, Helena, do you think I'm a fool? Wait, don't answer that." Giggling and snickering, Harley pulled the knife back, leaving an inch-deep wound in Helena's side. "What daughter isn't going to hang around their filthy rich father? Huh?"

"I told you, I don't know where he is. We haven't spoken in years, you KNOW that." Helena looked away from her.

Harley strode across the room, taking a small box from a shelf. She opened the box and took a syringe and a small bottle. Filling the syringe with the liquid from the bottle, she returned to Helena's side.

"Now, Helena, I'm going to ask you one more time. Where is your father?" Harley tapped out the bubbles and held the large needle in front of Helena's face.

Rather than answer, Helena spat in Harley's face.

Harley didn't move. Shutting her eyes for a moment she tightened her jaw as Helena's spit rolled down her cheek. "Okay, Helena, have it your way." Harley brought her arm up and then in a quick movement she jammed the needle all the way into Helena's thigh.

"Arghhh!!!" Helena cried out in pain, fighting against her restraints.

Harley pushed on the plunger, emptying the contents of the needle into Helena's bloodstream. "Stop struggling, Helena,

it's not worth it."

Helena continued to try and get her arms free, but the rope only bit into her skin more. Blood began running into the palms of her hands from the open wounds around her wrists. Soon, she began to tire and feel the effects of the drug Harley had given her.

"Good," Harley said as she watched Helena stop struggling and enter a sleepy state. "Truth serum should help you to think. Now, where is your father?"

Helena's facial expression was one of confusion. "My father?" she asked, looking up at Harley.

"Yes, Helena. Bruce Wayne, your father. Where is he?"

Helena looked down for a moment as she struggled to think. "I'm not sure."

Harley tried to keep her anger at bay. "Think, Helena. Where does your father live?"

Helena continued to think, but the answer wasn't coming to her. "I...I don't know," she said, shaking her head. "I haven't seen him in such a long time."

Harley stood up and ran her fingers through her hair in frustration. Then she thought of another question to ask. "If you don't know where he is, who else would know?"

"I don't think Barbara knows, but she probably wouldn't tell me even if she did."

"Who's Barbara?"

"She's been my guardian ever since my mother died."

A smile began spreading across Harley's face as she listened to Helena spill her guts with ease. "When did your mother die?"

"About seven years ago. She was..." Helena paused for a moment and then began to cry.

"She was what?"

"Murdered," Helena said with a sob.

The smile left Harley's face for a moment. "That's terrible."

"That bastard is going to pay for what he did to my mother and to Barbara," Helena slurred.

"Who?"

Helena began falling asleep and mumbled something inaudible.

"Who, Helena?"

"J-Joker," she whispered before her head slumped forward as she drifted off to sleep.

Harley's eyes grew wide as saucers as all of the pieces began falling into place. "Well, well, well. I certainly have a treasure on my hands."

Barbara bit the end of her pencil nervously as she looked at her watch. "Dammit, Helena." After a minute of debate, she decided to put a trace on her com device.

Numbers flew across the screen as the computer processed the trace and soon displayed the result. "What the?" Barbara exclaimed, as the location that popped up wasn't Dr. Quinzel's address.

"Dinah, do you copy?"

"Right here, what's up?"

"What's your location right now?"

"I'm down on 2nd Street. Why? Where the hell's Helena?"

"Good question, I just tracked her com and it's telling me she's down over by the old junkyard near the pier. Meet me over there."

"Got it!"

Barbara gathered some equipment and headed to the elevator as quickly as possible.

## PART 5

While Helena slept, Harley took the opportunity to untie her and drag her outside where she chained up her hands and suspended her above the ground with one of the machines.

She slapped Helena's face a few times in an attempt to wake her up. "Come on, Helena, wake up."

Helena winced a bit, but didn't wake up.

Harley wound up and punched Helena in the wound she'd made with the knife, causing it to open wider and bleed more. "Wake up!"

Helena coughed and winced as the pain began to register to her brain. Slowly, her eyes started to open.

"Wakey, wakey."

Helena blinked several times to clear her vision.

"So, tell me more about Joker."

"What?" Helena asked, unsure of why his name was brought up.

"Before your little nap, you were telling me all about Barbara, your mother being murdered, and Joker." Harley circled around Helena with her arms folded across her chest as she waited for her to answer.

Helena swallowed hard and wondered how much she had divulged.

"Go on, tell me more about him. So far you've only said that he's a bastard."

Helena realized there was no point in trying to cover up whatever she had told Harley, so she just let go.

"Yeah, he's a fuckin' low-life bastard, actually."

Harley clenched her fists in anger as she continued walking around Helena's dangling form. "How so?"

"That freak had my mother killed and tried to kill Barbara. That sicko should have had a bullet in his brain..."

Harley gave Helena a roundhouse kick to her already sore ribs and followed it with a punch directly in her stomach that left Helena gasping for air.

"Don't you EVER talk about my Mr. J. like that!"

Helena coughed as her lungs filled back up with air.

"He's a good man and I won't put up with ANYONE talking about him like that!"

Helena hoisted herself up a bit and swung towards Harley, kicking her in the back of the head. With her feet tied together she was limited on her impact, but she managed to stun Harley and knock her to the ground.

Holding the back of her head, feeling a little bit of blood, Harley turned and looked at Helena with an angry look. "You're gonna pay for that!"

Harley got to her feet and stormed over to the controls of the machine. Pressing one of the buttons, the machine let go of the chain that was holding Helena up. Helena fell to the ground, hard, on her side.

Harley quickly stormed over to her and began kicking her uncontrollably.

Helena blocked some of the blows, but not many. Some remnants of the drug were still in her system, slowing her reaction time.

Satisfied that she'd kicked her enough, Harley moved away and watched as a bleeding and battered Helena curled into the fetal position, hugging her bleeding side.

Harley wiped the sweat from her brow with the back of her hand before reaching behind her back and pulling out a gun from the waistband of her pants. Pulling the hammer back, she aimed it at Helena.

"Take back what you said about him!"

Helena didn't answer and continued to writhe in pain.

Harley fired the gun, but the bullet hit the dirt next to Helena's shoulder.

"The next one is going in you if..."

"No it isn't!" a voice from across the junkyard yelled out.

Harley quickly turned around and was met with a Batarang to the head, slicing a gash in her forehead.

Dinah took control of Harley's mind as she reached down and retrieved the gun. After a few moments, Harley passed out.

"Oracle, call Reese and have him come down here."

"He's already on his way, I called him after I left the Clocktower. I'm about two minutes away. Did you find Helena?"

"Yeah," was all Dinah could say as she knelt down beside Helena who was barely conscious and bleeding badly.

Barbara could sense the concern in Dinah's voice. "Tell her to hang on, I'll be there soon."

Dinah put her hands over Helena's to assure her. "Barbara's on her way, you're gonna be okay."

Helena's eyes rolled back in her head as she passed out.

Barbara and Dinah got Helena back to the Clocktower and with Alfred's help, they got her into the lab. All of the movement had awakened Helena.

"W-Where am I?" Helena gasped.

"My Goodness," Alfred said as he got a good look at Helena's blood soaked body.

"You're at the Clocktower. You're safe now." Barbara put a comforting hand on Helena's forehead, as she looked her over. "She's having trouble breathing, could be a punctured or collapsed lung," Barbara said as she began setting up surgical equipment and programming the computers.

Helena squeezed her eyes shut as pain consumed her. "It hurts," she said softly.

"It's okay, Helena," Dinah said as she took her hand. "Can't you give her anything?" Dinah asked Barbara.

"Not until I know exactly what's wrong. Everyone step back while I do a scan."

They all moved away from Helena as a bright green light scanned over Helena's still form.

The scanner beeped when it was finished and Barbara dove back into action. Taking out a pair of scissors, she cut off Helena's shirt. She frowned at the sight of the stab wound that had finally stopped bleeding.

Looking up, Barbara read the results of the scan. "Shit," she cursed as she grabbed a bottle of Iodine and smeared some on Helena's side.

"What are you doing?" Dinah said with fright in her voice.

"I need to insert a chest tube to help her breathe. Her left lung collapsed."

"Come, Miss Dinah, why don't we go get a little air," Alfred suggested, reaching out for her arm.

Dinah pulled her arm away from his grasp. "No! I want to stay here and make sure she's okay. I-I want to help." Dinah's voice trembled in fear.

Barbara sighed and pointed to a cabinet in the corner of the room. "Get me a tube from there."

While Dinah rushed over to get the tubing, Barbara grabbed a scalpel and made an incision in Helena's side, inches above the stab wound.

Helena screamed out in pain, sending shivers down Alfred's spine as he did his best to hold her still.

"I'm sorry, Helena, I have to do it." Barbara's voice was shaky as she did her best to keep from bursting into tears.

Dinah returned to Barbara's side and almost gagged at the site of the new wound that Barbara had made. "Here," she said, handing Barbara the tubing.

Barbara began inserting the tube carefully, trying to ignore Helena's cries of pain.

Dinah couldn't watch any longer and ran out of the lab.

After the tube was in, Barbara taped it in place. Alfred assisted in helping Barbara finish the tasks at hand, his heart breaking inside as he saw how hurt Helena really was.

Dinah sat out on the balcony for hours, her knees tucked up to her chest. Finally, when Barbara was finished helping Helena, she came out to check on her.

"Dinah? You okay?" Barbara asked sheepishly as she slowly wheeled over to her.

Dinah wiped the tears from her face. "Yeah. I'm no good with blood and guts. I can't even dissect the frog in Science class without wanting to upchuck. I'm sorry."

Barbara put her hand on Dinah's shoulder. "There's no need to be sorry. Not everyone can do that kind of work."

Dinah sat silently for a moment before speaking. "There was so much blood. I didn't know what to do when I first saw her. I froze." She wiped more tears from her face with the sleeve of her sweater. "I've never seen Helena hurt like that before and... it scared me."

"It scared me too," Barbara admitted.

"Is she okay?"

"Yeah, she's okay. I was able to take the pressure off her lung so it could re-inflate, so she's breathing easier. She's got three broken ribs, a concussion, a stab wound, and a bunch of nasty cuts and bruises, so she's going to need a few days to recuperate."

"C-Can I see her?"

"Come on," Barbara said, smiling, as she reached out for Dinah's hand.

Barbara led Dinah to the room Alfred had helped Barbara move Helena to. The sight of Helena lying so still, covered with cuts, bruises, and bandages, made her bottom lip quiver as she began to tear up.

Barbara wheeled away, leaving Dinah on her own to enter the room, which she did, slowly.

Dinah swallowed hard as she walked over to Helena's side and nearly jumped out of her skin when she heard Helena's weak voice.

"Hey, kid."

"Helena, you're awake."

Helena merely nodded in her sleepy state.

"How are you feeling?"

"Like shit, thanks." Helena smiled which made Dinah feel a little better.

Dinah smiled back. "I was really worried about you."

"I owe you one. You...you save my life." Helena winced a little as she put a hand over her ribcage.

"You okay? You want me to get Barbara?"

"Actually, yeah. I need to talk to both of you."

Dinah left the room and returned with a panic-stricken Barbara in tow.

"What happened?" Barbara asked, flying to Helena's side, checking her bandages.

"I'm fine," Helena said, putting up a hand. "I just...I need to talk to you about Dr. Quinzel."

"Helena, don't worry about that right now. You need to concentrate on getting better."

"But.." Helena started.

"Reese has it taken care of. He interrogated her about what happened and she flipped out on him, attacking him. They took her to Arkham."

"No. No!" Helena said shaking her head and attempting to sit up.

"Helena, lie still."

"They can't put her there! Dammit!" Helena gripped her side in pain as she sat up.

"Helena, don't!" Dinah said as she tried to get her to lie back down.

Barbara pulled out a syringe and injected Helena with a sedative.

Helena grabbed Barbara's wrist and forced her to pull the needle out, spilling the liquid on her arm before it was able to enter her bloodstream. "Don't dope me up to shut me up. Listen to me!"

Barbara moved away in hopes Helena would calm down. "Okay, but you need to lie back down."

Helena eased herself back down on the bed with a few grunts of pain. Taking a moment to gather her strength, she then began to explain. "Dr. Quinzel is working with Joker. She...she found out that Bruce is my father and...and tried to use me to get money from him."

Dinah looked at Barbara who was speechless and trying to make sense of what Helena was saying.

"She injected me with some kind of truth serum. I don't remember what I told her before I passed out. When I woke up, she asked me about Joker. I...I realized that I must have mentioned him and so I told her what I'd do to the bastard." Helena stopped as a flash of pain ripped through her body.

Dinah rubbed her arm to comfort her, as Barbara remained motionless, as if she were in her own world.

"The more I insulted Joker the more it pissed her off," Helena said through gritted teeth. "I didn't care anymore, so I just kept talking shit about him. Then next thing I knew, Dinah was next to me and the I blacked out."

"Barbara?" Dinah said softly. "Barbara?"

Barbara snapped out of her trance with a jump. "We...we need to call Reese." She wheeled out of the room, still in shock from what she'd just heard.

"There's no telling what those two will do when teamed up together," Dinah said as she sat next to Helena.

"I can't believe I trusted her. That was so stupid of me!" Helena said as she leaned her head back.

"It's not your fault."

"I have trust issues as it is and now this happens."

"It's okay. It'll all be okay."

Barbara wheeled back into the room, slowly, her eyes brimming with tears. "Joker and Dr. Quinzel escaped an hour ago."

They all looked at each other and could only wonder what Joker and Harley would have in store for them next.

~ FIN

# ROBBERY IN PROGRESS

Written - 5/03

## PART 1

The night was quiet as Helena made her way across the rooftops of New Gotham.

Crouching by the ledge of one of the rooftops, Helena sighed. "Oracle, any report of activity? A mugging? Jaywalking? Anything?"

"Nothing. I guess the riff raff of New Gotham's decided to stay in tonight."

Helena scanned the area below her, frowning at the silence. "Dinah? You got any action where you are?"

"Nothing here either," Dinah replied from her location.

"Why don't...," Barbara started to speak, but was cut off by the beeping of the Delphi. "Wait. I'm getting a report of a robbery in progress. The museum."

"On our way," Helena said as she dashed off into the night.

Helena and Dinah arrived at the museum and entered through the vent system on the roof. Slowly, they made their way inside.

"Let's split up. You take the West and I'll take the East."

"Got it," Dinah whispered as she went on her way.

"Oracle, we're splitting up to cover more ground."

"Okay, just keep in contact."

Helena walked down the corridor and could hear movement up ahead.

"Oracle, I think I found them. I'm moving in."

Barbara always hated this part, when Helena signaled that she was 'moving in.' It made Barbara's stomach flip flop with worry because there was no telling what trouble lay ahead.

Helena peered around the corner into a large room. Two men, dressed head to toe in black, were removing ancient artifacts and jewelry from the numerous cases scattered throughout the room.

Helena moved into the room, hands on her hips. "Hey, what'cha doin'?"

The two men spun around, surprised to hear someone.

"Get her!" one of the men huffed at the other.

Both men charged at her, but Helena jumped into the air, kicking out and hitting them in the face. They fell to the ground as Helena landed back on her feet.

They got up again, this time both produced guns and began firing at her.

Helena dodged the oncoming bullets and dove over one of the cases. Glass shattered all around her as the bullets penetrated the glass.

"Huntress?" Barbara said in a nervous voice. "Huntress, what's going on over there?"

"Can't talk right now, kinda busy," Huntress said in her com as she continued to dodge more bullets.

"Dinah, get over to Huntress's location," Barbara instructed.

"On my way."

Helena leapt up onto the frame of one of the cases and kicked out at one of the men, knocking the gun from his hand. Quickly, she jumped on top of him and knocked him to the floor, using him as a shield as the other man began firing at her. His bullets slammed into the man's chest, she could feel the impact as the man lay on top of her.

"Dammit!" the man yelled as he realized he'd just killed his partner.

Seizing the man's pause in firing, Helena threw the man off of her and charged towards the other man, tackling him to the ground. Both engaged in hand-to-hand combat, striking each other with numerous blows.

Dinah ran down the corridor and suddenly found herself falling flat on her face as someone tripped her. Turning around, she was met with a kick to the face, rendering her unconscious.

The darkly-clad figure stepped over Dinah and began heading towards Helena's location.

Helena continued fighting with the man, both were bloody and beginning to tire.

The man tried to reach for his gun that laid near his side, but Helena got up and kicked the gun across the room.

Angrily, the man flipped to his feet and launched another attack on her. They locked arms and Helena's eyes began turning orange.

"What the hell?" the man gasped, tightening his grip on her arms.

Helena returned the stronghold and leaned her weight into him, knocking him on the ground on his back, pinning him down by grabbing him around the neck.

"I could easily crush your windpipe right now," she threatened.

The man struggled and gasped for air, his face turning dark red as what little air he had in his lungs began to slip away.

Suddenly, Helena felt something slam into her shoulder, pitching her forward onto the floor.

The man coughed and inhaled as he moved away from her, rubbing his sore neck.

"Helena?" Barbara said softly as she heard her whimper.

Helena was face-down on the floor when she felt a foot on the back of her neck. The owner of the foot began applying more and more pressure as they pulled the hammer back on the gun.

"Gather up what we've got and let's get out of here," the person behind her said to the man who was still coughing.

Helena was surprised at the gender of the voice and wanted to turn around to look at them, but she couldn't move.

"You're obviously not police, even though your feeble attempt at stopping us was just as sloppy as New Gotham's finest."

The woman moved her foot away from Helena's neck and then rolled her over with it.

Helena looked up at the woman and was disappointed when all she saw was a black ninja mask and dark sunglasses. She was about to make a comment, but stopped when she noticed the woman's gun hand shake slightly.

The woman paused for a moment before crouching down beside Helena and knocking her in the head with the butt of the gun. Helena went limp as blood began to trickle down her face from a cut by her eyebrow.

"Let's go!" the woman yelled at the man as they gathered their duffle bags and ran off. She glanced back at Helena for a moment and then turned back around.

"Helena? Dinah? Somebody talk to me!" Barbara wheeled back and forth, panic rising in her throat when there was no response from either woman.

"Dammit," Barbara swore as she grabbed the keys to the SUV and headed for the elevator.

En route, Barbara suddenly heard Dinah's voice come through her com. "Oracle, do you copy?"

"Dinah! Thank God. Are you okay?"

"Yeah," she said, rubbing the side of her face, wincing as she could feel a bruise beginning to form.

"Where's Huntress?"

"I'm...I'm not sure, I just came-to." Dinah began walking down the corridor in search of Helena.

"I'm on my way to get you two, but be careful, they might still be in the museum."

Dinah cautiously made her way towards the room at the end of the corridor. Getting to the doorway, she slowly peered in. "Wow."

"What?" Barbara asked.

"I can tell Helena was here because this room is trashed. No one's here though." Dinah moved into the room and as she got further in she stopped dead in her tracks. "Oh my God, Huntress!" She ran to Helena, kneeling at her side.

"Dinah? What's happening?" Barbara could feel herself gripping the wheel tighter as she waited for Dinah's answer.

"Huntress is hurt, she's unconscious."

Barbara felt slightly better only with the fact that Dinah hadn't said Helena was dead.

"I'm gonna try and get her outside and meet you out back," Dinah said as she slid her arms under

Helena's armpits in attempt to drag her.

"I'm about five minutes away."

Dinah dragged Helena only a few feet before feeling wetness on her hand. She moved her hand away to examine it and found fresh blood. She gasped at the sight, but continued dragging Helena towards the exit.

"Everything okay?" Barbara asked, noticing Dinah's gasp.

"Um, yeah, everything's just peachy. She's just...umm, she's just heavy."

Minutes later, Barbara pulled up at the back of the museum in time to see Dinah approaching with Helena in tow.

Dinah got Helena into the back of the SUV and climbed in after her.

Barbara sped away as Dinah shut the hatch.

"What happened in there?" Barbara asked as she sped through the streets.

"Not sure, I missed most of it," Dinah said as she tried to inspect the wound in Helena's shoulder despite the darkness inside the car. Wincing at the sight, she moved the lapel of Helena's jacket and then tore Helena's shirt.

"What are you doing?" Barbara asked, looking in the rearview mirror.

"Well, Helena's got a bullet wound," she said softly as she put her hands over the wound and began applying pressure.

"What?!?" Barbara exclaimed as she nearly skidded off the road.

"Whoa! Easy!" Dinah yelled, trying to keep her balance as the car skidded.

"You didn't mention anything about Helena getting shot!"

"I...I didn't notice until I started dragging her. It doesn't look bad. It went straight through."

Barbara ran her hand through her hair, shaking her head. "We're almost home."

The ride was silent from that point on which made Dinah feel uncomfortable. She was sure she'd get a lecture of sorts before the night was over, and she wasn't looking forward to it.

## **PART 2**

Dinah awoke, realizing that she'd slept the night away at her desk rather than in bed.

Standing, she stretched her cramped muscles and headed to the kitchen.

"Bout time you got up," Barbara said as she sipped her coffee and read through the morning paper.

"What time is it?" Dinah asked, yawning.

"A little after Eleven," Barbara replied without looking up from the paper.

"Hey, nice shiner," Helena said as she walked into the kitchen. Her arm was in a sling and a small butterfly bandage covered the cut near her right eyebrow.

"Helena!" Dinah said in surprise. "Are you okay?"

"I've had better days, but I'll be fine by tomorrow." Reaching into the cabinet, she pulled out a box of Pop-Tarts and unwrapped a pair of the pastries before tossing them into the toaster.

Barbara folded up the newspaper and pushed it towards the center of the table. "So, last night, the thieves managed to run off with two millions dollars worth of rare items."

"One of them was a woman," Helena said as she retrieved the hot Pop-Tarts from the toaster and put them on a plate.

"A woman?"

"Yeah, she's the one that shot me and then pistol-whipped me."

"She's probably the one that knocked me out, too."

"Any descriptions?" Barbara asked.

"Nope," Helena said with her mouth full. "They were all in black and ninja masks."

"Great, so we have nothing to go on is basically what you're saying."

"Yeah, basically," Helena answered before taking another bite.

Barbara sighed as she wheeled away towards her computers. "I guess we'll just have to wait until they strike again."

"And they will," Helena said as she followed her. "I interrupted them so they weren't able to clean the place out like they probably intended. I'm sure their greed will lead to another heist soon enough."

"Yeah, you're probably right."

A few nights passed and there had been no sign of the thieves, that was until the Delphi began signaling a robbery in progress.

"Huntress, Dinah, robbery in progress," Barbara began as she read the info on the screen, "Midcity Bank?"

"Okay, on my way," Helena said before running off.

Helena and Dinah got to the bank just as the two thieves were exiting the bank. "Oracle, your Intel is too slow, they're leaving!"

"Stay on them!" Barbara instructed as she typing at her keyboard.

They ran down the street towards the thieves who were running towards the next block.

The two looked back at Helena and Dinah and split up, running as fast as they could.

"I've got the woman, you get him!" Helena instructed Dinah.

Dinah set off after the guy while Helena chased down the woman.

The woman dashed behind a building and climbed a chainlink fence, still clutching two money bags.

Helena followed behind her, but the woman disappeared on the next turn down an alley.

"Oracle, I lost her," Helena said in her com. "She just disappeared."

"Dinah? What's your location?" Barbara asked.

"I'm on the heels of this guy on Sicamore Street. He's starting to slow down." Dinah said, a little out of breath.

"Stay on him, and be careful."

Helena looked around the alley and didn't see any sign of the woman. Turning around, she was greeted with a kick to the face that sent her flying backwards crashing into the side of a dumpster. Dazed, Helena rubbed her jaw, realizing that no human could have delivered such a blow.

The woman, still dressed all in black, stood above her, fists clenched.

"You want a rematch? Well, all you have to do is ask, bitch." Helena stood up and was about to lash out, but the woman grabbed her by the shoulder, digging her thumb into where she'd shot her a few nights earlier. Helena gasped in pain and did her best to fight it, but the woman was very strong.

The woman let go and then kicked Helena's legs out from under her, watching her fall to the ground rubbing her shoulder.

"Stay down if you know what's best for you," the woman snapped at her.

Helena frowned and hooked her leg around the woman's legs, bringing her to the ground in the same manner.

Helena climbed on top of the woman and punched her a few times in the face before grabbing the ninja mask and tugging on it.

The woman grabbed Helena's wrist and squeezed as hard as she could.

Pain erupted in Helena's wrist before she was able to remove the mask. She let go of it and cried out as she felt the bones crack.

"This isn't the way I wanted it to be," the woman said to her as she rolled Helena over so that she was now on top of Helena.

Helena struck the woman in the face with all her might which sent her crashing into the brick wall.

Helena got to her feet, her eyes turning orange as she went over to the woman and delivered more blows.

The woman returned one of her own, catching Helena in the nose and spattering blood all over both of them, but Helena ignored it and once again reached for the woman's mask. This time her attempt to get it off was successful.

Helena was about to throw another punch, but stopped mid-strike when she looked at the woman's face. Her eyes returned to their normal color and Helena's jaw nearly fell to the ground beneath her. "M-mom?"

Selina looked at Helena and couldn't speak. Her daughter knelt before her, blood dripping down her chin.

"I-I thought you were..."

"Is this the kind of life you're leading? Superhero?" Selina asked, flipping the lapel of Helena's jacket with her finger.

Helena could feel tears beginning to form in her eyes. "You're supposed to be dead! Why did you lie to me!"

Selina looked away from her. "It was easier that way, but now I guess it doesn't really matter, does it?"

"What are you talking about?"

"I wanted you to think I was dead because I didn't want you mixed up in the dangerous life that I was involved in. And now here you are, involved in the exact same dangerous life."

Helena stood up and wiped the blood from her nose with the back of her hand, glancing at the amount that had been wiped away. "You had NO right to lie to me like that!"

Barbara was listening on the other end of the com in silence.

"Yeah, well, sometimes people have to lie if they really love you."

"Oh, please! Don't bullshit me. If you really loved me you would have been there for me, not kicking my ass or shooting me!"

"Helena, I didn't know that was you in that museum until after I shot you."

Helena clenched her jaw as she cradled her broken wrist. "I can't believe you're up to your old ways again, robbing banks, museums, and God only knows what other places."

"A girl has to make a living somehow."

Helena laughed sarcastically and turned away. "Ya know, I really looked up to you. And now...now all of my memories of you are ruined." Helena waited for a response and didn't get one. Turning around, she found Selina gone.

She picked up the ninja mask from the ground and twirled it in her hand before tossing it into the dumpster.

Helena returned to the Clocktower and walked right passed Barbara who was sitting by the elevator.

"Helena?"

Helena kept on walking and went straight to the refrigerator. Pulling out a bottle of beer, she twisted off the cap with her good hand and threw it across the room. She took a swig and headed for the balcony.

Easing herself down, she leaned her back against the air conditioning unit and stared off into the night as she took another drink.

"Helena?" Barbara called out to her.

Helena ignored her, wincing as she moved her hand to rest it in her lap.

Barbara wheeled over next to her, but kept a safe distance away. "I'm sorry."

"Yeah, so am I."

Barbara frowned at the dried blood on Helena's face and her swollen wrist. "Come on inside and I'll get you cleaned up."

Helena remained silent.

"Come on, please?"

Helena turned towards Barbara, "Maybe later. Right now I'm kinda getting used to the fact that my own mother faked her own death, shot me, broke my wrist, and beat the living shit out of me. How's that for motherly love?" She chugged down the rest of the beer and then threw the bottle, smashing it against the side of the building.

"Helena, I'm sorry. I heard her say why she did it and..."

"I need another beer," Helena interrupted as she got to her feet, wincing.

She went back into the kitchen and got another beer, then plopped down on the couch as she drank down the cold beverage.

Dinah entered the Clocktower as Barbara wheeled back into the room shaking her head as an indication not to say anything to Helena. Dinah nodded. "Um, I turned the guy over to Reese."

"Good work," Barbara said, patting Dinah on the arm as Dinah headed to her room.

Helena picked at the label on her beer, lost in thought.

Barbara wheeled over to her with a small first aid kit. She poured some saline solution onto a cloth and motioned for Helena to move closer toward her. "Come here."

Helena moved forward and allowed Barbara to wipe the blood from her face, wincing a little as she hit some sore spots. "It doesn't look like your nose is broken."

"Goodie."

Barbara finished wiping up and then glanced down at Helena's wrist which was swollen and bruised. "I'm gonna have to set that wrist."

"A few more beers and you can do whatever the hell you want to do to me," Helena said before downing the rest of her beer.

Barbara reached out and took the empty bottle from Helena before it was thrown across the room. "Getting drunk isn't going to solve anything."

"Yes, you're right, but it'll make me forget about things for a little while at least."

Barbara wheeled into the kitchen and put some ice in a towel and reluctantly got another beer from the fridge. She wheeled back to Helena and handed her the towel, "Here, put this on your wrist." She handed her the beer and sighed, "This is your last one and then we set that wrist."

Helena nodded as she took a sip. The effects of the alcohol were beginning to show in Helena's drunken eyes.

"You know I'm here if you want to talk."

"Not right now," Helena said, sincerely.

Barbara smiled slightly and patted Helena's thigh before wheeling away.

Helena shook her head as she tried to make sense of it all, but it seemed impossible. How could someone she loved hurt her so badly, she thought. Perhaps in time she'd find an answer.

~ FIN

# THE HUNTED

Written: 8/2003

## PART 1

The cold night air whisked past Helena's face as she sped across the rooftops, attempting to out-run a man who was taking shots at her.

1. Bullets whizzed past her head and her body, missing only by inches.

"Oracle, I need a little help here!"

"What's your location?" Barbara asked through her comm.

Helena dove behind an air conditioning unit as bullets riddled the metal, narrowly missing her. With a grunt, Helena landed on the ground. "Just track me! Some ass is taking pot shots at me."

Barbara quickly programmed the computer to track Helena's location. She bit her lower lip as she eagerly waited for the response.

Helena breathed heavily from both the running and the adrenaline rush as she tried to stay low and hidden.

Listening closely, she heard nothing but silence - no footsteps, no gunfire.

"*This is too easy,*" Helena thought to herself. Her heart was pounding against the walls of her chest like a jackhammer.

"Huntress, I have your location. Dinah's on her way."

"Copy that," Helena whispered.

Helena allowed a few minutes to pass before deciding to move from her spot.

Slowly, Helena got to her knees and scooted over to the edge of the air conditioning unit. Peering around it, she looked across the roof top and saw no one.

Confused, Helena stood up to get a better look. Still, no one was there.

She turned around and was met with a hard blow to the face, one that knocked her to the ground on her back.

She shook it off and looked in the direction of where the fist had come from and was immediately grabbed by the front of her jacket and hauled to her feet. Strong hands clutched the leather of her coat causing it to tighten around her.

"Helena Kyle," the man said through a gritted teeth and a nasty sneer. The man was massive. He stood at an easy 6'5". His shoulders were broad and his muscles gave him enough bulk to earn him the title of 'massive.'

He tightened his grip and could feel her hands trying to pry his away. Laughing, he squeezed, cutting off her air.

"What's the matter? Can't breathe?" He took great pleasure in watching her eyes roll as her oxygen-starving brain faltered.

Suddenly, he raised her into the air and slammed her onto the ground with all his might.

Helena felt every bone in her body rattle as she hit the hard ground. Coughing and gasping, she tried to get the air back into her lungs, grimacing in pain with each breath she managed to achieve.

"Huntress?" Barbara called to her.

Helena couldn't respond with words, only grunts. She rubbed her neck, feeling the sore area where his hand had been squeezing.

"Dinah, are you close?" Barbara asked with worry.

"Almost there."

The man put his boot on Helena's shoulder and forced her down on the ground. He straddled her and knelt down, locking his strong legs against hers so she couldn't kick him. Then he pinned her arms up behind her head.

"Your father tried to kill me," he growled at her as he applied pressure to her wrists. Lifting up his chin, the moonlight cast upon a deep scar that swept across his neck. "This is his handy work."

"Oh woe is you," Helena said with sarcasm.

"Hmpf, you really are a brat. Just like that bitch you called your mother."

Helena felt a surge of anger rushing through her, enough anger to allow her to get him off of her.

She quickly stood up and prepared for a fight, ignoring the ache in her ribs from her earlier bodyslam. "Sorry, I don't really like it when freaks call my mother a bitch."

The man whipped out his gun and aimed it at her. "I'm going to enjoy killing you, but I have to warn you that I'm going to kill you slowly. I want to enjoy every moment of it."

"I guess everyone has to have at least one cheap thrill in their life."

Helena could hear the gun click and she leapt out of the way.

"Come on, Helena! Just let me get at least one of these in you."

Helena took cover behind some metal pipes and listened to him yell.

"I know your father is still alive somewhere, and I want to send him a message. After I kill you, I'm going to carve my name in your back and then I'm going to hang you from one of the tallest buildings in New Gotham so he can see that he didn't succeed in killing me."

"My father doesn't kill!" Helena yelled back. "And I don't believe my father gave you that scar."

The man laughed heartily. "That's a good one! You don't know your father very well then." Aiming his gun in the direction of her voice, he began firing over and over.

Helena got low to avoid the bullets that flew past her.

"Hey!" a female voice shouted to him.

He whipped around and saw Dinah standing on the edge of the roof and began firing the gun at her.

Dinah leapt from the ledge and rolled onto the ground, avoiding the oncoming bullets.

"Well, Helena, enough for tonight. I'll be back. You can count on it! I'm not giving up until you're dead like your mother!"

The man ran off across the roof and disappeared.

Helena got up as Dinah was walking towards her.

"You okay?" Dinah asked.

"Peachy."

"Oracle, we're on our way back," Dinah said into her comm.

## **PART 2**

Barbara greeted Dinah and Helena as they exited the elevator. She immediately noted the look of pain in Helena's eyes but could see Helena was doing her best to hide it.

"Let's go," Barbara said as she pointed to the medical lab.

Dinah looked at Barbara and then at Helena. "What?"

Helena rolled her eyes and headed for the lab without saying a word.

"You didn't say anything about being hurt," Dinah said as she followed behind Helena.

Helena eased herself down onto the recliner chair that resembled one from a dentist office. "It's nothing, I'm just a little sore from my little tango with that psycho."

Barbara frowned at Helena's feeble attempt at passing off her injuries, something Barbara was growing tired of.

Helena sat in silence as the computer scanned over her body to check for injuries and was relieved when it finished. She was about to get out of the chair, but Barbara held up her hand and waved her finger back and forth.

"Uh uh uh."

Helena's eyes narrowed as she folded her arms over her chest and remained seated.

Dinah stood over Barbara's shoulder, reading the results along with her.

"Looks like you've got bruised ribs, but nothing's broken."

"See! What'd I tell ya," Helena said as she got up, wincing a little.

"You need to take it easy which means you need to get to bed. Where are you going?"

Helena was about to leave the room but turned back around. "Were you not listening over the comm a little while ago? Some asshole just tried to kill me and claims that my father tried to kill him. I have NO idea who this dick is, but I have to find out."

"Helena, we can deal with this tomorrow night. Right now you need to rest. I'll do some research and see what I can come up with."

Helena sighed heavily. "I don't know what pisses me off more - the fact that he tried to kill me or that he was talking shit about my mother."

Dinah walked over to Helena and placed a comforting hand on her shoulder. "Barbara's right. We need to come up with something before we go out there and try to find him."

"Thanks for backing me up out there, kid."

Dinah hated when she called her 'kid,' but let it slide given the fact that it was rare for Helena to thank her for anything. "You're welcome," she said with a smile.

Helena headed up to the loft to crash as Barbara went to work on trying to figure out who this guy was. She knew most of Batman's enemies, as many of them were her own, but this one was unfamiliar.

### **PART 3**

The following night...

Dinah and Helena walked along the edge of the pier, smelling the salty air that hung in the night.

The moon was full, but its light was blocked by thick clouds which made the night even darker.

"I'm gonna check out the dock over there. Signal me if there's trouble," Helena said as she left Dinah alone.

Dinah felt a little uneasy about being alone, but she didn't dare say anything.

Helena looked around the area, but nothing seemed out of the ordinary. But just as she completed the thought gunshots rang through the air. "Dinah," Helena said outloud as she raced to Dinah's location.

She could hear the shots getting louder and louder as she neared the area and then she felt her stomach tie itself into a knot when she saw Dinah's body lying on the ground by the edge of the pier.

There was no sign of the gunman, just thick silence. Silence that reeked of trouble.

"Dinah!" Helena yelled as she dashed to Dinah's side. She was about to inspect Dinah's body for wounds when she heard the man's voice from behind her.

"Poor little girl got in the way." The man began to laugh. "She's an easy kill."

Helena felt her jaw clench with anger as she stood up and was about to attack, but he quickly pulled out his gun and began firing. Her mind went blank as she flew backwards and fell into the water, sinking to the water's floor.

#### **PART 4**

Barbara pulled the covers over Dinah's chest to keep her warm. She'd taken a strong blow to the head, but luckily didn't suffer a concussion.

Barbara turned to leave when she heard Dinah's weak voice.

"Barbara?"

"I'm here, are you okay?"

"Where's Helena?"

Barbara put her head down and began to cry.

"What?" Dinah asked with concern, fearing what Barbara was going to say.

"He...Helena's dead. The bastard killed her."

"Oh my God no. No!" Dinah began crying uncontrollably as she sat up, wincing at the pain in her head.

"I'm sorry."

"It can't be! You're wrong!"

"Dinah, I wish I was. She's gone."

Dinah latched onto Barbara as they continued to sob.

"I have to go out for a while and take care of some things. I'll be back as soon as I can. Alfred is here if you need him."

Dinah nodded as she wiped her eyes with her sleeve.

## **PART 6**

Barbara quickly wheeled down the long, carpeted hallway that was lined with expensive oil paintings that had come from all over the world.

She reached the room at the far end of the hall and entered it, flipping a small switch by the lamp as she passed it.

The bookshelf in the corner of the room slid over, revealing a secret room. Quickly, she wheeled into the room.

The room was more like a medical lab. Shelves held medical supplies, cabinets held medicine, and a steel table covered with a white cloth sat in the middle of the room under a light that was currently off.

"I got back as soon as I could," Barbara said as she hurried to the table. "I wanted to get Dinah home before she woke up."

Helena was lying on the table, her blood staining the white cloth beneath her. She held onto her wounds tightly in an attempt to stop the bleeding and to stop the pain, neither of which were working.

Her breathing was erratic due to the pain, but she was alert.

The river water mixed with her blood, making the blood stains even more prominent. The floor below the table was surrounded by puddles of crimson, a sight that Barbara tried to avoid.

"Let's get these wet clothes off of you." Barbara grabbed a pair of scissors and began cutting Helena's shirt, revealing a bloodied bullet-proof vest under it.

"What's the purpose of wearing a vest if it doesn't work?" Helena asked through gritted teeth.

Barbara shook her head in frustration, "He must have used high-powered bullets." Frowning, Barbara switched on the light above the bed, wincing when she got a good look at the blood covering Helena's neck, arms, and chest. "I need to get this vest off so I need to move your arms."

Barbara moved Helena's left arm first, flinching as Helena let out a loud gasp of pain. Gently, yet quickly, Barbara undid the velcro straps that held the vest in place and then lifted it off, tossing it to the floor.

"I'm not gonna look," Helena said in a gasp as pain consumed her.

Barbara swallowed hard as she looked at the three bullet wounds - one in her side and two in her shoulder. The skin around the wounds was black and blue from the impact and each of them leaked steady streams of blood.

"I hate to say this but I need to roll you over onto your side to see if any of them went through."

Helena closed her eyes. "They didn't, trust me. Just go ahead and get them out."

"I have to be sure."

"Fine," Helena spat as she held her breath against the pain.

Barbara prepared herself mentally. "I'm gonna roll you on three. One...two...three." Barbara rolled Helena onto her side and quickly checked for exit wounds. Finding none, she rolled her back over.

"Okay, that sucked!" Helena said with a grunt of pain.

Barbara grabbed some medication from one of the cabinets and then some needles from a drawer. "I'm gonna give you some pain medication and sedate you so I can get these bullets out."

"That would be nice," Helena said as she felt Barbara slid the needle into her vein - a pain that couldn't compare to the pain in her chest.

"I'm so sorry Helena. I never anticipated this."

Helena watched a single tear roll down Barbara's cheek just before she slipped into unconsciousness.

## **PART 7**

Barbara returned to the Clocktower. She looked exhausted and distracted, something that was obvious to Dinah.

"Barbara? You okay?"

"Fine. I'm fine," she said, snapping out of her trance.

"I'm going down to the docks to look around."

"No you're not!"

"I have to. I can't just sit around here and be useless. I have to catch him and make him pay for what he's done."

"Dinah, I know you want revenge, but going out there alone isn't smart."

"Too bad, I'm going." Dinah turned and headed for the elevator.

"Dammit," Barbara swore under her breath as she knew she really couldn't stop her. She watched as the elevator doors shut and then grabbed the keys to the SUV and headed out after her.

## **PART 8**

Down at the docks, Dinah paced the area. She couldn't help but stare at the water where Helena had fallen. The flashbacks of gunfire sent chills down her spine.

Drops of blood stained the wood on the edge of the pier - Helena's blood.

Walking a few yards further, she saw someone crouched down, looking over the edge of the pier. It was him.

"Looking for something? Or someone, should I say."

The man looked up at her but didn't move. "You know exactly what I'm looking for, but I'm surprised you have the guts to come back out here."

"You're not going to find her because you killed her."

The man laughed as he stood up. "I don't believe anything until I see it. So until I see her dead and bloated body I'm going to assume she's still breathing."

Dinah started to cry. "You killed her you bastard! She was my friend!!" She concentrated on his mind and gave him one hell of a headache.

He fell to his knees, clutching the sides of his head.

"You're going to pay for what you did. I'm going to make your brain explode."

"Dinah!" Barbara yelled as she pulled up in the SUV. "Don't!"

"He needs to be punished!" Dinah concentrated harder.

The man yelled in pain and collapsed to the ground.

"Dinah, you know that killing him isn't going to bring Helena back. Let's go."

Dinah wavered as she thought about what Barbara said. Then she let go of the mental hold on the man. "You're lucky, this time," she said to him before getting into the SUV.

Barbara sped away quickly. "You could have killed him."

"So."

"You know that's not what we're about. And it was stupid to go out there alone. Don't you EVER do that again!"

Dinah remained silent for the majority of the ride, until she realized they weren't going to the Clocktower.

"Where are we going?"

Barbara pulled into the garage of a huge mansion. "I need to show you something."

They both got out of the SUV and entered the house. Barbara led the way to the third floor, a room on the right side of the hall. Slowly, Barbara opened the door and entered.

Dinah walked behind her and nearly jumped out of her skin when she saw Helena lying in bed watching

TV, her left arm in a sling and bound to her chest.

Helena turned her head to the side to see who had entered the room. "Hey, kid. You look like you've seen a ghost," Helena joked softly. The medication still hadn't worn off which made her words slurred and sluggish.

Dinah's hand came over her mouth as she walked towards Helena.

"I'm sorry I couldn't tell you the truth, Dinah. It's not that I didn't trust you, I just wanted you to have a genuine reaction when you faced him again. I want him to think she's really dead."

"I-I don't know what to say," Dinah stammered as she looked at Helena's battered body.

"Helena and I had intended for him to shoot her that night so she had on a bullet-proof vest. But the bullets cut right through the vest. Not something we thought would happen." Barbara's voice quivered with emotion.

Dinah took note of the bandaging around Helena's shoulder and around her waist. Some specs of blood leaked through the bandaging.

"Bastard got me three times," Helena said softly and slowly.

"But...how..."

"The plan was for Helena to fall into the water and swim to the other side of the docks where I'd pick her up. That all happened according to plan, but the last thing I expected was to pull her out of the water with bleeding bullet wounds." Barbara lowered her head as she flashed back to the sight of Helena clinging to the edge of the pier, breathing hard and with great pain.

"It's not easy to swim when you're shot full of holes, let me tell you that much." Helena chuckled, but it hurt her to do so.

"Easy," Dinah began to tear up as she sat down on the bed next to Helena.

"Do you need more pain killers?" Barbara asked, concerned.

"No, no more drugs. I-I can't focus with that stuff."

"Well, we'll let you get some rest. I'll come check on you in a few hours." Barbara looked at Dinah and motioned for her to leave.

"I'm gonna stay with Helena. She shouldn't be alone."

"She needs her rest."

"It's fine," Helena insisted. "Let her stay."

Barbara shook her head and wheeled out of the room.

"I almost killed him, Helena."

Helena's eyes rolled as she tried to stay awake. "Why didn't you?"

"Well, Barbara stopped me, plus I thought you might want to do it."

Helena smiled. "I've got a plan."

"Really? What's your plan?"

Helena had drifted off to sleep, leaving Dinah wondering what sort of revenge Helena had in store.

## **PART 9**

Barbara made another trip to the mansion to check on Helena and found her fast asleep while Dinah watched a movie on the TV.

"Has she been okay?"

"Yeah, she's fine."

"I need to change her bandages so she's gonna get a little cranky in a minute."

Barbara wheeled to the side of the bed and produced a syringe filled with pain medication.

"I wouldn't give her any of that," Dinah protested.

"Dinah, she was shot three times. She's going to need something for the pain - meta or no meta."

Helena listened to the conversation as she pretended to be asleep. A part of her did want the medication because the last dose had wore off hours ago, but the other part of her didn't want to feel the groggy effects.

Helena stirred a little and pretended to awaken. "Wha-what are you doing?"

"I need to give you more pain medication," Barbara said as she put the tip of the needle to Helena's arm.

Helena pulled her arm away. "Just give me some aspirin, no more shots."

Barbara looked at her for a moment and didn't feel like arguing. "Fine. Suit yourself." Reaching into her medical bag, she got a bottle of aspirin and took two pills out, handing them to Helena.

"I need to change your bandages, they haven't been changed since this morning."

Helena swallowed the pills with a gulp of water and allowed Barbara to change all of her bandages. Of course, Barbara couldn't resist the poking and prodding each wound in the process which made Helena want to hit her.

Dinah stared at the TV, avoiding the sight of the bloody, angry wounds that littered Helena's upper body.

"Okay, you're all set. I'll change them again first thing in the morning, so get some sleep."

"Okay." Helena said, wincing a little as her wounds throbbed.

Barbara looked at Dinah.

"I'm gonna stay with Helena tonight."

"You have school in the morning and Helena needs her rest..."

"Stop being so...so motherly," Helena spat.

"Helena, you got shot, I can't help but be 'motherly'."

Everyone was silent for a few moments.

"I found out who our mystery man is."

Helena felt the cloudiness in her brain suddenly disappear as she looked at Barbara. "Who is he?"

"His name is Jerome Peters, but on the street he's known as The Black Panther because he seems to have nine lives. A few years back, he was shot by police during a bank robbery. They thought he was dead, but when they went to load him in the van he attacked them, killing five police officers. He disappeared for a while and then resurfaced during another bank robbery. Some of the thugs he was with turned on him and left him for dead, but he escaped the police again."

"Where does my father fit into all of this?"

"That's the one part I couldn't figure out. I wasn't able to find any record of them meeting."

"I think he's making it up."

"I dunno. I'm not so sure."

"My father wouldn't try and slice someone's throat like that. I know he and I aren't the best of friends, but I don't believe he's capable of doing that." Helena closed her eyes against a wave of pain.

"Look, let's drop it for tonight. We'll discuss it in the morning when you're feeling a little better."

Helena sighed through the pain and nodded in agreement.

Barbara left the room, leaving Dinah to keep a watchful eye on Helena.

## **PART 10**

Later that night...

Helena awoke to Dinah shaking her lightly.

"Helena? Come on, I've got your things."

Helena painfully sat up and swung her legs over to the floor.

"What's the matter? You okay?" Dinah asked as she saw that Helena wasn't getting up.

"Yeah, I'm fine. Just give me a minute." Dizziness clouded Helena's mind along with more pain, but she shook it off and got to her feet.

"We really shouldn't be doing this."

"Be quiet and help me get my jacket on."

Helena took off her sling and tossed it onto the bed.

Painfully, she stretched out her arm in order to get her jacket on.

"Really, Helena. Maybe we should wait until tomorrow night, until you've healed some more."

"No way. The more we wait the better the chances he has of killing or attempting to kill someone else close to us." Helena grunted in pain as she cradled her arm against her abdomen. "Let's go."

## **PART 11**

They walked along the streets for hours and there was still no sign of The Black Panther.

Helena leaned against a brick wall, wiping the sweat off her brow with the back of her hand.

"Helena, you don't look so good." Dinah reached out towards Helena's face, flinching at the heat radiating from her cheeks and forehead. "Shit! You're burning up. We need to get you to the Clocktower."

"No! I'm not going anywhere until I've..."

"You've what? Killed me?" a man's voice appeared from the shadows of the night.

Helena and Dinah looked up and saw The Black Panther standing a few yards away from them.

"I knew you weren't dead, Kyle." A sickening smile spread across his face as he walked closer towards them.

Dinah moved in front of Helena, shielding her. "Don't even think about laying a finger on her."

"You again. You're really annoying, little one."

"Dinah, don't," Helena gasped behind her.

Dinah attempted to get inside the man's head, but found herself unable to do so.

He chuckled in amusement. "Don't wear yourself out. I know who you are now. You're Canary's little bastard child."

Dinah struggled to break through his mind, but a sudden wave of dizziness knocked her to the ground.

"Dinah!" Helena cried out as she watched her hit the ground, unconscious.

"Hmmm, looks like you and I have some unfinished business to attend to." With a flick of his wrist, he produced a shiny switchblade knife.

Helena swallowed hard as she moved away from the support of the wall.

"What's the matter? Those little bullets hurt poor little Helena?"

"Shut up and fight," she said as she took her battle stance, stuffing away the pain screaming from her shoulder.

The man circled around her, waving the knife around as he glared at her. "I know what it's like to get shot like that. To have the metal burn your flesh and tear through your muscles. It's worse when they hit bone. That crunching, scraping sound that stays with you forever."

Helena swallowed down the nausea that came upon her.

The man swiped the blade towards Helena, but she avoided it, barely.

He faked another attempt which made Helena move too soon, leaving her wide open for the next thrust that came towards her. The blade sliced her upper arm, leaving a deep wound.

"Come on Kyle, so far the score is three for me and zero for you. You're making this way too easy."

Helena covered the wound, feeling the warm blood dripping over her fingers.

He lashed out at her again, but she jumped out of the way and managed to kick him in the hand, knocking the knife away. Quickly, she kicked out again and hit him hard in the nose.

Blood flowed from his nose as he put his hands over it. "Good one, Kyle!"

Before he could celebrate any further, Helena gathered all of her strength and jumped on his back, putting her arms around his neck, strangling him.

He grabbed at her arms, but she held on tightly.

"What's the matter? Can't breathe?" she mocked him.

Helena's wounds screamed for her attention causing her hold on his neck to loosen gradually. He seized the opportunity and elbowed her in the side, jarring her wound.

She hit the ground like a sack of rocks, hugging her midsection.

The man coughed and rubbed his neck as he walked over to the knife lying on the ground. Snatching it up, he headed back in Helena's direction.

"That's it! I can't play around with you anymore." He knelt beside her and raised the knife high in the air, ready to plunge it through her chest, but he found himself being knocked to the ground by someone colliding with him.

Helena's eyes fluttered as she looked over and saw the lying on the ground. A figure dressed in black with a large, flowing cape hovered above him from a thin wire. He sprayed something in his face, rendering the man motionless.

"D-dad," Helena mumbled to herself.

Batman looked over towards his injured daughter and climbed down from the wire, rushing to her side.

He scooped her up into his strong arms and placed her in the back of the SUV before retrieving Dinah.

He slid behind the wheel and sped off into the night.

## **PART 12**

The Clocktower alarms blasted into the once silent night air, causing Barbara to bolt awake. She quickly got into her chair and wheeled out towards the elevator.

She hadn't expected to see Batman carrying his daughter in his arms, not in a million years.

Dinah was walking by his side, squinting slightly at the blinding pain in her head.

"B-Bruce," she stuttered as he gently laid Helena's unconscious form on the floor.

Alfred entered the room, gun in-hand. "Master Bruce."

"Alfred. Why didn't you tell me that Helena had gotten hurt?"

"Wait. You two keep in touch?" Barbara asked, surprised.

Bruce knelt beside Helena and began inspecting her wounds, ignoring Barbara's last comment. "She's got a really high fever and is bleeding. Someone get me some supplies from the lab."

Alfred dashed off to fetch the supplies as ordered and soon returned.

Bruce removed Helena's leather jacket and felt his heart break as he saw the blood coming through her shirt, indicating she'd torn her stitches. He placed a towel over the wounds and applied pressure.

Helena moaned in pain as he pressed down on her.

"Shhh, you're going to be okay," he tried to assure her.

Helena's eyes opened slightly and she looked up at her father.

"Don't say it, Helena. I don't want to argue right now."

Helena didn't want to argue either, but didn't know what to say. A man she hadn't seen in years, her father, was now tending to her wounds, and she was at a loss for words. "*How ironic,*" she thought to herself as she fell back into unconsciousness.

## **PART 13**

The morning light pierced through Helena's eyes as she slowly opened them.

The room was quiet, and in looking around she realized she was alone, which surprised her. She figured Barbara would at least be by her side trying to poke her with some sort of needle.

She squinted in pain as she tried to sit herself up against the mound of pillows behind her. Getting comfortable just wasn't possible in her current state.

"How are you feeling?" Barbara's voice asked as she entered the room with a tray full of breakfast.

"Been better."

Barbara set the tray down on the edge of the bed and wheeled over to Helena's side. She reached out towards Helena with a small cellphone in her hand. "Bruce left this for you."

Helena took it and looked it over. "What's this for?"

"In case you ever need him, he said to dial '0' and he'll be there for you."

"Why now? Why after all these years does he decide he wants to be in my life?"

"I think last night scared him. I don't think I've ever seen him like that before. Seeing you hurt was hard for him."

Helena continued to fidget with the phone before tossing it onto the bed beside her.

"So what happened with The Black Panther?"

"Bruce put in an anonymous phone call to the police last night. They picked him up just after Bruce got you and Dinah out of there."

Helena sighed, thinking of her father.

"You have to talk to him at some point, Helena."

"Yeah, whatever."

Barbara knew there was no point in arguing with her because they've argued over it many times before only to get nowhere.

"Well, eat something and then we'll get you up and walking around for a little while. I'll be back in about a half hour."

Barbara left the room and Helena continued to stare at the phone that lay beside her.

## **PART 14**

Helena stood at the end of the alley, leaning against the wall as she looked up towards the rooftops.

A dark shadow appeared above and jumped down towards her, landing directly in front of her.

She took in the sight of him. His tall, muscular frame covered with a long, black cape.

As he walked closer towards her, he removed the cowl that covered his head and face. "Hi, Helena."

"Hi," she said softly, like a shy little girl.

He took her by the arm and led her to the back of the alley where no one would see him without his mask.

"How are you? Are you okay?" he asked as he began checking on her wounds. Her arm was still in a sling bound tightly to her chest.

"I'm fine. That's one of the perks of being half Meta."

Bruce laughed and couldn't help but stare at her. "You smile like your mother."

"Yeah, Barbara's said that too."

"Listen, I'm sorry that I haven't been there for you. I know there really is no excuse, but I thought by staying out of your life you'd be safe. I guess I was wrong considering what happened last night."

Helena looked away from him for a moment.

"Last night was something I never thought I'd ever have to face. Alfred's told me about the other times you've gotten hurt, but this time was different. I..."

"Did you leave that scar on his neck?"

Bruce turned away in silence.

"You did, he wasn't lying."

"He tried to kill your mother right in front of you. You were only a baby then. I...I lost control and threw him through a plate glass window. The glass sliced his throat. I would never intentionally slice anyone's throat, but I did leave him there to die. I admit that."

Helena thought for a moment about how she's reacted when someone's tried to kill Barbara or Dinah.

"I haven't made the best choices in my life, Helena, and I can't make up for lost time, but I can be here for you now, if you want me to be."

Helena didn't answer him, just wrapped her arm around him and hugged him.

~ FIN

## I DON'T NEED ANYONE...SO I THOUGHT

Written: 8/2003

### PART 1

Sometimes I'm not sure why I choose to live my life this way. I mean, I know I didn't have a choice, in a way, seeing as growing up with Barbara wasn't exactly a normal childhood - being surrounded by lots of technical equipment, lab stuff, and oh yeah...criminals.

There are days when I hate her guts - Barbara that is. Even though my mother was a criminal and my father was a crime fighter, I still sometimes find myself resenting the fact that Barbara kept me in the 'lifestyle.'

I hate it when she tells me that I didn't 'have to,' but that's a load of crap. When you're a teenager who's mother has just been murdered and your dad is off somewhere in hiding, you're hardly in the position to guide yourself through life.

Of course, now that I think of it, there are days when I love Barbara and consider myself lucky to have had such an intelligent and strong mentor to grow up with.

But how do I feel today? Today I'm hating her guts. I think of this as I sit in the corner of a rooftop hugging my knees to my chest as I breathe in the cool night air.

My comm is off, I turned it off about an hour ago after I stormed out of the Clocktower, vowing never to return.

I honestly don't need Barbara, or anyone else, telling me how to live my life anymore. Nor do I need to hear her thoughts regarding my decision to not pursue things with Reese, telling me it's a 'foolish thing to do.' Doesn't she understand that it's easier this way? Never mind that, doesn't she understand that it's none of her damn business?!?

Getting too close to him leaves me wide open to more and more questions about who I really am and what I'm all about. He can't know too much about me, for both our sakes.

He's told me countless times that he doesn't want to see me get hurt and I feel the same way about him, even though I never said anything outloud. So it's for the best that our relationship remain a working relationship and nothing more.

After listening to Barbara give me a long-winded speech about 'letting people in' and 'giving love a chance,' I'd had enough. I'm tired of her giving her two and a half cents all the time because I don't want it. End of story.

Then there's Dinah. She chased after me and tried to feed me her own words of wisdom. Hmpf, like I'm going to take the advice of a high-schooler. I think not!

I don't need either one of them anymore. I'm capable of handling myself and living my own life as I see fit.

*"Yeah. I don't need them at all,"* I assured myself mentally.

I got up from my spot and brushed the dirt off the back of my leather pants before heading to my apartment.

## PART 2

A few nights passed and I still haven't set foot in the Clocktower, nor have I heard a word from Barbara or Dinah.

As I look over the side of the rooftop I'm perched on, I suddenly realize I'm out in the night, as usual. I guess it's become such a part of my life I never even thought about it, just did it.

I head to street level and hear a commotion about a block away.

Walking closer, I can hear a few men arguing with each other, then I see two men kicking another man on the ground.

My mouth opens to tell them to stop it, but nothing comes out.

I look at them and they look at me.

"Get out of here, lady. Unless you want to be next," one of them threatens me.

Without even a word, I turn and walk away.

Sirens begin to wail in the distance, mixing with the sound of the men continuing to beat on the man on the ground.

I duck into an alley and lean my back against the wall, closing my eyes.

I can't believe I just walked away like that. I didn't even speak up, no nothing, but I suppose if I want any sort of normalcy to my life I have to do just that - not get involved.

I open my eyes again and find Dinah standing in front of me with her hands on her hips.

"What the hell's the matter with you?" she asks me.

"Look, if Barbara sent you here to persuade me to come back or..."

"You just let them beat that man to death."

I felt myself swallowing hard as I heard her say it, but I didn't let my emotion show. "I can't live my life as a crime fighter anymore, Dinah. I just want to live a normal life. One that doesn't include being beat up every other night by the scumbags of the city because I had to stick my nose in their business. We can't clean up the city ourselves, we're outnumbered."

I could see Dinah begin to listen to Barbara's voice coming through her comm.

"Yeah, she's right here," Dinah said into her comm. She looked at me as she listened to more of what Barbara was saying. "Barbara said she wants to see you at the Clocktower."

"Tell her 'good for her' but I'm not going back there. That's not where I belong anymore."

I turned and began walking out of the alley and could feel Dinah following me. I quickly spun around to face her, my fists clenched at my sides. "Dinah, go home. DON'T follow me around all night because Barbara says you have to."

"Barbara's not telling me to do anything. Look," she said as she turned off her comm, "my comm is off."

"Great. You can still go home now." I turned to leave and suddenly I felt her grab my wrist. Anger surged through my veins and I could tell she got a hit off me judging by the look on her face before she let go of me.

"You want to fight me, don't you."

"What?" I asked, acting surprised.

"You're really pissed off at me right now and you want to fight." Dinah stepped back a step and put her fists up in front of her. "Come on, let's go."

I couldn't help but laugh because I could kick her ass any day of the week.

"GO home," I said one last time before walking away. But I hadn't gotten too far before I was tackled by Dinah's thin frame - thin, but enough to knock me to the pavement.

"Are you nuts!" I yelled as I pushed her off of me and stood up.

She got to her feet, and before I could say another word she punched me right in the eye. As much as I hate to admit it, it hurt.

"You can't leave this life, Helena. You KNOW that deep inside you you've got that anger that fuels you. Anger that makes you hate those that hurt or kill innocent people - innocent metas. You owe it to Barbara."

"Screw you!" I spat as I leapt up the side of the nearest building and ditched her.

### PART 3

As I neared The Dark Horse Bar, I flinched a little as my fingers jabbed the forming bruise on the bone under my eye.

When I got to the entrance, I fumbled for my keys - not something I usually do. I guess the night's events had me a little rattled.

"Ouch," a man's voice said a few feet away from me.

I looked over to my right and saw a man standing there looking at me. He was about 6 feet tall, maybe 200 pounds or so, and if I had to guess I'd say he was in his mid thirties.

"Your eye," he said as he pointed to his own.

I bent over and grabbed my keys that had fallen on the ground and looked at him.

"Yeah. I walked into a door. Stupid, I know."

"Ah, the ol' walked-into-a-door story."

"*What the hell? Who is he to imply that I'm a liar,*" I thought to myself. "Excuse me?" I said to him. I couldn't help myself because it really did piss me off.

"I...I'm sorry. I didn't mean to say that you're...I mean...ummm."

"Yeah, well, I have to get going."

"Listen, I'm sorry. I really didn't mean to be rude. Can I ummm...can I buy you a drink to make up for it?" He pointed towards the bar inside the slightly open door.

"I can't. The place isn't open, hell, it's not even my bar. If I..."

"P.J. won't mind."

"You know PJ?" I was surprised he knew the bar's co-owner because not many did. I soon found myself opening the door for him and letting him in.

I could feel him following me as I made my way to the bar. "What'll ya have?"

"A nice cold beer is good enough for me. Anything you have on tap is fine."

"*How boring,*" I thought to myself as I went behind the bar to get a chilled glass from the mini fridge.

I never anticipated his next move - creeping up behind me and putting me in a stranglehold as he held onto a gleaming switchblade.

"Cooperate with me and I'll let you live, simple as that." His voice sent shivers down my spine as he whispered into my ear.

I struggled to get free, but stopped when I felt the tip of the blade dig into my side right below my lower rib.

"DON'T!" he hissed at me as he gripped me tighter and dug the blade in some more. I could feel blood start to drip down my side under my shirt, pooling around the edge of my thong.

"What do you want?" No sooner had I asked the question, I found myself crashing to the floor in a seated position while he held the blade to my throat.

Reaching into his jacket, he pulled out a set of handcuffs, holding them up in front of my face. "Handcuff your hands behind your back, tight!"

I did as I was told only due to the fact that the blade was dangerously close to the location of my jugular. If I made the slightest move I wouldn't be starting any new life, just ending one.

"Good," he said as he moved the blade away from my neck.

He looked down at my side and could see the blood. "Aw, I'm sorry, baby. I didn't mean to cut you so soon."

I flashed a phony smile which got a chuckle out of him. "Why are you here?"

Standing up, he went over to the cash register and began slamming his fist on it. Over and over he banged on it until finally it popped open.

Like a madman, he began pulling the money out of the drawer, filling his pockets.

"You came here to get a couple hundred dollars? You must be new at this?" After I said it I realized how much what I'd said dripped with sarcasm and was going to cost me.

Sure enough, I got a swift kick in the ribs for being a wise ass.

"I don't want to hear another word from you unless I ask you a question. You hear me?"

I nodded as I grunted in pain. More blood came out of the knife wound and dripped onto the floor beside me.

He went over to the phone sitting on the top of the bar and began dialing. After a few moments he started talking to someone on the other line.

"Hey, P.J., bet you never thought you'd hear from me again after all these years.....What do I want? Don't play stupid with me. I want my money. I think I've waited long enough and have given you plenty of chances to pay it back. I.....No! You listen to me! You hang up the phone and she's dead!.....I don't know, your cute little bartender. Short dark hair, blue eyes.....What do you mean you don't know her?" He looked at me, eyes wide as saucers. "Who the fuck are you?" he barked at me.

"I've never met P.J. so he wouldn't know me."

"She claims you two have never met. If either one of you are pulling my leg here I'm gonna lose it! I'll burn this place to the fuckin' ground with her in it. You'll have nothing left and she'll be dead, not that it'll matter because you don't even know her!.....Well, then get your fat ass down here with the money. And if I see or smell any cops, this place AND the girl are history! Got it?!?"

He paced back and forth as he talked to P.J. which gave me a little time to think. Then I remembered the baseball bat under the counter. I could see it from where I sat, but getting to it would require me to move at least ten feet from my current position - not a good idea right now.

The receiver slammed down as he cursed P.J. out with virtually every name in the book. "Okay. The bastard's gonna be here in a half hour and he BETTER have my money." With one quick tug, he tore the phone away from the wire and threw it into the mirror at the back of the bar. A shower of glass shards rained onto the floor.

He grabbed a bottle of Jack Daniels and took a few sips from the bottle before handing it to me.

I shook my head, but that royally pissed him off.

"Drink it!" he screamed as he grabbed a handful hair in the back of my head and pulled my head back. Shoving the bottle in my mouth, he poured the liquor in, forcing me to drink it. My mouth and throat burned as I swallowed more and more of it, despite my best attempts not to.

I tried not to choke as the remaining amount slipped down my throat. My jacket and pants were drenched. I was sitting in a puddle of Jack Daniels, feeling like a drunk from the street, reeking of booze.

I coughed and gasped as I tried to catch my breath.

Smiling, he looked at me and grabbed another bottle. "That sure hits the spot, doesn't it? You're still thirsty I bet."

Pinning my legs down, he began pouring that bottle down my throat until it was empty. Then he tossed the empty bottle across the room, laughing as it smashed into a thousand pieces.

My head swam a little as the alcohol begin to seep into my bloodstream.

## **PART 4**

Everything was quite until P.J. arrived, duffel bag in-hand.

He led P.J. over to the bar and had him look at me to see if he recognized me.

"Yeah, she looks a little familiar. I've seen her once or twice maybe, but we've never met. Why'd you have to drag her into this, Jason?"

"Right place, wrong time. Right, sweetheart?"

I half-heard him because I was starting to feel the effects of the alcohol.

Jason opened the duffel bag and checked out the money while P.J. motioned to the gun inside his jacket. I shook my head in an attempt to tell him it was a bad idea to pull the gun on Jason, but it was too late. He went and did it anyway.

"You're not getting any money off me, Jason. I'm tired of playing games with you over the years, and today it's gonna stop." P.J. held the gun at Jason's back, fully intending on using it if he had to.

"I'm sorry to hear you feel that way, P.J., but you owe me. In fact, you owe me MORE than what's in this tiny little bag. How about we make a deal?"

"No deals, Jason."

"Come on, be a sport..." Jason quickly turned himself around and grabbed P.J.'s wrist, twisting it around so the barrel of the gun was pointed at P.J.'s chest.

BLAM! BLAM!

The gun went off and P.J. fell to the floor in a heap, not far from my feet. Blood began to pool underneath him, draining away his life.

"Oops," Jason said as he shrugged it off.

He emptied the gun and grabbed a towel to wipe off his fingerprints then he put the gun in my hand, pressing my fingertips on the trigger.

I struggled a little but it was useless with my hands behind my back.

"Okay, this needs to look like a fight," he mumbled to himself as he tried to set up the scenario, again pacing back and forth.

While his back was turned, I managed to get my hands out from behind my back by bringing the cuffs around my legs. He hadn't noticed when he turned back around, so when he wasn't looking I went for the bat.

I reached up under the counter and yanked it from its hiding place and immediately stood up as if I were up to bat at the World Series. The only problem was that I was very drunk and couldn't hit the broadside of a barn.

I took a swing towards his head, but in a sober world I clocked him on the elbow.

He yelped in pain and I swung again, this time connecting with his jaw.

"Gotcha, ya bastard!" I slurred like a drunken sailor and swayed a bit in a feeble attempt to keep from falling over.

Jason rubbed his throbbing jaw and stood up again. "You're one crazy bitch."

"Oh, you have no idea," I taunted as I swung again.

He ducked out of the way and the end of the bat came crashing down on the side of the bar, splintering the wood.

He tackled me to the floor and we struggled for a few minutes as he tried to get the bat away from me. I got a couple of hits in to his face, but he got in some to mine as well.

We traded blows for a few minutes and I could feel myself getting really tired. My side began to ache from all of the movement, but I put it out of my mind and got to my feet.

Standing over him, I swung blindly a couple of times, feeling the bat connect with something.

I swung once more and hit nothing but air, realizing it was because I'd knocked him to the ground, out cold.

I stood there motionless as I looked at his lifeless body, blood pooling around his head. Swallowing hard, I dropped the bat by my feet. I'd killed him.

The pain in my side flared up again and I put my hand over the aching area only to find the hilt of a knife. During our struggle, he'd managed to stab me with the switchblade, but in my drunken, adrenaline rushed state, I never felt it enter my body.

I sank to my knees, staring at it, realizing it was in there pretty deep, probably hitting things it shouldn't be hitting.

Grabbing a towel, I placed it around the wound to staunch the flow of blood. The white towel didn't take long to turn red which worried me.

I struggled back to my feet and made my way upstairs to my apartment, tripping and falling along the way, doing my best not to fall forward, impaling myself further.

Panic washed over me as I crawled into my apartment and went into the bathroom to get another towel. "*I have to call Barbara,*" I thought to myself. As much as I hated admitting that I needed help, now wasn't the time to be stubborn.

I sat down and leaned against the tub, just to rest for a moment before I called Barbara, but it never happened because I blacked out.

## **PART 5**

I could hear someone calling my name, faintly.

"Helena?" Dinah called out from the other room. I could hear her coming closer.

"Oh my God, Helena!" Dinah gasped as she ran to my side.

Dinah touched neck to try and find a pulse. I could hear her release the breath she must have been holding in when she felt one.

She cupped my face with her hands and raised it, gasping as she looked down at the hilt sticking out of my stomach.

I could hardly keep my eyes open, but I did the best I could.

"Helena? Can you hear me? Helena?"

I mumbled something in response, but even I didn't know what I was saying.

She let go of my face and checked on my wound which hurt like hell when she moved my hands away from it. My moans of pain must have scared her, by the look on her face.

"Shhh, you're okay," Dinah said, a hint of a sob in her voice.

She returned the towel over the wound and gently placed my hands back over it. A hiss of pain escaped through my lips as I tried to keep my eyes open.

"Oracle, I found Helena. I'm at her apartment. I'm bringing her back."

I watched Dinah's facial expression for as long as I could before passing out again.

## **PART 6**

The sudden surge of pain throughout my belly is what woke me up.

Dinah was dragging me out of the car and into the Clocktower elevator.

"W-what are you..."

"Shhh, we're almost there, just hang on," she tried to assure me as she laid me down on the elevator floor with my head resting in her lap.

"Barbara?" I mumbled.

"She's waiting for us upstairs."

I glanced over as the elevator doors opened and found it odd that Barbara wasn't waiting right by the elevator doors, given my current condition and all.

Dinah got up and began dragging me again, but didn't get far when Barbara came zooming over.

"What the hell?!?" Barbara gasped, looking at me with wide eyes. "How did...where..."

"I found her in the bathroom in her apartment. There was one guy in the bar too, dead."

"Why didn't you tell me...why are her hands handcuffed?"

I tried to hear what they were saying, but the pain was grabbing most of my attention. I pressed harder on my stomach which made me cry out. Fresh blood squirted around my hands making them stickier.

The next thing I knew, Dinah was quickly dragging me into the medical room where she got me up onto a metal table.

Barbara wheeled herself next to me as she put on a pair of latex gloves. "Whoa," she exclaimed as she waved her hand in front of her nose. "You smell that?"

"Yeah," Dinah answered as she got some supplies and carried them over to Barbara.

"Helena, how much have you had to drink?"

"He...he forced me..." The pain was unlike any pain I've felt before so I had to stop talking until it let up.

"Who? Who forced you to?" Barbara waved off a needle full of medication that Dinah tried to hand her.

"J...Jason."

"Who's Jason? How much did he make you drink? Everything at the bar?"

I clenched my teeth in frustration because of the pain and the fact that I didn't want to do anymore talking, but I had no choice when it's Barbara asking the questions. "Two...two bottles of J.D."

"Shit," Barbara swore under her breath, but loud enough for me to hear.

Dinah tried handing her the needle again and Barbara shook her head. "I can't give her anything, she's got way too much alcohol in her system."

"This is gonna be fun," Dinah remarked as she set the needle down on a metal tray.

"Tie her ankles down as tight as you can, then the strap by her knees."

Dinah did as she was told. I couldn't blame the kid, she was only following orders.

"Come over here and hold the knife while I get her hands."

Barbara cut the chain between the handcuffs and then put her hands over mine, moving them away from the wound. Dinah's moved to where mine once were, keeping the knife steady.

Barbara tied my wrists to the table and then secured a strap around my chest, just under my neck. "I'm sorry, Helena. I can't have you moving around."

I couldn't even answer, it hurt so bad. So bad that tears fell from my eyes. Normally I would be mad at myself for crying in front of Barbara and Dinah, but at this point I didn't care.

Barbara began assessing how far the blade had gone in and what it may have hit. I gritted my teeth through the pain and tried to keep my breathing steady, but found myself holding my breath instead. "Hurry," I pleaded with her.

"I'm trying to." She had Dinah move her hands away as she grabbed the hilt and slowly pulled up on it.

"Geezus!!" I yelped as I felt pressure in my belly.

"Easy, Helena. Don't move around."

My stomach muscles contracted and caused me even greater pain, but Barbara kept pulling as if I couldn't feel a thing.

"Almost there," she said as she eased it out with a steady hand.

"Uhhh!" I screamed as I squeezed my eyes shut against the pain.

One more pull and the blade's bloody tip exited my body.

"Got it!"

Dinah quickly covered the stab hole with a wad of gauze while Barbara prepared another scan before stitching.

That was the last thought I remember because my body couldn't take anymore and drove me into the darkness.

## PART 7

When I came to, Barbara was by my side, already poking at my wound.

I reached over and grabbed her poking hand. "Stop it, that freakin' hurts when you do that."

"Sorry," she said with a pout as she pulled her hand away from my grasp.

She covered my wound back up and taped it with some surgical tape.

"So, what exactly happened last night? And who is this Jason guy that you mentioned?"

"I went home after my little confrontation with Dinah and this guy was outside. He said he knew P.J. so I let him in for a drink. He freaked out and pulled a knife on me then handcuffed me. He tried to blackmail P.J. and had him come down to the bar with a buttload of money..."

"Wait, so they were both there last night?"

"Yeah. Jason killed P.J. with the gun that P.J. brought with him, then he put my prints on it to make it look like I did it."

"But Dinah said there was only one guy there when she got there."

"What?!? But I smacked Jason over the head with a baseball bat. I killed him. There was blood all over. They were both lying next to each other."

"Dinah said she found one guy and he had bullet wounds to the chest."

"Shit," I swore under my breath. "Jason got away." My mind began to race as did my pulse and breathing.

"Helena, calm down." Barbara grabbed my wrist and began monitoring my heart rate.

My belly erupted with pain. Wincing, I hugged my stomach. "The cops are gonna think I killed him."

"I'll call Reese and straighten it out. Just calm down, you need to calm down and rest." Barbara stroked my hair, trying to soothe me.

I breathed through the pain and talked myself into calming down.

"Good, good. Now I want you to get some rest. I'll call Reese and tell him what happened..."

"Barbara!" Dinah yelled as she entered the room.

"Reese just triggered the signal."

"I'll be right there."

"I need...I need to talk to Reese," I said as I tried to sit up.

"What are you doing?!? You're not going anywhere!" Barbara put her hands on my shoulders, pushing me back down.

"Ugh!" I gasped, hugging my stomach again.

"Stay put! I'll talk to Reese. DO NOT get up from this bed unless you want to cause yourself further

injury."

"But..."

"Do you not remember that I pulled four inches of steel out of your stomach? Stay here and DON'T move!"

Dinah ran back out of the room and Barbara pulled the covers over me. "I'll be back in a while to check on you."

Barbara left the room and my brain went to work. I had to find Jason and bring him down. Of course, this wasn't something I was going to be able to accomplish within the next hour or two, given my injury, but I had to do it soon.

## **PART 7**

I woke up in the middle of the night, checking the clock beside my bed. I'd slept a little longer than I had anticipated, but it didn't hinder my plans.

Slowly and painfully I sat up. "Damn!" I gasped as my hand flew to the wound in my stomach.

Keeping a firm grip on the wound, I got out of bed, closing my eyes against the wave of dizziness that swept over me. I breathed through it as it passed, and it did soon enough. Then I limped my way over to the closet to get dressed. Most of my leather attire was at my apartment, so jeans would have to do.

It took almost a century to get myself dressed. The pain in my belly was intense and the more I moved the more my body protested against me, but I sucked it up and headed out into the night.

## **PART 8**

I reached my destination and entered the building through the door on the roof...after I picked the lock of course.

I walked down a small flight of stairs towards a long hallway, hugging my midsection the entire time. Sweat beaded on my brow and I wiped it away with the back of my hand.

A feeling of relief washed over me when I saw the elevator at the end of the hallway. Normally I'd have no problem breaking into a place, no caring about things like elevators, but in my wounded state it was a blessing.

I took the elevator down to the fifth floor and walked towards one of the doors that lined the hallway. Quickly, I picked the lock and quietly entered.

I walked further into the dark apartment, but was caught off-guard when I was grabbed and roughly thrown to the floor on my stomach.

"Don't move!" Reese yelled as he forced his weight down on the small of my back.

The pain in my belly intensified and I could feel fresh blood flowing from the wound, indicating that the stitches had torn. "Ugh! R-Reese!" I gasped in pain.

Suddenly, the room lit up, causing me to squint.

"Shit! Huntress? Oh my God, I'm...I'm sorry."

Reese carefully rolled me onto my back, his eyes widening at the sight of the blood on my shirt.

"Stay still, I'll get help."

I grabbed his hand and kept him from running away. "NO! No ambulance."

"But you're bleeding, you need a..."

"Reese...NO! Please." I looked him straight in the eye, hoping to connect with him mentally and get him to understand. I know that's Dinah's gig, but hell I was desperate.

"Fine...fine...just...let me get a towel or something." He ran off and came back with a bath towel.

Carefully, he lifted up my shirt and exposed the bloody bandage. His face contorted a bit as he peeled back the bandage and revealed the torn stitches, now swimming in a pool of blood around the wound.

"I...I didn't do it, Reese."

Reese wiped the blood away with the towel and then applied pressure to the wound.

"Geezus!!" I screamed as the pain shot through me. My hands instinctively grabbed onto his as I hissed in pain.

"Sorry, I need to get it to stop. What are you doing here? You should be in bed, resting." Just in that one sentence, his voice changed from concerned to anger.

"I need you to know that...that I didn't kill him."

"So you break into my apartment to tell me this?!? They have this handy little device that they invented called the telephone."

Great, now he's switched from angry to wise-ass.

I struggle to get myself into a seated position, despite Reeses' attempts at keeping me down. "I should go."

Reese helps me up, probably knowing that it's useless to protest. "You can't walk all the way home like this. Let me drive you."

"No...I..."

"You're coming with me so shut the hell up." Reese grabbed his jacket and car keys and put a supportive arm around me, helping me to the door.

## **PART 9**

I didn't dare let Reese anywhere near the Clocktower, so I had him drop me off a few blocks away. Okay, maybe it was more like I pissed and moaned and ended up practically jumping out of the car before it came to a stop.

I rode the elevator up to the loft, being careful not to get any blood on the steel floor - don't want Alfred giving me shit about having to clean it up.

The loft is dark, silent and still. I drag myself across the room and just about make it to the stairs when the lights switch on, illuminating the loft and making me squint for a moment.

"What are you doing?" I hear Dinah's voice ask me from behind.

I move my jacket over a bit to conceal the bloodstained towel that I'm squeezing against my side. "I just went out for some air, couldn't sleep." I pray that she doesn't come any closer, and she doesn't.

"Oh," she says sleepily.

"Good night," I say as I slowly make my way up the stairs to my room, sucking in my breath along with the pain I feel with each step.

I head straight for the bathroom and shut the door behind me. I can't help but grunt as I take my jacket off and let it fall on the floor. I move the towel away and take as deep of a breath as my side will let me and toss it on the sink. Lifting up my shirt, I can see that the bleeding has slowed but hasn't stopped.

I'm left with only a few options: I can leave it alone and hope it stops, I can go to the medical lab and sew it up myself, or I can wake Barbara or Alfred and have them do it. Without much hesitation, I grab the towel and press it back over the wound and decide to head downstairs to the lab.

The walk to the lab felt like miles and I can feel myself begin to shiver and sweat...not good.

Switching on the lamp by the table, I get out the equipment I need and then go to the medicine locker. Much to my disappointment, Barbara's locked it. "Shit! Are you serious?" I mutter in frustration. Looks like I'll have to stitch myself up with no local anesthetic. Fun.

I remove my shirt and sit up on the table, aiming the light towards my bloody side. I wash it out and make sure it's all clean before I even touch the needle to my skin. Damn I wish I had a bottle of Jack Daniels right about now. But since I don't, I suck in my breath and begin the slow task of stitching up my wound.

"Helena!"

I flinch and the needle plunges into my skin a little too far, making me gasp in pain. "Geezus!!"

Barbara wheels herself over to me, a look of horror on her face as she looks directly at my terrible stitching job. "Stop what you're doing before you scar yourself for life." Slapping on a pair of latex gloves, she quickly takes over.

"Mind if I lay down, I don't feel so good." I don't even wait for an answer and just lie down on the cold, steel table.

She puts a hand to my forehead and flinches. "You're burning up. The wound's infected."

"I cleaned it out before..."

"Be quiet, you're in enough trouble as it is."

I watched through half-closed eyes as she checked my temperature and vitals and then placed some sort of metal disk on my forehead. "Are you making me your Guinea Pig again?"

"Sort of. It's something I've been working on. It's synched up to my laptop and will help me track the infect and kill it and it can help me regulate your temperature."

"Ugh, too much information," I slur as my eye lids get heavier. "Think it would be rude to pass out on you?"

Did Barbara answer me? Yeah, I don't know because as soon as I said it I faded into the darkness.

## **PART 10**

This little set back has put a crimp in my plans. Why did I go to Reeses' first? What an idiot. See, that's why I get burned when I think with my heart instead of my head. Now I'm lying back in bed again, hardly able to move.

Sighing, I tried to think of a plan.

"Hey," Dinah said softly as she entered my room. "How are you feeling?"

"Better, thanks."

"Listen, I know why you snuck out last night and I want to help you."

I have to admit, I'm surprised at what I've just heard. The kid can be a major pain in the ass, but right now I really do need her. And if she's willing, all the better. Hell, in the end it won't be the same old Helena-told-me-to kinda deal.

"Dinah, you don't have to get involved." I'm trying to at least act as if I don't want her help, but the kid is persistent. Hmmm, wonder where she's learned that?

"You can't go out there again in your condition. You need me. Besides, I know where Jason is."

I think my eyes have gotten so wide that they might just roll out of my head. "What?!? How..."

"I've been doing a little snooping and..."

"You shouldn't be messing with these guys, it's too dangerous."

"I only did some snooping on the street, the rest was..." she paused for a moment and looked away from me, "on Barbara's computer."

Okay, now my eyes really did roll out of my head. "How the hell did you get into...oh wait a minute...you didn't?"

"Yeah, I kinda did."

If Barbara finds out that Dinah played around in her head she'll be so pissed off even I don't want to be anywhere near the radius of her wrath.

"So...what's the plan?" Dinah asks as an excited look comes over her face.

"The plan is..." I begin to say, checking the doorway to make sure Barbara's no where around, "you need to tell me everything you know about Jason and then you and I will come up with the plan on getting to him and making him pay for what he's done. Barbara ISN'T to know about any of this, got it?"

"You have my word, but I know she's on her way up here soon. I passed her by in the kitchen."

"Maybe we should meet up tonight after she's gone to bed. I could probably use the rest anyway if we're going to be venturing out in the city in search of that asshole." I kind of surprised myself. I admitted that I needed rest? What the hell kinda drugs did Barbara give me last night?

"Okay, I'll keep tabs on him through Barbara's surveillance and will let you know the second something changes."

I nodded in agreement, impressed by the kid's skills. "Thank you for helping me," I said as I reached over

and touched her hand. "I know that I don't always make it easy to be my friend and I'm sorry for that. When you carry around as much baggage as I've got you tend not to have much room for anything else."

"Don't worry, eventually we'll get you to drop some of that baggage." She smiled at me and left the room, leaving me to wonder how Barbara's's lecture was going to be when she came up to check on me.

## PART 11

Later that night Dinah came to my room after Barbara went to bed, just as we had planned.

"You're already dressed?" she asked with surprise. "We're going tonight?"

"Yeah," I reply as if it's a no-brainer. "So spill it. What did you find out?"

"Okay," she said as she sat on the edge of my bed and whispered. "Jason's in an apartment building on the other side of New Gotham. He left a couple of times today, once to go to the grocery store, the bank and then the drug store."

I think for a minute and feel confused. "I know Barbara's surveillance set up is pretty hi-tech, but how did..."

Dinah held up a small black device.

"What the hell is that?"

"It's a tracking device."

Grabbing it from her and taking a look at it I immediately know my next question. "And you got this on him how?"

"Remember I said that I went out to do some..."

"Are you nuts?!? You shouldn't be going out alone and confronting these guys."

"Oh, and it's okay that you do?"

She had me. I needed to think of something, and fast. "I've been at this a lot longer than you. I've always gone out alone and have..."

"You're right. That's why you got stabbed, right? Because you're so much better at it than me? Huh?"

I wanted to slap her little face because I hate it when other people prove me wrong. "Look, I don't want to argue with you over this. Let's just get out there and find him and then we'll call Reese to come pick him up."

Dinah stood up, placing her hands on her hips. "And you want me to think that you're really going to call Reese after you get to him?"

"Yeah, after I kick his ass all over New Gotham THEN I'll call Reese."

"That's what I thought."

"Whatever!" I huff. "We'll go to his apartment and bring him down to the mill down by the dock yards. It's quiet there. I don't want him to cause too much of a commotion and end up having his nosey neighbors calling the cops before I get a chance to work him over." I crack my knuckles, feeling the surge of adrenaline begin to bolt through my body.

"Great, so we need the van?" Dinah asked flatly.

"Duh. How else are we gonna get him to the..."

"Alfred took the van to the manor this afternoon, said he was adding some gadgets to it."

I sigh heavily as part of my plan begins to crumble. "Okay, we'll figure something else out. Let's think about it on the way. Let's go."

Dinah followed me downstairs as we quietly made our way across the large room.

I headed for the medical lab and Dinah grabbed my arm, stopping me. "Where are you going?" she whispered.

"Shhh!" I said as I yanked my arm away and entered the lab. I began picking the lock on one of the cabinets in the corner of the room. I could feel Dinah's eyes boring a hole in the back of my skull as she watched me do it. "Tell Barbara about this and I'll kill ya." I didn't even look to her for an answer, just popped the lock and opened the cabinet. Reaching in, I grabbed a tranquilizer gun and tucked it into the waistband of my leather pants. "Okay, we're outta here."

When we got out to the street the tracking device was beeping like crazy.

"What the hell?"

"He's on the move," Dinah said as she looked at the small PDA screen.

"Where's he going?"

"Heading towards Jefferson and Fifth."

I didn't want to waste time with small talk so I began to run, hoping Dinah would just shut up and follow me.

She did.

## **PART 12**

We tracked the signal to an old closed-up dance club that hadn't seen activity in years. His signal was steady and unmoving. We had him right where we wanted him.

Wasting no time, I kicked the back door open with ease and entered. "Turn that off," I whispered to Dinah who immediately shut the blasted device off and shoved it in her jacket pocket.

Slowly, I walked into the main area where the dance floor had once held a sea of dancing bodies. A tiny green light on the floor caught my eye and I bent down to pick it up. "Shit."

"What?"

"Is this the tracking device?" I asked, holding it in the palm of my hand.

Dinah didn't answer, just nodded hesitantly.

"Shit! We lost him."

"Helena!" Dinah screamed behind me.

I attempted to turn around but never made it all the way around before I was tackled to the ground by Dinah's body, a bullet whizzing past us.

"I thought you were dead, bitch!" Jason yelled from the darkness of the room.

Another shot rang out and landed close to my leg, splintering the wooden floor. Quickly, Dinah and I ran behind the bar, dodging bullets that were hell-bent on embedding themselves into our flesh.

"You'll be wishing you were dead after I'm done with you!" he yelled, his voice getting louder as he drew closer.

"I don't think so!" I said as I took a deep breath, jumped up onto the bar and launched myself at him. He got a shot off before I knocked him to the ground, but by some sort of miracle it missed me. I don't think I would have felt the pain even if he had shot me because all my mind had written all over it was revenge and anger.

I pummeled him with my fists and felt Dinah trying to get me away from him, fearing I'd kill him. Turning towards her, my eyes turned catlike. "Back off!"

Turning my attention from him was a big mistake. Even though it was only for a few seconds it was long enough for him to get to his gun and fire it.

I rolled to the side and felt the bullet nick me in the thigh.

Dinah got a mental hold on Jason, giving him one hell of a headache. He tried shooting at her and I somehow got to my feet and pushed her out of the way. "I owed ya one," I said as I rolled off of her.

Dinah quickly put her focus on his hand, mentally breaking the bones, causing him to drop the gun while screaming out in pain. Walking over to him, she gave him a swift kick to the head and knocked him unconscious.

"Whoa, what the hell happened in here?" Reese said as he entered the room, gun drawn.

"What are you doing here? How'd you...." Before I could finish Barbara wheeled in behind Reese.

"I knew you two were up to something."

Reese handcuffed Jason and dragged him out to the car.

"You okay?" Barbara asked me as she watched me limp towards her.

"I'm fine."

"No you're not," Dinah said as she positioned herself beside me, slinging my arm over her shoulder to help me walk.

"You guys always make a big deal out of..."

"When are you going to stop being so damn pigheaded? You're NOT invincible."

"Never said I was. I just don't need you two nagging on me the way you do. It's just a scratch."

"You've got to be kidding!" Barbara huffed as she opened the car door for me and Dinah.

"She okay?" Reese asked Barbara as he walked over to the van.

"Says she is, but she could be riddled with bullets and claim she's fine."

Reese laughed and looked over at me. "You're quite the handful, aren't ya?"

"Don't start on me I'm in no mood." My leg was beginning to sting and burn. I just wanted to get home and get it fixed so I could get on with life.

"I'll call Barbara later to check on you."

I didn't answer him because I knew that if I did something sarcastic was bound to fly out of my mouth.

Dinah climbed in next to me and shut the door. She reached under the seat and grabbed the first aid kit and began wrapping my leg as tightly as possible. I couldn't help but grunt a little.

"Sorry."

She was getting good at taking care of injuries. I guess that's a good thing and a bad thing. Good because obviously in our "line of work" we're going to get our fair share of cuts and bruises. And bad because kids her age should be worrying about who she's going to take to the prom and not about how to get a bullet out of your body.

Barbara was silent during the entire ride back to the Clocktower.

"You're mad, aren't you?"

"A little, yes," she said quietly as she pulled into the garage.

"I'm...I'm sorry about what I said earlier. I know you and Dinah have always been there for me, but I'm used to being alone and..."

"We're a team, Helena and a team isn't made up of one person."

"When I left you and Dinah, I only wanted to feel what it was like to be Helena Kyle. Plain-old Helena Kyle. But ya know, this damn life follows me around wherever I go. Even if I try to leave it I can't."

"It's in your blood, you CAN'T leave it."

I rubbed my sore leg as I bit on my bottom lip. I HATED it when she was right.

"I wish I could tell you that if you left things would be completely normal for you, but there's no way that will ever be true. I'm sorry."

"I guess it's something I just have to accept. Just not sure when that will be."

~ FIN

# AMPED

Written: 2/2004

## PART 1

Rain mixes with my blood and splashes onto my clothes and onto the pavement beneath me.

I'm sitting on a rooftop somewhere in the city, my back against a cool, brick wall. The rain washes over me and I don't even think about it. Hell, I don't even care. If it wasn't a hot summer night I'd probably be cursing against the cold and wetness, but today it feels almost comforting. Soothing.

It had been one hell of a night, not that most of them aren't when I'm out on "patrol." But this battle was a little harder to fight.

Barbara had sent me to an old junk lot on the edge of the city because she'd gotten word of some new drug that was to be distributed and that was the meeting place. She didn't tell me what the drug was, just that I needed to get my ass down there, stop them from giving it out and bring the drug back to the tower so she could analyze it. Seemed like a simple plan but things got out of control, fast.

I climbed up on a stack of old cars to get a good view of the men that had gathered in a clear spot towards the middle of the lot. I counted five guys and sized them up. It didn't look like it would be a problem.

"Huntress, report."

With a heavy sigh I whispered my response. "I'm here. They just got here."

"How many?"

"Five. I'm going silent for a few minutes so I can get closer."

"Okay."

I heard the hesitation in Barbara's voice. I'd heard it before so I knew it well.

I turned my comm device off and quietly made my way closer to where the men were. I perched myself on the hood of what looked like an old Mustang and tried to plan my intrusion.

One of the men patted his pocket and smiled. This gave me the indication that it was about to go down. Sure enough, I was right. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a vial that contained a neon green fluid that looked like one of those Glo Sticks.

I stood up on the hood and leaped towards their area. My feet connected with the dusty, dirt ground as I landed hard and strong. "Guess you've never paid any attention to those egg in the frying pan commercials, huh?"

"Who the hell are you?" the man with the vial asked me.

"I'm your anti-drug," I answered with a lop-sided, sly smile.

The two men that had come to get the drug took off running as if their asses were on fire. Then I saw vial man's sidekicks coming towards me. I spun around and kicked out towards one of them, hitting him in the jaw and then I felt rough hands grabbing me by the back of my jacket. I reached down and grabbed the man's leg and pulled. He crashed to the ground on his back and I kicked him in the groin, rendering him useless. To make sure he stayed down I gave him a kick to the head and knocked him out.

The other guy came at me again.

"What? You haven't had enough?"

He snarled at me and swung, missing me by a mile. I threw a swing of my own and missed but I swung a quick left hook and smacked him hard in the eye. While he was nursing his eye I punched him hard in the gut, sending him to his knees and then gave him a chop to the back of the head, knocking him out cold.

The vial man was watching the fight the entire time and stood there still holding the glowing fluid.

"You want some?" I asked as I approached him.

He took a few steps back and it looked like he was ready to pee his pants but he took the lid off the vial and emptied the fluid into his mouth. I stopped in my tracks and watched as he fell to his knees clutching the sides of his head and then his stomach. Grunting and panting he looked like he was going to pop a blood vessel.

I turned my comm back on. "Oracle, do you copy?"

"Go ahead."

"One of the guys just downed the drug."

"Dammit," she swore softly, but loud enough for me to hear.

"You want me to bring him in?"

"I'm sending Dinah for back up. In the meantime, stay AWAY from him. Keep an eye on him but don't get near him."

"So you know what the drug is? What the hell is it? Is it a virus or something?"

"No, it's..."

Her words trailed off as my focus turned back to the guy who was now standing, his eyes glowing as green as the fluid he'd consumed.

"What the fu...."

He came at me with hurricane-like force, tackling me to the ground like a run-away freight train. I felt my bones rattle as I hit the ground with tremendous force. This little nerd of a man had now been transformed into a maniac!

He jammed his fist into my ribcage and I could have sworn I felt and heard something crack, but I didn't have time to think about it because he launched another fist towards my face, connecting with my eye. The sting indicated to me that he'd managed to split me open and the warm trickle of wetness down the side of my face confirmed it.

I tried like hell to gain the upper hand but he was so damn strong.

Before I knew it, he'd grabbed me by the front of my shirt, hauling me to my feet. He dragged me over to one of the cars and slammed me into it.

I sank to the ground, coughing and wincing. He didn't care for my pain. In fact, I think it fueled him because he grabbed me again and slammed me against the car over and over and over.

I was on the verge of passing out when it started to rain. It kept me somewhat alert but not enough to save my own ass.

He flipped me over his shoulder and took me to the entrance of the lot where his van was parked. Roughly, he threw me in the back and slammed the door.

I tried to get up and get over to the door but he started the van up and stomped on the gas, causing me to slam right into the back of the van, aggravating my battered body.

He didn't speak as we drove, just grunted like an animal.

I smashed into the walls of the van over and over as he sped through the streets like a madman and got to the point where I just let my body go limp. I was physically defeated.

My comm must have been damaged in the fight because I wasn't hearing Barbara's voice booming in my ear, and there's no way she wouldn't be yapping away if she'd heard the struggle.

The van came to a stop and I heard the motor turn off. He got out of the van and came around back to open the door. That's when I gathered up all of my strength and got my legs around his neck when he came close to me. I squeezed as hard as I could despite the pain that coursed through my body.

Still I squeezed.

His hands clawed at my legs to free himself but I wasn't giving up. That was until he pulled the switchblade out and jammed it into my thigh.

He got free and fell to the ground gasping for air and rubbing his neck and I got out of the van, limping away into the night.

I managed to get up to this rooftop where I know he wouldn't find me. So that's where I've stayed for the past half hour or so since making my escape.

I've been sitting here resting because I hurt and because I'm mad at myself for not being able to defend myself.

Looking out at the city skyline, I know exactly where I am. That's the advantage of my "job," knowing every inch of the city. It would really suck if I didn't know because in my current state I don't think I'd be able to figure out how to get home given my head felt like it was a mass of spider webbing.

I grunt in pain and let out a slight hiss as I stand up and begin limping across the roof. I get to the edge and debate about going down to the street level and walking the entire way or skipping across the rooftops which cuts the time in half. Of course, my leg and other parts of my body aren't going to like the jumping, but something inside me is begging to go home...NOW.

Backing up, I take a deep breath and run towards the ledge and jump off the side of the roof towards the adjacent roof. The weight on my wounded leg causes me to fall to the ground where I stay for a few moments. The wound has torn a little which means it's bleeding more. The rain that's mixing with my blood makes it appear even worse so it's hard to tell the truth of it's severity.

When I finally make it back to the tower I'm exhausted beyond words. Barbara's eyes grow wide when she sees me stumble into the room, doing my best to act as if nothing is wrong and I'm merely just a wet, sopping mess. But then I do the unthinkable. I feel my eyes roll back in my head and the darkness consume me. I hit the ground like a ton of bricks.

## PART 2

"Helena? Helena?"

I can hear a female voice calling to me off in the distance and then I feel a hand on my arm.

"Helena?"

Opening my eyes I see Barbara looking down at me.

"Good, you're awake. You had me worried. I thought for sure you'd slipped into a coma."

I squinted and winced as my entire body felt like one giant ache. "What the hell?"

"You took some harsh blows to the head," Barbara told me, as if I didn't know already.

"What kind of drug was that? The guy turned into a monster."

"It's some sort of super human drug that revs up your system and gives you meta-like powers."

"Great. First people don't want to be around metas and now they want to be metas? That's fucked up." I started to get up but stopped when the pain hit me.

"You're not going anywhere for a few days."

"Ugh," I grunted. "I can't believe I let him beat me like that."

"It's not your fault."

"I should have been able to at least keep up with him. Hell, I just about surrendered to him."

"You can't blame yourself. He was pumped up on this drug."

"What good am I out there if I can't even defend myself?" Anger began snaking through me as my frustration grew.

I made another attempt at getting up and managed to at least sit up.

"Helena, you're NOT getting up. Please! You've got a concussion, two broken ribs, a bruised kidney, a bruised back and a nasty stab wound in your leg. You move from this bed and you're right, you WON'T be defending yourself because you won't be in any shape to do so."

I blocked her from my mind as I eased myself off the bed. I sucked my breath in as my leg began to throb with pain. Covering it with my hand, I began walking out of the room.

Naturally, she chased after me.

"Helena! Stop being so damn stubborn for once!"

"Barbara! Enough! I just want to be alone right now. Is that so much to ask?!?"

She didn't answer, which was a surprise and I didn't feel her behind me anymore.

I limped up to my room in the loft and gently eased myself down on the bed.

If there's anything I hated it was people bugging me when I was sick or hurt. Just the constant coddling

drives me nuts.

Leaning back, I hug my ribs as they ache from the movement. Blowing out a breath, I close my eyes and wait for the pain to subside so I can concentrate on other things. But Barbara must have been right. I must have taken quite a beating because my body just shut down and I drifted off to sleep.

### PART 3

Someone's shaking me again. What the hell?!?

I open my eyes and see Dinah.

"Helena. Don't tell Barbara that I told you, but you might want to come see this."

"What?" I ask, still groggy from my nap.

"Downstairs," she said as she quickly left the room.

I shook my head to try and clear it and then stood up. Limping out of the room I made my way downstairs and saw a body lying face down on the floor by Barbara's chair.

Squinting in confusion, I walked closer to find out who it was.

"What the hell's going on?" I asked as I approached.

"Helena!" Barbara snapped as she looked up and saw me coming. Immediately, she wheeled towards me, her hands out in front of her as if trying to block my way. "Go back upstairs and rest."

"Who's that?"

"Just go back upstairs. I'll take care of this."

I looked her in the eye and it became clear to me who it was.

Pushing past her, I stormed towards his body, ignoring the pain that was radiating from my wounds. I could feel my jaw tightening with anger and I made myself loosen up before I broke all of my teeth.

I kicked him onto his back with my foot and felt a lightening bolt of anger strike me when I saw his face - the vial man.

"Where'd you find the son-of-a-bitch?"

"Dinah picked him up. He'd collapsed last night after your encounter. He took too much of the drug and..."

"Awwwww, too fucking bad." My voice was coated with sarcasm as I gave him a swift kick to the ribs.

"Doesn't feel too good, does it?"

His eyes opened slightly and I was happy that he was able to watch me kick his ass.

I reached down to grab his shirt in order to haul him up, but the pain in my ribs stopped me for a moment.

He smiled at me, noticing my pain and began to chuckle.

I closed my eyes for a moment and then re-opened them to reveal the cat-like orbs. Then with all my strength, I hauled him up and threw him into the wall. He slumped to the ground and I picked him up again, smashing him against the wall over and over.

"Helena! Stop!" Barbara yelled.

I hauled him close to my face. "Where's your knife you little bitch?"

He didn't answer.

I slammed his head against the wall and applied pressure as I pinned him. "Where is it? Or are you gonna try to stick me again? Huh? Answer me!"

Still no answer, just a sick laugh.

I let go of him and watched as he slumped to the floor in a heap.

"Go ahead," I taunted him, "Get your knife and come at me. I dare you!"

"Helena!" Barbara yelled again.

"Stay out of this, Barbara. This is unfinished business that I need to clean up."

"Stop it!" she urged as she wheeled between me and the pitiful loser. "Go back upstairs. Dinah?!?" she called out.

Dinah came to the head of the stairs.

"Get Helena back to her room and check her wounds."

"Let me do this, Barbara!"

"You're not going to..."

I looked up and saw him on his feet. The knife was in his right hand, still coated with my blood. Then he charged towards Barbara.

"No!!" I screamed.

Everything was a blur and happened so fast, even I didn't know what was happening at the time even though I was right there deep in the action.

"Oh God!" I heard Barbara say from beside me.

"Helena!" Dinah yelled out as she came over to me.

I was lying on the ground and he was on top of me. Yuck.

Dinah tore him off of me and dragged him away. Both she and Barbara didn't even look at him, they just looked at me in horror.

"He-Helena?" Barbara asked, her lips quivering.

I looked down at my chest and could see my hands and chest were covered with blood.

"Get me the kit!" Barbara screamed at Dinah.

"Wait. Wait," I said. "It's not mine," I said softly, gulping down a breath.

Dinah came back over to me, moving my hands away from the bloody spot on my chest, inspecting it for a wound.

"It's not my blood," I repeated.

They looked over at the guy on the floor who was impaled with the switchblade and a feeling of relief simultaneously washed over them both.

Barbara wheeled over to him and checked his pulse. "He's dead."

"No duh," I said with a hint of laughter. "Help me up."

Dinah helped me to my feet as best as she could.

"We need to check you out," Barbara instructed me as she looked me over. "Go to the lab and I'll meet you two there. I'll have Alfred clean up in here."

Dinah got me to the lab and helped me up on the table.

"You okay?" she asked.

"Fine, kid."

All of a sudden she began to cry.

"What's the matter?"

"I'm so sorry, Helena."

"What for?"

She sobbed for a few minutes and then wiped her tears. "The drug he took...my mother helped develop it."

I know I'd literally been kicked in the gut but this felt a thousand times worse.

"What?"

"I remember hearing that she was working on a drug like that a few years ago. Because people hated Metas so bad, she thought that by creating a drug that gave people meta-like strength would help them understand us."

"That's fucked up!"

"A man she was seeing at the time had convinced her that they would turn all non-metas into metas so that everyone would be equal."

"Did you tell Barbara this?"

"NO!" Her answer came fast, furious and short.

"Well if you don't tell her I will."

"You can't!"

"Like hell. She needs to know. We need to see if there's more of that shit or..."

"Everything okay in here?" Barbara asked as she entered the room.

"Fine," Dinah said, glaring at me.

I glared back at her and debated over and over in my head whether to spill the beans or not.

"Helena? You okay?"

"Yeah. Let's just get this over with."

Dinah left the room and Barbara could sense the tension. A moron could have detected it, it was so thick.

"You sure everything's okay?"

"Yeah, I'm sure," I said through a clenched jaw. "Just feel like hell is all."

I knew she didn't believe me but now wasn't the time to clear things up. I had a more pressing issue on my mind.

## PART 4

A week had passed since Dinah had informed me of her mothers involvement with the drug that guy had ingested.

1. Barbara managed to keep me out-of-commission for a good part of the week by pumping all sorts of drugs into me to keep me sedated and still. I hate it when she does that and she knows it.

Now that my wounds have healed somewhat, I've been going out on "light" sweeps. Dinah's been covering most of the slack. Normally I'd be bitching like nobody's business but it's actually worked out to my advantage.

You see, I've been doing some detective work on Dinah's dear deceased mother in order to find out more about this drug and who's behind it's continued creation. With Dinah on sweeps and me all nestled safe in the warmth of my own bed, yeah right, I've managed to get a name....Jack Culver. He and Carolyn had worked together some years ago and his name kept popping up with people I've talked to.

It's late, Dinah's out doing her thing and Barbara thinks I'm working a shift at the bar for my ailing friend Jennifer. In reality, I'm standing in front of the door to Jack's apartment. Obviously his work hasn't made him much money because he's living in filth. If his apartment is anything like the hallway I'd be forced to pity the man.

I put an ear to his door and try to hear any movement from inside but it's hard to hear over the constant yelling of the couple next door who are airing their dirty laundry for all the world to hear. I'm almost tempted to bust down their door and punch them both in the mouth in order to get them to shut the hell up.

It's impossible to hear whether Jack is in there or not at this point, even with my sensitive hearing, so I'm just going to wing it.

I take a few steps back and then charge at the door, kicking it with my foot, sending it crashing down to the floor. A cloud of dirt and dust flies into the air giving my grand entrance a more menacing feel, but the feeling is lost on only me because he's not here.

It was actually convenient that the couple had been yelling because they'd masked my grand entrance. Now I'm happy I didn't pop them in the mouth.

I check all two of the rooms, which includes the bathroom, and he's no where to be found. The windows are shut so he didn't make an escape, I just have really bad timing.

Looking around the dump I feel compelled to offer the pity I'd previously mentioned. This place is disgusting. I've been in my share of dives but this one could very well top the list.

There are dirty dishes in the sink that look like they've been there for months. The flies are what give me that indication. I'm surprised there are no ro...wait. Never mind. There are roaches. There's some sort of conga line of them around the edge of the counter top near the refrigerator. They must know of some secret passage into the fridge that's not visible to the human eye.

I almost don't want to open the fridge, afraid of what my fly, tumble or spray out, but curiosity gets the better of me.

With the tip of my index finger, I hook it around the handle and pull. No way was I going to put my whole hand on that handle. God only knows what's on it!

I'm almost knocked off my feet from the powerful odor that's now been released into the room. Putting my jacket sleeve over my mouth and nose I fight the urge to gag.

The fridge is empty of food, except for something that looks like it may have been a hunk of cheese, a very old bucket of KFC chicken and a carton of milk that had so much mold on it, it looked like a Banzai Tree.

Maggots, flies, roaches and other nasty little creatures were in their glory. There were thousands of them. It was like an amusement park of insects that had festered on a gold mine. I seriously feel like tossing my cookies.

I kick the door shut and hope at least the odor will dissipate. There's no help for the visual that's forever scared my mind, but whatever.

Quickly, I head towards what's supposed to be the living room I would assume. There's a couch that's full of holes and stains. Not even gonna go there. The springs are visible on the left side and some of the foam is scattered on the floor.

I walk over to it, trudging through a mass of dirty laundry, newspapers, take-out food containers and various other items I don't even want to think about. It looks like someone intentionally pulled the couch apart judging by the way the foam was thrown on the floor all in one place.

Looking closer down into the hole something catches my eye. "Bingo!" A vial of the green fluid is tucked inside towards the front of the couch.

A few scenarios swirled around my head: the vial rolled down there and was forgotten when the others were pulled out or the vial was hidden there intentionally.

I tucked the vial into my pocket for safe keeping and turned around to search the bed. More roaches had claimed their territory there. I'd always heard that they were one of the cleanest insects on the planet but I'd have to beg to differ.

Taking my foot, I maneuvered the mattress off the box spring.

"Well, what do we have here?"

Reaching down, I picked up the Polaroid of Carolyn and Jack that had been sandwiched between the mattress and box spring. There was no date on it but my guess is that it was at least ten years old. The two of them looked pretty chummy from the way she had her arms around him. Interesting.

I continued my inspection of the apartment and struck gold again, this time in the bathroom, of all places.

Inside the tank of the toilet, there was a baggie duct taped to the side full of papers: receipts, invoices and handwritten notes full of chemical jargon that was way over my head.

Satisfied that I had enough to go on for now, I exited his apartment and headed to my own.

## **PART 5**

The following night, I went on sweeps with Dinah for part of the night - per Barbara's instructions.

It was awkward, to say the least. We hadn't spoken since the night she'd told me about the drug and her mother's involvement and now that I had more pieces to the puzzle I felt the awkwardness between us even stronger.

"Don't feel like you have to babysit me or something," she snapped, out of nowhere.

"Huh?"

"I'm capable of taking the entire sweep shift by myself. Not sure why Barbara feels that I need you to tag along."

If that wasn't a cold front moving in then I don't know what it was. A huge part of me wanted to beat her snippy little ass. This was MY watch, MY territory, MY city and MY shift. How dare she make it seem like she could even fill my shoes.

"Keep it up and maybe I'll have that talk with Barbara after all. I'm sure she'd love to hear all about your mother's diabolical plan."

She was in my face in a matter of seconds. This was a Dinah I'd never seen before.

"DON'T you dare speak of my mother in such a tone. Your mother was no Betty Crocker either, or have you forgotten?"

Yep. She was inches away from eating my fist, but Dr. Quinn would be proud. I swallowed the physical anger and did my best to keep it down.

"You're the one that told me about your mother and how sorry you were for her. Now all of a sudden you want it to all go away and be okay? Just because you..."

"Shut up! I don't want to talk about it anymore."

Glancing at my watch I saw that it was late. Perfect timing. "I gotta go anyway."

I got up on the ledge of the roof and jumped off. The cool air that whooshed into my face calmed me down a little.

When I got to street level I headed for an old meat packing plant on the outside of town. The address had been written on all of the receipts and invoices I'd found at Jack's apartment so I decided to check it out. But there was one thing I had to do first...

"Oracle?"

"Go ahead, Huntress."

"I'm just checking in before I sign off for the night. Dinah's over on the market place roof in case you're wondering."

"I've been trying to get in touch with her for about a half hour. She's got her comm off again. You have to stop teaching her things like that."

"ME?!? I didn't tell her to do that."

"Well, we'll deal with it later. How are your ribs and thigh?"

"A little sore still but they'll be fine in a day or so."

"Ya know, I have to say that I'm really impressed with your cooperation over the past week."

Oh, here we go.

"I know it's not easy for you to take my orders sometimes, but you know I'm just looking out for you."

I'd hate to kill her Hallmark moment but if she only knew that I was just doing it in order to do some investigative work she'd freakin' kill me.

"I know I'm a pain in the ass sometimes," I say.

"Sometimes?"

"Very funny."

"Have a good night."

"See you tomorrow."

I turned off my comm and continued on my way to the meat packing plant.

## **PART 6**

When I arrived, I found the place all boarded up. The edges of the windows were charred, indicating that there'd been a fire.

The building looked pretty secure, however. I climbed up to the roof and despite some holes here and there, it was stable.

I climbed down into one of the holes and prayed that when I landed I didn't fall straight through the floor, but luck was on my side for once.

The wood of the floor was dirty and water stained from the fire fighters that had put the fire out. The smoky smell wasn't very distinct. I don't recall any fire in this area so it must have been quite some time ago.

I got to the first floor and found nothing but charred wood, burned equipment and lots of ash and dust.

As I walked along the floor, the clacking of my boots gave off a hollow sound all of a sudden. Looking down, I brushed the dirt around and saw a metal square that looked out of place from the surrounding cement.

Kicking the dirt around some more, I found a small chain. Pulling on it, the metal square slid away and revealed a hole.

I reached into my pocket and took out a small flashlight and shined it down into the hole. There was a ladder on the side and it looked like a tunnel.

Wasting no time, I climbed down the ladder and shined the light forward. The light lit up the long hallway so I slowly walked forward.

Getting to the end of the hallway, it appeared to be a dead end. Concrete bricks in front of me, to my left and to my right. Seemed odd.

I shined the flashlight all around the wall and towards the ceiling and that's when I saw the short pull-chain covered in spider webs that was in the corner. I couldn't help but scrunch up my face as I put my hand in the webbing and pulled the chain. The wall in front of me slid forward and revealed a small room that contained a wooden desk, some metal tables, a few computers, lab equipment and various other nerdy stuff.

I walked in and checked everything out, taking notice of the notes tacked on the wall near a set of glass beakers. The sequence looked a little familiar so I took out the papers I'd found at Jack's apartment. Sure enough, they were the same chemical equations. This must be the pattern for the drug.

There wasn't much dust on the equipment in the room which led me to believe that everything was still in use. So either Jack or the vial man had been here recently. Someone must have cooked up a batch of this shit and sent it out for distribution.

I opened the small cabinet that was sitting on the floor under a table and my face lit up green from the glow that emitted from it. It was packed full of vials of the drug.

I grabbed the back of the cabinet and ripped it from the wall, tossing it to the floor with force. The vials smashed into thousands of pieces and the drug spilled onto the floor in a large neon green puddle.

"What are you doing!" I heard a female voice squeal behind me.

I whipped around and was shocked to see Carolyn standing there, her eyes wide with horror.

"What have you done!!" she croaked as she pulled out a gun and aimed it at me.

"Why did you do this, Carolyn?"

Tears began rolling down her cheeks.

"I worked SO HARD on this project and you've just destroyed MONTHS of work!!"

Before I could say something I found a red-hot bullet embedding itself in my shoulder, sending me backwards from the force and knocking me to the ground.

I laid there motionless for a moment, digesting what had just happened as I stared up at the ceiling.

"I can't believe you of all people wouldn't support my cause," Carolyn said to me as she appeared above me, her gun aimed at me once again.

I heard the snap of the hammer being cocked back.

"DON'T even think about trying anything because I WILL shoot you again. Now get up!"

I sat up and she handcuffed my hands to the metal table that was bolted into the ground. Great. This escape wasn't going to be so easy.

"What'd you do with Jack?"

Her head snapped up and she froze for a moment, stunned by the mention of his name. "Jack?"

"You know, lives in filth, has noisy neighbors...that Jack."

She ignored my question for a few minutes while she dug through her backpack and pulled out a bomb. Setting it down gently on the metal table that I was cuffed to, she licked her lips in satisfaction as she looked at it.

"So...where is he?" My voice contained a hitch as the pain in my shoulder began to become quite an annoyance. It was bleeding heavily and was burning like a bitch.

"Jack tried to take all of this away from me and claim it as his own."

"So you killed him, is that it?"

"Something like that. He even got his son involved. How's that for a family business."

The pieces were started to fit. "Lemme guess, nerdy looking boy, early twenties, reddish blonde hair, buzz cut, blue eyes."

"You know Michael? Where is that son-of-a-bitch?"

"Hmm, looks like me may have to make a deal."

"No deals," she said, grabbing the gun and pointing it at me again.

"Then I guess I can't tell you where he is."

That was the wrong thing to say because the butt of the gun cracked against the side of my eye, re-opening the fragile flesh of the wound that was just about healed.

"Don't fuck with me, Helena."

I thought the circle of stars that swirled above cartoon characters heads was fake but since I was now experiencing it first-hand I had to change my view on that.

Carolyn continued to hook up the bomb and get it set. When I heard the beeping sound I couldn't help but flinch.

"Boom!" she teased as she gathered her backpack and slid it onto her back. "Sorry, Helena. I've gotta move locations now that you've invaded this one."

"You're not gonna get away with this."

"That's right, you're not."

I looked up towards the doorway and saw Dinah standing there, hands on her hips and a pissed off look plastered on her face.

"D-Dinah," Carolyn stammered. "She-she tried to kill me, I had to cuff her to the table and..."

"Disarm the bomb, NOW!" Dinah demanded.

Carolyn's eyes darted back and forth between me and Dinah as she backed up, reaching behind her back.

"Dinah! She's got a gun!"

Carolyn fired the gun in Dinah's direction and I couldn't see whether the kid had been struck or not. I heard her hit the ground with a grunt, but the table blocked my view.

Another shot rang out and the lights went out.

"Dinah!" I screamed. I tried not to move in order to keep from setting the bomb off but it was killing me not to be in the action.

Both women had run out of the room and I could hear more shots and a struggle on the floor above me. The feeling of not knowing what was going on was pure agony.

I leaned forward and rested my forehead on the leg of the table, closing my eyes, listening to the sounds above. Then they stopped.

I waited for a few minutes, holding my breath, listening to the thick silence.

"Dinah!" I called out. No answer.

"Shit," I swore out loud as I slowly got to my knees to look at the bomb on the table. I had five minutes to figure out how to get out of here and it wasn't looking good. Every time I tried to move my hands the table shook. I was a sitting duck.

I heard footsteps approaching the room and felt my body tense up for an attack.

A beam of light shined in my eye and I squinted.

"Helena!"

"Dinah?"

"I'm here," she said as she came to my side, her face bloody and battered from her own mother's hands. And people say my mother was a bitch?

"We only have a few minutes to get out of here before the bomb goes off."

"Let me try and get these cuffs off."

She struggled to focus her powers on the cuffs but it was clear that she'd suffered some sort of head injury and was unable to concentrate.

"I...I'm sorry," she trembled as she continued to force her focus.

The timer was down to fifty seconds.

"Leave me!" I said.

"NO!" she growled through gritted teeth.

"Go, Dinah. Just go. Save yourself!"

"I can't leave you and I won't!!"

My heart was beating a million miles an hour and the adrenaline rush had masked every ounce of pain I was supposed to be feeling.

"Dinah!!!"

"Helena!!"

She grabbed me in a tight embrace as the timer ran down and I squeezed my eyes shut waiting for the impact.

Time stood still.

Everything was frozen.

"Helena?" I heard Reese's voice calling.

"Helena?!?"

It got louder and louder.

"Are you okay?" he asked as I suddenly felt his hands on me.

Opening my eyes I realized it wasn't a dream. "Reese?"

"Dinah? You alright?"

Dinah let go of me and moved away. "Yeah," she mumbled in response.

He drew in a breath and blew it out. "You guys cut it way too damn close this time." He picked up the bomb from the table and held it up so we could see the timer. It was flashing and stopped at 2.

"How the hell?"

"Barbara jammed the frequency from outside and stopped it," he explained as he took my cuffs off and gingerly inspected the bullet wound in my shoulder. "Let's get you two out of here."

## **PART 7**

Channel surfing had to be one of the most boring activities on record. I've been doing it for over an hour and have had enough.

Getting up out of bed, which I wasn't supposed to be doing, but whatever, I went downstairs to see what Barbara and Dinah were up to.

I found them playing a board game at the kitchen table so I decided to join them, at least to offer strategic support if anything.

"You know you're not..."

"Don't," I said, holding up a hand.

Easing myself down on the chair I sighed.

"Who's winning?"

"Dinah here has managed to own every house on the block and also conned me into being the banker."

"That's got trouble written all over it."

Dinah did her best to try and defend herself. "What? I'm not cheating!"

Barbara cleared her throat and smiled.

I sat there and watched them play, thankful that no one brought up the subject of Dinah's mother or the events over the past week. I'm sure it'll eventually come up and we'll have a lot to dish out, but for now it's nice to not have to talk shop in order to feel like...family.

~ FIN

**RUN!**

**Written: 4/2004**

## PART 1

Barbara bit her bottom lip nervously as she read the incoming information on her computer screen. "This can't be good," she mumbled as she typed again searching for more data. After a few seconds the screen showed the results. Now she felt most worried.

"Huntress, do you copy?" she asked through her comm device.

::Kinda busy,:: came the short reply.

Barbara could hear the sounds of fighting coming through Helena's comm.

"Is Dinah with you?"

There was a delayed response after a few grunts and groans.

::No.::

"You okay?"

::Just fine,:: Helena replied angrily, annoyed with the interruption.

"I found something that worries me. Are you..."

Before Barbara could continue, she heard Helena's connection turn off.

"Son of a..." she swore softly. She had done it again. Sighing, she put her hand to her ear and called out to Dinah. "Dinah, do you copy?"

::I'm here, Oracle. What's up?::

"Where are you?"

"I was finishing homework at Gabby's house."

"Huntress is in the middle of something at the moment so I need you to go out to do some investigating."

::Cool! Where?::

"My Intel says that on the East side of the city there's been some activity down in the sewers. According to my map of the sewer system, there's a main tunnel over on Derby Avenue. Look for the manhole marked number twenty five."

::Copy that.::

"I have some info, but not much. The guys that are there....I have a bad feeling about them."

::I'm on my way.::

"Dinah...be careful."

::Right,:: Dinah replied with an aren't-I-always-tone in her voice.

## PART 2

Dinah climbed down the narrow, metal ladder and into the tunnel. The smell was overpowering and she did all she could to block her nostrils from inhaling the rotted stench.

She walked slowly along the tunnel, trudging through water, mud, and trash.

Voices presented themselves from further on ahead as they echoed throughout the tunnel. The echo made it hard to hear what they were saying so she decided to get closer.

Taking cover into the darkness, Dinah stayed out of sight while she listened to the men talking.

"The game starts tonight, you all know the rules," one of the men stated.

"Come on, do we really need rules?"

"The game isn't fair to everyone if there aren't rules, my friend. Each of you have paid a good deal of money to play this little game, and as the host of this game I want to be sure that each of you gets your moneys worth. Allow me to go over the rules one more time, just so we're all clear. Rule number one - each player will be equipped with one Glock .357 and one full clip of 5 bullets. Each of you have your own distinct, colored bullets. Rule number two - you are not to use any other weapons and will be padded down before the game begins. This makes the playing fair for everyone. If we find that you have used other weapons, let's just say that you won't be playing another game with us or anyone else for that matter because Joey here will kill you."

Dinah felt herself flinch a little at the word "kill."

"How the game works is you try to make use of as many bullets as you have been supplied, but you cannot shoot to kill. The game lasts for exactly two hours and after two hours, the prey will be taken back here. At that time, Joey will remove the bullets. The player with the most hits wins the game - fifty percent of the total amount paid by each of you to play. The losers, well, are losers and get nothing."

"What if a bullet goes all the way through? Technically it's a hit, but it won't be there for you to count it."

"These bullets are designed not to produce a through-and-through. So don't worry, all of your hits will be counted." Suddenly his cell phone rang. He answered it and talked with someone for several minutes. After hanging up the phone he smiled and rubbed his hands together. "Gentlemen, everything is ready."

"Who or what is the prey?"

"You'll find out soon enough. I'll give you tracking devices. This way it'll make the game a little more interesting. Think of it as hunting in the jungle, a concrete jungle, that is."

One of the men looked at the organizer and crossed his arms. "I'm curious as to what made you think of this game, if I may be so bold as to ask."

"I want to show all my enemies what will happen to them if they interfere with my business, and basically if they try to fuck with me."

"Alright, let's get this game going!" one of the other participates snapped, annoyed with the delay.

"Okay, okay. I can see you're all eager to get underway."

Dinah quietly made her way closer to where the men were, doing her best to stay hidden in the shadows. Her new location afforded her the ability to see some of the men, but she was still unsure as to how many of them there were.

A heavysset man passed out small black boxes to each of the men. "Here are your tracking devices. The device will be activated in exactly twenty minutes, signaling the start of the game. You will have only fifteen minutes to use this device to locate the prey. This should allow you enough time to find the prey and make your first move. After fifteen minutes, you're on your own. You'll have to use the remaining hour and forty-five minutes to hunt the prey using your own skill."

The men laughed and Dinah felt her skin begin to crawl.

A large, muscular man opened a briefcase containing three handguns. That solved the question of how many men were playing this deadly game.

He passed out the guns and closed the case up.

"Gentlemen, let the games begin."

Dinah quickly moved as far into the corner of the tunnel as she could when she heard them coming her way. The darkness shielded her as the men walked past, totally unaware of her presence.

As soon as they were gone, Dinah followed them.

"Oracle?"

::Go ahead.::

"There were some men down here, they're planning some sort of hunting game. They didn't say specifically who they're hunting but my guess is that it isn't quail."

:Did they say his name or where they're going to start this 'game'?::

"No, I'll follow them. Where is Huntress?"

::She's still got her hands full with a couple of thugs on the other side of town. Her comm is off, as usual.::

"They are going to kill someone, Barbara. I have to follow them and help who ever they're hunting."

::Wait Dinah, I'll call the police.::

"If you call the police the man that is organizing this could kill the prisoner. The guy behind this whole thing did tell the others that the reason why he's doing it is to show everyone who's boss."

::I knew this couldn't be good. Follow them and be careful. Keep constant contact.::

### PART 3

At Clock Tower Barbara tried to contact Helena unsuccessfully.

Dinah looked down the tunnel as the men moved down the sewers towards other areas that branched off from the main tunnel. They moved in different tunnels waiting for the tracking device to activate.

Follow them all was impossible so she choose one. It was the only way to find and help the "prey."

Just as she was about to get closer to him, she heard the device emit a loud beeping sound. Afraid that he'd see her, she ducked behind a wall to stay out of sight.

The man kept a watchful eye on the device as he headed down the tunnel and to the corner. The device was beeping faster, indicating that he'd found the prey, but when he looked across it there were two people: both dressed in black, side-by-side, and wearing hoods to conceal their faces.

"Which one?" he muttered under his breath as his eyes shifted back and forth from one person to the other.

He watched as the two split up, each going their separate ways. One of them began running down the sewer and after a few moments it was clear who the prey was.

Quickly reaching for his gun, he removed the safety and fired.

The sound of gunfire from one of the other participants echoed through the walls of the old sewers. He too had been watching the prey from afar.

Dinah got to her feet and watched two men running by another tunnel in an attempt to catch their target. More gunshots sounded.

Following them, Dinah took some shortcuts and managed to get ahead of the men.

:Dinah?: Barbara's voice came booming through her ear.

"I'm here."

::You okay?:

"I haven't been able to get close enough to see who they're hunting. It's like a giant maze down here! I can't follow all of them at once."

::Let me pull up the map. Okay, you're walking toward a small square.::

"Yes... I can see it. They are there now," Dinah whispered. "I'm gonna try and get closer." Dinah ran off towards the area the men were in.

There were now three men at various spots in the square, each one hell-bent on finding their prey and ultimately winning the game.

Dinah kept silent and hidden behind two barrels as she watched two of the men begin to argue.

"It's hurt," One of them said as he kneeled on the floor, his fingers touching blood spots on the ground.

"Good, I think nailed it in leg," the other one said.

Angry, the other man stood up and got into the other man's face. "I'm winning this game so don't even think about taking my money."

"Screw you, you probably haven't even hit your mark so I wouldn't go bragging about anything just yet. Besides, I heard that you're not very good at hitting any mark. Just ask your wife."

Dinah watched as the man lunged out towards the other man, grabbing his gun away from him and shooting him square in the chest. He'd dug the gun into the man's body in order to muffle the sound.

The man's body flopped to the ground in a lifeless heap as the other man cleaned his fingerprints off the gun and tossed it onto the ground. "I'm not wasting my bullets on you, you worthless piece of shit." He spat on the dead man's body before walking away, leaving the man to bleed out all over the tunnel's floor.

"Well," Dinah thought "one down, two to go." When the man was gone, Dinah moved from her hiding place and looked the spots of blood all over the ground.

"Oracle, their prey is hurt," she said into her comm. "I need move faster." She walked deeper into the tunnel but lost sight of the man due to the distraction of the killing and examining the spots.

"Shit," she swore to herself. "I lost him."

Dinah tried unsuccessfully to find him, but after a few minutes she could hear gunshots. With the echo from the tunnel, it was hard to figure out which direction it was coming from.

She ran off towards where she thought the shots may have come from but didn't see any sign of the men. She did, however find more blood, and lots of it.

After a while, Dinah checked her watch and sighed with frustration as it had been nearly one hour since she began following the men. Finally, she found them.

Hiding near a dark wall, she watched as the men assembled in a small area of one of the tunnels. They wasted no time getting down to business.

"Gentlemen. I see that there are now only two of you. Perhaps our prey was a bit too much for Mr. McDonough to handle. Oh well, no worries."

"So where's our play thing?" one of the players asked.

"Ah, we'll get to that right now. One of my men is bringing it here now. He found it lying on the ground near one of the water tanks."

"So...we failed..."

"No, it's still alive, but I don't know yet who hit the target and how many times. I just know is hurt. But first, I need you to give back your weapons."

The men handed over the weapons and the man inspected the clips. "Hmm, each of you used up all of your bullets I see."

The organizer's right-hand-man, Joey, entered the area dragging a body by their jacket. He got the person on their knees, holding them up by placing his big arm around their neck. He yanked off the hood and Dinah's stomach plummeted to the ground. It was Helena.

Her face was bloody on one side and she looked like she was struggling to stay conscious. Her face showed the pain she was in but with the black outfit Dinah wasn't able to tell where she was wounded.

Dinah didn't know what to do. She was too close to the men to call Barbara, they'd hear her for sure. She couldn't move from her position, they'd see her and kill her in a heartbeat. And she was afraid to storm them and risk Helena's life.

Joey shoved Helena to the ground on her back and pinned her down, smirking as she moaned in pain. Her hands were bound tightly behind her back with thick rope. The splintery material bit into her wrists causing them to bleed.

"Damn," one of the men gasped. "We hunted down a chick?"

"Not your average girl next door. I trust she gave you one hell of a chase, right?"

"Definitely," one of the players answered.

"I've had my eye on her for quite some time and I knew that she was perfect prey for my game," the man said as he knelt down beside her and touched her cheek. "Today I prepared a trap for her...and worked. She's not as smart as she thinks she is."

Despite the pain, Helena glared at the man. "I'll...kill you." Her voice was ragged, rough and reeked of pain.

"Oh really?" he laughed, "somehow I doubt that."

Joey ripped the material by her shoulder, exposing a gory, bloody bullet wound. With a pair of tweezers, he dug into the wound Helena gritted her teeth and tried to breathe through the pain that was coursing through her body. He pulled out a blue bullet, holding it up for the others to see. Helena did her best to stifle her whimpers of pain.

The organizer shined a flashlight on the bloody bullet. "Score one for blue."

"Son of..." Helena made an attempt at getting up but Joey pushed her back down, slamming her head on the hard concrete. Dazed, Helena hardly felt the pain of Joey's tweezers digging into the bullet wound in her thigh.

"Score another for blue." He looked Huntress and smiled "Girl, you are really amazing. I'm rather sorry that this will be your first and last night to play with us." He pointed at the blood oozing from her wounds. "Looks like these guys got you good."

Dinah felt the tears welling up in her eyes as she watched the torture that Helena was going through. She felt helpless and frozen with fear, but Helena's scream of pain knocked her out of her trance.

Joey had ripped out a yellow bullet from above Helena's hip, and he definitely wasn't gentle about it's removal.

"Argh!! You son-of-bitch!" she yelled before holding her breath against the pain.

"Don't worry honey, we have two more yet." Joey said turning her roughly to her back. She grunted. He looked the bleeding wound near her ribcage and smiled. "Next one coming up!" he teased.

"That's enough!" Dinah mumbled under her breath as she focused on Joey's mind and used her powers against him.

Joey dropped the bloody tweezers and clutched his head in pain.

"Joey?" the man asked with concern.

"Make it stop!" Joey screamed.

Dinah heightened her power and tossed Joey into a nearby wall, knocking him unconscious.

"What the fuck?" one of the men gasped.

Dinah turned her attention to the ring leader of the group and played with his mind, making him think he was being choked to death. Soon, the man fell to the ground, unmoving.

The two men that had been the players in the game looked on in shock.

"What's the matter? You guys afraid?" Dinah asked sarcastically as she stepped out of the shadows.

"D---Dinah?" Helena mumbled as she noticed her friend a few feet away.

One of the men ran at Dinah, but didn't get far before he found himself being flung across the tunnel, slamming into the solid concrete wall and sliding to the ground like a ragdoll. His head split open like a cantaloupe and leaked blood onto the dark cement of the tunnel's wall.

Helena made a feeble attempt to get to her feet, but she couldn't find the strength. She was back down on the cement in a matter of seconds.

The other man stood where he was and was visibly frightened. His bottom lip trembled and his hands went up in front of him as Dinah walked closer to him.

"Don't! Don't kill me!"

"What?"

"Please! Please don't kill me!" he begged.

"You have the balls to beg me not to kill you yet you and your sick friends here had no problem with almost killing her."

"I...I..."

"Dinah no!" Helena shouted supporting her body on her good arm. "Don't..." Helena tried to stand up again but her legs were weak and she hit the ground once again.

Dinah lashed out at the man and punched him in the face, knocking him out cold. She wanted to continue with the beating, but Helena needed her help.

"Oracle?!?" Dinah's voice was tainted with worry and Barbara could sense it.

"What's happening? What's wrong?"

Dinah ran toward her friend and cut her bounds. "It's Huntress. She's hurt really bad and needs help."

::Wh-what? How did...:: Barbara muttered, shocked ::They were hunting her??::

"She was their prey. I think they trapped her and turned her mic off." She kneeled next to her friend and examined her wounds. "She's been shot."

::How many?::

"Geezus." Dinah felt her heart jump out of her chest as she felt all around her friend's body. "One in her right shoulder, two in her thigh, one near her hip and another in her side. She's bleeding all over the place!"

::Any of them go all the way through?::

Dinah made a second sweep of Helena's body. "No."

Barbara felt her stomach flip flop. ::I'm on my way!::

Helena curled into a ball, hugging her stomach. Her breathing was labored and shallow.

Dinah moved Helena's hand away from one of the wounds slowly. "Easy Helena, everything is okay. Let me see it," She whispered to her. The wound near her ribcage was bleeding the worst of them all. Placing her hand over it, she applied pressure to try and stop it.

Helena moaned in pain and Dinah did her best to comfort her. She cradled Helena's head on her lap; the brunette opened her eyes and looked at her with glassy eyes. She tried to talk but Dinah held her tightly. "Shhh, Barbara's coming." She stroked her hair and was thankful that it was somewhat dark in the tunnel so she wouldn't have to see all the blood. The brunette tried to remain conscious but her whole body was a mass of pain.

::Okay,:: Dinah heard Barbara's voice, ::I need you to get her up to street level. There's an exit about 50 yards from you, to your left. Can you get her there without moving here around too much?::

"I'll try my best." Dinah looked around and found a metal ladder leading to the street.

She leaned over Helena and moved her arms behind her back. "Helena, I need to move you. Barbara is going to take us home. I'll try to not be rough."

Helena couldn't answer, she merely nodded. Her vision began to blur and she passed out.

## **PART 4**

Alfred was waiting for them when they arrived. He helped Dinah carry Helena into the med lab where they laid her down on the table. Barbara wheeled toward a table and grabbed a pair of scissors. "Help me get these clothes off her. All this dark clothing, I can't tell where her wounds are." Barbara wheeled back toward the unconscious brunette.

1. Dinah helped her mentor cut Helena's clothes off while Alfred sterilized the surgical equipment.

"Dear God," Barbara gasped as she looked at the five bloody bullet wounds that were scattered throughout Helena's body.

"They took out three of the bullets already," Dinah said as she pointed to the wounds. "The one in her shoulder, the one near her hip and that one closest to her knee."

Barbara shook her head. "Friggin' barbarians. They probably did more damage just ripping them out like that." She inspected the wounds and could see the torn tissue. Helena was going to have a lot of healing to do, meta or no meta.

Dinah flinched each time Barbara pulled out a bloody bullet and dropped it onto the metal tray beside her. The sound seemed obnoxiously loud as she envisioned the spent bullets being pulled from Helena's body.

"That's the last one," Barbara said as she wiped the sweat from her brow with her arm. "The scan's not showing any others so we need to get those wounds cleaned and stitched up."

Alfred came over to Barbara's side and assisted her in cleaning Helena's wounds. He poured saline solution onto the bloody holes in Helena's thigh, immediately turning the clear solution red as it mixed with her blood.

Dinah watched the blood flow over Helena's leg, onto the table and splash onto the floor. She swallowed hard and tried to fight the dizziness that came over her, but she lost that battle as her eyes rolled up in her head and she fainted onto the floor.

"Dinah!" Barbara gasped.

Alfred peeked over at the fallen girl. "She's alright, let her be. Miss Helena needs our attention right now."

## **PART 5**

They'd worked on Helena for most of the night. Barbara stayed by her side after they moved her to her room. The brunette was in the grip of fever all night. It wasn't until the morning when it lowered a bit. Who ever had done this to her was a insane psycho. The bullets were small enough to penetrate but not kill her with a single shot. Five gunshot wounds was pushing it close. A sixth may have killed her for sure. Barbara shuddered at the thought.

Helena began to stir around 9:30am and Barbara was ready to keep her injured friend from getting out of the bed. She knew her all too well.

Helena blinked herself awake and immediately sighed as the pain presented itself. Her body was on fire and throbbed with pain. "Shit," she swore as she gritted her teeth.

Barbara held her hand, shaking her head as she saw Helena try to sit up. "Easy, no getting up," Barbara said softly as she put her hand to her friend's forehead. "You've got a high fever, some of the wounds are infected. That place was dirty and by the looks of some of your wounds they weren't real concerned with removing those bullets the right way."

Helena didn't answer. The fever and the pain kept her silent. And silence was something Helena usually didn't know the meaning of.

Barbara looked at her, feeling her own heart aching as she watched the pained look on her face. "I've given you as much medication as I can. I wish I..."

"It's fine," Helena mumbled, "I'm fine..."

Barbara didn't believe her, it was obvious that the pain was intense. Being shot five times, manhandled, and having bullets ripped from your body couldn't feel very good.

"Dinah?" Helena whispered in a soft, barely audible voice.

"I sent her to school. I was hoping it would keep her mind off of what happened last night."

Helena shifted in the bed, grunting as even the slightest movement sent waves of pain thundering through her body. She closed her eyes.

"Do you remember what happened before you were shot?" Barbara asked.

Preparing to speak, Helena took a deep breath. "Ambushed at the mill. Too many of them. Thought I could handle it, but they didn't fight clean..."

Barbara put her hand on Helena's arm, rubbing it as she spoke.

"Someone drugged me. I fell, they overwhelmed me. One of them, a big guy took me somewhere. Put a hood over my head, tied my hands up." She took another deep breath and let it out slowly. "I tried to call you but they had ripped off my necklace. The tall guy told me that I had an opportunity to live if I ran. The drugs...confused me. Before I could say something they started to shoot so I ran. They kept shooting, I kept running..." Helena struggled to stay awake and finish her story, but her eyelids grew heavier by the second. "There were so many...they were everywhere..and..."

Barbara patted Helena's arm. "That's enough for now. Rest. We can talk later."

"It hurt so bad." A single tear rolled down Helena's cheek. "Why?...who?"

Barbara fought back her own tears as she wiped Helena's tear away. "Sleep. Let it go for now."

"I tried...to call you...I...tried..." Helena mumbled before drifted off to sleep.

Barbara brushed the hair away from Helena's face as she let her own tears flow.

## **PART 6**

Helena slept for most of the day and Barbara never left her side.

Alfred entered the room with a tray full of food. "Miss Barbara, you must eat something," he insisted as he set the tray down on the small table next to the bed. "I shall sit with Miss Helena in your absence."

Barbara checked Helena's temperature again, almost ignoring what Alfred was saying. "Her fever finally broke about an hour ago. I just want to be sure it stays that way."

"Honestly, if I was able to take care of Master Bruce I am surely able to take care of his daughter. Now eat or I shall have to force feed you myself."

"I'm sorry, Alfred. I don't mean to imply that you're not capable of taking care of her," Barbara whispered to him as he sat next to her. "I'm just...I'm afraid to leave her. I've never seen her this hurt before." She could feel the tears beginning to swell up again in her eyes and she did all she could to hold them back.

Alfred patted her hand. "I understand. This isn't an easy line of work and one hopes and prays that situations such as this never occur." The old man chuckled a bit. "I'll be honest, Miss Helena's condition scared the dickens out of me as well."

Barbara smiled, thankful for Alfred's comforting words.

Helena groaned as she began to wake up and Barbara was right there by her side.

"Where am I?" Helena asked with a confused look.

"You're at the Clocktower. Here, drink this," Barbara said as she helped Helena drink a glass of water.

Helena took a few sips, thankful for the cool liquid that soothed her dry throat. "I feel like hell."

"No offense but you look like hell." Barbara smiled, hoping to lighten the mood.

"I need to sit up," Helena muttered through a groan of pain as she began to sit up.

Barbara wanted to protest but Helena had already gotten herself up. "Here," she said as she stacked up the pillows behind Helena, "lie back."

Helena eased herself back down and let out a long sigh.

"It's probably best that you not lie flat any longer anyway. I don't want your lungs filling up with fluid." Helena watched Barbara snap into medical mode as she checked her vitals. "I need to clean your wounds and change the bandages. You woke up at the perfect time," Barbara said sarcastically.

"Lucky me."

"Miss Helena, it's nice to see you looking better. Would you like something to eat?"

"No thanks, Alfred. I'm not real hungry. Maybe a little later?"

"Very well. I'll be in the kitchen should either of you need anything."

"Thanks, Alfred," Barbara said as she dug into a bag full of bandages, antiseptics and various other medical supplies. "How's the pain?" she asked Helena who was rubbing the sore spots on her side.

"Not as bad, but it's still got a good bite to it."

"I'll give you some more meds after we get these wounds cleaned."

Awkward silence hung in the air as Barbara cleaned and redressed the wound in Helena's shoulder.

When Barbara moved to the wounds in Helena's thigh, Helena shattered the silence. "I lost track of how many times they got me."

"Five," Barbara said flatly as she grimaced a bit at the two wounds. The skin was black and blue, swollen and bloody. The black stitches that held the delicate skin together made them look even more severe.

Barbara poured antiseptic on the wounds and Helena yelped out in pain. "Shit!! That fuckin' burns!"

Barbara tried to keep Helena's hands away from the wound. "Sorry, but I have to keep them free of more infection. The one above your knee was full of dirt and grime when we got you back here. The tissue inside is torn up pretty bad. You're gonna have to stay off your feet for a while and give it enough time to heal properly. If not, then plan on having a limp for the rest of your life and say good-bye to jumping from rooftop to rooftop without any pain."

Helena looked away from Barbara as she digested the words and felt anger brewing inside her.

Barbara finished up with the wounds on her thigh and moved to the ones on her left side. She poured antiseptic onto the wounds and watched as Helena leaned her head back, biting on her bottom lip as the burning pain seared through her senses. "Almost done."

"I'm gonna kill that son-of-a-bitch."

"Get in line," Barbara responded as she dabbed at the wound by Helena's ribcage. "The bullet took a good-size chip out of your bottom rib. Took a while to get all the fragments out of you." Barbara pressed her fingers around the wounded area.

"Ow!!! What the fuck?!?" Helena yelled. "That hurts! Don't!"

"Sorry," Barbara said honestly as she put a gauze pad over the wound and taped it in place. "We'll have to check and change the dressing again in a few hours."

Helena sucked in a breath and blew it out slowly.

"Get some more rest. I'll come by in another hour to check on you." Barbara smiled slightly and began to wheel herself out of the room.

"Barbara?"

Barbara stopped and turned back around to face Helena.

"Thank you."

Barbara smiled. "I'm glad you're okay. Now get some rest."

Helena watched Barbara leave the room and after a few minutes she heard a slight knock at the door. Looking up, she saw Dinah.

"Want another visitor?"

"Come on in, kid."

Dinah walked into the room and sat down in the chair by the bed. "How are you feeling?"

"Like shit, but thanks for asking."

There was a long pause as Dinah tried to think of what to say. She always felt a distance between her and Helena whenever they were alone together. It felt awkward.

"So where'd that sick bastard go? Did we lock him up so I can have a few cracks at him when I'm able to get out of this bed?"

Dinah lowered her head for a moment before raising it. "I don't know where he is. I went back there this morning and they were gone."

"What? You let them get away?!?"

"You were bleeding all over the place. I needed to help you!"

Helena sighed in frustration as she leaned back into the pillows, shaking her head.

"If I didn't get you out of there you'd be dead right now." Dinah stood up, tears filling her eyes.

"I...I guess I'm just...I want to kill the bastard before he does this to someone else."

Dinah could see the pain in Helena's face. "I want to get him as much as you. Seeing you like that scared me. I don't EVER want to go through that again. I feel...responsible."

Helena's brow creased. "What? Why?"

Dinah wiped the tears from her eyes. "I was one step behind the whole way. I found the blood and I couldn't find you. When I did find you, I watched what they did to you. I didn't know what to do. Maybe if..."

"Don't! This isn't your fault. You did what you could. Don't blame yourself. If anything, steer your anger towards that prick that did this and help me find him. I'm useless at the moment so you need to help me." Helena looked towards the door to make sure Barbara wasn't coming. "We need to keep this between me and you, Barbara doesn't need to know."

"But she'll have both of our heads if..."

"If we tell her we'll have to do everything by-the-book and it'll take forever to catch him. If we do this on our own we have a better chance at finding him and stopping him before he...kills someone." The words hit home for Helena as she thought about how close she'd come to death.

"Okay. What do you want me to do?"

"When you're out on sweeps, ask around to see if there's a buzz going around. Talk to Peter who's the bouncer at Cue. He's cool and is really good with giving reliable info. Tell him what happened to me and I'm sure he'll offer up whatever he can. Then talk to Zen. He's a homeless dude who is usually over on 11th. He's got a carriage with him that has a black Led Zeppelin flag on the side of it. You can tell him I sent you. He's another good source of info."

"Got it."

"We'll see how that goes and if nothing pans out then we'll try a couple of other sources. But let's try these first. Hopefully this dickhead hasn't run too far underground."

Dinah could see that Helena's pain had intensified, judging by the look on her face. "You want me to get Barbara to give you some more pain killers?"

"Nah. I'll tough it out. I want to keep a clear mind."

"Alright. I'm heading out on sweeps in a little while. I'll check in to see if you're awake when I come back."

"I probably will be. I'm all slept out."

"I'll see you later then."

"Be careful."

"I will."

Dinah left the room and Helena sighed with frustration. She wanted to get out of bed and help Dinah track that bastard down, but she thought back to what Barbara had told her about her leg. Still, Helena was determined.

Painfully, she sat up and waited for the pain to lighten up. Swinging her legs over, she placed her feet on the floor and immediately felt the deep throbbing flare up in her thigh. Rubbing the sore spots, she slowly stood up, closing her eyes against the pain and dizziness that enveloped her.

When the dizziness cleared and the pain let up, Helena took a small step forward, swallowing hard against the new dose of pain cause from the movement. She took another step and found herself crashing to the floor.

Her body was consumed with pain and there was no way she was getting up without help, and help was in the form of Barbara wheeling into the room like a madwoman.

"Helena!" she gasped as she saw her friend writhing in pain on the floor. "Alfred!"

Alfred ran into the room to help Barbara get Helena back into bed. "Stubborn little girl. You're just like your father," he said as he scooped the injured girl into his arms and placed her gently back into bed.

"I'm...I'm fine," Helena tried to insist as she grunted and groaned through the pain.

"You're NOT fine, dammit! Stay in this damn bed and DON'T move!" Barbara checked the wounds and found some of stitching had been torn. "Alfred, can you get my suture kit."

"No more needles, come on," Helena pleaded.

"There wouldn't have to be if you'd just listened to me for once!" Barbara shook her head in anger.

Alfred returned with the kit and a small vile and needle. "I think you'll need this as well."

Barbara looked at Alfred and nodded. "I'm afraid so." She took the needle and filled it with the contents of the vile.

Alfred grabbed Helena's arm and held it down.

Barbara quickly tapped on Helena's vein and plunged the needle into her skin, emptying the needle.

"No!" Helena protested as she began to thrash about.

"I'm sorry, Helena. It's the only way I can get you to stay put."

When the needle was empty, she withdrew it from her vein and watched the drug take effect. Helena's eyes began to blink as she tried to remain conscious.

"You...bitch," Helena whispered before drifting off to sleep.

Barbara felt the word sting, but she brushed it off and focused on the task at hand - stitching Helena's wounds back up.

## PART 7

Night turned into morning and morning turned into day by the time Helena had awoken from her painkiller-induced haze. She shook the cloudiness from her mind and noticed Dinah sitting by her side, watching TV with the volume down.

"Hey," Dinah said as she noticed her friend waking up.

"How long have I been out?"

"A while."

It took a few minutes for Helena to fully wake up and when she did she got right down to it. "You go see those guys that I told you about?"

"Yeah," Dinah whispered. "Zen was the only one with info. He told me the guy's name is Henry Bloomington, but everyone knows him as Boom Boom because he used to be a boxer or something back in the day."

"That fat fuck was a boxer?" Helena laughed and then grimaced in pain.

"Doesn't seem possible does it?" Dinah agreed.

"So where is he?"

"I'm supposed to go see Zen tonight to get more info. He had a few people to check with and he told me he'd have more info for me tonight."

"You didn't tell Barbara about any of this right?"

"Not a word, but I noticed that she's got a hefty investigation going on herself. She was up all night last night. I'm kinda worried about her. She's really been on edge these past few days."

"What about the other guys that were there?"

"Zen said that Joey is Henry's right-hand-man, been employed with him for a few years now. No last name on him and not much info. It's like he came out of nowhere."

"And the players?"

"Well, unfortunately I don't have any names but the police have the two men in custody. When they ran from the scene they ended up in an alley and beat the shit out each other."

"What about the third guy?"

"He's dead. I saw one of the guys kill him when we were down in the sewer."

"Great, so the police are going to be hot on Henry's heels too."

"Look at it this way, at least he'll be off the streets."

Helena shook her head. "I want him, Dinah. I want to make him feel the pain that I felt. I want him to beg me to spare his life."

Dinah felt a chill run up her spine. "I understand your anger but..."

"But nothing. You're starting to sound like Barbara!"

"And that's a bad thing?" Barbara said as she entered the room.

The two girls looked towards their mentor, surprised at her sudden appearance.

"You two arguing about something?"

Dinah looked at Helena and then back at Barbara. "No...I...I was just telling Helena that she shouldn't be getting out of bed just yet. She's a little stubborn if you haven't noticed." Dinah looked at Helena and smiled sarcastically. "I have some homework to do before I go out. I'll see you later."

Barbara wheeled over to Helena. "You okay?"

"If you've come in here to pump me full of more drugs you can forget it."

Barbara held up her empty hands. "I come in peace," Barbara joked. "Seriously, are you feeling any better?"

"A little."

Barbara began checking on Helena's wounds, surprised that Helena wasn't protesting.

"I'm sorry I had to do that to you, but..."

"It's okay. I deserved it. I guess I'm just a little frustrated with being cooped up."

Barbara continued checking Helena's wounds. "You're healing well, even despite yesterday's tumble."

"Ow! Easy!"

"Sorry."

"So do we have any leads on our game man?" Helena thought she'd do a little fishing to see what info Barbara would be willing to give up to her.

"Mmm, not much. Still working on it. You shouldn't be worrying about that, let Dinah and I take care of it."

"I just feel so helpless lying here! I want to be involved somehow."

"Your focus needs to be on healing, never mind anything else."

"This sucks."

Barbara felt her emotions begin to leak out. "No, what SUCKS is finding your friend bleeding to death with five bullet wounds in her body. Or what's worse is that you thought everything was okay because you'd just talked to her, but then you find out everything's NOT okay and that if you had only known you could have helped and she wouldn't be lying here right now hurt and in pain." Helena was blown away by Barbara's response and remained silent. "I sat by your side through your fevered dreams and watched helplessly as your body fought off the infection. To be honest, I wasn't sure whether you'd be able to, you were hurt that badly. So don't talk to me about feeling helpless, Helena."

Barbara wheeled away to wipe her tears and get more gauze.

"Barbara, I'm sorry."

Composing herself, Barbara turned back around, clearing her throat. "Please, just let Dinah and I take care of this."

"Okay," Helena said softly. She honestly had no intention of staying out of it, but it's what Barbara needed and wanted to hear.

## **PART 8**

Later that night, Dinah was out on sweeps and had gotten more information from Zen. Henry was supposed to be meeting Joey at a bar on 8th to discuss their next venture.

Wasting no time, she headed over to the bar and waited outside to see if they'd show up. She pulled her hood over her head and close to her face so they wouldn't recognize her.

After about an hour, the two men pulled up in a limo and went into the bar.

Dinah felt like she had to tell Helena what was going on, but she really didn't want to see Helena coming out here in her condition and injuring herself further, so she tailed them alone.

The men sat in a booth at the back of the bar and she got as close to them as possible.

Henry looked over in her direction and she quickly turned away.

Slowly glancing back over, she saw that he was no longer looking at her but the two men were getting up to leave.

She went back outside and duck into a nearby alley to watch for them.

A few minutes passed and she didn't see them. Confused, she walked further out to see if she'd missed them, but she was suddenly struck from behind with a 2x4.

Dazed from the blow, she struggled to remain upright.

"Foolish little girl," Henry spat as he watched Joey lash out towards the blonde, striking her in the face and sending her to the ground.

"What do you want me to do with her, boss?"

"Kick the shit out of her. I think it'll be entertaining to watch."

"I wouldn't if I were you!" a female voice said from a few feet away.

Henry looked up and found a Birdarang flying towards his head. The flying disc smacked him right in the side of the head, sending him crashing to the ground.

"You bitch!" he gasped as he put his fingers to the bleeding wound.

Joey glared at Barbara as she took out another Batarang and let that one fly in his direction.

He snatched it out of the air and clenched it in his hand, ignoring the blood dripping from his palm as the sharp edges dug into his skin. In one quick movement, he hurled the disc back at Barbara.

The only way to avoid being hit was for her to lunge out of her chair. She landed on the ground with a thud and looked up as Joey headed her way.

He reached down and grabbed her by the hair, yanking her up. "What's the matter? Can't run away." He began laughing as he slammed her down to the concrete and gave her a swift kick to the ribs.

"Stop!" Dinah yelled as she turned her powers towards Joey.

Joey turned around, unaffected by her telepathy.

Dinah tried harder but it was no use.

Joey tapped the side of his head. "You're not getting in here ever again, little freak." He stuck out his tongue and showed her a flat piece of metal. "That's keeping you out of my head." He reached down and grabbed Dinah by the front of her jacket, hauling her to her feet before shoving her roughly against the wall. He pinned her there for a moment, watching her squirm, before lifting her and throwing her down onto the ground like he'd done to Barbara.

Barbara was still lying on the ground, unable to move. She'd felt a rib crack under the pressure of being hurled to the ground so she limited her movements.

Henry got up and smiled at the two women lying on the ground in obvious pain. "You two must be good friends with my latest prey. Tell me, did she survive? Huh?"

"Go to hell," Barbara said through gritted teeth.

"Did she tell you how they hunted her down like a dog and shot her like some wild animal? Huh? Did she tell you how much it hurt, the poor baby."

Henry didn't get another word out before he was knocked off his feet by a dark figure. They picked Henry up and flung him into the wall of the alley, kicking him over and over as he slumped to the ground.

Joey tried attacking the person from behind, but he regretted the attack as he soon found himself on the ground in a choke-hold. Joey gasped for breath and clawed at the dark figure's arm in an attempt at freeing himself. After a few moments, his clawing stopped as Joey took his final breath.

Henry jumped on the back of the dark figure and wrestled them to the ground. The two struggled for a few moments and then stopped as both of them became motionless.

The dark figure rolled Henry off of their body and moved away as Henry laid on the ground with a knife protruding from his heart.

The mystery fighter scooped Barbara up and placed her back in her wheelchair before running off into the night.

Dinah managed to get to her feet, fighting the dizziness that overwhelmed her mind, and got Barbara to the van that was parked further down the street.

## **PART 9**

When the two returned to the Clocktower, Dinah summoned Alfred's help in tending to Barbara's wounds.

"You need to have a thorough scan yourself, Miss Dinah."

"A little later, I need to check on Helena."

Dinah went upstairs to the loft's spare room and found it empty. Leaning heavily on the doorway, she shook her head. "I knew it. She never listens."

Dinah stormed downstairs back to the med lab. "Alfred, where's Helena?"

"Helena? Helena's gone?" Barbara asked through her pain.

"She was there earlier," Alfred insisted.

"Well she's not there now." Dinah went back to the loft and found Helena climbing back into bed.

Folding her arms over her chest, she walked over to Helena. "Where the hell were you?" Dinah asked.

"Whoa, I should ask you the same thing. You're bleeding." Helena reached out towards Dinah's face only to have Dinah slap her hand away.

"Why do you do this all the time! Why can't you just let me and Barbara handle things for once?!?"

Helena eased herself down onto the bed. "What the hell are you talking about?"

"Where were you about twenty minutes ago?"

"Here."

"Give me a break. You're like a window, I can see right through you. Where were you, really?"

Helena took a breath and let it out. "Okay. Okay. I was downstairs on Barbara's computer."

Dinah hadn't expected that response. "What?"

"I was poking around to see what information I could find."

"Wait, so you weren't out following us?"

Helena chuckled as much as her wounds would let her. "Are you kidding? It took forever just to get downstairs without being seen."

Dinah put her hand to her head. "I'm...I'm sorry, Helena. I..."

"So what happened? You found him didn't you?"

"Yes. I followed them and Barbara showed up. We both got our asses handed to us. Alfred's down in the med lab with her."

"Is she okay?"

"She's got a cracked rib and maybe a broken arm. We tried to fight them off, but that Joey is friggin' huge."

"Tell me about it."

"Someone dressed in black came out of nowhere and took them both out. I couldn't see who it was, it was too dark. I...I assumed it was you."

"Well, I hate to disappoint you but it wasn't me."

Dinah looked at Helena's hands for cuts just to make sure, but she didn't find any.

"I better go back and check on Barbara. You stay put."

"Yes, mother. And, Dinah...don't tell her I was playing with her computer. She'll kill me."

"Your secret is safe with me."

## **PART 10**

Later that night, Barbara laid in bed as she rested.

Alfred entered with a cup of hot tea. "Here's your tea, as you requested."

"Thanks, Alfred."

"You also have a phone call that you should take." Alfred handed her a small cell phone.

Confused, Barbara took the phone. "Hello?"

"Barbara?"

"Bruce?"

"I just wanted to see that you were safe."

"Oh my God, that was you?"

"Is Helena okay?"

"She's fine. But...you killed those men. You...we don't kill."

"Those men tried to kill my little girl. I'm tired of letting those lowlifes get away with things like that. I've made that mistake already."

"But..."

"Give Helena my love."

The line clicked as Bruce hung up.

Barbara placed the phone on the small table beside the bed and drifted off into the numerous thoughts that roamed around in her head.

~ FIN