



TURBO LOVER
BIRDS OF PREY
FAN FICTION COLLECTION
Volume 2

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

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HARVEST

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

Volume 2

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 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

HARVEST

Written: 4/2004

PART 1

It's now almost midnight and I haven't seen one ounce of action tonight.

At this point I'd much rather be wasting my time catching on the sleep that my body so desperately needs, seeing that I've been pulling some late nights every night for the past week or so.

"Oracle?"

:: Go ahead, Huntress. ::

"This is stupid. I've been out here all night and there's absolutely nothing going on. My butt's starting to fall asleep."

I could hear Barbara sigh through the comm because if she had HER way I'd be out here all damn night.

:: Fine. Call it a night. ::

I couldn't help but smile, I love it when I get what I want. "Huntress out."

I jumped over to the adjacent rooftop, landing squarely on my feet. At that same moment, Barbara's voice came back over my comm.

:: Huntress? ::

That's so damn annoying when she does that - making me think that I'm off the hook and then she goes and changes her mind.

"What?" I couldn't mask the annoyance in the tone of my voice. To be honest, I didn't try very hard to.

:: I just got Intel on a body that's been found at the lumber yard. ::

"Are the police there now?"

:: No. I just got the info from an underground source. They said we should check it out before the police get to it. ::

Okay, now I was intrigued. Cases such as this in which the police are the last to know usually spell trouble. And hell...I love trouble.

"I'm on my way."

:: Dinah's going to meet you there. Oracle out. ::

Great. Another baby-sitting mission. Barbara knows I love those.

I race through the streets and try to envision what it is I'm going to find when I get there. There's got to be something unique about this poor stiff, or else the Intel wouldn't have made it to Barbara.

PART 2

The lumber yard is a little more creepy at night than I had expected. The large machinery look rather menacing in the dark as the shadows play with their appearance. To think that some of the machines are downright deadly with all those sharp blades makes me shudder.

"Huntress!" Dinah calls out as she pulls up in the Hummer.

"Maybe you better wait out here while I check this out."

She climbs out of the Hummer and holds up a pair of transmission glasses. "Barbara wants to see what we see. I think it's safe to say that you wouldn't be caught dead wearing these so I'm going in with you."

I held myself back from commenting by taking a deep breath and letting it out slow and easy. "Fine."

We went into the building, cautious of the possibility that the killer could still be in there.

The place was hauntingly silent, except for the occasional noise of the machinery creaking just from the mere weight.

We scanned the entire first half of the building and made our way to the cutting area. That's when we found him.

From where we were standing all you could see were his legs. As we got closer you could smell the coppery odor of fresh blood. It looked like his top half was under one of the machines.

"Oracle, are you getting this?" Dinah asked as she turned on the glasses and sent the images to Barbara's computer.

:: Uploading them now. ::

We both waited for Barbara's reaction as the images revealed themselves to her.

:: Geezus. Is he pinned under there? ::

I knelt down to get a better look. "No. Looks like someone just stuffed him under there."

:: Pull him out. ::

Dinah looked at me and motioned towards the man's body. "Be my guest."

I snarled at her and grabbed the man's ankles, pulling him out from under the machine. "Holy shit!" I exclaimed at the same time Dinah gasped and covered her mouth at the sight. The man's eyes were wide open and staring straight ahead. The expression of shock and horror was eerily etched on his face. But worst of all...he had a hole in his chest and some of his organs had been ripped out.

"You seeing this shit?" I asked Barbara as I dropped the dead man's ankles and let them fall to the dusty floor.

:: What the hell?? :: Barbara asked with surprise. :: Dinah, zoom in on the wound. ::

She zoomed in and closed her eyes, swallowing back the nausea that was creeping up in her throat.

:: Looks like his liver was ripped out. Like something dove right into his body and yanked it out. Can you get samples? ::

Reaching into my jacket, I pulled out the small baggie of supplies. "I'll get what I can. Do you want us to bring him back for observation?"

:: No, we better not. ::

"I think I'm gonna be sick," Dinah announced as she ran out of the room to toss her cookies.

:: She okay? ::

"She'll be fine. She's gotta learn to deal with this stuff, ya know."

:: Go easy on her, please. I remember you weren't all that comfortable with dead bodies when you first started either. ::

"Yeah, yeah, whatever. I've got some tissue and blood samples."

:: Good enough. I'll see you back here. ::

"Be there in a few," I said as I tucked the samples into my pocket and stood up, looking at the man in an attempt to understand his story. Who would rip someone's liver out like that? Who could break through bone that easily to get at it in the first place?

I left the room and went outside and found Dinah leaning by the Hummer, hands on her knees.

"You want me to drive back?"

"Are you crazy? I don't want to get killed."

The girl had a mouth on her and there were just some times that I really wasn't in the mood for it. Tonight was one of those times.

"Get in car and shut the fuck up or I'll give you a hell ride you'll never forget, one that'll make you puke all night long."

I didn't wait for an answer, I just grabbed the keys from her hand and climbed behind the wheel.

Part 3

Barbara analyzed the samples we'd taken and they didn't tell us much. Hmpf. You'd think that with all that incredible technology she's got she would have been able to turn up something. No such luck.

I found myself back in the same place as the previous night and with the same amount of action...zippo. Is this a bad case of deja vu or what?

I figured a walk might do me some good, and keep me awake, so I get down to street level and prowl around.

It isn't too long before I spot a man at the other end of the street stumbling along. He's probably drunk, but I decide to go investigate just in case.

When I get closer to him I watch him fall to his knees, clutching his side and screaming a bunch of garbled words.

"He...he...help," he slurred as he began to spew blood from his mouth.

I couldn't help but grimace at the disgusting sight. It's not like I hadn't seen people spew blood before, but it's still kinda gross.

He fell to the ground, still holding his side, his fingers in a death grip around the blood-soaked material of his shirt.

"What happened to you?" I asked, trying not to get too close in fear he might spew blood on me and my leather duster.

He reached out and grabbed my ankle, pleading for help. "It...it...don't let..." He coughed up more blood and yelled out in pain.

"It what? What is 'it'?"

His mumbling was impossible to understand so I had to kneel beside him to try and hear him better.

He held onto my pant leg with a death grip as he tried to speak through his pain. His side was all cut up and bloody and when he moved his arm I could see part of his insides hanging out.

"Who did this to you?"

I heard a low growl from a few feet away and quickly looked up. The only sight that greeted me were two red, glowing eyes that peered out of the shadows.

"No!!!" the man screamed as he leaned against me in a desperate attempt to get up.

I stood up and felt my adrenaline kick up a few notches as I readied myself for the "thing" to show itself.

"Don't let it get me!" the man yelled as he tried to crawl away.

I stood my ground and watched the red eyes, but the "thing" never moved.

In an effort to coax it from its hiding place, I flashed my catlike pupils at him. It got a loud growl in response.

"Come on, show yourself. Who are you?"

The eyes blinked and another growl echoed through the street. Then it lowered itself. I got ready for it to pounce, but instead it flew into the air and disappeared.

"What the fuck was that shit?"

I turned back to the man who'd made it across the street, but was now lying on his stomach, panting.

I ran over to him and could see a massive pool of blood around him. "I'll get you some help," I assured him as I activated my comm.

"No!" he gasped as he turned over, reached up and grabbed the front of my duster with both hands. "It's too late for me," he whispered as his eyes began to close. "Ssstop th-that thing." His eyes closed and he let go of my coat as his body had finally succumbed to the severity of his wound.

Before I had a chance to do or say anything, the "thing" swooped down out of nowhere, knocking me out of the way with a strong shove.

Just as I got up, it snatched up the man's body like a rag doll and ran off into the darkness.

I thought about following, but this thing was quick. A little too quick for me.

PART 4

I returned to the Clocktower and trudged out of the elevator. I was tired physically and emotionally and it showed.

"Oh my God, Helena!" Dinah gasped as she launched out of her chair and ran over to me.

Barbara looked up from her monitor and immediately came over as well.

"What?" I asked, a little shocked by the response.

"You're bleeding!" Dinah gasped as she put her hands all over me, searching for the source of the blood.

I brushed her hands away. "It's not mine."

Barbara still stared at me, as if she didn't believe me.

I opened my coat and then moved my hands all over my upper body and even went as far as to lift up my shirt

. "See...not mine."

"If it's not yours then who's is it?" Barbara asked as she grabbed the sleeve of my coat and dragged me towards the kitchen to clean me up.

"Some guy's, I didn't really catch his name before he died right in front of me."

Barbara turned the faucet on and wet some paper towels to help clean the blood off me.

"The guy's guts had been ripped out, similar to the guy from last night." I scrubbed my hands with the liquid soap and watched the crimson water disappear down the drain as I continued my tale. "I didn't get a good look at who or what did it, but I saw it's eyes. Red and mean. They had a glow about them."

Dinah huffed as she laughed. "You sure you didn't have a few out there or something?"

"I'm not making this shit up. I saw two glowing, red eyes from the darkness. The thing growled at me then took off. When I went back over to the guy, the thing came back and pushed me to the ground. It grabbed the guy and ran off with him." I looked at Barbara to see if she may have an explanation, but she was busy cleaning the blood from my coat. "Hello? Anyone think that's rather odd that there's some...some THING out there with glowing, red eyes going around ripping people's organs out?!?"

Barbara stopped cleaning and looked at me. "I can't say that I've heard of such a THING but that's not to say that it isn't real."

That was it. I turned the water off and grabbed a towel as I shoved my way passed the two of them.

"Helena?" Barbara called out to me, surprised at my sudden exit.

I almost didn't turn around but my inner frustrations took over and turned me around. "If you two aren't going to take this shit seriously then there's nothing left to discuss. I'm not sure why all of a sudden you think I've lost my mind when I..."

"Helena? We didn't say we didn't believe you. You're tired, drained and..."

"Wait! Let me get this straight, you say that you're not saying that you don't believe me and yet you say

that I'm tired and drained. In other words, maybe because I'm tired I was just seeing things. So in reality you really don't believe me. And it's funny how you're more concerned about proving me to be a looney tune when another victim's gotten their guts ripped out and I'm standing here covered in their blood!" I turned back around and stormed towards the elevator, my fists clenched by my sides.

"Helena? Helena!"

I ignored Barbara's voice and got into the elevator. I mashed my thumb on the "door close" button until the heavy doors closed behind me. Then I closed my eyes as I swallowed down my rage.

Barbara was right, I am tired and I am drained, but I did NOT imagine those eyes or the "thing" that grabbed that guy.

PART 5

Barbara left several messages on my machine by the time I made it to my apartment. I erased them all without listening to them.

I'm sure she's tried to get me through my comm link too, but I really could give a shit right now. It's off and it's staying off.

As I toss my coat onto the back of a chair, I go to the fridge and grab a beer. Busting it open, I take a few swigs and then collapse onto my newspaper-littered sofa. I don't think I've even read any of the papers thoroughly, just read a page here and there and tossed them down.

Leaning my head back, I can't help but replay the fight between myself, Barbara and Dinah over and over in my head. I don't know I'm allowing myself to think about it, other than the fact that I'm sick of Barbara acting like she knows everything and everyone else around her is a babbling idiot. I worry about Dinah sometimes, being she hangs around with Barbara so much. I fear that she too will start acting like a snotty know-it-all and then I'd have two people that would soon be eating my fist.

Taking another sip of my beer, I get up and drag myself into my bedroom where I plunk down on the bed. I set my beer on the night stand and laid down only for a minute, but it was one minute too long because I fell asleep in a matter of seconds.

PART 6

Those eyes. Those red, glowing eyes. They're staring at me. I can almost feel them burning a hole through me.

They blink and disappear into the darkness for a split second and then they're there again. Blood red and glowing with evil.

Just as I'm about to walk towards them, I see them narrow and then I hear the growl. The growl is a dull rumble and then an ear-drum-blowing roar as it crouches and jumps at me.

The adrenaline in my veins is like an out-of-control tidal wave and I soon realize that it's just a dream as I bolt upright in my bed, panting and sweating as my heart thumps wildly against my chest wall. "Holy shit," I exclaim as I lick my lips and swallow hard as I continue to breathe heavily.

I look over at the clock and realize it's midmorning, so I drag myself out of bed and into the bathroom to take a shower before heading out to track down this freak who's now invaded my dreams.

PART 7

I spent a good part of the afternoon and early evening asking around about this red-eyed thing that's been sucking organs out of people and not one person has given me any information. I find it really hard to believe that I'm the only one that's seen this thing.

I have a feeling that a few people that I talked to have seen it and are afraid to admit it. One in particular comes to mind because when I asked him about it he nearly pissed his pants. He claimed he didn't know what I was talking about, but his reaction said the opposite. So, I'm keeping an eye on him. Perhaps he's the next target? In a way I hope he is so I can find out who this son-of-a-bitch is and stop him before he kills somebody else.

As I sit on this rooftop, watching the man down at street level, I put my finger to my comm set. I lightly trace it so I'm sure not to activate it because I'm still wondering if I should. Barbara and I have had it out many times before, and this won't be the last time, but it's so damn annoying.

I want to contact her because I could use some more info, but on the other hand I...

"So you're just gonna write us both off and do things your way from now on, huh?"

I was so lost in thought I didn't even hear Dinah sneak up behind me. My bad, that could get me killed.

I don't turn around, I don't want to give her the satisfaction. "What? And you and Barbara don't already do things your own way? But then again, your way is always right. What an idiot I am, I totally forgot."

Dinah approaches and stands next to me. "Look, she's been at this a hell of a lot longer than the two of us so I'm going to put more stock in what she's got to say."

That one stung, and I glared at her to let her know it.

"I don't mean that I'm never going to listen to what you have to say, but sometimes Barbara's right. And sometimes...well...Barbara's right when she says you're pig-headed and..."

"I'm not quite sure why you bothered to track me down other than to basically tell me 'fuck you,' in so many words."

Dinah uncrossed her arms and huffed. "I'm being honest with you. I want to work WITH you, not against you, but I think you really need to listen to me and Barbara sometimes."

I stood up and got in her face, pointing finger and all. "Smarten up, she's using you in order to make you into her little Minnie Me. She tried that shit with me and it didn't work. You've proven that you're easily influenced and she's using that to her advantage. She's using your weakness as her personal gain."

Dinah's bottom lip began to quiver and I knew that any minute she was going to bust out into tears, happens every time.

Guess what...I was wrong.

Her fist buried itself in my ribcage before I could blink an eye. I hit the ground gasping for air and grunting in pain. We've sparred before and she's never hit me with such force.

"I'm not weak!" she spat as she kicked me hard in the ribs, doubling my pain. "Take it back!" she yelled as she used her telekinesis to lift me off the ground and then slam me back down.

At least one of my ribs cracked under the force and each breath caused more pain.

"I said TAKE IT BACK!" she screamed as I flew into the air once again, but this time I was thrown towards the ledge of the rooftop.

I crashed into the stone wall, rolled onto the ledge on my back and fell backwards over the ledge. Luckily, I grabbed onto a metal bar on the fire escape on the way down, or else I would have splattered all over the ground.

My ribs screamed at me as I hung at least six stories in the air from a small metal bar.

Sucking in a breath, I swung my legs over towards the fire escape and hooked them around some other bars of the structure so I could get inside to the stairway.

I managed to get to the stairs and took a moment to clutch my side as I tried to breathe through the pain. Then, I began walking down towards the street.

I jumped off the stairs and crashed onto the ground. The harsh movement cause the crack in my ribs to expand and break. I've broken ribs before and this time was no different in that it hurt like hell. I think it hurt more knowing who caused the damage.

Leaning against the brick wall of the building, I took a moment to gather myself before attempting to get up.

:: Huntress?!? :: I hear Barbara yell in my ear.

"Oracle?" I gasp in pain-filled yet confused voice. I never turned my comm on so how did she...

:: I overrode your comm in order to contact you. Have you seen Dinah? ::

Had I ever. "Yeah," was all I could manage to say.

:: Where is she? Is she with you right now?:: Barbara's voice reeked of panic and fear.

"No," I grunted as I swallowed hard. "She was just on the rooftop with me." My voice barely spoke the words because it was getting harder to breathe.

:: I need you to keep tabs on her until I get out there, but you need to stay away from her. She's been infected! ::

My sleepy-pain-filled eyes shot open as I heard the word. "What? Infected?"

:: We were out last night and she was attacked by the same monster that you saw. When I got her back to the Clocktower, she started showing signs of heightened aggression. She... ::

Dinah walked out of the darkness and stood in front of me, stealing my attention away from Barbara's voice.

:: Huntress? :: Barbara called out.

I clutched my side as I got to my feet, ready for her attack.

:: Huntress?!? ::

Dinah folded her arms over her chest as she smiled evilly at me. It sent a shiver up my spine because this wasn't the Dinah that I knew.

"You need help, Dinah."

:: Huntress?!? She's there with you? ::

"Yes," I said flatly and softly.

:: I'm on my way! ::

Dinah broke out in a fit of laughter. "You really think Barbara's gonna come out here and save your sorry ass after all the things you said?"

"She's coming out here to help you. You've been infected by that...that freak!"

"He's not a freak!"

I should have kept my big mouth shut because I soon found myself being lifted off the ground and hurled towards a storefront window.

The sharp shards cut through my coat and dug into my flesh as I broke through the glass. The sound of the breaking glass was sharp and deafening.

I lay still for a moment on a bed of broken glass as I tried to get my bearings together.

"Aw. Did that hurt?" Dinah taunted from the sidewalk.

I tried to sit up but immediately felt a sharp, burning pain in my already wounded side. At first I thought I'd broken more ribs, but looking down I could see that I'd been impaled by a large shard of glass.

I didn't have much time to think about it because Dinah climbed through the window and hauled me up into a sitting position as she grabbed onto the lapel of my coat.

"I'm sorry that I had to be so rough with you, but you need to be a little more open-minded and a little more closed-mouthed."

Trying to stay alert, I did my best to keep my eyes from rolling back into my head. The pain was nagging at my brain to shut my body down, but I couldn't pass out because he was behind her.

He growled and snarled as saliva dripped from the huge fangs that protruded from his mouth.

If I had to describe him, he'd definitely be something out of the movie Alien because he didn't look human.

"Let me introduce you," Dinah said as she held onto the leather tighter and dragged me out to the sidewalk.

The pain was excruciating. In fact, it was so bad, I wanted to cry.

She let go of my jacket and I flopped to the ground, immediately rolling onto my right side in order to take the pressure off the other side. I was bleeding everywhere and with the glass poking out of the wound it was hard to put my hands over it to get it to stop.

"This is Helena, oh, I mean Huntress. Sorry, looks like I've given away your little secret. She likes to play superhero so she's got a code name."

"Oracle?" I whispered in a desperate, whimpering cry. But there was no answer.

"My new friend here's had to 'borrow' some organs from unsuspecting donors in order to stay alive. He's

quite intelligent. He's even performed the transplants on himself, believe it or not."

The alien-like creature stuck his chest out to display the nasty, scarred skin that looked like it had been cut and sewn back together with rope and a ski pole.

"He needs a heart and I think yours is the strongest one that I know of. So..."

"I don't think so," Barbara said as she wheeled up behind them, gun in-hand.

The creature turned around and lunged towards Barbara. I heard three shots ring out and then heard a loud thud as he fell to the ground. My stomach rolled as I saw thick, green fluid leak from his body and begin pooling around him.

"You bitch!!" Dinah yelled as she turned towards Barbara who was raising a gun at her.

"Dinah, no!!" I tried to yell, but it came out more like a whisper.

I closed my eyes and gritted my teeth against the pain as I heard two shots ring out. I quickly looked over and saw Dinah fall to the ground.

My body couldn't take it anymore and finally shut down.

PART 8

I felt a warm hand touch mine. Just the sensation alone hitting my nerves woke me up.

I immediately attempted to sit up, but the pain reintroduced itself to me and I laid back down. Not sure how or why I had forgotten about it. I guess your body tends to work in mysterious ways.

"You okay?" Barbara asked as she rubbed her thumb over the back of my hand.

It took me a moment for everything to register in my brain and to notice that Barbara was sitting beside me. Then I remembered what had happened to Dinah.

I yanked my hand away from her in disgust. "I can't believe you shot her!"

Barbara looked down and sighed heavily. "I..."

"There's no way you can justify your..."

"She didn't shoot me," Dinah said as she appeared in the doorway.

Okay, maybe it was the medication talking, but I could have sworn I just heard Dinah speak and now I think she's standing right in front of me.

"Well, sorta," Dinah explained as she limped into the room.

"I...I thought..." For once in my life I was at a loss for words.

"I shot her with two tranquilizers, heavy duty ones. It was the only way I could get her back to the lab to give her the serum."

"Heavy duty is putting it mildly," Dinah added as she eased herself down on a chair by the end of my bed, rubbing her thigh.

"So...you're yourself again?"

"Yeah," Dinah nodded as she looked at me. Her eyes moved down towards my injured, bandaged ribs and she started to cry.

"Yep, you're back to normal, you're crying."

Barbara gave me a shove.

"Ow! Easy!" I yelped as the pain kicked itself up a notch.

Dinah sniffed and wiped her eyes. "I'm so sorry, Helena. I didn't..."

I put up my hand to stop her. "You don't have to be sorry. It wasn't you."

"But I said some pretty nasty things on top of knocking you senseless and..."

"I think we're even with the nasty talk part. The other part, however....I think I smell a rematch coming soon."

"Oh no you don't!" Barbara interrupted as she shook her head in protest.

I winked at Dinah to let her know I was trying to get Barbara all riled up and she smiled as she wiped her tears away.

"I don't want to see you out of this bed for a few days, you hear me? If I catch you two in the training room so help me. Is anyone even listening to me?"

"Oh yeah, we're listening," I said with sarcasm.

"I mean it, Helena."

"Alright, alright. I hear you."

"And you, I want you to get back to bed. You should be resting."

Dinah got up and began limping towards the door. "I'll come by later, Helena."

"Okay. Bring your boxing gloves."

"Helena!" Barbara snapped.

"What? I'm kidding."

I let Barbara stew in it for a few minutes and watched the angered expression on her face melt away.

"I'll let you get some rest, but I just want to say that I'm sorry if I doubted you on this one. I had no right to dismiss the issue and not take you seriously. I'm sorry."

I thought for a moment in order to choose my words carefully. Yes, it's something I've been working on. "I accept your apology, but I wish you would cut me more slack sometimes. We don't always have to do things your way."

"I agree, but sometimes your way is a little more violent and aggressive than I'd like it to be so..."

"All I ask is that you trust my way once in a while. In this 'business' you don't always get more with honey than you do with vinegar."

Barbara took my words and nodded. "You're right. Sometimes we can't be so passive about things. I think I was just afraid of not knowing what we were up against and I guess I tried to slow you down. I was afraid that you were gonna run off into the streets and hunt the thing down like a wild cowboy."

"I did anyway so how did your way work, exactly?" I was anxious to see how she was going to talk her way out of this one.

Barbara was silent and nodded a few times. "It didn't work. Okay. You happy now?"

"What? What was that? Did you say your way didn't work?"

"Helena," she said in an aggravated tone. "I'll try to be more open to your way now and then."

"Good. It's a start."

"I know we're completely different people with completely different styles so I think we need to meet each other half way and see how that goes?"

Deep down inside I never wanted to do anything her way, just seemed to take too long and contained limited to no action. But I knew that I had no choice, so I extended my hand and she took it. "Deal."

"Deal."

I'm totally holding her to this, so let's hope for her sake she meant what she said.

~FIN

BOMBSHELL

Written: 4/2004

PART 1

I had just cleaned up a fight between two drunks down on the south side of town when Barbara called me on my comm.

:: Huntress? ::

"Go ahead."

:: Just got word of a robbery at the North Street Bank. Police have been dispatched so perhaps... ::

"I know, I know. See what I can get from Reese."

:: Keep in contact. Oracle out. ::

I turned my comm off and rolled my eyes. I'm waiting for the day that she asks me to bark for her since she's always telling me what to do.

Whatever.

I race towards the bank and find the street littered with cops and their flashing lights. Radio transmissions fill the night air and I have to laugh. They sound so official over the radio, as if they know what's going on. In reality, they have no clue. It's quite amusing sometimes.

I spot Reese coming out of the bank, heading over to his car. He's alone so I saunter over to him to see what info he'll offer up.

"Someone wanted a withdrawal after banking hours I take it?"

Reese looked up from his notepad and looked at me. "Something like that."

Okay. I guess it was time to go fishing.

"Amateurs? Pros? What are we talkin'?"

Reese folded up his notepad and tucked it into the pocket inside his jacket. "Not sure."

He was starting to piss me off with his one-word answers.

"Not sure or you won't tell me?"

He sighed and rubbed his hand over his chin. "Look, Huntress I can't give you any information. The last time I did I nearly lost my job."

"Fine," I said as I put my hands up, letting him know I wasn't going to push.

"I'm sorry, I..."

"No. It's okay, I understand." I shrugged and back away from him. "I'll let you get back to work so you don't get fired."

"Huntress, I'm sorry."

I ignored his lame-ass apology and walked away. He didn't try to follow me so that indicated to me that he sincerely had no intention of telling me anything.

When I got around the corner, out of sight from the cops, I scaled the side of an apartment building and perched myself on the roof.

"Oracle, do you copy?"

:: I'm here. What'd you find out? ::

"Absolutely nothing. Reese refused to tell me even the smallest detail."

:: Well, we'll have to find out on our own after they leave. ::

I didn't hear what she had said because I was too pissed about Reese. "I'm so tired of his shit. Doesn't he know that he can trust me by now?"

I slammed my fist into the brick wall beside me and let out a groan of frustration.

:: Huntress, don't take it personal he's only doing his job. ::

Shaking out my sore hand, I bit on my bottom lip. I can't believe she's siding with him.

Wait a minute...yeah, I do believe it.

"I'm gonna hang up here for a while and wait for them to leave then I'll go inside and see what I can find."

:: You want me to send Dinah out? ::

It always amazes me how an intelligent person such as Barbara could ask such stupid questions.

"No. I'll call if I need back up. No sense in sending us both in and tripping an alarm or something."

:: Okay, but be careful. ::

"Aren't I always? Huntress out."

I turned my comm off and took a seat on the ledge of the roof where I could see the reflection of the police lights flashing from the street.

As I sat there, I thought about you-know-who. I couldn't help myself, I have feelings for the guy.

It's hard to say whether he has feelings for me because he's so hot and cold. Sometimes when I'm with him I feel his attraction and other times, like tonight, I feel nothing. I'm not sure how to take that and that's what pisses me off. Love is such a game and I'm not sure I have the patience to play.

PART 2

A good two hours passed and the police FINALLY packed up and left.

I jumped over the rooftops to get to the bank's roof. I was careful to check that no stray cops were left, I didn't want any surprises.

"Oracle?"

:: Go ahead. ::

"The cops just left. I'm on the bank's roof."

:: Okay. There should be an air duct towards the middle of the roof. ::

"I see it."

:: There should be a small hatch to the right of the duct. ::

I looked all around and couldn't see anything. Then I kneeled down and felt around the gravel with my hands. In moving the gravel, I found a small door. "Got it, but it's got a lock on it. It's digital."

:: Already working on it, :: Barbara said as she typed like a madwoman.

Within a few seconds, the lock beeped and clicked.

:: Go ahead. ::

I pulled the small metal ring and opened the hatch and started climbing down the small, narrow ladder.

:: Climb down to the basement level. That's where the main vault is located. ::

I got to the basement and saw a small metal door to my left. I extended my hand towards the latch and opened it up slowly.

:: After you go through the door, take a right and then a left. That's the room before the main vault. I've disabled all of the lasers so you should be able to make it to the room without a problem. Just DON'T go any further until I tell you. ::

"Got it."

I got to the room and was surprised at the size of it considering there was nothing in it. Seemed like a waste of space.

"Why's this room so damn big?"

:: If the laser beams were on you'd be cut to ribbons. This room is a heavy grid of high-powered lasers that alternate their beams, making it almost impossible to get through because it's a random pattern. ::

There was blood on the floor towards one of the doors. Could have been a guard or one of the robbers who bit it.

"How we coming with the main vault?"

:: Almost there. ::

It was pretty scary that Barbara knew all these things about turning alarms off. Good thing she's on MY side.

:: Okay. You've only got two minutes. That's the best I could do. ::

I wasted no time in opening the door to the main vault and was shocked at the sight before me. Barbara must have heard me gasp.

:: What is it? ::

"There's a lot of blood in here. Not much money, but lots of blood. On the floor, on the walls."

Closer inspection of the room made me notice small needles all over the floor near the pools of blood.

"That's weird."

:: What? ::

"There are little needles all over the floor."

:: What?!? ::

"Little needles. Like the ones they use for acupuncture."

:: Son-of-a... ::

"Oracle? You okay?"

:: Take one of the needles for testing and come on back. ::

Barbara paused for a moment.

:: I think I know who did this. ::

PART 3

When I got back to the Clocktower, Barbara was waiting by the elevator. The silence on the comm during my trip back to the Clocktower made me think that this must be serious and this only confirmed it by her waiting by the door for me.

I handed the needle to her and she quickly wheeled back to her computer to run tests on it.

"Any chance you're going to tell me what's going on?" I asked as I followed her.

"Let me run this quick scan before I say anything. I want to be sure."

She placed the needle in a small vile and loaded it into some contraption connected to her computer. She rung her hands nervously as she waited for the results.

This didn't seem very good.

Just watching her made ME nervous so I finally had to put my hands over hers. "Stop! Please. Tell me what's going on."

The computer beeped and she shifted her focus to the results that presented themselves on her monitor.

She read the lines of text feverishly, mumbling to herself.

Then she put her head down, as if defeated.

I was about to see if she was okay when she slammed her fist down on the table, making me jump.

"Dammit! I knew it. It's her. How can that be?!?"

"Who? What the hell's going on?!?"

"You guys okay?" Dinah asked as she entered the room. "I heard a loud bang."

Barbara wheeled away from the computer she was working on and moved across the lab to another.

"Barbara?" Dinah asked with concern.

"Come on, talk to us, Barbara."

"Her name's Bombshell. She's a thief, a manipulator, a liar and a murderer. And that's only the half of it."

"Wow, that's some resume," I joked. No one was laughing.

Barbara pulled up Bombshell's photo on the computer. Immediately, I thought Betty Page, only blonde. She definitely looked like one of the old pinup girls that guys in the military loved to paste on the side of their planes.

"Bombshell is really Michelle Babson. She's made quite the living out of taking things away from other people...including someone I loved."

There it is. No wonder she was acting strange.

"Barbara, I'm sorry," Dinah said as she put a comforting hand on her shoulder.

"His name was Derek McCarthy. He had the biggest, bluest eyes in the whole world. I met him at a charity ball. He was one of the waiters believe it or not." Barbara smiled through her tears at the fond memory.

I was never any good at the mushy stuff so I stayed quiet and just listened.

Barbara wiped her tears away and cleared her throat. "About three months after we'd been seeing each other, we were attending the grand opening of the Willard's Jewelry Store. My father's best friend had opened it after almost a year of protest by the surrounding stores. The neighbors were afraid it would attract criminals....they were right."

"The party was almost over when a bunch of armed, masked men stormed into the store. Some grabbed the jewels while

the others pistol-whipped whoever was close by, just for the hell of it."

"Derek saw one of them hit an old woman so he got up and punched the masked man in the face. He continued beating on him and that's when she appeared - Bombshell. She didn't wear a mask or anything that concealed her identity. She just strode into the room, tossed a small bomb in Derek's direction and smiled."

"Oh my God," Dinah said as she covered her mouth.

The tears began to flow down Barbara's cheeks again. "Bombshell ran out of the room and her men took cover just as the bomb went off. The place was so chaotic. All I could do was focus on Derek. He was lying on the floor across the room from where I was, bleeding."

"How many others did she kill?" I asked.

"That's the ironic thing. Only Derek died because he was the closest to the bomb." Barbara paused for a moment as she sniffed her tears away. "He died in my arms."

Like a bolt of lightning, the vision of my mother dying in front of me hit me, even made me feel dizzy.

"She has these bombs that emit hundreds of needles. It's not a large enough bomb that will kill a room full of people, but if you're the target of the bomb and it goes off..well...you know. They go in pretty deep and can puncture vital organs, veins, arteries, whatever they hit."

I sat down on the edge of the desk, unable to find anything to say that would comfort her.

"She was supposed to be dead," Barbara said through a clenched jaw. "There was a fire in the warehouse she and her men were using as a hideout. I was told that they found her body amongst the ashes."

I stood up again, a feeling of renewed energy rushing through me. "Where do you think she'd be hiding out now?"

Barbara was surprised by the question and looked up at me. "...I'm not sure."

"Well, we've gotta find this bitch and put her six feet under where she belongs." I didn't wait to hear anyone's two cents, I just headed for the elevator. I know this was Barbara's score to settle, but after what she'd said about Derek dying in her arms it felt like my score too.

"Wait, Helena," Barbara yelled at me as she followed behind me and grabbed my wrist, stopping me.

"I'm going out there to look for her."

"You can't go out there alone. She'll kill you."

"I'm not going to give her the chance," I said as I tried to continue walking, but Barbara gripped my wrist tighter.

"You're NOT going out there until I get more information on where she is."

"I can go out there with her," Dinah suggested as she walked over towards us. "Two versus one is..."

"Don't you two get it?!? She's a cold-blooded killer who will strike when you least expect it. She's quick and she's deadly. It's been years since I've seen her. God only knows what other tricks she's got up her sleeve now."

Barbara's eyes shifted back and forth between me and Dinah.

"Please. Give me until tomorrow morning and then we'll form a game plan."

I thought about it and figured we could at least wait until morning. "Okay. You have until 9:00. After that, I'm going out and kicking some ass."

"Fair enough," Barbara agreed.

"I'll go make some coffee," Dinah said with a heavy sigh.

It was going to be a long night.

PART 4

When I came downstairs I found Barbara asleep at her computer terminal.

It was almost 8:30 and there was no doubt in my mind that she'd been working throughout the night. The number of mugs of coffee sitting next to her on the table confirmed it.

My mere presence woke her with a start.

"Wh...what time is it?" she asked, groggily and confused.

"8:30. You still have a half hour, don't worry."

I walked towards the kitchen in search of breakfast and didn't expect to hear her following me.

"I don't know where she's hiding out but I do know a few details of what she's after next."

I stopped and turned around, very much interested. "Do tell."

"There's some chatter about old paintings that are worth millions as well as old statues and vases."

"The museum?"

"That's what I'm going with. I'm going to monitor the talk that's been going around to see if I can pinpoint a date. In the meantime, take a trip over to the museum today and keep an eye out for anyone that might be casing the joint." Barbara looked at her watch. "Ha. Twenty minutes to spare."

I flashed a slight smile. "Cute."

Barbara smiled back.

"I'm...I'm sorry about Derek. We'll find her and take her down."

Barbara nodded and went back to work. It was clear to me that she didn't want to talk about it and I wasn't going to force her.

PART 5

I took Dinah with me to the museum. I figured it was easy enough and she wouldn't get in the way.

We walked around the museum and kept an eye on people coming and going, but nothing seemed out of the ordinary. Just your average relic-loving Geeks who get all hot and bothered from things of the past. Pretty boring if you ask me.

I walked into the weaponry room and suddenly things didn't seem so bad.

"Now THAT'S a work of art," a young man said to me as he walked over towards me. "They don't make pieces like that anymore."

The object of his desire was an ax with knives on it's edge.

"It is pretty interesting looking," I responded as I turned to look at him. If I had to guess I'd say he was in his early thirties. He was clean-shaven, dressed in a black shirt, black jeans, black boots, and a log black coat. His hair was long but was pulled back in a ponytail and slicked back with gel. I probably would have been turned on if attire were the only factor, but he wasn't very attractive. He had a weird way about him.

"This piece alone is worth at least two villas in the Swiss Alps AND a Lamborghini Murcielago. I'd kill to have this in my collection."

Were these the magic words I'd been waiting to hear? He did seem overly interested in the weapon.

"Yeah. I guess it would look great...hanging on a wall in a living room or something."

He didn't appear to find my comment funny because he wasn't laughing.

"My dear, everything in this room is a piece of history. Although people have set a price tag on them, I feel like they're priceless."

Okay. This guy was giving me the creeps.

I was just about to ask him how much he'd be willing to pay for such an item, but when I turned around he was gone. Was it something I said?

"Hey. You find anything?" Dinah asked as she approached.

I leaned in close to her, so that others around us wouldn't hear me. "I just had a conversation with some guy that said he'd kill to have that ax up there."

"You think he's part of Bombshell's gang?"

"I dunno. Could be. Might not be. I don't think we have enough to go on."

"You get his name?"

"No."

"Oh, good job. Where'd he go?"

I looked around the room and didn't see him anywhere. "I don't know."

"Even better."

"Shut up, kid. I didn't even have to bring you with me, ya know." I stormed out of the room and headed for the exit. I didn't care whether Dinah was in tow or not at this point.

PART 6

For the next few days and nights we made trips to the museum, but our surveillance was done from the adjacent rooftop.

Long about 10:00pm, I noticed the man from the other day enter the museum with two others by his side.

"Oracle, we may have something."

:: What've you got? ::

"The guy from the other day. He just entered the museum with two other guys. The museum closes in a half hour. You think that's suspicious enough to check out?"

:: Hang tight for another ten minutes. ::

Those ten minutes felt like hours and I was beginning to get antsy.

"I dunno, this seems weird," Dinah said, breaking the silence.

"Oracle, we're gonna go check it out." I tapped Dinah's arm and we both headed down to the museum.

:: Keep your lines open. ::

We entered the museum and found only a handful of people lingering around.

Going right for the weapon room, I immediately found the man and his friends ogling at the weapons hung on the walls.

They were the only ones in the room. How convenient.

We were just about to go into the room when Barbara's panicked voice blasted through our comms.

:: Huntress! Get over to Wayne Manor now! ::

Her words blew through my mind like a hurricane. "Wh...what?"

:: Alfred just set off an emergency signal. I'll meet you over there. Go! Hurry! ::

PART 7

I don't think I've ever run so fast in my life.

I didn't even stop to make sure Dinah was keeping up, it didn't matter to me. Right now, someone had invaded my father's home...my home. Normally I don't refer to it as my home, but as I've gotten older I've come to understand things better.

When I arrived at the manor I didn't see Barbara's Hummer anywhere around. I guess I really did run as fast as I could.

I went around to the back and made my way inside through a secret door only Alfred and I knew about. At least he claims that we're the only ones that know, besides my father that is.

I could hear sounds coming from the east end of the house and quickly went in the direction of the noise.

Inside the study, a man was shoving lamps and anything of value into a black duffel bag.

"Excuse you!" I said as I entered the room and charged at him. I jumped up onto the desk and kicked out at his face, knocking him out cold. That was too easy.

I walked down the hall and heard noises in the den. Another man was also filling his bag up with anything he could grab. Valuable or not, he didn't seem to care.

"Uh, uh, uh. That's not yours for the taking, better put it back."

This guy was a little more brazen and at least tried to put up a fight.

He ran at me and swung out his right fist. I ducked and launched a punch of my own, hitting him in the ribs. It stunned him for a moment, long enough for me to grab the back of his head and slam it onto the corner of the table, knocking him out.

This was way too easy.

My next stop was the gallery on the second floor where I knew my father kept some rather pricey paintings.

I dashed up the steps and got to the top only to be greeted with a kick to the chest, knocking me back down.

It stunned me for a moment because I got the wind knocked out of me, but I recovered in time to fight off the man that now held me by the front of my shirt.

I sucked in a breath and head-butted him.

He let go of me and doubled over so I grabbed him by the waistband of his pants and threw him up and over the railing, watching him land on the hardwood floor below - unmoving.

I ran to the gallery and found her standing in the middle of the room, her back to me, admiring all of the pieces on the wall in front of her.

The room was huge. I hadn't been here in so long I'd forgotten how big it was.

"You must be Helena," she said without turning around. "I was wondering if you'd show up."

"No one invited you here so you'd be smart to leave or else..."

"Or else what," she asked as she turned around to look at me.

"Or else I'm gonna have to kick your bottle-blond ass."

The bitch had the nerve to laugh in my face. Bad move.

"You're kidding, right?"

"Oh, I don't joke about ass kickin's."

"Yeah, well, neither do I," she said as she quickly moved her hand out towards me.

I saw the thing come flying towards me so I leaped out of the way and slid across the bare, hardwood floor, covering my head with my arms.

The bomb went off and I felt a few twinges of pain. Looking down at my thigh, I saw two little needles.

Reaching down, I ripped them out and tossed them to the floor as I stood up.

"Good job," she said as she clapped.

Just then, Barbara appeared in the doorway.

"Well, well, well. Look who's joined the party," Bombshell commented sarcastically.

"Helena, go. Let me take care of this."

"Are you crazy? I'm not leaving you with this bimbo."

"I said GO!"

Barbara tried her best to pull me towards the door, but I wasn't having it.

"I don't have time for a domestic dispute." Bombshell tossed another bomb, this time towards Barbara. I turned just in time to see it fly through the air.

Kicking out, I pushed her chair with my foot to get her out of the way.

The bomb landed a few feet in front of me and exploded.

Instinctively, I threw myself to the ground and then I waited for the pain to attack my body.

Oddly enough, I felt nothing.

Looking up, I saw hundreds of needles suspended in the air only a few inches from my body.

I scooted out of the way and the needles continued their flight out through the doorway where Dinah had been standing only a few seconds before.

"And who is this?" Bombshell asked as Dinah reappeared.

"Someone else who's gonna kick your ass," Dinah responded.

Bombshell chuckled as she reached into her pocket, but before she could pull her hand out Barbara tossed a Batarang at her, slicing her arm and causing her to falter backwards.

I moved in and swept her legs out from under her, then pinned her to the ground by wrapping my hand around her neck. "This all ends here." I said as I squeezed.

"Helena!" Barbara yelled from behind me.

I really didn't want to hear the rule book recited to me on how we don't kill people.

I was about to reach into her pocket to see what she was looking for earlier, but I heard a click noise near my waist and stopped.

Bombshell laughed and I launched myself away from her just as another bomb exploded.

This one was more powerful, as it sent me skidding across the floor.

It took me a moment to get my bearings, but when I did I realized Barbara and Dinah were on the floor. Both appeared to be in pain and bleeding.

My own pain was masked by the worry for my friends, and I didn't even notice that I too had been injured. At least ten needles had embedded themselves throughout my body, but I ignored them for now.

"You bitch," I seethed as I set my sight on Bombshell who was standing up again and ready for a fight.

"Bring it on!" she said as she winked at me.

"Oh I'm gonna bring it all over your face."

I ran towards her and kicked out towards her head, but she was quick and grabbed my ankle, knocking me off balance.

When I hit the floor I swept my leg at her feet but she jumped over it.

I saw her reach inside her jacket and I immediately got to my feet in the ready position.

She held out her hand and showed me this small black disk lying on her palm. "Isn't it cute?" she asked with an annoying squeal in her voice.

Letting it fly, she tossed it towards me.

The little disk was so quick I never had a chance to see it change or make a move. A cold, steel dagger embedded itself deep in my shoulder.

"Cute and deadly, just the way I like it," she taunted as she reached for another disk.

This time, when she threw it in my direction I was able to avoid it by lunging to my left. I hit the ground hard and not without intense pain.

I looked up as she had just let go of another bomb, but I was surprised to see it reverse directions and land back at her feet. It exploded and I turned away. I heard her body slump to the ground.

Dinah was on her knees and with every ounce of strength she had she had sent the bomb backwards.

"Thanks, kid."

I grunted in pain as I stood up and limped over to where Bombshell was lying, blood pooling all around her.

She was gasping for air probably due to the numerous punctures in her lungs made by the needles. She looked like a bloody pincushion.

Blood dripped out of her mouth with each gasp but she still wore that ridiculous smile.

"That one's for Derek," I whispered to her as I watched her gasp for her last breath.

I turned back around and saw Dinah helping Barbara into her chair.

"You two okay?" I asked, even though it was obvious that they weren't.

"My goodness," Alfred exclaimed as he rushed into the room.

"Where've you been?" I asked as I pulled the needles out of my body.

"A little tied up in the basement. No pun intended." He grabbed my hand in order to stop me from injuring myself further. "Don't touch them and certainly don't touch the one in your shoulder."

"Okay, okay."

Alfred tended to Barbara who had a good amount of needles jammed into her body. Unfortunately, most of them had hit her upper body so she was able to feel them all.

Dinah got a few of her own. The nastiest of which was one that was stuck in the side of her neck, just missing her Carotid Artery.

We all ended up staying at the manor for a few days while we recovered. It was a little weird being here, but got easier as the days passed.

Barbara wheeled into my room just as I had turned off the TV.

"You look a lot better. The blood and the red hair really don't go very well."

"Funny," she said flatly. "I just wanted to say thank you for covering our butts."

Wow. Could this be the first time in history that she didn't lecture me on my aggressiveness?

"You don't have to thank me. You know I'd always be there for you and Dinah."

"Are you okay being here? I know it must be hard for you."

"Nah. It's okay. I've gotten kinda used to it."

"Oh really. Should I tell Alfred that you'll be moving in?"

"Yeah, no."

"I didn't think so."

Our banter lightened things up only for a short time before the awkward silence set in.

"Helena, I know this goes against everything I've ever said or thought before, but...I'm glad she's dead."

I didn't see that one coming.

"Years ago when they told me she was dead and I believed them I didn't feel that way, even though she'd killed Derek. But this time it's different. It's like I was betrayed again and it...it changed the way I feel about her death." Barbara laughed softly. "I'm sorry, that probably sounds stupid."

"No it doesn't. You're entitled to feel angry now and then, Barbara. You don't always have to push vengeance aside."

Barbara nodded. "I know. Let's just keep this between you and me for now. Okay?"

"Okay. How does Dinah feel about the whole thing?"

"She seems to be doing okay. We talked about it for a while this morning and aired some things out. But I think she's going to be fine. We have to do what we have to do."

"I agree."

"Well, get some rest. I'll see you in the morning."

"Good night."

What Barbara had said to me replayed in my head all night. I guess it was because I had never heard that from her before so my brain wanted to hear it again and again in order to believe it.

~ FIN

LIGHTS OUT

Written: 4/2004

PART 1

I've had a weird feeling all day.

I can't explain it, it's just...well...weird.

As I look out at the night sky from up here on top of the Granite Building tower, I feel an odd, cooling sensation - a chill. I know I'm way up here and there's a slight wind in the air, but it's different. The chill feels like it's looming. Like I said, weird.

It's almost 1am and I figure I better make a final sweep from the rooftops below before heading home.

I make it over to an apartment building over on 8th because it gives me a good view of the trouble spots. It's a rough area, something I've come to find out the hard way.

There's a couple of guys hanging around the corner and I know they're up to no good, I can feel it.

Sure enough, one of them just pulled out a knife. Damn, and I thought I was going home on time tonight.

I jump onto the ledge of the building on the alley side. This way I can sneak up on them.

I hop over the ledge and make my descent but rather than sailing towards the sidewalk I find myself upside down, my head and left shoulder smashing into the brick of the building I just leapt from.

I hit pretty hard, hard enough to draw blood and shake the cobwebs from my skull.

Looking up, it looks like the hem of my coat got caught on a rusty piece of rebar.

"Great."

I move my body backwards to gain enough momentum to be able to swing myself over towards the iron bars that line one of the tenant's deck.

RRRrrrrrip!!!

Before I can think, before I can even react, my coat rips from the rebar and I sail towards the ground below.

Everything is wrong - I'm not facing the right way, I wasn't ready for the plunge...I'm not prepared. In fact, I'm fucked.

BLAM!!!

All I feel is the air being knocked from my lungs and tremendous pressure all over my body due to the impact.

I open my eyes slowly and realize I haven't fallen on the sidewalk, I've fallen onto the roof of a car.

I can't move, it hurts too much.

I can't breathe, it hurts too much.

I can feel blood leaking out of my body from all sorts of places and there's not a damn thing I can do about it.

All I can think about is sleeping, and that's when I feel it...that chill.

Suddenly, the pain intensifies and my eyes close.

PART 2

I feel like I'm being dragged.

When I open my eyes I can see that I am. Someone dressed in black is dragging me by the ankle.

Everything around me is dark so I can't tell where I am.

The next thing I know, he stops and flings me out into the darkness. I crash into a wall of some sort and slump down to the ground.

Looking up at him, all I see is a man dressed in black along with a black cape and hood. Not one ounce of flesh is showing. He's just standing there staring at me.

"Who the hell are you?" I ask.

He doesn't answer me, just laughs and squats down in front of me.

I kick out towards him and successfully knock him over on his ass. "Get the fuck away from me!"

As soon as I'm on my feet, I find myself off them again when a sudden blast of energy hits me and knocks me to the ground, flat on my back.

"Don't fuck with me," he snarls in a low voice.

When he leans in closer to me I realize he doesn't have a face, just a black void inside his hood.

Just as I'm about to make a snide comment, I stop myself because it dawns on me who the man is....death.

"Behave yourself, little girl and things will move a lot quicker. Now, we've got an appointment that we're already late for."

He grabbed me by the shoulder and began dragging me again. To be honest, I was afraid to fight him off because I feared the unknown. I just let him do it.

It wasn't long until we reached an area that had cages lined up and down a long hallway, most of which were empty.

He opened one of them and tossed me inside, locking it before I could attempt to get out.

"What am I doing here?"

"Sit down and shut up until your destination is determined."

He walked away and I could feel the chill that I'd felt earlier in the day.

I sank to the ground, hugging my knees. He'd been watching me all day, waiting for the right moment to strike.

"Hey!" a voice called out to me from the cage beside me.

I turned and saw an old man sitting on the floor in his cage.

"How'd you get in here?" he asked me.

"I..." I thought back to what had happened and remember lying on the roof of that car, "I fell." Upon saying the words, I checked myself over for injuries.

The old man saw what I was doing. "They go away here because it doesn't matter anymore."

I couldn't find anything. No broken bones. No blood. Nothing.

"I got stabbed. My own son killed me." He turned to show me his chest. "Stabbed me right in the heart."

His chest didn't show any signs of a stabbing. This was pretty fucked up.

I swallowed hard as I thought about Barbara, Dinah, Alfred...Reese. Then I started to cry. "I can't be here," I mumbled.

"It's okay," the man said.

"Fuck you! It isn't okay! I'm not supposed to die, not now! Not this way! I didn't do anything!"

"You said you fell so you DID do something, you fell." He giggled at his own words which tore through me like red-hot poker.

My tears stopped and I felt anger boiling up inside me. I stood up with my fists clenched by my sides.

"Don't talk to me. Mind your own fuckin' business. You don't know a damn thing about me."

"Excuuuuuuse me," he said rudely. "No need to be such a bitch. Maybe THAT'S why you got here. Huh?"

I walked over to the door and put my hands on the bars. I tried a few times to push the door open, even tried kicking the door open. No luck.

The man next door laughed at my feeble attempt at an escape.

"If you don't shut up right now I'm..."

"What? Gonna kill me?" He laughed some more, this time louder. "It's a little late for that, sweet thing."

I did my best to let his words roll right off me.

I turned my back to him and sat back down.

Putting my head in my hands, I thought about all the times I pissed Barbara off, and all the times I'd ever lied to her.

Then I thought about Dinah. I've never really accepted having her around. I think it's partly due to jealousy. This is my turf...or at least it was.

Reese. There's a complicated situation, but that may be my fault. I don't let people get too close to me, not even him. Now I regret it.

All these "if only's" going around in my head, it's driving me crazy. I slam my fists on the ground in a rage just as he comes back to unlock my cage door.

"Still in a pissed off mood I see."

"I'm not ready for this," I said as I stayed where I was.

"I don't give a shit whether you're ready or not, you're coming with me."

I stood up and faced him. "I'm not going anywhere with you!"

"We can do this the hard way, it doesn't matter to me." He grabbed my jacket and I batted his arms away. A swift kick to his shins stunned him for a moment and I took the opportunity to smash my fist on his back to get him down to the ground.

I ran past him and shut the door to the cage, locking it and locking him inside. "Told you I wasn't ready." I shoved the keys in my pocket and watched as he got up.

"Get back here!"

"Way to go, sweet thing," the old man said as I walked past his cage.

"Rot in hell," I told him with raw honesty.

I began running back in the direction we'd come in when he first brought me in. It kept getting darker and darker, making it impossible to see where I was going and to know if I was going in the right direction.

I kept on running but stopped when I felt that cool sensation. In the blink of an eye, something slammed into me and drove me to the ground. I grunted from the impact and knew right away it was him, I could smell him. Rotting, stinking death.

He punched me a few times and I returned the favor but it was useless. He didn't tire and wouldn't let up.

I went at him with everything I had and managed to wrap my legs around his neck, hearing a sickening crack echo throughout the area we were in. I felt his body go limp and I let go in order to get away from him. I heard him hit the ground, but I took off as quickly as I could.

It felt like I was running forever, but I had to keep going.

It started getting lighter and I could see where I was going now.

"Hey!" a low voice called out from behind me.

I turned around and saw a sickle coming towards me.

SLAM!!!

It jammed itself into my left shoulder but I didn't feel anything. With a hard pull, I tore it from my shoulder and threw it back at him before running again.

I ran as fast as my legs would take me and then I felt a sudden blast of pain just as the light got extremely bright.

I found myself gasping for breath and sitting upright.

"Helena?!?" Barbara called out.

The shock of hearing her voice startled me and zapped the air back into my lungs.

Panting, I turned to my side and saw Barbara sitting beside me, panic etched all over her face. "Lie back down," she told me as she put her hands on me.

I did as I was told, which was a first. "Where am I?" I gasped.

Barbara was poking me with all sorts of needles and taping all kinds of monitors to me. "Shhh, lie still, try

and calm down."

"Helena!" Dinah yelled as she hurried into the room. "Is she alright?"

"We'll know in a minute."

"What the fuck is going on?" I demanded through gritted teeth. The pain was intense and it surprised me because it rapidly came on out of nowhere.

"We found you on the roof of a car, you fell," Dinah said as she helped Barbara set up the machines by my bed.

"I...I was dead."

The room got quiet quick and both of them looked at me.

Barbara was holding back tears and doing her damndest to concentrate. "Yes, you were."

I didn't say anything after that. Enough had been said already.

"I'm giving you a light dose of painkillers. I want to make sure your brain functions are stable and undamaged before I up the dosage. You're going to be in a lot of pain for a while. I'm sorry."

"It's okay," I mumbled softly.

"Dinah, can you leave us alone for a few minutes?"

"Sure."

After Dinah left I could see Barbara begin to break down. Honestly, it scared me because it must have been pretty bad.

I reached out my hand and touched Barbara's. Big mistake. It's opened up the flood gate of tears.

"I wish I could yell at you or something but I can't," she sobbed, "I know it was only an accident. One of the tenants from the apartment building said he saw you fall. He helped me get you in the car."

"I..."

"I knew something was wrong the moment I saw you lying there."

I didn't know how bad I was hurt, just knew that I hurt like hell.

"How'd you find me?"

"I hadn't heard you report in so I was tracking you to be on the safe side, I know how you are. When I saw that red light move a little ways and then not move at all I knew in the pit of my stomach that something was wrong. I tried contacting you and there..." Barbara sobbed some more, "there was no answer."

Barbara wiped her tears away with her sleeve as she checked the results of my brain scan.

I didn't even try to make any jokes, this wasn't the time.

I could see relief wash over her face as she sighed. "The results came back normal, no brain damage."

She reached up to turn up the morphine and I stopped her. "No. Leave it. I don't want to sleep."

"But you'll be in pain."

"I don't care. I don't want to go to sleep just yet. Not after..."

Barbara nodded and straightened out the sheets with her hand.

"So how bad is it?"

"Well, you took a nasty smack to the head leaving you with one hell of a gash by your eyebrow. You dislocated your left shoulder, broke two ribs and collapsed a lung. I was trying to get your lung re-inflated when you woke up."

I closed my eyes for a moment as I flashed back to roof of that car.

"You okay?"

"I don't know," I said. "How is someone supposed to be after they see death?"

Barbara didn't answer because I don't think she had one.

"I saw him. I felt him. I smelled him. Hell, I fought him. How ballsy is that?" I chuckled then winced. "I felt him all around me but I didn't know that that's what it was." A single tear rolled down my cheek. "I'm not ready to die."

"No, you're not," Barbara agreed.

"I fought like hell to come back here," I said just as a rush of pain ran through my system.

"I know. Your vitals were all over the place."

I smiled through the pain at the thought of Barbara knowing how much of a fight I put up.

"You're safe now, Helena. I'll be right here," Barbara said as she reached up towards my morphine drip.

"Thanks," I said as I let her turn it up. I think this is where a bit of the wall around me began to crumble down because I just let her in.

~ FIN

ANGER MANAGEMENT

Written: 5/2004

PART 1

I just want to hit something, or maybe someone. I'll take anything at this point, I'm so mad.

That's one thing I've never had much of a handle on...my anger. It has a life of it's own. It's almost schizophrenic when I think about it. It's like another version of myself comes charging out from deep within my soul, like a runaway freight train.

Everything around me pisses me off and it's always when I'm pissed that Barbara or Dinah feel the need to intrude on my life and ask "are you okay?" Or worse, they tell me "you need to calm down." Fuck them. That only pisses me off even more. When I'm pissed off I just want to be left alone. Don't they get it? Why is that so hard to understand?

I slam my fist into the nearest brick wall a few times, ignoring the sting of the flesh being ripped from my knuckles. My anger masks the pain. In fact, it masks a lot of things other than more anger.

I can't believe how unbelievably pissed off I am. Words can't even describe it. I run my fingers through my hair and suck in a breath as I close my eyes, trying to get a hold on the situation but it's no use. My mind spins out of control and thinks of more and more things that irritate the living hell out of me and I find myself holding in my breath, my fists clenched tightly in front of me.

The burst of anger makes me kick the shit out of the dumpster and trash cans that are beside me. Trash flies everywhere but I could give two shits. Being accused of littering is furthest from my mind at the moment.

I pace back and forth like a madwoman, cursing out loud, feeling my blood pressure rising by the second.

Again I pummel the wall with my fist. The last blow hurt like hell and I may have chipped a bone in my hand, but I don't care. I just shake it off and continue to pace back and forth.

I never thought I could ever get this angry again. Each time it happens I think that there's no way I can top it. Well, tonight skyrocketed to number 1 on my anger chart.

Looking over, I see a kid coming towards me. He's maybe Dinah's age, if that. Little does he know that now's not the time to fuck with me.

"What's the matter, darlin'? You need a little something to calm you down." He showed me a little bag of coke in his palm as he wiped his nose and winked.

The ice in my veins hardens for only a moment before it's melted away by the boiling fire of anger that's just re-ignited.

"You picked the wrong woman to talk to about doing drugs with you tonight, junior."

A frown formed on his face as he was a little insulted by my answer. "Whoa, you're tighter than a drum. You need to loosen up."

He came closer to me, standing behind me, smelling me.

I let him do it because it was only a matter of time before my anger boiled over and spewed all over him.

He licked his lips and ran his hand down my arm and then around my inner thigh. "Why don't we see if you're tight..."

I grabbed his wrist and twisted it, snarling my lip as I enjoyed hearing his pained cry.

"Uhhh! Let go! I...I was only foolin' around!"

I couldn't resist twisting it the opposite way, listening to him cry even louder as I heard it snap. "Oops. I guess it doesn't move that far around, does it?"

I let go of him and he fell to his knees, cradling his wounded arm. "You, bitch!"

Wrong choice of words. This kid is pretty damn stupid.

Reaching down, I grabbed a handful of hair from the back of his head and tossed him into the wall. Before he could slump to the ground, I kicked out with my foot and pinned him to the wall by his neck.

He put his good hand around my ankle in an attempt to get me to release him, but I only pushed harder.

"How much of this shit have you been dealing, huh?"

"I...I'm not..." he gasped.

"Bullshit. You were too quick to give me a freebie, who else have you been giving this to?" I pressed harder and could feel him struggling for breath.

"Sssstooop!" he pleaded.

I moved my foot away and watched him flop to the ground, choking, coughing and almost puking from the whole ordeal.

I didn't allow him time to recover. Why should I? I kicked him right in the face and sent him down to the ground holding his broken nose, blood running all through his fingers and down his chest. "You're a fuckin' mess, you no good piece of shit." I walked around him, my arms folded across my chest. "Who gave you the drugs?"

"You broke my fuckin' nose!"

"No shit, Sherlock." I swooped down on him and pinned his shoulders down with my knees. Winding back with my fist, I waited for the right time to launch it. "Tell me who your supplier is or else you're gonna be swallowing all of your teeth."

"Oookay! Oookkkay, just get off of me!" he sobbed.

I moved off of him and stood up. My bad because he drove his fist into my stomach, totally catching me off guard.

I doubled over and coughed. He got me pretty good.

"Ha ha! Stupid c...."

Remember that angry animal inside of me I told you about? Well, it flew out of me and flew towards him, spearing him like a bull.

He hit the ground with a smack as his head connected with the pavement, dazing him but not knocking him out.

Good. I wasn't done yet anyway.

"You should've have hit me," I snarled at him as I hauled him up and then hurled him across the sidewalk into a parked car, setting the alarm off. I picked him up again and slammed his head into the glass of the car's passenger side window. "If I ever catch you around New Gotham again..." BLAM!!! I slammed his head onto the hood. "You'll be the sorriest little fuck this side of the Atlantic." OOMPH!!! I drove my fist into his gut. "Hurts, doesn't it?"

With all the excitement I didn't even notice the car that had stopped on the corner behind me.

"Stop! Hold it right there! New Gotham P.D.!"

Reese.

I let the kid go and he fell to the ground. Not sure when he lost consciousness, I wasn't really paying attention.

"Reese?" I said as I slowly turned around.

"Huntress?" he gasped, his gun still pointed at my chest.

"You're not gonna shoot me are you?"

The sad thing is that he looked like he had to think about it for a minute. That surprised me.

"What's going on here?" he asked as he looked down at the beat up druggie. His gun was still on me.

"He's peddling drugs around here. Tried to offer me some coke." I bent down and was going to rummage through his pockets to find it, but Reese stopped me.

"Don't! Don't move."

This was weird.

"I was just gonna get the drugs from..."

"Just turn around and put your hands behind your back."

"What?!? You're...you're arresting me?!?"

"Turn around," he said with a little more authority.

I shook my head in disbelief as I turned around and put my hands behind my back.

Reese shocked me even further when he pushed me down to my knees and shoved me face-down on the sidewalk.

"Reese!"

He slapped the cuffs on me, a little tighter than he needed to.

"You could have killed him," he said as he walked over to the boy, kneeling down to check his pulse.

This was messed up and I sure as hell wasn't going to stick around long enough for him to haul my ass to the station.

PART 2

There was no way I could go back to the Clocktower now, not with my hands cuffed behind my back. I only had one choice, and I think I probably rolled my eyes a million times on the way.

I kicked at the door with my foot and waited.

Nothing.

I kicked it some more and finally a sleepy Gibson appeared at the door. He rubbed his eyes and blinked the sleepiness away, but as soon as he saw it was me he perked right up.

"Helena! Wh-what are..."

"Sorry, Gibson," I said as I shoved him inside and shut the door closed with my foot.

"What's going on?"

I turned around and showed him the cuffs. "Can you get these off?"

His eyes were wide and he stammered a bit in trying to make a decision. "What did you do to get handcuffed? Wait! Wait! Never mind, I don't want to know," he said as he rushed towards a drawer and pulled out a large ring of keys. "I've got a master key here somewhere."

I looked at the amount of keys on the ring and started to feel that anger biting at me inside. "Gibson, I don't have all night. The cops are looking for me."

He tried key after key as we talked. "So...what DID you do?"

"I beat up on a guy handing out drugs. Reese caught me and cuffed me. I took off before he had a chance to put me in the patty wagon. I..."

:: Huntress, do you copy? ::

Shit. Looks like Barbara just got word of the APB for me.

"What?"

:: Where the hell are you? :: she asked in a stern voice.

"Why?" I asked, playing with her.

:: Don't start with me, Helena! The police are looking for you, Reese has been stabbed. What's going on?
::

"Whoa, wait a minute, back up. Reese was stabbed?" I felt lightheaded for a moment in hearing the news.

:: Just tell me where you are and I'll come get you. ::

"Got it!" Gibson exclaimed as he unlocked my handcuffs.

:: Never mind. Now I know where you are. I'm on my way. ::

I glared at Gibson for giving up my whereabouts.

"What?" he asked with innocent eyes.

"Nothing, forget it. Barbara's coming to get me."

Gibson handed me the cuffs. "So Reese got stabbed?"

"Yeah. It must have happened after I left because he was fine when I was there."

"So they think you did it? I assume."

"Most likely. They seem to be on the hunt for me right now." I peeked out the front window and saw a patrol car coming up the street. "Speak of the devil." I moved away from the window and watched as a bright beam of light burst through it from the spotlight they were shining up and down the street.

"Barbara better get here quick," Gibson said nervously as he shifted back and forth on his feet.

PART 3

Barbara pulled up in the Hummer and I wasted no time in getting in.

"What the fuck is going on?" I asked as I shut the door.

"You tell me," she said as she pulled away from the curb.

I sighed heavily as I began the story. "I went out to blow off some steam and this punk came up to me, tried to offer me some coke and even copped a feel."

"Why do I know where this is going?"

"What? And you wouldn't mop the floor with him if some sicko put his hands all over you?" Barbara didn't answer, just frowned. She knew I was right. "So I kicked his ass a little bit. Then Reese showed up. Someone must have called the cops." I held up the set of handcuffs. "He cuffed me and was going to arrest me. While he checked on the asshole I took off. Reese was fine when I left."

"Well, word on the street is that you beat up the kid and stabbed Reese when he tried to break it up."

"WHAT?!?"

"Don't yell at me, I know you wouldn't do something like that."

I ran my fingers through my hair and then smashed my fists down on the dashboard, nearly cracking it.

"Hey! Hey! Don't put a hole in the dash!"

"Pull over," I said.

"What?"

"Pull over!"

"Helena, you're not getting out. We need to..."

I didn't wait for her to finish, I just opened the door and jumped out. I hit the ground pretty hard and rolled a few feet before I was able to get up and run off. I had to get to Reese.

PART 4

Sneaking into the hospital wasn't easy. Cops were crawling all over the place.

I ducked into a closet just as a doctor was coming up the hallway.

At just the right time, I opened the door, smashing it right into his head. He fell to the floor and I dragged him inside the closet. "Sorry, buddy. Gutta borrow your clothes for a little while."

Quickly, I changed into the scrubs and grabbed his clipboard in order to make myself look official.

I stepped out into the hall and walked towards the nurse's station.

There were two nurses on duty. One was on the phone while the other was organizing some charts.

"Hi."

"I thought the night shift was supposed to be slow?" I joked.

"Yeah, right. This is when we get all the drunks who think they can drive home or think they're Mike Tyson and can take someone on twice their size."

I laughed at her joke because she was right. Hell, she probably took care of some of the drunks I beat the shit out of.

"Listen, I was wondering if you knew what room Jesse Reese is in? He's a friend of my dad's. I heard he got stabbed earlier tonight."

"Hmm, he's not on this floor. Lemme check." She went to her computer to do a search and I found myself tapping my finger on the desk with anticipation.

"He's on the third floor, room 340."

"Thanks!"

"Hey," she said to me with a confused look, pointing towards my chest. "How come you've got Dr. Felton's badge on your coat?"

I looked down and nearly died. "Oh, dammit. I did it again." I chuckled a bit to try and throw her off. "We were on break and I must have picked up his coat instead. Shit, he's gonna kill me. This is the second time this week that I've done that. I better go find him. Thanks again!"

"Sure," she said as I turned and walked away as fast as I could.

I sucked in a breath and blew it out slowly, trying to stay calm. That was a close one.

I went down to the third floor and it wasn't a surprise that there were two officers posted outside his door. Great, now I had to do things the old-fashioned way.

I went back up to the closet where I'd hidden the doc and switched clothes with him. He was still out like a light and there was a hefty bruise forming on his brow.

The hallway was deserted for the moment, so I dashed down the hallway to the last room on the right.

I quietly went inside, trying not to disturb the old man sleeping in the bed.

I opened the window and looked down. I needed to get down two floors but there wasn't anything for me to grab onto.

This was gonna suck. I went over to the man's bed and slowly peeled the sheets away and dragged them off the bed. I tied one end around the railing of his bed and twisted the sheet to form a rope. The old man was surely gonna go for a ride once my weight was on the sheet, but I didn't have much choice.

I tossed the sheet out the window and got up on the window sill. With a deep breath, I climbed out and scooted down to the end of the sheet, swinging to and fro in the cool night air.

I got myself down to the third floor and swung way over to my left. Reese's room was around there somewhere and I ended up having to check a bunch in order to find him, but I finally did. And just in time. The sheet was getting looser and I knew it was only a matter of time before it came untied from the man's bed up on the fifth floor and I was sent whooshing down to the parking lot.

I got myself on the ledge of the window and opened it. That's when the sheet came loose. I wasn't ready for the sudden slack and grabbed onto the sill for dear life.

I hoisted myself inside and tumbled onto the floor.

Looking up, I could see that I woke him up.

"Huntress?" he whispered in a sleepy state.

Before I could get to my feet, the two officers that were outside the door were now inside the room, guns drawn.

"Hold it right there!" one of them yelled. "Hands up where we can see them!"

I put my hands up in compliance. "Reese, tell them I didn't do it."

One of the men grabbed my wrists as he took his foot and shoved me to the ground, pinning my arms behind my back.

"Reese!"

"Shut up!" the other cop said as he kicked me in the ribs.

"No!" Reese grumbled as he tried to sit up. "Don't!"

"Reese, this bitch tried to kill you, man!"

The cop put his foot on the back of my neck and pressed down.

"Stop! She didn't...she didn't do it," Reese gasped.

"What?" the cop asked.

"Perp...the perp stuck me."

"Get your damn foot off me," I growled.

The cop took his foot away and backed off.

"He got me when I tried to help him," Reese explained.

"Shit, Reese!" the cop snapped as he ran out of the room.

"Uncuff her!" Reese tried to yell.

The cop uncuffed me and I immediately stood up and sneered at him.

"Sssorry about that."

I went over to Reese's side. "Why didn't you say something sooner? These guys have been chasing my ass down all night."

Reese smiled. "I was out all this time."

"That little bastard must have said that I stabbed you." I put my hand over his. "I'm sorry that I left you. I didn't know that you were in trouble."

"Don't. I'm the one that...that should apologize."

I smiled at him and ran my hand over his cheek. "Ya know, if you wanna play with handcuffs all you have to do is ask me."

The cop that had cuffed me blushed. "Um, I'm gonna go check with Nelson to make sure he's in that bastard's room reading him his rights."

Reese laughed and winced as the pain flared up in his stomach.

"You better rest. I'll come by in the morning to visit now that it's okay to use the hallway rather than the window."

He smiled at me as he drifted off to sleep.

As I watched him, I realized that I really needed to get a handle on this anger thing. If I hadn't gotten mad and beat on that kid then Reese wouldn't have been sent out there and none of this would have happened. I guess my anger effects more than just myself.

~ FIN

CLOSE CALL

Written: 5/2004

PART 1

The streets are growing more and more brutal with each passing day.

I hate to use the old cliché of "when I was..." but it's true. When I was out on these very streets as Batgirl I didn't see this much brutality.

Unfortunately, tonight is another night in which it's hit home. My home.

I'd gone to bed early and was about to fall asleep when I kept hearing this sliding noise.

I dragged myself out of bed to go investigate even though I really wanted to ignore it.

I wheeled out towards the computer lab. From across the room I could see the elevator door opening, closing halfway and opening again.

When I got close enough to see the reason for the elevator malfunction I felt like I was going to suffocate.

She was lying face down on the floor, her upper body outside of the elevator and her lower body still in the elevator. The door would close, hit her in the ribcage and open again as it sensed her.

My ability to speak left me for a few moments as my brain tried to make sense of what my eyes were seeing.

I purposely tumbled out of my chair in order to get closer to her and roll her over. When I did, that's when I saw all of the blood.

I screamed for Alfred at the top of my lungs. I thought for sure my scream would shatter every piece of glass in the Clocktower, I screamed so loud.

I held onto her, cradling her unconscious form, sobbing like a damn baby. I couldn't let go of her, just held her as tight as I could.

Dinah ran towards us and joined me in the onslaught of tears.

Both Alfred and Dinah helped me rush her into the med lab. That's where I've been for the past six hours.

As I watch the rise and fall of her chest, it feels wrong to me - unnatural. It's not my Helena. The ventilator that I have her hooked up to is breathing for her, so that's why.

Each time the machine clicks and hisses it tears me apart inside. But I have to be strong. I have to be strong for her right now because she's isn't.

I'm not going to say that she's weak because she's so far from it. Who else would have survived four gunshot wounds to the chest, right?

I don't think I'll ever get that metal "clink" sound out of my head - the sound of the spent bullets I pulled

from her body and dropped in that small, metal tray. Ugh! It makes me nauseous just thinking about it.

The tray is still sitting there where I left it - the bloody bullets staring at me, constant reminders of her wounds.

One of them bit right into her lung, leaving me no choice but to put her on the ventilator to help her breathe. It would be too difficult for her otherwise. I hope she forgives me when she wakes up.

As I wring my hands, I notice splatters of her blood on my arms. Even if I were to wash it off I don't think I'll ever be totally clean of all the blood, there was way too much of it. And as a result, her blood pressure is low...very low.

I reach out and touch her hand. Her skin is pale and cold. I squeeze it a little, just to let her know that I'm here. She doesn't squeeze back. I really didn't expect her to.

It's been a few hours since I managed to get her vital signs stable, so that's a good sign.

I double-check her wounds to make sure everything is okay, not that she'd begin to bleed out or anything, but I guess I'm just checking to save my sanity and give myself something to do.

I used up every last piece of gauze that I had as well as the last roll of surgical tape, so Dinah went out to the drug store to get some more. Good thing because her wounds will need to be cleaned and redressed in another hour or so.

Alfred's been in here a few times, telling me I need to rest and that he'll sit with her. But I'm not leaving. I came too damn close to losing her tonight and I can't walk away, not even for a minute.

Hmpf. If she knew I was acting this way she'd have some sort of wise-ass comment. She's got a comment for everything.

She's so cold.

I grab an extra blanket and place it over her, hopefully that'll help.

"Here," Dinah says as she walks into the room, handing me a bag full of supplies. "Any change?"

"No. She's still stable though," I say softly. "There's got to be something else I can do." I begin fidgeting with her IV wires out of nervousness. My hands shake, probably due to a combination of worry, lack of sleep and lack of food.

I feel Dinah's hands over mine. "Barbara, stop it. You've done everything you can for her. It's up to her now."

I've held it back all night, but I can't hold it anymore - I burst into tears, sobbing and rubbing Helena's hand. "I...I don't know what to do."

"Maybe you should rest for a while or get something to eat."

"I...I can't." I feel like a blubbing idiot but I can't help it. This ordeal has left a huge dent in my soul.

"Then let me get you something to eat."

"Fine," I surrender. I don't have the strength to argue.

"She's gonna pull through, Barbara."

Those words ran through me like a buzzsaw blade as she left the room.

I grab onto Helena's hand, kissing the back of it. "Helena, if you can hear me I don't want you to be scared. Everything's going to be okay. You hear me? Everything's going to be okay."

More tears fall from my eyes as I watch her chest expand and contract. If she were awake it would hurt like hell, so I'm thankful that she's not. I hate seeing her in pain, I hate it more than anything.

The bullets wreaked havoc on her. Only one made it all the way through her body, the one that hit her in the side and sliced her spleen on the way out. Then there was the one that tore a hole through her lung and got jammed in her scapula. The others floated around her body, making my job even harder. Yeah the scan told me where they were, but getting them out was a different story. They were all in dire need of being removed, so it was hard to prioritize. I had to wing it and count on her strength to help me.

Seeing her like this is killing me.

I can't even see straight anymore. My mental and physical exhaustion has finally gotten the best of me and I pass out with my head resting on Helena's thigh.

PART 2

Not sure how long I've been out, but I as I come to I can feel a hand on my shoulder. It's probably Alfred, ready to tell me again that I'm going to be the one that needs taking care of if I don't get proper rest in my own bed.

Instead, I look up and see that the hand belongs to Helena.

Her eyes are slightly open and I hear her moan quietly. I think she's trying to talk but the tube in her throat isn't going to allow that to happen.

"No, don't try and talk," I tell her as I sit up and take her hand in mine. "I-I'm sorry about that," I say as I motion to the ventilator tube. "You have to have it, at least for a little while longer."

I can see her struggling to stay awake and it makes me feel terrible.

Reaching over, I brush her hair from her forehead. My skin touches hers and I realize that she's gotten a little warmer. That makes me feel a little better so I give her a smile. "You're gonna be fine."

She nods slightly and shuts her eyes against the pain that's raging through her upper body.

"Do you want me to give you a little more morphine?"

Surprisingly, she nods.

Okay, now I'm back to feeling bad again. Helena NEVER wants pain medication.

As I turn up the morphine drip, I feel a shiver crawl up my spine. This is a clear indication of how severe her wounds are and I just want to kill the bastard or bastards that did this to her.

"There ya go, baby," I say, my voice dripping with emotion. "Just rest and get better." I rub her arm as I inhale deeply and exhale slowly. Within seconds the morphine goes to work and soothes her back to sleep.

"I heard you talking, is she awake?" Dinah asked as she entered the room and stood beside me.

"She was for a minute or so. She just went back to sleep."

"You're still in one piece. I'm surprised she didn't fight you to take that tube out of her throat."

I did it again. I started to cry.

"Barbara? I'm sorry. Wh..."

I put up my hand to wave her off. "I'm sorry. She just...she umm..." It took me a minute to compose myself. "She wanted more morphine."

I didn't have to explain any further. Dinah knew what it meant.

PART 3

It's been about eight hours since I cleaned and redressed Helena's wounds and removed her from the ventilator. She'll be happy about that.

As I wheel back into her room I see that she's just waking up so I quickly wheel over by her side.

"Ugh," she grunts as she tries to move.

I take her wrist and begin checking her pulse. "Feeling any better?"

"I'd be lying if I said yes," she answered in a hoarse voice. "My throat is really sore."

"It's from the tube. I'm sorry, I tried to get it out as gently as possible."

Heavy silence between us combined with her heart monitors beeps was the only thing that filled the air for the next five minutes.

"Barbara?" she whispered, her eyes still not fully open.

I was able to hold back the tears, but barely. "Once again I almost lost you. Only this time was the worst I've ever seen."

"Barbara, we..."

I didn't give her a chance to finish because I was focused on my own thoughts that were swirling around my head and I needed them out! "You were so...so cold. You lost a lot of blood."

"Barbara..."

"I stayed right here by your side the entire time. I wasn't going to leave you, not until I was 110% sure that you were okay."

"Barbara!" Helena yelled at me, immediately wincing afterwards.

That snapped me out of my trance. "Geezus, I'm...I'm sorry," I said as I gently put my hand on her side where one of her wounds were. I didn't want her to tear the stitches.

She leaned back against the pillow, biting on her bottom lip.

I put my hand on her forehead in an effort to calm her. "Who did this to you?"

"That's what...that's what I was trying to tell you," she whispered.

As I stroked her hair I listened to her.

"Your...your daughter."

I wasn't sure I'd heard her correctly because of her whispering. "What?"

"Your daughter," she said through gritted teeth.

PART 4

Barbara went ghostly white when I repeated it.

"B-but..." she stammered.

"She told me you gave her up, that you didn't..." my throat, along with my entire upper body, felt like it was on fire, "you didn't love her." I wasn't sure she'd hear the last part because I barely heard myself.

She heard me, loud and clear...she left the room.

I hated being the barer of bad news, but oh well. I'm the one who took four to the chest. It's not like I can pretend I don't know who did it.

Damn I wish I could get out of this bed, but the pain and sleep-inducing medication make me feel like a lead weight. To be honest, it hurts so damn much I don't think I'll even be out of this bed by the end of the week. I got it good this time.

PART 5

I slept for a little while and when I woke up I was surprised that I was still alone. I thought for sure Barbara would be by my side, poking at me or something. But she wasn't.

Dinah came into the room and I could immediately see the confusion written on her face.

"Helena?" she said softly.

"Where's Barbara?" I asked.

"I was going to ask you the same thing. Was she here?"

"A while ago. I don't know how long exactly."

Dinah chewed on her thumbnail. "It's not like her to up and leave without telling anyone. Something's not right."

"Yeah, you could say that."

Dinah's head snapped up as her eyes widened. "Why? What's going on?"

"I told her who shot me."

I could practically see Dinah's brain running down a list of names in her mind in an attempt to guess who it was. She'd never guess this one.

"Who was it?"

I swallowed to coat my raw throat before I spoke. "Her daughter."

"What?!? It...it can't be. That's insane!"

"She gave her up when she was born."

Dinah started pacing, holding her hand to her forehead. "No. No way."

"It's true," Barbara said as she wheeled herself into the room. "I had her when I was seventeen. There was no way I could care for her at that age. Believe me, I thought about it over and over and over and I did what was best for her."

It looked like Barbara had been crying for a while, her eyes were puffy and red. Can't say that I blame her given what I'd told her.

"I...I don't know what to say," Barbara said to me, clearly holding back more tears. "I don't think saying I'm sorry will help, no matter how many times I said it."

"You're not the one that shot me, she did, remember?"

Dinah put her arm around Barbara. The kid was getting quite good at consoling people.

Barbara cleared throat took a deep breath. "What happened out there?"

"Barbara, we don't..."

"Just...just tell me."

I really didn't want to go into the details, I wanted to try and spare Barbara that part of the ordeal. But Barbara is just as stubborn as I am sometimes and I don't have the strength to battle with her.

"When I went home last night, she was in my apartment. When I opened the door she shot me."

I watched Barbara swallow and bite on her bottom lip nervously.

"It was dark. I could feel someone there but I didn't get a chance to see who it was, just got knocked to the ground by a bullet. I got up and got hit again. I heard the gun go off some more while I was lying on the floor but my whole body was numb."

"How do you know it was her?" Barbara asked, hoping that I was wrong.

I wasn't.

"She kneeled down next to me and whispered in my ear. She told me who she was and that you'd be seeing her soon."

Those words clearly made Barbara uncomfortable, judging by the way she straightened up in her chair and shook her head.

"It was a long way back to the Clocktower, that's for sure." I tried to make a lighthearted comment but the seriousness of the conversation squeeze the humor right out of it.

"I have to make this right, I owe that much to you."

"Barbara, you're not doing this alone," Dinah said sternly.

"Well, we're not doing anything yet. I need to figure things out first. In the meantime, Dinah, you're staying put. No leaving the tower for anything. I don't need you being the next target."

"We can't stay locked up in here forever," I said.

"You need to stay out of it and..."

"I can't stay out of it, dammit! That fuckin' bitch put four slugs in my chest and I'll be damned if..." my thought was cut short as a burst of pain erupted in my side.

"Helena, stop it. You need to rest. Revenge is the last thing you should be thinking about right now. This is my problem and I need to fix it."

The pain was intense, to say the least. I guess I'm all talk and no action today since there's no way I'm getting out of this bed, no matter how much I want to.

"Dinah, I want you to stay here with her and make sure she does NOT get out of this bed. If she does, give her this." Barbara took a syringe out of her pocket and handed it to Dinah. "That'll knock her out in a matter of minutes."

"You wouldn't," I growled.

"I won't if you don't make me," Dinah answered with a sly smile.

"Miss Barbara," Alfred said as he walked into the room carrying a bouquet of black roses, "these just came for you."

Barbara took the flowers and chuckled, insulted. She took the card off the stick and tossed the flowers into the barrel. As she read the card I could see the anger in her face.

"What's it say?" Dinah asked.

"It says," Barbara cleared her throat, "How's Helena? See you soon!" Barbara ripped the card up into tiny pieces and threw them on the floor before quickly wheeling out of the room.

Dinah started to go after her but I stopped her. "Don't. Let her go. Alfred will watch after her."

"We can't let this girl get away with what she's done and we can't let Barbara face her on her own. She'll kill her."

The kid was right. Her daughter was ready to go postal on Barbara after years and years of bottled up anger. Unfortunately, the pain in my chest reminds me all too much of that anger.

"I have to do something," Dinah said as she crossed her arms over her chest.

The next thing I knew, Dinah was running out of the room.

"Dinah!" I tried to yell, but the pain radiated from my chest. Ugh, this pisses me off. If there's one thing I hate it's feeling helpless.

I laid there for a little while and visions of that night suddenly filled my head - the bang of the shots being fired, the feeling of falling to the floor and the impact of the bullets hitting my chest.

I've been shot before, but it's never been quite like this. I was in some serious trouble.

It makes me wonder if I'm flirting with danger a little too much. Not that I asked for this or brought it upon myself, but Barbara can only save my ass so many times.

I don't want to think about it but my brain keeps flashing more images at me - the blood, Barbara's daughter's face and the long trip back here to the tower.

All of those thoughts have worn me down and before I know it I fall asleep.

PART 6

I don't know what to do.

I feel sick to my stomach just thinking about everything that's managed to happen over the past few days and for that dreaded decision I made nineteen years ago.

I'll never forget the day she was born - October 22. I got to see her for only a few minutes before a nurse came to take her away. It was one of the hardest decisions I've ever had to make, but it was for the best.

Her father was a twenty-year-old high school drop out with a fast car, a cool leather jacket and one hell of a smile. He was a bad boy, which is what attracted me. I wasn't a bad girl by any means so they're right when they say opposites attract.

We were parked in a vacant lot one night and that's where it happened. I insisted he use a condom but his irresistible charm got the better of me and before I could say another word he was already half way home.

I should have been more forceful, then perhaps I wouldn't have been faced with having my doctor inform me that I was pregnant.

Even worse was telling my father about it.

Let's say that it didn't go over too well and there was a good month of us not speaking to each other.

I was in my eighth month when Greg decided that fatherhood wasn't for him. I think as my due date got closer he began to freak out.

I remember standing on the front porch and watching him through a sea of tears as he peeled away down the street. I screamed his name over and over and collapsed in a heap as I felt my world crashing in on me.

My father came out and scooped me up into his arms and brought me inside. We had a long talk and that's when I decided to give her up.

He offered to help me with her but I couldn't do that to him. He had his own life to lead and this was my responsibility.

I never saw Greg again. I tried to find him a couple of times but didn't have much success. To be honest though, I didn't try all that hard.

So now here I am - my daughter's tracked me down and almost killed one of my best friends because she's angry with me. With ME. Why didn't she shoot me? Why take it out on Helena?

"Barbara?"

"Not now, Dinah. I need to be alone."

"The last thing you need to be is alone during all of this."

I really don't want her here but I can tell she's not going anywhere.

"Look, I don't want to get you involved in this. I don't want her to hurt you because of me. She almost k...." I suddenly find myself crying again, "killed Helena."

"Barbara, we need to face her together. If you face her by yourself she'll kill you. I don't want that to happen."

I wipe my eyes and take a deep breath. I just want this to all go away.

"Where do we start?" Dinah asked as she sat beside me.

I guess one and a half minds were better than just half because my brain wasn't functioning at full capacity. "I need to do some research and make a few phone calls to find out who adopted her. I need to get an idea of her background."

"What do you want me to do?"

"You can help me with the list of phone calls. We'll split the list in half and then compare notes."

Dinah clapped her hands together and rubbed them, ready for action. "Let's go then. We need to find her soon."

I hate to admit it but I'm scared. My own child could turn against me. What will I do when I see her? What does she look like? So many things to think of but I need to stop it and focus. My main goal right now is to find out what's made her so damn angry.

PART 7

We've been at it for hours and have come up with enough information to make THE call - the call to her adoptive parents.

Dinah left the room, giving me full privacy, and I'm grateful for it. It's hard enough making this phone call but having someone else in here with me would make me even more nervous.

My hands are shaking as I punch the numbers on the phone.

The butterflies are kicking at my stomach like little jack hammers as the phone begins to ring.

"Hello?" a male voice says through the phone.

"Umm, hello. I'm sorry to call so late, but I need to talk to you about your..."

"Look lady, if you're selling shit I'm not buying."

"No! No! I'm not selling anything. I'm calling about the little girl you adopted nineteen years ago."

"What about her?"

I wasn't expecting the coldness in his voice.

"I...I'm her birth mother. I'm..."

"Ah, so you're the one that gave birth to that punk."

"Excuse me?"

"Taylor's been a handful from day one. We were never able to get her straightened out. She's runaway more times than I can count, she's a thief, she's a liar and she's got one hell of a temper. We have a child of our own and she nearly beat him to death one day because he kept teasing her about being adopted."

I want to throw up.

"My wife and I cut all ties with her when she left a couple of years ago. Things have been a lot easier since then."

I almost couldn't speak. "D-do you know where I can find her?"

"Couldn't tell you. Maybe look wherever there's trouble, you're sure to find her there."

"I, um, I don't want to take anymore of your time. Thank you for speaking with me."

"Sure," he said before hanging up.

I let the phone drop from my hand as I began sobbing.

PART 8

I think Barbara's afraid to face me because she sent the kid in to clean and redress my wounds. She couldn't have gone off to find her daughter alone because Dinah would surely have gone after her.

"So, what's wrong?" I ask her. The look on her face clearly shows that something's up.

"Nothing, why?"

"You're kinda quiet."

"I-I just keep thinking back to when we found you."

"It's more than that. What's going on? Did Barbara find her?" Dinah was silent as she taped the gauze to the wound in my side. "Come on. You know I'll find out one way or another."

Dinah let out a heavy sigh. "Okay, but you have to promise you're not getting out of this bed until Barbara says you can."

I hate promises and I rarely make them. "Fine."

"Barbara talked to her daughter's adoptive parents. Turns out she's quite the wild child. She gave them a bunch of trouble and ran away a bunch of times. They haven't seen her in a while though."

"So it was a waste of time, basically."

"Pretty much. We did find out that her name is Taylor. I guess she's got a lot of anger going on."

"Ya think?" I chuckle and then wince in response.

"Barbara's not taking it very well."

"Yeah, I didn't think so. Be sure to keep an eye on her, will ya. I don't want her doing something on her own. She's not in the right state-of-mind. I don't trust her judgment right now."

"I'm trying to keep tabs on her but she's so distant right now." Dinah finished up with her nursing task and pulled the covers back over me. "There. You should be all set. They seem to be healing quite well. How do you feel?"

"I still feel like shit, thanks for asking. But I do feel a lot better than the other day. It doesn't feel like an elephant is sitting on my chest anymore."

Dinah laughed.

"How's our patient doing?" Barbara asked as she came into the room.

"There you are," I said, "We were just talking about you." Barbara smiled but it was forced. "You okay?"

"Yeah," she said softly.

I didn't believe her for a minute. Between the look on her face and the emotion in her voice I could tell she was a wreck.

"You should get some rest, you look like you haven't slept in days."

"I haven't," she said, honestly.

"Well, you're always telling me what to do so now I'm telling you. Get to bed and rest. There's nothing you can now. Your mind is exhausted and it's not going to do you any good to wear yourself out."

Barbara nodded. She knew I was right but she hated like hell to admit it.

"Come on," Dinah said as she pointed toward the door, "let's go."

"Alright. Alright. It's not like being awake is getting me anywhere anyway."

Barbara turned around and headed for the door. I motioned to Dinah to keep an eye on Barbara and Dinah nodded.

Hopefully the kid could get her to stay put.

Ha. Listen to me. Of all people that should be chastising anyone for not doing what they're told it shouldn't be me.

PART 9

I slept for all of maybe an hour and a half. That's as long as my brain would allow, there's too much running through it.

I could have kept on going but they both insisted I rest. Alfred's been after me too. I know they all mean well but there's so much to deal with right now, they just don't understand.

All these thoughts are giving me a headache.

As I squeeze the bridge of my nose I hear Dinah screaming my name from out in the computer lab.

I quickly get myself out of bed and into my chair. "Dinah?!?" I yell back, then the lights go out.

She's here.

I wheel out into the lab just as the back up generators kick in and illuminate the room with a few lights - enough light for me to see Helena face-down on the floor with Taylor on top of her, a gun aimed at the back of Helena's neck.

Dinah's chained up in a chair beside them, desperately struggling to free herself.

"Taylor!" I shout, surprising her.

"You know my name. Interesting, considering you didn't even want me!" she cocked the gun and I could see Helena flinch at the sound.

"Don't do this. Your anger is with me, not Helena or Dinah. Take your anger out on me."

"Oh I will, but I need to clean up some unfinished business first."

"Taylor, don't!"

"Why?!? Like one more bullet's gonna make a difference, huh, Helena."

I started to wheel towards her but I could see her finger tightening around the trigger so I stopped.

"Please, don't!" I pleaded. I could see Dinah trying to focus on Taylor's mind but I shook my head to tell her to stop. It was too dangerous with that gun so close to Helena. "Wait! Before you do anything please tell me why. Why you did this to Helena. Why you're so angry."

Taylor moved the gun away from Helena and gave her a hard kick to her wounded side. "Don't try anything." I couldn't help but jump, feeling Helena's pain as she curled up into a ball, grunting.

She walked towards me and raised the gun, aiming it at my head. "You wanna know why I did this to her? And all this time I thought you were pretty intelligent."

The barrel of the gun came up against my temple and I could feel myself clench my teeth in both fear and anger.

"You didn't love me. You gave me away, yet you took HER in and treated her as if she were your own!"

A white-hot pain burst through the side of my head as she punched me with all her might, sending me crashing to the ground. I laid there dazed for a moment and could feel a trickle of blood running down my cheek.

"Sorry, mom! I forgot that it's rude to hit a cripple!"

The words stung but not as much as the kick she delivered to my ribs.

She got in my face and grabbed me by the front of my shirt, hauling me up close to her. "You love her more than me, admit it! Go on! Admit it!"

"No," I squeaked as I tried desperately to catch my breath.

"I...I..."

WHAM!!!

Another kick to the gut. This one almost made me throw up, but I did my best not to.

"Get away from her," Helena growled from behind her.

When I looked over I could see Helena standing, barely. Her left arm hugged her wounded side which was bleeding again and she swayed a bit on her feet. She was in no condition to fight.

Dinah joined in and gave her a mental blast, but Taylor was ready. She dug into her pocket and pulled out a tranquilizer gun and shot Dinah in the neck with a dart. "Nice try," she said with an evil smile. "Do you really think that I didn't do my homework before I came here?"

Dinah's eyes fluttered and soon closed as she passed out.

I saw Helena moving towards Taylor. "Helena, don't! Stay out of this."

"Like hell I will. The little bitch and I need to chat about what happened the other night."

Taylor laughed defiantly. "Gimmie a break. Do you think you're going to be able to take me on? Didn't you learn after the first four bullets?"

I could tell that Helena's anger was growing and it was only a matter of time before Helena made a move.

Sure enough, Helena ran towards Taylor and started the fight.

As the two began exchanging blows, I painfully got myself back into my chair and took out a Batarang. Holding my breath, I let it fly.

The disc flew through the air and embedded itself in the back of Taylor's shoulder. She fell forward slightly and Helena took advantage by brining her knee up and hitting her in the face, then pushing her down to the floor.

"Give it up," Helena hissed as she pressed her weight down on Taylor's back, pinning her down.

I wheeled over to them and was surprised at how deep the disc was in her. I didn't mean to throw it that hard, but then again I did.

"Get off me, bitch!" Taylor grunted.

"Helena, you alright?" I asked as I saw her bleeding side.

"Fine. Let's finish this."

"You better get off me or there will be hell to pay."

I saw her hand disappear into her pocket and I knew something wasn't right as soon as I saw her hand

come out.

"Helena! Her right hand!"

Helena quickly looked down and saw what I saw. In a flash, she grabbed Taylor by the wrist and shoved her hand underneath her stomach.

A muffled bang rang out followed by a cry filled with pain.

"Helena!" I gasped.

Helena rolled off of Taylor as blood began pooling under her.

I got out of my chair and rolled Taylor over. She was covered in blood and her upper body had been pierced by hundreds of pins.

"Holy shit," Helena said, her eyes wide as saucers. "Am I seeing what I think I'm seeing?"

"Taylor?" I called out as I put my hand to her cheek. "Taylor?" Her eyes opened slightly and she began coughing up blood. "Why, Taylor?"

"Sh-she took care of me...loved me like you...like you were supposed to."

"She knew you were my daughter?"

Taylor shook her head. "Not until recently."

She coughed up more blood and I knew the end was near.

"What do you mean recently? How recent?"

"Bombshell's alive?" Helena gasped as she hugged her side and stood up.

Taylor laughed at our confusion. "How else would I have found you?" She laughed some more and then coughed uncontrollably. "Sh-she'll be back for you all," she said as she spoke her last words.

As much hurt and pain the girl had caused, she was still my flesh and blood. I couldn't hold back the tears.

Helena put her hand on my shoulder and I brushed it away. "Don't. I...I just want to be alone with her for a little while."

"I understand," Helena said as she went over to Dinah who was starting to come to. "Wh-what the hell happened?"

Helena got the chains off of her. "I'll explain later. She wants to be alone right now."

I heard them leave the room and I let everything go.

I cried for giving her up.

I cried for her anger.

I cried for her death.

I cried for what was yet to come.

~ FIN