Girls night out II (Gotham style)

by dhapin

Summary

Illyana returns to the DC universe, this time with friends. Girls night out. Will Gotham survive?

In chapter six of Tag I’m It, I apparently created a team (Dani, Jubilee, Illyana and Laura). They get together and beat up crooks (hey they all like fighting). At the end Jubilee wanted to have a girl’s night out in New York so… this story resulted. LordGrise and I got to chatting (as he continues to create the Illyana/DC crossover story Arkham that I created to have an Illyana/Joker story) and… Well…

Thus resulted… Another DC crossover (Yeah!) by LordGrise and I.

To better understand this story I recommend that you at least read Chapter 6 of Tag I’m it (Or read the whole story, which I think is fantastic, but I’m rather biased). And of course the story Arkham.

This story assumes that Illyana continues to visit the world of DC.
Part 1a: THREE DAYS LATER

Batman sat wearily at his accustomed workstation onboard the WatchTower, the Justice League’s space station, and accessed his email. For the last three days he had not been on Earth, but instead engaged upon a matter requiring the attention of the Justice League and the Green Lantern Corps. Food and sleep had been in short supply, and Batman was in need of both. Food was currently a mug of his vegan smoothie #1, usually referred to as 'Batman's swamp smoothie'. Sleep he was postponing until he got back to the mansion as he had an hour and a half to remain on the station pending the lab studies confirming he wasn't bringing an alien plague to Earth, and after fifteen minutes focused meditation, he was making the most of his time until he could go to his bed.

Routine notifications were summarily noted and dealt with in the order they were presented; then he opened the Gotham patrol reports folder. One in particular was multiply flagged: Orphan, Oracle, Catwoman (!)... and most ominously, by Alfred.

He immediately contacted Alfred; Alfred generally only made formal notes on a patrol report and flagged it if there were injuries involved and follow up care - or rest - was needed.

"Good morning, sir. I have activated the Tahiti Protocol; it seems you and Ms. Kyle were feeling in need of privacy. The return can be enacted at your convenience. Ms. Rasputin returned Ms. Cassandra rather late this morning; she is still sleeping off a devil’s brew of alcohols and other recreational substances. I do not believe she will be fit to patrol for two days."

Part 1b: Girls Night Out Mark II (three days prior)

Five little bats sitting in a tree. One fell out, oh dearly oh me. One turned to the another’s and said to thee…

“Doug Marcaida, the knife judge on the show Forged in Fire. He’s shown up from time to time at the mansion to give a class and to fight with Logan. I find him most skilled.” Was the opinion of Laura (code name X-23).

“Nonsense. Has to be Bruce Lee.” Counters Dani. “The best martial artist of all time has to be
“Bruce Lee.”

“Jackie Chan!” Was Jubilees contribution which earned her glares from Laura and Dani.

The location, Central Park New York, 1:37am. Our heroes are sitting in a tree, bored and arguing due to said boredom.

A crackle on the radio link from Illyana as she whispered a complaint. “So much for hiding in a tree waiting for evil doers to attempt to take advantage of me. Your chatter could awaken the dead.”

Illyana was pretending to be passed out on a park bench (dressed in a simple red gown), holding a half empty red wine bottle. While Illyana? It’s simple, it was her turn.

But wait? That’s only four? Who is the fifth person in the tree? Kitty? Elizabeth Braddock (Psyocke)? Hope? Monet? Squirrel Girl (after all they were in an oak tree with acorns)? Hope? Storm? (Yeah like Storm would sit in a tree). Rachel? Had to be Rachel… Right?

Nope. It was Mazikeen from the bar Lex in Los Angels. She was here on Illyana’s invite as the other’s didn’t believe that Illyana had been telling the truth about the bar Lex.

“You are all wrong.” States Mazikeen with distain and a sneer as to their opinions. “Master Ken, his show, Enter the Dojo is both entertaining and most definitive as to such things. I recommend his episode, One hundred ways to attack the groin, it taught even me a few things. He’s based in LA so I ended up holding him hostage until he revealed his secrets. Plus, his other show, Master Ken’s Private’s, has various guest attend and demonstrate attack techniques. Most illuminating. I love his saying, never take your eyes off the balls, words to live by girls. Words to live by.”

Dani replied with irritation. “That is not a real thing!” While Jubilee and Laura just looked on with sudden interest. Jubilees was later to comment, she had me at balls.

Mazikeen did not bother to reply, instead she just pulled out her iPhone X, unlocked it and hit one of her saved web links.

They then watched Master Ray, and his porno mustache, demonstrated one hundred groin attacks in just two minutes. The three were impressed, even Dani.
Laura made a mental note to review all of his work while Jubilee and Dani wondered about later practicing some of the newly seen groin attacks in the Danger room (they later did and their male sparing partners were not pleased). Hmmm… They concluded, they really needed to try some groin attacks the next time there was a villainous attack.

“Do all his methods involve a stomp to the groin?” Inquired Laura.

“Most, it can be optional, but why deny yourself the satisfaction? He is after all the caption of the crotch.”

Ok, Dani was beginning to see why Illyana had invited Mazikeen. On the negative side she was rude, crude, violent, and verbally abusive. Those were oddly also some of her pluses. That and the knife collection she’d brought. Dani was really keen on all the knives, and just how many Mazikeen was able to conceal upon her person; something Laura was also quite impressed with as well. Mazikeen was currently letting Dani wield a knife called the Castrator. It had a curved hook like end for… well, the name was most descriptive as to what the hook curve was used for.

“This is a bust.” Groused Mazikeen, who was not talking about her cleavage (which was on rather prominent display), and especially not about Jubilee’s anemic ranking upon the titty index in general and in this particular female gathering. “I thought there was supposed to be evil doers to beat and hurt. All that has occurred is a drunk urinating against this tree, a pick pocket with the ferociousness of a hamster, a very small hamster, and a very inadequately equipped man who likes to display himself for reasons that lack any sense.”

Illyana again whispers into her mike. “There might have been some real crooks but no… everybody has to chatter like a bunch of hens, show videos while practicing martial art moves in the branches. Can’t imagine why the muggers are staying away.”

Illyana sat up on the bench, there was a flicker of light, and she was now dressed in her usual tight black leather getup. “Okay, guess it’s a no show for tonight. Time for a Starbucks run?”

The others leapt down from the tree and clustered around Illyana. So… just who are these damsels of distress?


Mutant teleporter, demon, sorceress queen of Limbo, and all round bitch when she wants to be.
Blonde with dark blue eyes (when in human form). Illyana is in her usual field getup, black leather short shorts, a black leather top with a boob window, tall black boots, black gloves, plus she has some kind of black sticks stuck in her hair. There was also some kind of weird black spiky armor on her left shoulder. Illyana currently has no displayed weapon.

Danielle Moonstar (A.K.A Mirage)

Dani is a Cheyenne (American Indian). Dani’s mutant powers are currently deactivated, but she is extremely skilled in many forms of armed and unarmed combat (i.e. hard ass bitch) and is currently a Valkyrie of Asgard which gives her strength, reflexes, the ability to sense impending death, and great resilience. She is currently wearing her winged headdress (white wings that stand up straight), soft tan leather boots, and a black leather body suit accessorized with a silver belt and some silver jewelry. She has her long dark hair in a ponytail. She has a bow at her back and a long knife at her side, plus that curved Castrator blade on loan.

Laura Kinney (A.K.A X-23, also known as Wolverine)

A small woman, Laura is a survivor of the Weapon X program, literally bred to be the perfect killing machine. White skinned with dark black hair. Like her biological father (Logan, also known as Wolverine), she is a mutant and has the same abilities as her father. Enhanced sense, an accelerated healing factor that allows her to regenerate damaged or destroyed tissues with great speed. Injuries such as gunshot wounds, slashes, and puncture wounds completely heal within a matter of seconds. She possesses two retractable claws sheathed within her forearm; plus a single shorter claw from each foot. The claws are bone, but have been coated with adamantium (meaning they are unbreakable). Before her escape from Weapon X, she had been trained (and used many times) as an assassin. She is dressed not as the Wolverine, but rather like Illyana in tight black leathers, only with a bit less skin showing.

Mazikeen

A dark skinned (looks like a mix of East Indian and European descent) a beautiful and sensuous woman. Long black hair this is current worn as a ponytail. She’s dressed in skin tight black leather (boots, pants, shirt, and jacket). She is a demon from a hell, now on earth. Violent. Really really violent. Was one of hell’s main torturers, definite sadomasochist and very sexually promiscuous. She is strong, fast, has some mild telekinesis, heals, and likely other magical abilities not yet shown.

Jubilation Lee (A.K.A Jubilee)

A dark haired Asian, former mutant now turned Vampire (she was transformation by the bite of Xarus, son of Dracula). Her powers include superhuman strength and speed, the ability to turn into vapor, and to talk incessantly (which is a natural ability, not related to any mutant or vampire powers). She has vampire healing abilities as well. Jubilee now possesses all of the weaknesses of a vampire, but is resistant to sunlight (it does however make her weaker). She apparently did not bother to fully read the memo about tonight’s activity as she is dressed in a full body black outfit, with major pink highlighting, plus a yellow trench coat (yes bright yellow, great for sneaking
around at night) and giant red goggles.

So one blonde and four dark haired girls standing around talking, then a flicker of a light circle and they are at a Starbucks (the one by Avengers Mansion).

A few minutes later…

They were all admiring the knives that Mazikeen’s had brought, over mocha and frappuccinos, and vanilla tea for Illyana.

Oh, and Jubilee was having a Starbucks blood smoothie (her first) and was put out to discover that a very few Starbucks had a secret blood menu (not advertised in any way). The drinks were way expensive but good. And just how the hell did Illyana and Mazikeen know about the secret menu and she didn’t? So unfair! The other vampires were always keeping things from her! I mean… she was a member of the blood drinkers club even if she got her blood from a blood bank and didn’t… (as I said, massive chatty powers).

Mazikeen was currently explaining the purpose of each knife.

“… And of course Castrator is one of my favorites, I always used it to castrate newcomers in hell. And anything else that needs castrating, which was surprisingly frequent. There was this one time that I…”

“What’s that one for?” Asked Jubilee, in an attempt to change the topic as Mazikeen was very keen on the whole topic of castration and Jubilee was finding Mazikeen’s enthusiasm for said castrations to be unnerving. Jubilee was pointing at a small bladed knife, just two inches long, black wood with no hand guard, and carved with what appeared to be erotic figures entwined in various positions.

“That’s my sex knife.” Replied Mazikeen after draining her third quadruple espresso.

“You cut people while having sex?!” Was Jubilee’s rather loud reply. With earned her a glare from Mazikeen (and cringes from everybody else in Starbucks).

Mazikeen picked up the knife in question. “Sometimes, when I’m in the mood, but not with this knife.” She twirled the blade about with various hand moves (which impressed everybody, except
all the other customers and the Starbucks staff as the display of weaponry was unnerving). “This knife is for when a man just can’t perform anymore. One cut by me, one cut by him upon me and... ready for more hot and heavy action.”

Dani commented. “Never seen Viagra in quite that form before.” A comment that made Jubilee giggle. The Starbucks was only mildly crowded (this was one of those 24 hour Starbucks, but nobody was sitting by our gals, likely due to the prominent display of lethal weapons).

Illyana then brought out her bat boomerang, only to receive dismissals from Jubilee and Mazikeen.

“Obvious forgery Illyana.” Dismissed Jubilee (the well known weapons expert, as in not at all). “Cheap souvenir. Can’t believe you fell for it.”

“Marginal.” Sneered Mazikeen as she stole a sip of Jubilee’s drink with a lightning quick grab. “Inadequate to do more then minor damage as the edges are insufficiently sharp for deep cutting or penetration. It’s as if the intent is only to harm and not to kill.”

After stealing her drink back with a lightning fast move of her own, Jubilee commented that. “I bet there would be muggers in Gotham. Too bad it doesn’t exist. Which is a disaster for all of creation as I’d make a great Robin.”

Illyana gave Jubilee a mild glare. “Gotham is filled with muggers and all kinds of criminals. And as I said last time the Bat doesn’t like vampires. And you’re way too chatty for the Bat anyway, he’s more of a grunt and glare kind of guy.”

“Am not! And the Bat does not exist! That just a comic.”

Mazikeen stole the blood smoothie back from Jubilee. “This is boring, I was promised a fun night and so far this has been disappointing. And you Jubilee are the worse vampire I have ever met, blood from a bank instead of hot and fresh from the source? I’ll bet you don’t even use your powers to seduce sexual partners. Why not just stake yourself and be done with it. I wish to depart this place, and...” Suddenly Mazikeen was twirling a pair of fur lined handcuffs, and Jubilee’s eyes got big. “Illyana assured me that this would be fun, promised in fact. I distinctly recall the phrase I swear. I mean to have my fun Yana, if not in combat then just like last time.”

Just a minor frown back from Illyana. “Control yourself Maz, the night is still young... somewhere... and... wait a second, that was you wearing the... um...ok. How about Seattle or
LA?” Hmmm, it was still daytime in Tokyo so that was off the list, bit of a bummer as Ninjas could be real fun.

“You said New York.” Was Maz’s reply. “You gave your word it would be fun. And if I’d wanted LA I would have stayed in LA. And I like you better when you’re wearing your horns and tail. This is not fun so… time for…”

Okay, Illyana concluded that Mazikeen was in a mood so extreme measures were obviously needed to recover the evening. She interrupted Maz before Maz went into more detail (no need to have Jubilee freak out). “Damn, I was hoping to save this for a later time but… First a few questions. Anybody have any issues with bats?”

Just some no’s and shaking of heads in response, plus a sarcastic expression from Jubilee (she is a vampire after all).

“Okay, any issues with cats?”

Neither Dani or Laura had issues but Jubilee did make a face as she stated. “Hate cats.” And she attempted to steal the blood smoothie back from Mazikeen, only to fail as Mazikeen slurped it sarcastically after avoiding Jubilee’s attempt at seizing the cup.

Mazikeen then replied as she flipped the now empty cup to Jubilee. “Cats are self-centered, obsessed with only what pleases them, and vicious, so… of course I adore the evil little critters.”

Jubilee glared at Mazikeen and the now empty cup. “I prefer dogs.”

Which elicited a sniff of disparagement from Mazikeen. “If you want a dog then get a man, their better then dogs.”

Questioning glances from other others caused Mazikeen to emphasize a bit. “Foot massages, pleading apologies, sex, good for fetching things other then sticks, and since they talk so little their mouths and tongues can be better employed southward.”

A moment of confusion on Jubilee’s face, then she blushed as the sexual implications of Mazikeen’s statement were understood. Which of course just made her lose more points with Mazikeen (A blushing vampire… what’s the world coming to?).
Illyana decided to go for it. “Okay then, I’ve been working on a little spell, some chaos magic cribbed from the Scarlet Witch, to help setup a party as it were. It should ensure that the evening is very eventful with all kinds of fun for the participants. And I will remind you that it is a different universe. You gals in?”

Agreement all around, it was not just Mazikeen that was bored. Jubilee did ask a mischievous question. “Does this other universe have a Steve Tyler?”

A question that did not prompt a nice response from Mazikeen. “Why would you care if there is a... oh... Okay... I get it. You’re into the elderly. Your one of those kind of vampires, okay. Takes all kinds.”

A comment that finally got Jubilee angry. “I am not into the elderly and what do you mean okay?”

“No judging, just would have thought that you’d go for something younger and more... health.”

The tif was broken up by Illyana. “Try to play nice Mazikeen, and Jubilee she’s just trying to get your goat because she’s bored.”

The two settled down, and Mazikeen grinned at being caught.

Illyana explained. “Okay, rules are the same. No killing unless extreme situations, the Bat really gets upset at killing. Agreed?”

They all agreed, even Mazikeen who did sneer a bit at the obvious wimpyness of yet another no killing rule game. They picked up the knives, while Illyana conjured a small bottle containing a dark red liquid and five shot glasses.

Illyana poured five shots, then did some mystical gestures that ignited the top of the liquid with little magical blue flames. She then held up one of the shot glasses as if to do a toast while gesturing for the others to take a glass as well. They did and Illyana spoke the toast.

“To a fun time for all in the group.”
They clicked the glasses and all drank, and the little blue flames briefly outlined their bodies as they drank.

“Wow… that has a kick.” Was Jubilee’s comment. “What was it?”

“Purified chaos.” Was Illyana’s reply. “This should work. Okay, click your heels and hold on to your unmentionables, we’re on our way.”

There was another flicker of a light circle and they were gone (much to the relief of everybody else at Starbucks). And just in time to avoid a late night Starbucks visit by Jane (the Wasp), who did not get along at all with Illyana.

All that was left was Jubilee’s sudden question left lingering in the air as they vanished. “What do you mean should?”

Part 1c: Gotham (Bad girls bad girls, whacha gunna do?)

The ladies looked around, and at first, nothing had changed: They were just back in Central Park amidst the trees. Then they realized they weren't the same trees, nor were they in the same places. Nor the same time, it was now twilight instead of late night. They saw the city skyline and…

Illyana was smug in her declaration. "Ladies... welcome to Gotham. Anyone fancy a drink? I know this really great club..."

Then five punks stepped out of the brush, confronting Illyana, who was still holding the half full bottle of wine. All had the whiteface, green hair, and rouged lips that marked them as Jokerz...

Part 1d: Something wicked this way comes

The alert was seen in the Monitor Womb of the WatchTower first, and instantly relayed to several
Unfortunately, Batman wasn't on-planet at that moment: he and the other core Justice League members were dealing with an issue Elsewhere. And so it fell upon to Oracle to manage the situation. At the precise moment the alert came in, though, she already had two situations developing simultaneously: Nightwing and Robin were fighting an AI manifestation claiming to be of the HIVE, while Spoiler and Red Robin were dealing with a robbery that had morphed into a standoff.

Cassandra Cain, A.K.A. Orphan, was the only one more or less in position to check out the sensor ping in the park...

Orphan crouched atop the Mixtel Apartments and studied the holographic display being emitted by her gauntlet. Three Little Brown Bats, as the small semi-autonomous drones were called, were silently (at least to normal human senses) orbiting the coordinates Oracle had sent. A winking icon in the corner of the display indicated Oracle was also viewing the imagery feed. Interpolated phased radar, directed infrared, and visible spectrum cameras combined to produce a surprisingly good if monochromatic field of view; Orphan was studying the kinesthetic of the members of the group while Oracle ran comparisons on the Magik database that she and Batman had put together after Magik's prior visit.

"Using Magik as the twelve o'clock, from the implants detected by the radars the woman at one o'clock is likely the female Wolverine clone, X-23. Unbreakable bones, claws from hands and feet of that same metal Catwoman's new claws are made of, and just as sharp; superhuman strength and speed, de facto immunity to chemical agents, ability to soak and rapidly heal even lethal damage in seconds, and she's a berserker." Oracle reported, her voice getting that absent tone that meant she was splitting her focus. "Oh, and hyper-acute senses. Psychotic tendencies... Known killer. Her comic history is almost as bad as Magik's."

Orphan wasn't nearly as concerned about her as the brightly dressed one next to her. "Seven o'clock, Oracle. No pulse. Infrared shows body heat ambient to air, almost. She not breathing... Fangs. I see fangs when she speaks."

Oracle's voice was crisp. "Hypothesize Jubilation Lee. Has to be. Codename Jubilee. Cute. Cassie, she's a vampire. Energy projection abilities, very vague what she can do, besides the usual suite of abilities and weaknesses a vampire gets. Comics portray her as a heroine, though, says she doesn't kill. What's your loadout tonight?"

"Standard patrol."
“I'm sending you the heavy combat swapouts, and detailing some LBBs to you. You're on your own until things ease up. Strongly recommend you observe only. The woman at thee o’clock is likely Dina, codename Mirrage, she’s a warrior and supposedly a Valkyrie. The dark skinned woman at nine o’clock does not have a clear match, hypostasize she’s Monet St. Croix, code name M. Strength, speed, telekinesis, telepathy, speed, reflexes, she’s full kit.”
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Turns out Marvel has turned Jubilee back into a human, and of course regained her mutant powers as well, so I suppose this might be the only time she’s going to be hunting with the Bad Girls. Being mortal again makes me think that she will be less interested in the games they play; not to mention being much more vulnerable.

However…

LordGrise and I have a difference of opinion on that subject. LordGrise is of the opinion that a) she’d be very hurt and angry if she were snubbed from further invitations; b) her time as a vampire would leave her with more of a lust for life experiences than ever, and c) the predator's instincts she received during her time as a vampire will still be there, potentially more so than she might like. All we have to do is upgrade her gear a bit to compensate for her reduced durability, and away she goes like the energizer bunny (as we all know Jubilee can be).

What, gentle reader, do you think? Leave your opinion in your review comments, please? We really do wish to know.

Oh, and in LordGrise’s Batman fanfic universe, Ivy and Harley are a romantically committed couple. They’re no longer really villains (thanks to Batman), although they still drink at the Iceberg with the Rogues. They don’t want to be separated, so they keep a (comparatively) low profile, these days. They hit a big score when… well… y’see...

And we both figure Illyana is a bit more vocal and expressive in the Bat-averse then in the Marvel universe because she’s on vacation as it were.

All typos and tense mistakes are my fault.

Part 2a: THREE DAYS LATER

Batman stared at the comm screen. Receiving assurances from Alfred that things were well in hand, apart from one of his own having gone off on some kind of mission related bender, of all things, did not sit well with him, however unintended said bender had been. And Alfred’s answer that the mission report was the proper place to start when Batman, rather sternly, had enquired as to just what the hell had happened, did not sit well with him.
“A most insightful choice of words sir. You will find that Ms. Grayson and Ms. Kyle have more then adequately detailed the events in the mission log; and perusing the document does provide you with something most productive to occupy your quarantine time.”

“Alfred…”

“It’s all there Master Bruce. And a quick perusal will allow you to better formulate any remaining queries you will have. My apologies for the comment at the end of the file. A Ms. Lee, was most insistent that it be included. She extracted my promise that it would be; otherwise I fear we might still have her verbose presence dwelling amongst us. Master Dick offers additional apologies for the Batmobile, the bobble heads appear to be quite unremovable at this time. And before you ask they are of the three automotive celebrities of Top Gear. I shall be so bold as to state, on behalf of all of England, we are very embarrassed to have inflicted them upon the world.”

Batman finally gave up trying to pry information out of Alfred and, after another long slurp upon the vegan smoothie, he opened the log entry and began to read. He promptly stopped at the first line.

Magik (Illyana Rasputin) had returned yet again, but this time she had brought some friends. Based upon Alfred’s comments Bruce surmised she was a Top Gear fan. With minor trepidation Bruce continued to read, his smoothie forgotten.

Part 2b: Things that go bump (three days prior)

**Jokerz.** A criminal gang affiliated with the Joker. Being Joker related meant that the gang was less involved in routine criminal activity and more inclined to murder and mayhem in general, rather then just criminal revenue opportunities.

“Hey little chickie…” Began the first male Jokerz gang member as he grabbed at Illyana, only to be knocked off his feet by a thrown beer bottle from Dani, She’d used a bottle that was conveniently handy, laying on the ground next to a waste container labeled Keep Gotham Clean, and she always did throw a mean pitch. A pitch that had bounced off of the J’s forehead.

The remaining gang members, likewise all male, attacked as they snarled at both the assault and the gall at the women for not even letting them get the opening line in.
“Remember the rules!” Shouted Illyana as she danced back, protecting the partially full wine bottle that she was still holding. Quickly she threw a spell at it, converting the fragile glass to something much more akin to steel, although still looking like glass.

“First point!” Shouted Dani in victory, with a fist pump in the air, as she too backed away with Illyana.

“No fair!” Hollered back Jubilee as she leapt into combat with a flying kick that knocked her targeted low life into the bushes. She followed up her attack by stomping his crotch and putting a quarter twist into her heel for style. “You're not supposed to interrupt the villain’s opening remarks! It ruins the mood!”

Mazikeen drew a police baton from somewhere and engaged a J who was using two knives. "Marginal assailants at best..." She commented as her erstwhile assailant went down after a relatively gentle knock to the head. She didn't bother with the crotch stomp; it wasn't like he'd feel it… and a good stomping deserved an appreciative response.

Laura was also under attack by two incompetents who were waving switchblades like they were some kind of Harry Potter magic wands. She refrained from popping her claws and just used her fists and feet to take them down. She did seize the opportunity to practice two of the crotch attack moves she had observed, and found them both to be highly effective at immobilizing the foe and personally quite satisfying.

Illyana refrained from doing anything other then taking a swig of wine from the bottle and then giving few test swings with it like it was miniature baseball bat. Still masses like a wine bottle but no breakage potential any more. A few droplets of wine scattered across the area, generating little gaslight blue vapors that swirled across the ground.

“Restraining yourself, Illyana?” Joked Dani as she watched the brief fight.

“Naaaaa, just letting the others have a little fun...” Was her reply.

Just then, the J who had been hit with Dani’s bottle staggered to his feet, only to bonked on the head by Illyana with the wine bottle, which flattened the criminal once again. Why no crotch attack, gentle readers? Well, Illyana was the only one who had not seen the video, and Hell Lords usually refrain from direct physical combat as they considered it déclassé; Illyana being a definite exception to that rule. But One supposes she would be willing to give you a stomp if you asked
nicely, usually Hell Lords metaphysically hit you in the balls, rather than literally.

However, Dani had seen the video, and as the hapless, and rather concussed, gang member staggered to his feet yet again, he received crotch attack technique number 47 (boot to the groin) from Dani. A short cry of agony and the thug was down clutching his balls and trying breathlessly to moan; which Mazikeen silenced with a quick kick to his head as she walked back over to Dani and Illyana.

Mazikeen spoke with a sneer in both her voice and expression. “Pathetic. These scum aren’t even worthy of crotch stomps. I’ve fought dogs that did better. Blind three legged dogs.”

Dani was beginning to have a few second thoughts about the whole crotch thing as she surveyed the groaning and crying criminals. “I don’t know about this. Looks… nasty. Somehow I don’t think Captain America runs around whacking bad guys in the nut sack.”

“Then he is a fool.” snarled Mazikeen. “Battle is about winning; only fools babble about it being fair.”

“Then he’s mine!” Was Jubilees jubilant cry, only to be stopped by Dani with a minor rebuke. “Chill girl, he’s out cold.”

Jubilee pouted at Dani for a second, then backed up a few feet. Jubilee was quite convinced as to the battle utility of what she had learned as she practiced a few swings with her foot. “Down and out! Just think how many battles the X-Men fought that would have been over so much faster if we had just punched them in the ’nads. I mean… do you hear any witty banter from these idiots? Any threats? Ha! Imagine how quick a Thor Loki battle would be if Thor just zorched Loki in his danglies with that hammer he has. Though I suppose he’d have to rename the hammer… Hmmmm what’s Norse for ball buster?”

“Testicles, they’re clutching their testicles.” Observed Laura, being specific as always as she briefly thought upon Loki receiving a blow to the crouch from Thor’s Hammer. “And as it has never happened, I imagine Thor must think it dishonorable or something.”

“Asgardian combat rules.” Was Illyana’s comment as she gave the bottle another practice swing. “They frown on that.”

“That is why the Roman combat methods were so effective in mass combat…” Began Laura only to
be interrupted by Jubilee.

“Balls, testicles, nut sacks, **who cares?**” Shouted an exuberant Jubilee, her eyes glowing incarnadine with her excitement. “**Bring it on!**”

Meanwhile, in the alley across the street, the two senior Jokerz who had set this little test to their newbie noobs looked at each other. One spoke to the other. "**Dusted, man. All of ’em bounced dirty. Who these bitches think they are? Even the Bats don’t do the nards like that! They need to show some respect!**"

The other pulled out a cell phone and uploaded the video they had just taken to their super-secret app (It’s called U-Tube for those in the know, they even had their own channel. Oddly, it posted instantly, instead of taking the usual several hours to do so). "**Gotta be a party, man! Nobody disses us like that! Gonna do them hard an' dirty!**"

The call went out, and suddenly a LOT of Jokerz found themselves able to respond, almost as if… something had cleared out their calendars and ensured that they would be close by. Purely random chance, that. Just a coincidence….

Meanwhile…

“**Calm down, Jubes.**” Was the advice from Dani.

“**She has her blood up.**” Smiled Mazikeen. “**Perhaps there is more to this little youngling vampire then mindless prattle, after all.**” A comment that earned Mazikeen a glare that from Jubilee that Mazikeen pretended not to see.

Dani swiped the wine bottle from Illyana, took a swig, and passed it on to Laura, who likewise took a drink, and then passed it to Mazikeen who drained what was left and passed the bottle back to Illyana. Meanwhile Jubilee retrieved a small flask from her jacket and took a swig of blood (from a blood bank for those who want to know).

“**Okay… now what Yana?**” Asks Dani as she looked about.

Illyana was busy looking at a rooftop with a slight grin. The grin remained as she turned and replied. “**We could go to that club I mentioned.**”
Laura was also looking up. “There are drones above us.” She commented. “Muted, but I can hear the turbines.”

“Batsies, or the Bat, but definitely Oracle then.” replied Illyana. “Ha! Point one out to me.”

Laura pointed and Illyana flicked a casting that way with a mischievous grin. Oracle cursed as the words Hi Oracle! Flared orange in her monitor as the spell burned the words into the drone’s camera lens.

“That was fun… she’ll be so pissed.” Giggled Illyana, who took another swig from the spontaneously refilled wine bottle. More drops of the dark red liquid sloshed from the bottle, and where they touched the ground, further puffs of gaslight blue vapor swirled and evanesced into the gathering faint mists. This noticed but unremarked fact, plus the sight of a giggling Illyana, and her not been embarrassed about it, was to later be recognized as the first clues that maybe… things were beginning to head in the direction of getting out of hand.

Which they immediately did.

Mazikeen tossed the baton to her left hand and drew a knife with her right hand while Laura tensed, they both sensed the same thing.

The next wave of Jokerz attacking.

Part 2c: One minute earlier, back on the roof…

Four more drones arrived with a gossamer shriek of counter-thrusting turbine, each carrying a portion of a heavy combat belt. Quickly, Orphan performed the swapouts, attaching the replaced subunits around her thigh to form an ancillary equipment garter belt.

Orphan was just beginning to relax; the first five green haired assailants had gone down rapidly, but none of the takedowns looked too violent, apart from the rather flagrant groin attacks. Certainly the perps were all still breathing, (even if some of them currently wished otherwise), which was Orphan’s primary concern. Now if only the suspected vampire didn’t start draining them…
The women had gathered back together discussing something and mocking their fallen foes. But then the one designated M had suddenly pulled a knife as the massing Jokerz swarmed towards the park and the women as though homing in on a signal.

Many held switchblades and stilettos, other’s had baseball bats and even some firearms. The streetlights glittered wickedly on the weapons as dozens of J’s flooded towards the clearing. One, surrounded by what could only be described as a guard force, carried a bottle, sealed in purple wax.

"Drones, airlift, now!" Orphan snapped as she threw herself off the side of the building. The acknowledge symbol flashed in Orphan's heads up display, letting her know that Oracle had seen as well and was coordinating with Gotham PD, alerting them to the developing situation.

As one, the four drones took formation around her, two slapping into her hands, the other two latching onto her boots, altering her fall into a swooping glide that carried her into the park and over the Jokerz. As she approached, she took the time to designate four of the oblivious gang members for tasing, before releasing the drones. The drones on her feet released first, allowing Orphan to swing into an attack posture before she let go of the drones in her hands; then all four arced into their targets, and brought them unconscious and convulsing to the ground. She allowed herself a predator's grin as she fell like an ebon thunderbolt onto a fifth and likewise rode him into the grass and unconsciousness. Only she and Damian could pull off that drone maneuver: due to their greater weight the drones could not support the other Bat-folk well enough. Then she was rolling off her unwilling landing pad and attacking the Js from behind.

**Part 2d: Get ready to rumble!**

The Bad Girls assumed a defensive formation, with Illyana anchoring the center, Dani behind her armed with her psychic bow and arrows (the energy arrows can stun an opponent by disrupting their nervous system) Laura to the left of Illyana and Mazikeen on the right. Jubilee stood behind Dani both to protect the rear and to function as a mobile reserve. They braced themselves as the Jokerz attacked without plan or organization, just a green haired human wave.

“Battle Royal!” Shouted Dani as she released her first mystic arrow which took down one of the armed hooligans

“Burger in France!” shouted back Jubilee. A proclamation that earned her questioning looks from all the other girls.
Dani fired another arrow and then got the reference. “That’s *Royal* with cheese, not battle royal, you’re misquoting *Pulp Fiction!* Again!”

“What is this ‘Pulp Fiction’?” Inquired Mazikeen as she blocked a knife strike from one opponent with her baton. Her own blade licked out, and her assailant shrieked as all the tendons in his knife hand released. Such was Mazikeen’s skill that none of the nerves or major blood vessels were damaged. Then he quieted as Mazikeen tapped his head with the dagger’s pommel while swinging the baton up and into the privates of another J.

Neither Illyana or Laura knew or had time to answer Mazikeen’s query while they fought, as neither of them had ever seen the film. Illyana was wielding the open wine bottle as it was a short sword, scattering drops of wine in wide swathes. Yet more gaslight blue vapors rose, and a mists began to deepen. Laura had popped the blades in her right hand; with that hand she destroyed guns and knives as they came into reach. Blood began to spatter the soil as well.

“Great film!” Was Jubilee’s replay as she joined the fray as she defended both sides of Dani using her vampire speed. “It’s this *weird crime film directed by Quentin Tarantino, great guy, I’ve seen all his films, but never when Shogo’s awake because he’s just a kid and you shouldn’t show such stuff to kids. But anyway, this film has John Travolta, Bruce Willis, Samuel Jackson, Uma what’s her name, and some other nobodies in it. There are these two hit man, played by Travolta and Jackson, and they show up at this apartment looking for this briefcase for their boss. They end up shooting one of the guys after speaking this great dialog and delivering this dramatic bible quote. Later they’re at this 1950’s themed restaurant where some crooks try to steal it from them. But before that Uma has a drug overdose from some heroin that Travolta had, but only after they win the dance trophy. Meanwhile Bruce has been bribed to throw a fight, which he doesn’t, and ends up saving the mobster boss who bribed him, after he meets the gimp in this black spandex bondage suit; but before all of that, Travolta and Jackson have to clean up after they accidentally shoot this guy which is a great scene by the way. Then…”

One of the Jokerz paused in the fight and excitedly exclaimed. “That’s my favorite scene!”

“Good, hated the film, nighty-night now.” Muttered Dani as she shot him with an energy arrow right in the crotch. An act that enraged the J’s even more. Ball shots and now classic cinema graphic disrespect as well! Get ‘em!

Meanwhile Oracle watched the ongoing battle from various viewpoints as her three LBBs circled. Whatever was in that bottle was creating a mist that was starting to obscure her cameras, infrared as well as visual spectrum. She switched main observation mode to radar.
Laura dodged a shotgun blast, pivoted, and sliced the shotgun in half before stabbing the assailant thru both kneecaps and leaving him also shrieking in agony. Mazikeen took a moment to appreciate the artistry that Laura had demonstrated. Damn, that girl has potential! Before grabbing the bottle from Illyana to take another hit before continuing the fight. She tossed the bottle back to Illyana while Jubilee floated around them, half vaporous cloud, half terrifying vampiress battle-queen while she continued to explain the film.

“Then Bruce is looking for his father’s watch, which his totally hot French girlfriend forgot to get… or was that before the spandex gimp scene where the mob boss is getting totally power roto-rootered by this pawn shop hillbilly? Only towards the end of the film do you realize that the whole film is out of sequence because Bruce ends up shooting Travolta in the bathroom of his apartment after…”

Then, from stage left, a warrior shriek of "Hang on, 'yana, we're comin!'" Presaged a sixth combatant expertly wielding a carnival maul as though it were a nerf bat, tripping a J with the shaft one moment before twirling and pounding another off his feet into an immobile heap.

Oracle's lips thinned as she realized precisely who had just joined in. But where is…

The one with the bottle reared back, clearly preparing to throw his SmileX nerve gas bomb. Then, whip fast, vines shot out of the darkness, immobilizing him and snatching him shrieking into the shadows between the trees. His despairing cries got everyone's attention while and the bottle traced a lazy path in the air, flipping end for end, before Jubilee did one of her vampire leaps to catch it before it could hit the ground. Jubilee rose up from the ground, eyes blazing red, her figure outlined in gaslight blue, and flourished the bottle. “Bring it on, bitches! We'll take you all!”

The remaining Jokerz turned, attempting to flee from the sight of a battle-roused vampiress holding the deadliest object they knew how to make, and ran straight into a phalanx of bat-drones, marshaled by a VERY unamused Orphan. Shrieks followed as they underwent mass tasing, then relative silence reigned, broken only by the groans and moans of the fallen and the background serenade of sirens as GCPD rushed to the scene. The drones busied themselves securing the Jokerz with extruded zip ties and adhesive foam.

For some reason, only then was Orphan’s presence finally noticed by both the Jokerz and the Bad Girls. Illyana waved at Orphan while saying. “Thought that was you on the building. Girls, this is Orphan, one of the Bat Clan…”

A red-headed woman emerged regally from the trees, apparently clad in leaves. Vines extended along the ground before her, offering the captured J as if for ritual sacrifice. “You must be Illyana.” Was Ivy’s comment as she examined the lot of them. Hmm... no males at all, an assembly of impressive feminine power the like of which she'd not seen in some time. She nodded in approval.
“And you must be Ivy... Love the vines.” Replied Illyana.

Harley then introduced herself by shaking everybody’s hand while stating. “Name’s Harley, pleased ta mecha!”

“Why you all here?” Inquired Orphan of Illyana in that terse speaking style Orphan sometimes reverted to.

The others, apart from Harley and Ivy, all eyed this new woman wearing black skin-tight battle dress with the classic matte yellow equipment belt. A second such belt adorned her left leg, a weaponized garter, which was giving Dani some ideas. Her cowl covered all of her head; her eyes were night dark in contrast to Batman, who preferred opalescent white for his eye lenses. Symbolic stitches surrounded the mouth and chin of the mask. A yellow-rimmed black bat logo showed her affiliation as clearly as her scalloped night dark cloak.

Just who is Orphan, you ask, oh gentle reader? She is Cassandra Cain, the biological daughter of the assassin David Cain. She was deliberately deprived of speech and human contact during her childhood by her father, as conditioning to become the world's greatest assassin. Her first languages were body nuance and violence. This enables her to routinely perceive minute changes in anyone's expressions, breathing, muscles, joint position, and center of gravity, which in turn allows her to see or "predict" an opponent's moves before they happen. Consequently, Cassandra grew up to become a superhumanly skilled martial artist, at the cost of being mute, illiterate, and utterly unsocialized. After coming to the Bat-Clan, she learned to speak and read, but still tends to be very terse. She is the adoptive daughter of Bruce Wayne. Wikipedia is suggested for those who wish for more details.

Illyana briefly ignored the ongoings and summoned one of the monitoring LBBs via the simple expedient of reaching through a portal that she summoned and snagging it. She pulled it back through the portal and brought it to face her.

“Oracle stop struggling with it, I’ll release it in a second. I know you can hear me, so record for this for the police, and I believe it will answer your question as well, Orphan.”

The drone stopped trying to pull away and just hovered. A tiny red light blinked on. Illyana gestured for the others to join her and they took up positions behind her. Behind them, Ivy and Harley smiled for the camera as well. Jubilee and Harvey were both making funny faces as Illyana dictated her recording.
“Ladies and gentlemen of the Gotham City Police Department, and particularly Commissioner Gordon. Greetings, I am Magik and we are the Bad Girls…”

“Bad Girlz!” Interrupted Jubilee with emphases on the z. "Gotta get the growl in there!"

Illyana glared at Jubilee before continuing. “Bad Girlz.” She held up the Smilex bottle she had retrieved from Jubilee. "These are Jokerz… and this is a SmileX bomb. They were going to use it on us; the video should be in the GCPD drop box even you hear this. We’ll let you all clean this mess up… and why are we here? To fight crime!”

“And Par-tay!” shouts Jubilee. “Don’t forget the party! And chew bubblegum! Bet they make me an honorary Robin before the night is done! I’d so make a great Robin… Just the other days I was telling…”

“I thought it was mostly to enjoy physical violence under the guise of fighting crime.” Was Mazikeen’s contribution while Dani tried to shush Jubilee.

The red light blinked out on the LBB as Oracle’s voice projected from the LBB. “That’s a cut Magik. I’ll trim it up a bit before I pass it on. Why are you here again?”

Dani stage whispered to Illyana. “They don’t appear to be very welcoming…”

Illyana stage whispered back, knowing the drone was catching it all clearly. “I did burn down Arkham Asylum the first time I was here… totally justified by the way, I’ll explain later.” Dani’s surprised expression clearly conveyed her thought: Yes, indeed, you will explain later.

Jubilee was still going on about being a Robin, an exposition that Harley was now encouraging as Harley was totally agreeing that indeed, she’d make a great Robin, especially with that coat...

Orphan stage whispered to Illyana. “She ever stop talking?”

Dani grins and replies. “No… We think it’s one of her super powers.”

Oracle meanwhile wanted to hit her head on her console. Dear God, they're here to fight crime,
party, and chew bubble gum. And Bruce isn’t here. And I'll bet they forgot the bubblegum...

Jubilee of course then stated quite loudly. “I got cherry an’ watermelon bubble gum if anybody wants some! Oh, hey Illyana, since you seem to be good with the Bat, can we get a tour of the Batcave?"

Moments later everybody, except Mazikeen and Orphan, were chewing bubble gum and even blowing a few bubbles as they all expressed interest in a Batcave tour. Oracle's metaphorical desire to pound her head against her console intensified.

Oracle couldn’t quite believe the words that then came out of her mouth. “Okay, Deal. No killing while you're here, you fight crime, you don't burn anything down again, and I'll set up a tour of the Batcave.” Oh my God, did I just say that?!

Illyana retrieved the wine bottle, took another swig, and passed it around. "Deal." All of the Bad Girlz drank to the agreement, even Jubilee after first smelling it and apparently liking what she smelled. In the Clock Tower, Oracle suddenly tasted good red wine as she sipped from her water bottle.

Harley then inquired. “Hey, 'yana... We got nothing doing tonight. Is this a private party or do you got room for two more?”

Jubilee tossed the wine bottle to Harley after quick nods and grins between the five indicated the two Sirens were all good by them. Harley took a long pull, and then handed the bottle to Ivy she exclaimed.

"Oh hell yeah! Night Train, is that? Ooooh, that's got a kick!"

Ivy sipped, her eyes widened, and she took a longer swallow. "Oh my... that could grow on me..."

Oracle felt like the words were being pulled from her mouth as she keyed Orphan’s radio channel. “We can't leave this lot unsupervised. Orphan, you’d best go along to keep them out of trouble.”

“One more?” Inquired Orphan, as she somewhat shyly held up a finger for attention.
“Hell yeah! Climb on board girl!” was Jubilee’s exuberant reply as she handed Orphan the bottle. Orphan accepted it as if it was the SmileX bottle, not intending to so much as sniff it... but the slightest, most ethereal tendril of gaslight blue wafted from the bottle to her mask, and she found herself taking a small sip after lifting up her mask. Just a sip... one little sip of what was not really wine anymore, but a vintrified essence of magical chaos.

“Where is everybody Oracle?” Inquired Illyana as she watched Orphan imbibe with approval. Maybe she's not as stiff as I thought... “I’d have figured Batman would be here by now.”

“Batman is... unavailable. Currently Spoiler and Red Robin are dealing with a robbery that has become a standoff...” Oracle clamped her hands over her mouth, but it was far too late.

“This is a job for... the Bad Girlz!” was Jubilee’s giggled cry as she pirated a certain Super Somebody’s catch phrase.

Illyana prepared to open a portal... and then a thought occurred to her. This is Gotham, we should see the sights on the way. She led the way towards the park entrance with a sharp gesture, the bottle making the rounds as they went. As they exited the park, Illyana stuck two fingers in her mouth and whistled sharply, as if summoning a taxi. The sound echoed weirdly, as if channeled in directions not obvious. Somewhere close by, a garage door rattled up where but moments before had been a brick wall, and a number of engines, some heavy, revved softly.

A long, low limo eased out of the darkness quietly. She was, not a mere black, but a polished ebon hue that seemingly shifted as her length slid thru the pool of light cast by the streetlight. Her headlights were slitted diagonal cuts that somehow conveyed the impression of eyes, and her grille literally grinned, the vee shape defined by thin vertical bars of chromed steel that interlocked. The long, long low hood had two rows of slits like nostrils, and emitted the darkly deep burble of automotive power that every muscle car aspires to, but so very few ever truly achieve.

The car pulled up at the curb, the grumble of the engine reverberating in the air.

"Ohhh..." all the Girlz breathed. Harley said it best. "Momma like."

The back door opened and they all piled in as the stereo burst into thundering life.

Now, on the day I was born
The nurses all gathered 'round
And they gazed in wide wonder
At the joy they had found
The head nurse spoke up
Said "leave this one alone"
She could tell right away
That I was bad to the bone

Bad to the bone
Bad to the bone
B-b-b-b-b-b-b-bad
B-b-b-b-b-b-b-bad
B-b-b-b-b-b-b-bad

Bad to the bone

I broke a thousand hearts
Before I met you
I'll break a thousand more, baby
Before I am through

…

…

It was Bad to the Bone by George Thorogood and the Destroyers.

The car pulled away down a dark alley with the song echoing off the urban canyon like walls while the Girlz, apart from Cassandra, sang the chorus “Bad to the bone!” Then, feeling socially daring… Cassandra joined in on one chorus.
This is going to be a long, long night thought Oracle as she hurriedly radioed Spoiler and Red Robin that they were about to have company. She then took a deep breath before keying open Nightwing's channel.

“Dear…” Barbara began, she paused for a moment, for a second there she could have sworn she heard Cassie's voice raised in the chorus of “Bad to the Bone”… Nah. She never sings… “We have a complicated situation developing…”

Part 2e: Enter the Dojo

Somewhere else… A distant place not of this earth but instead the earth of Illyana. To be more precise Albuquerque New Mexico, on the corner of… Hmmm that might be too precise… call it a mysterious unknown desert location… Yeah that sounds better. At a mysterious desert location, not in downtown Albuquerque, nor outside of Albuquerque, but close unto an In-n-Out, we see a man clothed in a red cotton karate uniform tied with a multiply knotted black belt. His legs are crossed as he is deep in meditation within his training Dojo at the aforementioned mysterious location, not located deep in suburbia, in Albuquerque, two blocks from an In-n-Out.

However, he was not sitting upon the training the mats, no… he was upside down with his legs crossed while balanced on the pinkie of his left hand.

It was Master Ken, 11th degree black belt. Creator of the marshal art Ameri-Do-Te™. He had taken the best parts of every other style in the world and none of the weaknesses!

His Dojo is a laboratory of violence…which makes him a Professor of Pain…with a Master’s Degree in Mutilation and a Doctorate in Destruction. He also has an Associates Degree in Massage Therapy. Every part of his body is a weapon, even his mustache.

Master Ken has a saying, which was prominently displayed on his web site and mentioned repeatedly by him in his videos.

“Ever studied Kung Fu? Tae-kwon-do? Krav Maga? They’re all BULLSHIT. Only Ameri-Do-Te will give you the skill to survive a real life street encounter. Don’t waste time with cardio kickboxing or old fashioned karate. Forget using traditional weapons. In Ameri-Do-Te…YOU are the weapon. (To be clear: We do also have weapons training. But once you become a weapon you are even more dangerous. Because you’re a weapon holding a weapon. Imagine if you saw a knife holding a gun. Would you try to rob it? Of course not. And not because knives don’t have pockets
to carry money. But because as a criminal in that situation you are twice as likely to be injured or killed. Understand? No? Then you need Ameri-Do-Te!) And no, the Dojo does not take American Express, mostly because they charge an extra two percent transaction fee.”

Master Ken’s most dedicated student, Todd Woodland (blue belt), was likewise engaged in meditation. He was sprawled on a training mat, two empty In-n-Out Double Double wrappers besides him, an empty vanilla shake cup, and a half empty bottle of Jack Daniels.

Master Ken opened his eyes and softly declared. “There are doubters of Ameri-Do-Te.” He gracefully unfolded and shifted to a standing position. “Come Todd, we must show them the error of their ways.”

Todd was unresponsive, deep in… meditation (which involved a vision of him defeating a dozen Swedish female ninjas, who were naked for some reason, armed only with…).

“Todd?”

Todd was just about to unleash his master blow when…

“Todd.”

Six on one! A new record as Todd single handedly…

“TODD!”

Todd awoke from the dream… I mean ceased meditating.

“Sorry Master Ken… I was deep in the visions of Ameri-Do-Te.”

“Think nothing of it… There are those who doubt what is taught here. Come, Todd, they must be shown the error of their ways.”

Master Ken focused his chi and punched the universe in its crotch, thereby opening a portal
between dimensions, a tiger face shaped hole (the Marvel female hero America was able to punch a star shaped portal into existence due to the teachings of Master Ken but was sworn to never reveal who had taught her). Masker Ken entered the portal, and Todd followed, after tripping over the Jack Daniels bottle and plunging head first into the portal.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

A reminder that this is a true joint LordGrise and Dhalpin production, a blending of writing styles and character interpretations. LordGrise tends to have Illyana be a bit more chatty than my writing (I am very much a less is more when it comes to most Illyana dialog), but in this case Illyana is also under the influence so that partially explains some of her verbosity. Plus I think she’s more expressive in the DC universe. LordGrise apparently took my first girls night out story (Chapter 6 of Tag I’m It) as a challenge to kick it up a few notches (which he has most certainly done in this and the next few chapters).

Part 3a: THREE DAYS LATER

Batman hated magic, small m, spelled with a c. Or the 'M' word as many of his companions referred to magical events around him as even the mention of magic tended to cause a bat scowl and a bat grunt from Batman at the topic in general and the idea of ‘M” in particular.

Data

Analysis

Deduction

Extrapolation

Action

These were the tools the Batman used to probe and solve crimes. Pure problem solving. Not… the M word. The absence of hocus pocus. No speaking words backwards to invoke a spell. A complete lack of mystic visions or the spirits whispering clues, leaving only true detective work.

Magik on the other hand (large M, spelled with a k), was an occasional visitor to his universe. One that nobody in the Justice League currently knew how to manage other then by playing nice. She appeared to mostly “vacation” as she called it; the 'A' suite in Lex’s Las Vegas ultralux timeshare condo property was hers. Bruce knew that she also had properties in various other major cities and resort areas, almost like safe houses; and he strongly (and correctly) suspected that there were additional properties she owned that he did not know about - in other words, real safe houses. He had made no real effort to find all that existed because; after all, Magik was a time traveler, and she could as easily purchase a property centuries ago and create caretaker arrangements as she might stroll into a realtor's office today.
Magik did practice magic wherever she went. But whenever she came by, one could generally track where she'd been via the zones of devastation she left behind if anyone were unwise enough to attack her. Her latest escapade was a classic example; no sooner had she arrived in this universe this time than she had been attacked by the Jokerz. And in just that one encounter, fully half of the known Jokerz gang members in Gotham had been apprehended on charges ranging from simple assault to possession and attempted deployment of a weapon of mass destruction.

Wherever she went, she got results. Lots of results. And thankfully she appeared willing to conform to his rules.

Batman read the attached police reports and the preliminary toxicology analysis of the bottle’s contents; the vast majority of the charges against the incarcerated Jokerz were likely to stand, thanks in no small part to the video evidence he was currently watching. Her companions all appeared very skilled in melee combat; but the number and variety of groin attacks had him wincing. He didn't encourage the use of such tactics; public opinion was an issue in these days of disseminated mass media, and the potential for unnecessary and unwanted injuries was unacceptable to him; plus... well.. he was male...

He was pleased to find that the database creation effort concerning Magik appeared to have paid dividends: all but one of Magik's other-world companions were identified, with co-referenced summaries from published comics. The one called Mazikeen was an exception however. He made a note of the need to further research the name.

And just what had happened to the Batmobile? As Batman read on, he found himself increasingly applying biofeedback techniques as he felt the onset of a stress headache and associated heartburn. The veggie smoothie, having a dairy base, did help...

**Part 3b: Cassandra reflections**

As the black reto limo pulled up, Cassandra (Orphan) thought upon the social dynamics of this little group. Her ability to read subtle body language had shown her much. Illyana was in charge, but in an oddly covert way, which was very different from the 'I'm in charge' presence that Batman always projected in group setting. Illyana was deliberately deferring to others, taking a lesser role then she could, for reasons that Orphan could not discern.

Harley and Ivy gave every impression of being out for a night on the town, out to party, and accidentally hooking up with a fun group. What the two considered to be a fun night out was, of course, concerning.
Dani, the American Indian woman, gave the strong impression that she was used to being in charge. There was also a familiarity between her and Illyana that spoke of friendship and hinted at possibly other, more intimate, things.

The woman Mazikeen was a conundrum. Her body language was as deceptive as Illyana’s, something that strongly suggested Mazikeen was likewise not human. What she deliberately projected was a brazenly aggressive and abrasive attitude that practically screamed her utter and absolute disregard for the threat potential of everyone except Illyana whom she consented to apparently consider an equal. Cassandra suspected a deeply held fear of weakness, so much was she overcompensating.

Laura eerily felt just like Cassandra. Quiet. Observant. And they both kept catching the other covertly examining the other out of the corner of their eyes. The most dangerous fighter of this group, thought Cassandra. Those claws of hers… very nasty, only a fool would wish to engage her in hand to hand combat.

Which led to the vampire, the one called Jubilee, of apparently unending chatter. It was a good act, if it was an act. But vampires were undead, and body language was mostly demonstrated by living beings. Vampires were to be feared... But no one here was demonstrating any unconscious fear or concerns about Jubilee. She was simply one of the group, and was even Mazikeen's preferred target for her edged teasing. Jubilee, for her part, simply didn't rise to Mazikeen's provocations; in fact, she seemed alternately amused or ignored whatever was being implied by Mazikeen. But some could lie with their body language, as Cassandra recalled from the time she and Illyana had sparred in the Batcave.

BEGIN CASSANDRA MEMORY FLASHBACK

“Lie.” Stated Cassandra as she fought hand to hand with Illyana. The fight was only a practice fight, but was quite intense. Her statement only elicited a wicked grin from Illyana.

Cassandra had just attempted to block an attack that had not in fact happened, while being struck by an attack that Illyana’s body language had not indicated.

Cassandra, also known as Orphan and the legally adopted daughter of Bruce Wayne, was a martial arts prodigy and able to read the intent of body language better than anybody.

Again she was fooled into attempting to block an attack that did not happened. This continued off
and one throughout the melee, with Cassandra occasionally injecting her observations.

“Lie.”

“Lie again.”

“Lie.”

Finally they took a break.

“How do?” Was Cassandra’s question. Her terse speaking was because she had been deprived of speech and human contact during her childhood as conditioning to become the world’s greatest assassin; she had also been illiterate. She’d since overcome these deliberate defects, but sometimes regressed to very terse speaking forms.

Illyana shrugged. “Demons lie. Can’t have the body revealing the falsehood.”

“You teach?”

“Not sure, never been asked. Mostly a demon thing but…”

Practice resumed and Illyana endeavored to show how it was done, with mixed results because it really was a demon thing.

**END CASSANDRA MEMORY FLASHBACK**

Cassandra finished her musing as she stepped into the car. This was a violent and potentially disastrous gathering of females, one that she was not surprised that Oracle (Barbara) wished her to monitor.

And yet, the group felt… good? Comfortable? It was a very odd feeling for Cassandra.
Part 3c: Bad to the bone...

With the bass thundering, each of the Girlz - with the exceptions of Illyana herself and Dani - blinked with surprise as they stepped down and into the limousine. The music reduced to a conversational level as they did so, but still all of them sang the chorus loudly when the song reached a chorus line. Cassandra impulsively joined in on the last chorus of the song, to cheers of “you go girl!” afterwards from Jubilee and Harley.

“BAD TO THE BONE!”

From the outside the car had appeared to be a standard length limousine, seating six to eight in reasonable comfort, probably along a single bench seat, with perhaps a loveseat defining the far end along with a minibar. Intimate might be a good word for such accommodations for such a crowd. With, of course, some cool retro styling on the exterior.

What they found was different. Very different. It was impossibly spacious, the girls found there was more than enough headroom to comfortably stand. A pedestal coffee table the color of honey and inset with a sheet of dark glass set center of the room, and surrounding it was actual furniture. An ebon dark leather theatre style couch with each of its several arms containing multiple jack in points and two drink holders dominated the space immediately beyond the coffee table. A pair of generously wide loveseats in the same style sat at either end of the table, equally well appointed as the couch. A full wet bar (!) with three generously stocked rows of decanters sat to the right of the entrance, against the forward wall of the space. A modest set of double doors denoted the presumptive entry to the actual drivers’ cabin.

Similarly placed on the rear wall was an ornate closed top desk inlaid with a fan of flaming katanas protecting a coat of arms. It was flanked by two equally ornate bookcases with glassed in doors. One of these was stocked with a rainbow of apparently archaic leather-bound tomes, the other, with open doors, had = slimmer trade paperbacks and hardbound trade comic collections. Varying bat sigils were apparent on every volume of the top shelf. A full length mirror that appeared to be made of polished obsidian stood by the entrance, in a position such that one could check one’s look before exiting. The carpet was a deep, deep red shag, sinfully soft and luxuriant. A curtained off archway to the left obviously led to a hallway and additional spaces deeper to the rear...

“What the heck, Illyana?!” Exclaimed Jubilee as the song died away. “It’s just like a Doctor Who episode. It’s bigger on the inside!”

Laura and Mazikeen, of course, responded with the inevitable “Doctor Who?” comment, like everybody did on the show when first hearing the titular name. Illyana’s response, however, was
decidedly out of the norm.

“Sanctimonious know it all jerk - can’t even drive straight...”

A response that elicited a confused response from Jubilee and Dani. “Who?”

“Exactly.” Was Illyana’s irritated reply. Then, seeing their confusion, Illyana beat a hasty conversational retreat; or so it seemed in hindsight. “The TV show I mean... I don’t like... it. He... acts pompous.”

Dani, and some of the others, were not quite convinced. Mazikeen, of course, cared not a whit about Doctor Who-ever; she immediately gravitated to the bar and liberated a bottle from the top shelf.

BEGIN ILLYANA MEMORY FLASHBACK

The Tenth Doctor Who was busy explaining to his companion Rose Tyler, the nuances of temporal dimensional travel, as she had asked if running into things was a frequent problem with the Tardis (the answer was yes but the Doctor was not about to admit to that). He was busy throwing various switches on the console while explaining as to the supposed rarity of such events.

“No Rose, only vehicles or entities enclosed within a dimensional time field are able to interact with constructs like the Tardis. Such events are quite rare. Nothing to concern yourself with.”

So... you can likely guess what happened next, almost like this was the beginning of an episode.

There was a shuddering jolt in the structure of the Tardis, accompanied with a smashing sound from the front doorway while the two occupants were thrown to the floor as sparks erupted from the Tardis main control panel. And of course the lights flickered dramatically. The shuddering stopped after a few seconds.

“As you were saying Doctor...?” stated Rose as she grabbed a railing to help herself to her feet. And yes she did sound a touch sarcastic.
The Doctor grasped a lever on the control panel and used it to both help himself up and to shut down the Tardis drive. “Rare does not mean impossible. I myself like to do three impossible things before lunch, good for the digestion.”

Then the Doctor announced, with his usual smug smirk... “Let’s go see what we’ve encountered.”

The Doctor jogged over to the door, opening it in a kind of a ta-da way, only to receive a punch in the nose from an outraged blonde who was standing in the doorway. A blonde who was sporting a very bloody and possibly broken nose. She looked to be in her early twenties, dressed in a black pair of short shorts, a black top with a boob window, tall black boots, black gloves, plus she has some kind of black sticks stuck in her hair. There was also some weird black spiky armor on her left shoulder. Her temper was not improved by the blood pooling in her left palm, which she was holding over her nose, blood which was dripping all over her cleavage.

“You! Imbecile!” Was the blonde’s angry declaration over the prone Doctor. Rose ran at the blond to strike at her, only to be brought up short by a sword burning with silver flame that had suddenly materialized in the visitor’s right hand.

The Doctor then spoke. “Ow! I dink you broke my nose!” Was the Doctor’s patently untrue complaint from the floor, then… “That was completely! Unnecessary! Young lady!” A statement that implied that the Doctor had some familiarity with the person who has just struck him.

The blonde stepped back and lowered her sword, allowing Rose to help the Doctor to stand back up. The Doctor and the blonde exchanged bloodied facial glares for a few seconds, then the Doctor introduced Rose to their visitor.

“Rose, meet Illyana Rasputin, although in Time Lord circles she goes by a more formal name.”

Rose offered a handkerchief to the Doctor so he might stem the bleeding from his nose. “Are you a Time Lord as well?” Rose inquired of their guest with more then a bit of hostility.

“Pffft.” Was the terse negatory reply from the blonde as the sword vanished as Illyana strode into the Tardis and down one of the hallways that exited from the Tardis control room, precisely as if she knew the layout. Which she in fact did; she was off to one of the wash rooms to clean up.

The Doctor provided Rose with an additional datum while dabbing at his nose with a handkerchief. “She’s not from Gallfrey.”
“What race is she then, and what is the name that she’s called?” Rose asked, since the departed blonde had not clarified anything.

“Gallfrey calls her the Darkchilde, and she is a Named Demon; a Hell Lord, in fact.” Then in a stage whisper. “Gallfrey and her kind don’t get along.”

“She’s from Hell?” Was Rose’s rather concerned question. “And by her kind do you mean demons in general, or Hell Lords?”

The Doctor looked… embarrassed about something as he replied. “A sort-of hell would be the short answer. The details are... complicated. And by her kind I mean one with her abilities over time... it made the Time Council nervous.”

“And you know her how?”

“There was a war, the Daleks were involved as well...”

Rose jumped to the obvious conclusion as she interrupted the Doctor. “And she was on their side, I take it.”

The Doctor sighed heavily and took the blood spotted handkerchief away from his face. “No... it’s much more complicated then that. The Daleks and the Time Lords are... two opposing forces that both ended up opposing...”

“Me.” Stated the returned blond, the named Illyana, who now showed no sign of injury. “You both opposed my plan to regain my soul.”

The Doctor explained a bit more. “The whole enemy of my enemy kind of allies because we were both very concerned that she was going to destroy the universe. You can guess that the alliance did not last very long. I must say, it was amusing to see the whole exterminate phrase the Daleks love to expound upon being used by her. But she was not very receptive to the Time Lord Council’s arguments against her plan; things... got quite a bit shouty and went precipitously downhill from there.”
The blond suddenly looked amused about something, and said, with tones of fondness.
“Exterminate… ahhh…. that brings back fun memories.”

That anybody would have fun memories of Daleks was of concern to Rose.

“So how did they stop you?” Asked Rose of Illyana. A question that elicited no answer from Illyana, just a neutral look of enquiry in the Doctor’s direction.

Another heavy sigh from him. “We didn’t. We…”

Illyana again finished his sentence. “Lost.”

“How!” Was Rose’s surprised question. A question that Illyana answered with a riddle, a riddle that meant something very different to a Time Lord than to the more chronometrically inexperienced Rose, or any normal person.

“What came first, the chicken or the egg?”

A question that Rose just looked befuddled about. “How is that an answer?”

The Doctor gently explained to Rose. “Non linear solutions. What came first is whatever a Time Lord left somewhere, either a pet chicken or some eggs. Time is malleable - and when you fight a war across time, well… what came first just gets endlessly overwritten until matters conclude. Turns out you can’t write Darkchilde out of time, because she was created in Limbo, which is outside of time. Daleks and Time Lords are more… vulnerable.”

Illyana offered one extra tidbit. “Plus Limbo has a great many demons…”

The Doctor did have to agree. “And there was that, as well.”

Rose of course asked. “How many demons?”

Another sigh from the Doctor. “We never did find out. Suffice it to say, more then we could count.”
“I borrowed some ideas from... the show, the whole messing with interior space... and the decorators kind of went overboard.” Was Illyana’s statement about the car’s interior. "But I rather like it...”

Ivy immediately knelt by the table, fully prepared to take her hostess to task for the reprehensible use of wood, undoubtedly taken from a tree slain long before its proper time... And stopped dead. "This is not wood! It's some sort of... bone?"

Illyana smiled as she retrieved a goblet from the bar and poured some wine from her everflowing bottle. "Dragon bone, taken from a skeleton found in the Grey Wastes. Died of natural causes, before anybody gets all Green Peace on me; its spirit long, long gone. Waste not, want not... And I like old bone better than wood. Polishes better, and much more conducive to my workings." She seated herself in the rearmost loveseat while gesturing for the others to sit as well. She then spoke to the unseen driver. "Skeeter, I have been informed of a bank robbery in Gotham that's turned into a hostage situation. Take us there."

"Yes, ma'am; been monitoring the situation on the radio." came a calm and assured male voice. "Twelve hostages, they got 'em all in the vault; they say they've wired the lock on the door and that if they close it, it will weld itself shut. GCPD negotiator is trying to talk to them."

Dani nodded and took charge after a glance at Illyana. "Illyana, you mind...? Alright, so this is how we do this: we make some noise, get them to slam the door on the hostages. That gets them out from under any stray fire. Illyana, your job is to get the hostages out after they slam the door on them - or earlier, if it looks like they're going to shoot at them. After that, you'll be mobile response. Jubilee, you're on scout duty; take the air vents, check the entire building. Take out stragglers. Maz, Laura, we're going..." Orphan raised a hand. “Yes Orphan?”

Orphan spoke. “Oracle say I should ask if you have display device I can interface to, so she can brief. Police have it very wrong."
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Time for another chapter. We wrote this a few months ago and then kind of sat on the shelf as we were both busy, and then we kind of picked at it for a while before finally getting serious.

If you are enjoying this, then, as always, reviews and comments are greatly desired (fuel for the muse as it were).

Part 4a: THREE DAYS LATER

Batman grunted a few times as he read the report. Grunts that just said expressed his distains of the M word. He slightly wondered if the car’s interior was a magical or technological creation, he suspected the M word again.

Odd, so far nothing indicated anything to do with the Batmobile. He popped two aspirin to address the growing headache and continued to read. Odd, for some reason Barbara had attached a wave file, appeared to be a song. He clicked play as he continued to read.

Part 4b: Additional Intel

Illyana snapped her fingers, and a concealed portion of the coffee table rotated, revealing a disc drive platter and a number of interface points. "Betsy, interface access coming live." Orphan inserted a patch cable, connected it to her wrist unit, then glanced at Illyana and nodded that all was ready.

Dani raised an eyebrow this was done. "Pretty impressive tech, Illyana...?"

Illyana smiled enigmatically. "My contracted garage has universes of sourcing options. Betsy, open channel to Oracle." Plus Erik had owned her a few favors.

A moment later the table revealed itself to be the projector for a holotank, as a spherical space
fuzzed with static before Barbara Gordon's Oracle avatar appeared.

Barbara Gordon, back in the Clock Tower, went wide eyed for a moment as a realization slammed home: she was seeing the inside of the limo in virtual reality as though she were making a video conference call to the Batcave or WatchTower from the point-of-view of her avatar. Her system is real-timing my viewpoint. And this is a mobile system I'm interfacing with whispered thru her mind.

Illyana greeted the avatar. "Oracle. Welcome. What have you got?"

Barbara shook off her bemusement, there was business to attend to. Her avatar's voice was an ambisexual alto. "Oracle online. Magik. Thank you for hosting me; this is an - impressive - environment." A map of central Gotham flowed into being in the holotank as Oracle gestured. "This is the location of the building housing the standoff. Technically, the perpetrators are on the thirteenth floor; however, access is via hidden stairways and concealed keylocks in the first and second stage elevators. I believe similar arrangements exist on technical floors twenty six and thirty nine. Red Robin and Spoiler are currently onsite."

Jubilee waved her hand from her position on the couch. "Uhm… who're Red Robin and Spoiler? They don't have, like, powers over food or anything to do with restaurants, right? If so then I assume their arch enemy must be the Condiment King."

A comment that drew looks from everybody except Mazikeen, who pretended not to care. Even Oracle blinked twice. The looks elicited a defensive comment from Jubilee. "Hey… don’t look at me that, I'm being legit here! We got Paste Pot Pete, so it's not like we don't have weird villains back home as well!"

Illyana raised a hand to forestall Oracle's response. "Jubilee, over by the desk, the books with all the Bat-sigils on them? Those are the long-form answers to all your questions about the Bat. Short form is, they're two of Batman's Clan, they're on our side, they do martial arts and stealth and batarangs and everything Orphan and all the other Bat-clan members do."

Illyana had gathered various intel on the heroes and villains in this universe. One book in particular, the Idiot’s Guide To The Bat (So You Want To Be A Villain In Gotham?) was her favorite. 'Ten Things Not To Say To The Bat And Why: A Villain’s Cliff Notes' was a close second.

Jubilee grinned and relaxed on the couch. "S'okay. I'll read up later. Need to know it all if I'm gonna be a Robin..."
Orphan, Oracle, Harley and Ivy all looked at the bookcase speculatively. Illyana quashed the rising interest in reading brutally. "They're warded, ladies. Anyone from this universe who opens one of those will find nothing but blank pages. Persistent attempts also have ever growing unpleasant side affects as well."

Barbara's amusement filtered thru the Oracle avatar perfectly. "You have established a database on us, Magik?"

"Exactly as you have on me, Oracle." Magik answered imperturbably. "And unfortunately just as prone to error in the fine details. But I suspect mine is likely more complete. Certainly more widely sourced."

Barbara nodded, and in the holotank her avatar did likewise. "To continue..."

The holotank filled with the thirteenth floor, with a small portion shaded in red. "Original cell phone calls were that there was an unregistered communal bank on the site, being robbed. Technically, an illicit enterprise, but these forms of banks are particularly popular among those who are employed illegally, and therefore cannot open normal bank accounts. Generally, they are operated more or less honestly, though lacking Federal and State insurance and oversight. The vault the police are concerned with is actually a gun safe, and originally there was only one hostage."

The layout changed, more than doubling in size, and becoming partitioned off, much like a flea market. "Then, according to Spoiler, what both she and Red Robin had taken for a solid wall collapsed, revealing itself to be a painted piece of cloth, such as is used in certain magic acts. Revealed was an illegal grey and black market, dealing in stolen and counterfeit goods, with a particular emphasis upon raw chemical components, custom formulators, and non-recreational pharmaceuticals."

The layout increased again, now filling more than three quarters of the available space on the floor. A particular area was shaded in purple and pulsing. "As Spoiler and Red Robin investigated further, the original count of six perpetrators became twelve, then fifteen, then eighteen, of at least two different affiliations, but apparently working together in defiance of their usual practices."

Oracle sounded disapproving as she reported this, as if the idea of criminals not conforming to their established norms was somehow Magik's fault. "The number of unarmed civilians has increased as well, and currently number sixty, mostly women and a few children, most if not all of whom are almost certainly illegal aliens. The perpetrators have gathered most of them all in this area, which is - also in defiance of common practice - a shared secure storage area."
Dani studied the hologram. "The aisles appear twenty odd feet wide?"

"Yes." Oracle answered. "I suspect the presence of at least one powered forklift somewhere onsite; there are far too many pallets of materials that are too heavy for standard hand trucks."

"Wide enough for this car?" Inquired Dani, looking at Illyana. Illyana studied the projected plans, frowned in thought briefly, then nodded to Dani.

Dani continued. "Oracle, can you bring Spoiler and Red Robin - is that actually what he calls himself? There's a burger chain by that name where we come from - into this conversation? We need to coordinate."

Illyana then tossed out an additional tidbit of info for the benefit of those not familiar with her car. "Betsy is bulletproof." As a Dani had a brief discussion with Spoiler and Red Robin.

**Part 4b: Getting ready for the big dance**

"Illyana, do you have any additional weapons in this thing?" Asked Jubilee. "Sounds like a little upgrading is in order." Then, after a full body language frown from Orphan, crossed arms and all, a clarification. "Suitably non-lethal, of course."

Illyana pointed to the closed doors at the back of the room with her left thumb. "Check the back."

Jubilee and Harley hurried over to the doors, with Ivy, Laura, and Mazikeen more casually following behind them.

Illyana instead strode over to where the Japanese swords were mounted on the wall, and took two of them down (it had been awhile since she had used Maker and Taker and she felt kind of an itch to use them).

"Illyana, those look very lethal." Observed Dani as Illyana took a few practice slashes, an observation that Illyana replied to with a shrug. "So’s a pencil if you use it right, ask John Wick."
Then to the projected Oracle who did not look happy at Illyana’s choice. “Don’t worry, I promised.”

A shout from Jubilee. “Dani! You have got to see this! It’s like… Aladdin’s cave!”

The back doors have been flung open revealing a walk in closet kind of room. One might could call it an Aladdin’s cave... If one allowed the Aladdin in question to be a weapon obsessed Doomsday Prepper getting ready for the Fall of Civilization. Pistols, revolvers, rifles, shot guns, knives, swords, pole arms, bows, crossbows, clubs, a selection of aerosol sprays, a flame thrower, and even an honest to God five inch bore muzzle loading bronze cannon were available, to name but some of the items; plus various uniforms and body armors. And loads upon loads of various munitions.

The first thing everyone (except Orphan) collected on the way into the room was a round-the-ear throat mike/earbud combo in single-use packaging. These were slipped on by one and all, and Barbara busied herself for a minute capturing and adjusting frequencies so the team could speak.

Dani wandered over where Jubilee and Harley were ooh’ing and aah’ing over something. Ivy was not nearly as impressed as to the contents, as she rarely used weapons. Laura just ignored the room after a brief appraisal, as nothing attracted her. Mazikeen disregarded the firearms and was busy examining a particularly nasty looking halberd, before rejecting it in favor of a very large two handed battle ax that was notched and looked well used, Illyana’s old axe, actually.

Orphan issued an emphatic “No” while pointing at the ax. Which of course just cemented the idea with Mazikeen. “You do not tell me no, little batling.”

Things got tense between the two of them, very tense, before Illyana interceded between the two. “Orphan, Mazikeen has sworn.”

Orphan pointed out the obvious. “Ax can maim, sever, cause great harm.”

All valid points, causing Illyana to just regard Mazikeen for a few seconds. Mazikeen scowled at the two of them, while looking irritated, before grudgingly stating. “Fine. I promise to not chop things off.” Then grumbled something about this place having more rules then hell.

Orphan mentally chewed over Mazikeen’s answer, then… “Be watching you.”
“Of course.” Was Mazikeen’s smug reply as she struck a poise with the ax. “Why would you not?” Which conveyed that impression that Orphan and Mazikeen were not quite on the same wavelength as to why Orphan would be watching Mazikeen.

A sudden squabble between Harley and Jubilee then distracted Illyana, giving Mazikeen a chance to flash a wicked grin at Orphan. Ahhh… this was shaping up to be such a fun night, after all… thought Mazikeen.

The cause of the commotion you ask? Well… A matching pair of hot pink (yes, hot pink, and bedazzled) MP-5’s had been found. Harley and Jubilee both spotted the weapons at the same time and simultaneously shouted "Dibs!" resulting in the inevitable squabble over the weapons.

Dani ignored the squabble and selected a very nice multiple feed automatic shotgun featuring two tubes and a drum clip, and began loading from boxes of beanbag, taser, and mini-missile rounds.

Complaints and glares of irritation from both Oracle and Orphan at Illyana, which prompted her to yell out. “Only use the non-lethal ammos!”

“And the ax?” Pointed out Oracle.

“It suffices.” Smugly replied Mazikeen, completely ignoring the true intent of Oracle’s question, which just made Barbara grind her teeth back at her apartment.

Jubilee and Harley finally agreed that each could have one of the MP-5’s. Jubilee also went for a 50’ caliber Desert Eagle armed with low velocity jelly stun rounds.

Harley squealed as she found a backpack filled with grenades. "Hey, Oracle, remember Eastern Europe?" Was her laughing query as she showed her find to everyone.

“Utterly unacceptable.” Was Oracle’s predictable pronouncement. "This is a hostage rescue, not a seek and destroy mission."

Harley mock glared at the Oracle hologram. “Yeah, and that was just a recovery mission, and it turned out okay, didn’t it?” Then she put it back with a dramatic sigh, only to giggle and return with a grenade launcher. “But this makes a good compromise! Don’t worry Oracle, non-lethal rounds only, Scouts honor.”
Barbara could only groan. God, Bruce is going to blow a gasket when he reads the mission log on this one. "No gas grenades, there's not much ventilation on that floor. No smokers, either."

Harley pouted as she put a bandolier (belt of rounds) back. "Killjoy."

Ivy was the odd girl out. "None of this is adequate." She grumbled. "If only I had a few of my babies here..."

"Try the door in the back." Replied Illyana distractedly, while busy examining Dani’s shotgun. "Yes, this should get the job done." (Why such a weapon when Dani’s mystic energy arrows had the same effect you ask? No idea, go ask Dani, but the girl does like her guns)

Ivy was briefly confused. "What back... oh... that back door." As she noticed the hereto overlooked door at the rear of the arsenal (damn, I could have sworn this was just wall a second ago...) Ivy hesitantly opened the door, to find her greenhouse before her.

"My babies!" Coo’d Ivy as three ambulatory George style carnivorous flowers the size of men walked through the door upon her summoning. As they passed her she reached in and grabbed a fanny pack of seeds as well. "Harley, as soon as we find some soil I’ll grow you some escorts as well!"

Harley just grinned and shook her head. "Nah, Red, they cramp my style. Always crowding me..."

The plan was briefly reviewed again, and then Dani called a final go / no go from everybody.

Ready Illyana? “Uh-huh”

Laura? “Yes.”

Jubilee? “Oh yes.”

Everybody else? “Yeah”
“Alright Girlz, let's go!”

The girls lined up at each of the exit doors, but first Jubilee took another hit from Illyana’s bottle, which was on the table. Then she joined the Girlz. Absentmindedly, she’d placed the bottle right on the edge of the table. A table that one of Ivy’s plants bumped into as they stacked up behind their mistress.

Nobody noticed the bottle tip over onto the table, spilling cerulean fog right onto the Oracle projector as Jubilee said, with a smile. “In the films, there’s always a sound track for the big fight scenes. We should have a sound track!”

 Mostly just looks of puzzlement or negation from the rest. Looks that annoyed Jubilee. "It’d be something crazy like… I don’t know… something fight orientated like… like... Ballroom Blitz!"

“Ballroom Blitz?” Relied the rest of them.

“Ballroom Blitz?” Said Barbara to herself as she breathed in unnoticed cerulean wisps that emitted from her holoscreen projectors.

“Yeah… Ballroom Blitz!” Enthused Jubilee.

“Okay… Ballroom Blitz.” Replied Dani as she humored Jubilee. That… might have been a hasty decision. Skeeter, in the driver’s compartment, shrugged his shoulders and hit the play button on the car stereo. You guessed it… Ballroom Blitz by the Sweet began to play but… the lyrics ended up being sung mostly by the Girlz.

"Oracle, we're in position over the entrance to the corral." Red Robin radioed. "Two guards in engagement range, both with AK 47s. Two more across the way. We can take the two on the hostages side on your mark, although distracted would be better."

"Copy that, Red Robin." Oracle responded crisply. "Distraction inbound. Bad Girlz, you are Go at your discretion."
A flare of actinic light was the tenth of a second warning before a nightmare cross of engine roar and hungry predator's snarl sounded across the floor. Unseen behind the glare of the headlights, four Little Brown Bat drones accompanied the juggernaut limo. The four guards on the hostages all spun and gaped as Betsy's headlights speared their ocular centers with more lumens than a 747's landing lights could produce, freezing them in place like so many deer. One of the guards reflexively opened up from the hip, bullets spraying wildly across the front of Betsy's grille and windshield.

Across the entire floor, everyone spun as the ebon black car rocketed into the room, brakes in full lockup to bring it to a halt between the hostages and the hostiles. The four shooters were all struck broadside by Betsy as she fishtailed slightly to ensure getting all four. The passenger doors swung wide and the Girls leapt forth as blue mist likewise vented forth. Simultaneously, Red Robin and Spoiler burst from their concealment in the air ducts.

Combat and mayhem engaged. Dani leapt to the top of the car, shotgun slung and forgotten, and began firing her mystic arrows at targets while singing the opening lyric to Ball Room Blitz. “Oh, it’s been getting so hard. Living with the things you do to me, aha”

Orphan somersaulted two times before her feet struck a bad guy in the ribs as she sang. “My dreams are getting so strange. I’d like to tell you everything I see.”

Jubilee was teleported by Illyana onto the top of a pile of crates forming one corner of the common storage area, her appearance deliberately drawing all attention from the other side of the floor, where Betsy could not be seen. Her eyes flared incarnadine with excitement, and her fangs flashed as she sang. “Oh, I see a man at the back. As a matter of fact, his eyes are as red as a sun.”

Said man in the back suddenly looked startled, then a blast of rubber 9mm rounds from Jubilee’s MP-5 took him down. Most were to his chest, but a few drifted lower, right into his…

Laura came out slicing a weapon apart before backhanding her opponent with a fist. She seamlessly took up the song. “And a girl in the corner, let no one ignore her.”

Said girl in the corner was Illyana, also on top of a pile of crates, catching ricochets with her teleportation circles while gesturing at Mazikeen with her sword Taker. “Cause she thinks she’s the passionate one!”
Mazikeen was swinging her ax in dramatic motions, showing tight leather and a great deal of cleavage while dodging fire with the Devil's own luck, scattering criminals who either fled or were knocked flying with the flat of the massive weapon or kicks from her.

Barbara found herself bobbing her head and tapping on the keyboard like they were drums while initiating a taser strike from one of her drones. "Oh, yeah, it was like lightning."

Mazikeen snarled a line of the song. "Everybody was frightening."

Barbara sang back as she twirled in her chair. "And the music was soothing."

Illyana snapped her fingers in time as she took down more ricochets and performed overwatch. "And they all started grooving."

All the Girlz then sang while continuing the take down. "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah..."

Dani pointed out that. "And the man at the back said - "

The man in back, the one with the red eyes, stood back up and screamed in a singing voice. "Everyone attack!" Only to get a taser round from Dani’s shotgun to the forehead of his (metal) helmet, knocking him spasming into the wall behind him (Dani had remembered the shotgun) before falling to the floor.

Harley's voice could now be heard in her New Jersey drawl. "And it turned into a ballroom blitz!" As she launched a beanbag round right into the crotch of the man in the back from her grenade launcher (who had just stood back up, only to fall down again), then dropped the grenade launcher to its sling and fired a prolonged burst from her MP-5 into a group of thugs, who scattered and took cover. The expended clip went flying as she reloaded her MP5 with professional speed.

Seeing Harley reloading, Jubilee leapt upon the hapless thugs as they started to peek out, She sang. "And the girl in the corner said."

That being Orphan, who was repeatedly punching a thug while telling him. "Boy, I wanna warn ya, it'll turn into a ballroom blitz."
Barbara sang the chorus as she continued to monitor. “Ballroom blitz!”

Laura likewise sang the chorus as she disarmed two more foes. “Ballroom blitz!”

Illyana as she continued to flicker about. “Ballroom blitz.”

Skeeter was actually bored as he smoked. His job was to cover the hostages, and otherwise to do nothing - his weapons were NOT not-lethal. There was a thump and a face was smushed upon the windshield, looked like the thug has been thrown. Skeeter used the windshield wipers to smack the dazed thug back and forth a few times, then grinned and exhaled a long blow of smoke at the hapless thug as he fell off the car as he laughed a line. “Ballroom blitz.”

Orphan paused in pummeling a foe. “I'm reaching out for something. Touching nothing is all I ever do.”

Jubilee appeared to answer Orphan. “Oh, I softly call you over. When you appear there's nothing left of you, aha.”

Mazikeen was hosting a screaming man into the air by his crotch, who was the screaming man? The line said it all. “Now the man in the back. Is ready to crack as he raises his hands to the sky.” Yep, the red eyed man who was quite distressed.

Barbara zoomed in on Illyana. “And the girl in the corner is everyone's mourner. She could kill you with a wink of her eye.”

Ivy strode about, dosing those who were down with sleepy-pollen and thereby ensuring they stayed down, while her plants protected her. “Oh yeah, it was electric,”

Harley was rather ecstatic. “So frantically hectic!”

Jubilee was rounding up many of the fallen criminals. “And the band started leaving.”

Mazikeen gloated over the fallen. “Cause they all stopped breathing.” Orphan glared at Mazikeen, who pulled off the man in red's helmet to reveal it was a robot.
All the Girlz sang. “Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah...

Barbara replayed the footage on the red eyed man. “And the man at the back said ‘Everyone attack!’ and it turned into a ballroom blitz.”

Orphan whispered to the terrified criminal she was striking, her voice somehow carrying clearly. “And the girl in the corner said. Boy, I wanna warn ya, it'll turn into a ballroom blitz.”

Again all the Girlz sang. “Ballroom blitz!”

And now even the crowd sang. “Ballroom blitz!”

Barbara zorched one of the last few criminals low. “Oh yeah, it was like lightning.”

Jubilee took down another crook. “Everybody was frightening.”

Harley crooned to Ivy. “And the music was soothing...”

Ivy crooned back as she and Harley stared to dance together. “And they all started grooving!”

The now-former hostages took up the chant. “Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah...”

Red Robin observed to Spoiler. “And the man at the back said ‘Everyone attack!’ and it turned into a ballroom blitz.”

Spoiler sang back. “And the girl in the corner said Boy, I wanna warn ya, it'll turn into a ballroom blitz.”

The crowd sang, “Ballroom blitz!”
The Girlz sang, “*Ballroom blitz.*”

and then they all sang. “*Ballroom blitz.*”

Skeeter looked mildly impressed as he stubbed out his cigarette. “*Ballroom blitz...*”

Barbara was busy making notes in the action log. “*Ooh, it’s, it’s a ballroom blitz. It’s, it’s a ballroom blitz. It’s, it’s a ballroom blitz. Yeah, it’s a ballroom blitz...*”

**Part 4d: Meanwhile... Death to Ameri-Do-Te!**

The enemies of Ameri-Do-Te had gathered. Masters of Kung Fu, Tae-kwon-do, Krav Maga, Judo, Karate, kick boxing, and Ninjutsu. Enough with the mockery from Master Ken and his appropriation of their sacred battle styles and rituals.

Many had confronted Master Ken to teach the arrogant dog the error of his ways, only to fail every time. Kung Fu eunuchs had once attacked Master Ken secure in the belief that the lack of a venerable crotch protected them from Master Ken; they were wrong. Just as an amputee has phantom pain, Master Ken was able to do a phantom punch into the missing genitals (learned from the ghost of Mohammad Ali), thus rendering the eunuchs incapacitated.

Then… the idea of joining forces had occurred to them (they had all met at a groin injury therapy self help center). Another Master Ken saying was “*It’s not the size of the groin that matters, but the size of the hand that grabs it!*” All could attest that Master Ken had large hands.

Several names had been discussed before deciding upon League of Doom! A name that they had surrendered after the legal injunction and the ass kicking they had received from the other League of Doom. “... And next time you decided to ignored an injunction from us you’ve dead!”

So… time for a new name.

The Committee to destroy Master Ken and Ameri-Do-Te?

League of Destruction? (Another injunction letter from the League of Doom).
Miscreants of Mischief (Rejected after they realized it spelled out MOM)
League against Ameri-Do-Te? (Almost… but it was missing something)

After much discussion they settled on a name. League Against Ameri-Do-Te Ensemble! That was it! Only after the bulk order tee-shirts and hats (order a thousand and get twenty five percent off) did they see that the name had a possibly bad four letter acronym.

Regardless of the possible name, the group had gathered.

“Master Ken has left his fortress.” Stated a well endowed Swedish Female Ninja (yes females were also venerable to the art of Master Ken, one attack was called the crunchy taco). Fortress in this case being the city of Albuquerque.

“He is finally vulnerable.” Hissed a Kung Fu monk dressed in orange robes with a side ways baseball cap in a sad attempt to look gansta.

“Time to unleash our vengeance!” Screamed a kick boxer master.

“Why are you always shouting?” Complained the Judo master. “Stop shouting, we can all hear you. We had a vote… no more shouting.”

“He shouts with the anticipation of revenge!” Shouted the Karate master, which just intensified the fight about shouting. After much debate, and a few blows, order was regained.

The Master Ken destruction team was dispatched representing all the disciples, ten from each, seventy in all.

His death was assured, but they did wonder why he had left his fortress (which really oversold what the Dojo looked like, more of a marginal martial arts studio with two bathrooms).
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

I like this story, just a fun night out, X-Men style. Time for a few chapters of the girls relaxing and talking.

Various references to other stories, the big one being Pride, Prejudice, Illyana, and Zombies. Plus a reference to the story Tag I’m it (When Illyana first met Mazikeen). And a vague reference to Mother of Darkness. And a reminder that Lucifer is from the Fox TV show Lucifer (so is Mazikeen), not the comic book Lucifer.

Part 5a: THREE DAYS LATER

Batman grunted as if struck by a blow. Big M… really big M. The file had not just been music, it has been a set of videos extracted from Oracle’s little bats. He had watched Mazikeen wave that massive axe about as if it was a cheerleader’s baton, which demonstrated that she was quite strong, and very skilled. In fact the four, Mazikeen, Laura, Jubilee, and Dani were quite deadly. Illyana had mostly kept in the background, but the drones has caught her using the swords most skillfully, and non lethally. Plus the tactics of Jubilee, Ivy, and Harley. All as they sang Ballroom Blitz as if it was a Broadway production.

Yet… no deaths or crippling injuries. Lots of damage, and more then a few visits to the hospital for the perps, but a completely clean series of takedowns none the less. The robot he made note to look into the following night, if it was still in GCPD possession by then.

Another grunt as he observed a box of fireworks going off in the background, ignited by a wayward round from one of the perps. Of course there had to be fireworks… why not… after all it looked like a high production cost music video, especially with the quantity of Mazikeen cleavage shown throughout the video.

He did have to confess that Cassandra had a nice singing voice, who knew?

Part 5b: Ride-along (Part a)

The Bad Girlz had left it to Red Robin and Spoiler to deal with the cleanup, after first giving a very
quick news conference where they answered no questions (Dani had led the brief conference, but Mazikeen had stolen the show at the end as she had struck a poise with the axe held one handed over her head as she declared. “Criminals of Gotham... I’ve come for you.” A threat that most may have not paid as much attention to as they should, due no doubt to the tight leather cleavage being shown. Heck, more then a few were rather hoping that she had come for them.

Betsy was now rolling down the dark streets of nighttime Gotham. The rear of the car has been transformed into an open-top limo, with the driver’s compartment still isolated. The back of the car was now filled with a U shaped leather couches with the projector table in the middle. No Oracle image was being projected, but Oracle was still virtually present and occasionally commenting.

Mazikeen was sitting in the back, stretched out and looking most pleased. The giant battle axe was resting on the seat next to her, and on the other side of the axe was Illyana with her two Japanese blades. Dana was sitting on the left side couch (if you were looking forward) with Orphan and Laura. On the other side were Jubilee, Ivy, and Harley.

The now capped bottle of vintrified chaos was residing in Illyana’s left hand side cup holder. The group was passing around a rather less exotic vintage, a very good Merlot, except for Orphan, who was sipping a decaf latté (they had stopped at a Starbucks) and Jubilee, who was oddly quiet (for once) and not drinking anything.

“I love this town.” Purred Mazikeen, who was currently holding the bottle of wine. “Who knew that fighting crime was so damned fun! I’m so moving here if I can convince Lucifer to move his club. Being a hero is a blast!”

A statement that concerned both Oracle and Orphan. But they both wisely choose to not comment upon the idea as that would likely just encourage Mazikeen. They did wonder about the Lucifer comment and Orphan made a mental note to enquire when she had a chance.

Orphan was finding the drive to be... interesting. The cool night air, occasional light mists, and the street lights constantly changing, thereby casting shadows and light. Orphan was rather sure that Illyana’s and Mazikeen’s form kept slightly changing on each flash of light and shadow. Little horns kept coming and going on Illyana, as well as glowing eyes (that vanished if you blinked) and some rather long incisors. Likewise Mazikeen kept shifting as well. Orphan was not sure if it was the influence of the strange wine she had taken, or just magic in general.

Mazikeen continued. “But…” With an ironic glare at Orphan. “Battle with minimal bloodshed is so... lacking. Foreplay with no actual happy ending.”
“Bat’s world, Bat’s rules.” Was Illyana’s reply as Mazikeen handed her the wine bottle. Then, after a sip and passing the bottle to Dani. “Still fun.”

Mazikeen patted the axe and made an inquiry of Illyana. “What’s her name?”

“Wrath.” Was Illyana’s reply.

“Your axe is a she?” Asked Dani with some surprise, and also some internal wonder as to how Mazikeen had known that.

“Yep.” Replied a smug Illyana. “What’s with all the magical weapons having guy names? Not everything has to conform to patriarchal norms.”

“Wrath sounds rather male.” Observed Laura.

“Well, she’s a she and not a he.” Replied Illyana. “I was rather in that state of mind when I created her out of Belasco’s old axe. She lived up to her name until I got my soul sword back.”

Jubilee shifted in her seat with a grimace and clutched her stomach. “Illyana… I think I need to cut the night short and have you take me home. I need a blood bank…”

There were sudden looks of concern from Laura and Dani as Laura asked the question. “Not healing?”

“No… should have known you smelled the blood. And before you ask, my flask got hit, so… no Wolvie blood to jump start things.”

Laura scooted to the other side of the limo to sit next to Jubilee, and simply offered a wrist, an offer that Jubilee rather strongly declined.

“No… they already think I’m a monster.” She waved at Orphan, and Oracle as well.

Begin Orphan Reflections
A few minutes ago…

“Why trust vampire?” Asked Orphan of Illyana, since they had a moment of privacy while waiting inside the Starbucks (the others were outside by the car posing for selfies with each other and any interested pedestrians. Mazikeen’s were very… outgoing to say the least.)

Illyana replied with one of those responses that tended to confuse. “What makes you think I trust Jubilee, or anyone for that matter?”

Orphan thought briefly upon the idea… then rejected the underlying premise. “You trust. Why?”

“You’ve never been a vampire.” Was Illyana’s reply after some thought. “Most are… not voluntarily turned into such, and they tend to have few choices. Slaves to their makers and the strong. Almost always morally crippled by events or abuse, and of course the Thirst. Jubilee resists the Thirst… and you don’t know Thirst until you’ve been a vampire. Laura and Jubilee are friends, they both helped each other start to get past what they were made into. Heck, Logan stuck them together, an action that has proven to be of great worth to both of them. I honor that.”

“What…?” Was Orphan’s question. There was not any notation or reference to that in Illyana’s file, although most of that file was pure conjecture as best… Illyana was silent, and looked distantly bored, a mien Orphan believed for not a second. Orphan tried again. “If stronger vampire show up?”

Illyana actually looked hopeful at the thought of such an event. “Then I suppose Dani, Mazikeen, Laura, and I will have a brief, very fun, and very lethal time. All per the Bat rules, I’d point out, as Batman has no problem with slaying vampires.”

Orphan thought upon that answer, then raised her pointer finger while giving Illyana a questioning glance. A glance Illyana answered with a smile as Orphan’s to-go order was announced.

“Yes Orphan, you will be most welcome to join in if you wish. Oh, and I suppose our guests would want to join in as well.”

“It is always easier to be better than you believe yourself to be if others believe in you... and show it.” Commented Illyana as she snagged a brownie before they went to the cash register. “Just as it is likewise harder to resist the malevolence that is an innate part of everyone if everybody just assumes you will always do wrong. It hurts to fall, and it also hurts when nobody believes in you even when you do the right thing, just makes falling easier.”

End Orphan Reflections

Everybody stared at Orphan... who of course found this to be uncomfortable.

“We’re all monsters.” Snorted Mazikeen in amusement. “Hells, I think the goodie-two-shoes vampire is the nicest of us. I’d offer my blood, but I don’t think she’d like the side affects.”

“Side affects?” Inquired Ivy.

“Rage, madness, sudden and massive violent outbursts... On the plus side, she might grow a cup size or two.”

“Not in the mood for jokes.” Grumbled Jubilee.

“Is offer voluntary?” Asked Orphan of Laura.

“Yes... if it’s the wounding that concerns you then...” Laura extended a blade from her right hand and nonchalantly cut her left wrist, then offered the bleeding wrist again to Jubilee.

Jubilee ignored the wrist and just looked at Orphan, who finally gave a small, embarrassed nod. Who was she to have her permission sought, particularly when the donor was willing? At which Jubilee finally, and with no small amount of leashed urgency, took Laura’s offered wrist and began to drink (after Laura first opened it again, as she’d already healed). Illyana tossed the Starbuck’s brownie to Laura, who caught it in her right hand and quickly ate it while Jubilee drank.

Dani raised a question to both distract the others from Jubilee’s feeding and to scratch a mental itch.
“’Yana, where and when did you end up with Japanese swords?”

Illyana glanced at her swords… thought for a few moments and then replied. “It was on my journey. The one that I then journeyed back in time to the present once I found what I was searching for. During that time, at one point, I was trapped in another dimension for quite some time, bereft of both my mutant power and my magics. I had been gravely injured, which took a great deal of time to recover from. Luckily for me, a British family gave me shelter and nursed me back to health. I received the swords from them as a gift as I had saved their lives, that saving had caused some of the injuries.”

Part 5c: Illyana’s story (see Pride, Prejudice, Illyana, and Zombies for full details)

…

…

"Time for your weapons, Miss Rasputin." Mr. Bennet announced once day after an extended training session.

Illyana had been sparring with Mr. Bennet and each of the Bennet daughters; and being repeatable defeated by each of them. If this bothered Illyana she did not show it, but Lydia was most smug about it and rather liked to excessively hand out combat tips (rather like golfing with somebody who continually offers golfing advice). Lydia would sometime be reminded that Illyana was recovering from injuries but Lydia paid that comment (and what was to be in hindsight a warning) no mind.

Mr. Bennet had left the training, toweling off the sweat from his brow, while Lydia had been showing Illyana just how she was able to get past Illyana's guard and smack her with the wooden training sword yet again.

He had come back holding two Japanese curved blades in sheaths. The traditional Japanese long sword and short sword. The hilts were wrapped in black leather and the sheaths were lacquered a dark glossy blackish red. The pommels had a golden Chrysanthemum engraving at the end of the hilt.

"The swords wielded by Hotaka, which were originally a gift to his father Hotoka from the Japanese emperor himself. Hotaka was a worthy foe of my house. He died honorably upon my blades and I clamed his swords as trophies of victory. I believe they will suit you, Miss Rasputin, until such a time as your own sword is recovered."
He presented the swords hilt first. Illyana grasped a hilt with each hand and drew forth the shiny steel blades. There was a flaming dragon engraved upon each sword.

"Their names are Honō no mēkā (Maker of flame) and Honō no shōkaki (Extinguisher of flame). They were nicknamed the Maker and Taker and were feared by many in China."

Illyana looked stern. "I thank you for this gift. I shall wield them with what honor I possess."

**Part 5d: Ride-along (Part b)**

The short explanation had served its purpose and distracted everyone, except Orphan, until Jubilee was done with her feeding. But that explanation had raised questions in the minds of a few.

Bennet? Was Dani’s thought, as it was likewise Ivy's and Harley's. Harley loved Jane Austen's books, and before she and Ivy had become an item, she’d always wanted to put together a Joker adaptation of Pride and Prejudice - with the Bat in it, of course. (Yes, dear reader, the story would undoubtedly have greatly differed from the published work, but the idea of the Joker being Mr. Darcy would have made the performance most memorable.) But no follow up questions were asked, as instead Orphan asked a question of Illyana and Mazikeen while pointing at the two of them.

"How you meet?"

A question that made Mazikeen laugh before she replied. "Bar fight."

Jubilee, Laura, and Dani exchanged glances before Jubilee burst out. "That story’s real?"

"Real as this ax." Purred Mazikeen.

**Part 5e: Bar Fight**
“You must now leave.” Stated a glaring Mazikeen who was suddenly in Illyana’s face. Part time bartender, part time security for Lucifer, part time warrior and part time head torturer (we all have our little hobbies, and life is just extra nice when hobbies and employment can overlap).

Illyana had been sitting at the bar listening to Lucifer playing the piano and singing. She had to give the Devil his due, he really was a good singer. He was currently doing his version of The House of the Rising Sun, a rather drawn out mournful ballad version.

*There is a house in New Orleans*

*They call the Rising Sun*

*And it's been the ruin of many a poor boy*

*And God, I know I'm one*

*My mother was a tailor*

*She sewed my new blue jeans*

*My father was a gamblin' man*

*Down in New Orleans*

*Now the only thing a gambler needs*

*Is a suitcase and trunk*

*And the only time he's satisfied*

*Is when he's on a drunk*

*Oh mother, tell your children*

*Not to do what I have done*

*Spend your lives in sin and misery*

*In the House of the Rising Sun*

*...*

*...*
“And why is that?” Replied Illyana while returning the glare.

“You are under age.”

“I so am not.”

“I do not care what your documents say, you are underage and you used magic to gain admission to the premises. Leave now or I’ll throw you out.”

“You and what army?”

“Just me.”

“Try it.”

Which Mazikeen promptly proceeded to attempt to do. Emphasis on ‘attempt’…

The fight was epic. Legendary in the telling. They wrassled, they tangled, they dueled with sword and knives. Many a bottle and glass was smashed as the blows were exchanged.

All the while Lucifer provided a soundtrack on the piano as he played and sang various songs (Hit Me With Your Best Shot was quite appropriate at one point). He later claimed that the fight was just part of the show (the crowd had loved it and kept wondering just how the special effects had been done).

At one point, while Illyana was repeatedly slamming Mazikeen’s bloody and torn head upon the piano that Lucifer was playing, Mazikeen threw an elbow into Illyana’s face, momentarily broke her focus and stunned her, and then threw the stunned Illyana across the room, thereby buying Mazikeen a moment of respite to clear her eyes.

Lucifer took advantage to comment, all the while continuing to play the piano while Mazikeen wiped the blood off of her face. “Maz… you do know you’re fighting the Ruler of Limbo. Right?”
“Bitch is mine!” was her reply as she ran across the room, only to stumble back into the piano a few moments later from Illyana’s counter attack.

“A Hell Lord, Maz… and…” A pleased looking pearly smile. “A rather feisty one at that. So nice to see the younger generation keeping up with the traditions. But really Maz. It's past time to call it a draw, before she really cuts loose.”

A brief look of startlement at Lucifer from Mazikeen, then an equally bloodied Illyana slammed into Maz, and they both went over the piano with a crash. Displaying the Devil's Own Luck, Lucifer moved his drink out of the way just in time, making it look gracefully easy as he did. Not a drop was lost as he took sip.

Lucifer started the next song, accompanied by the sounds of breaking glass, as the crowd cheered.

Why can’t we be friends, why can’t we be friends…

Afterwards, two beaten and bloody female demons had finally called truce and worked it out like responsible adults… ok… that’s not true. Instead they worked it out like unreasonable adults (much high proof alcohol was involved).

Part 5f: Ride-along (Part c)

Mazikeen concluded the story. “Then she got me drunk and took advantage of me.”

“I so did not!” Was Illyana outburst. “You got me drunk, and….” Illyana uncharacteristically went silent.

Mazikeen just grinned and gave a slow, sensually wicked lick of her lips. “The fight was the main course, perhaps… but the dessert! Ah, the dessert was epic…”

Everybody got to see Illyana actually blush for a few seconds, a very rare event.
Oracle now asked a question, a most concerned question. “The devil…the Lucifer?”

Illyana gave a small sigh and tried to explain.

“Yeah. Well - not exactly... uhm... it’s complicated. He’s from another reality, has massive family issues, and he’s an annoying kind of guy, so very full of himself. Think lovechild of Noel Coward and Mick Jagger, with a dash of the British actor Terry-Thomas. But enough talent for all three. Then mix in a big gulp of decadence and bacchus behaviors. And I wasn’t hanging out with him. I... it’s all kind of blurry now that I think about it, but I ended up hanging with…” A pointed thumb at Mazikeen. “Her. We did a lot of shots... and she got me drunk. Which partially explains why we…”

Illyana didn’t finish. But Mazikeen did, again with that slow, grinning lick of the lips. “Had dessert.”

Harley then put two and two together. “So you’re both really demons? Illy, I thought that was just a thing!”

Even as Illyana internally cringed, Mazikeen points a thumb to herself. “Big bad demon, Lucifer’s right hand gal in all things.” Then points to Illyana. “Bigger but not badder demon, somewhat of a kill-joy, rules, rules, rules.”

Harley’s eyes were gleefully delighted. “Cool!”

Then Mazikeen looked at Orphan. “Have you ever enjoyed... dessert, little Batling?”

Orphan just cracked her knuckles as she offered her own query in reply. “So... Demon. Not human, not of this world?”

Illyana saw where that might well go, and acted to preserve amity and the group fun-vibe. “Maz...”

The unspoken warning that went with that made Mazikeen pout. She grabbed the bottle of wine and swigged to cover herself.
Dani quickly shifted topic. “Yana, since when did you stop annoying Ninjas?” Then to the group. “Illyana likes to play this game she calls Startle the Ninja.”

A statement that made Orphan slightly twitch about something. A twitch that everybody saw.

**Begin Orphan Reflection**

Orphan was clutching the bottom jaw of a stone gargoyle with one hand as she dangled two hundred feet off the ground. Clutched and soundly cursed at Illyana who was kneeling on the head of the gargoyle, offering her hand for Orphan to grab and grinning.

“Jeeze Orphan, didn't know you were so… jumpy.”

Orphan just glared in reply. Looking over the city as you stand on the head of a gothic style skyscraper is not the time for somebody to sneak up on you and yell “BOO!” was her thought.

**End Orphan Reflection**

Then Laura, Orphan, and Dani all glared at Illyana as Jubilee asked. “Why the heck do you like to do that?” Harley, on the other hand, just grinned and was already thinking about creating her own version of the game (What a great idea! was her thought).

Illyana looked amused. “Same place I got the swords from, and Dani, the same place I learned massage.”

**Begin Illyana Reflection**

Illyana grimaced in pain as her left leg spasmed with cramps. Illyana was lightly oiled up and lying nude and face down on upon the massage table (she had only a towel covering her behind). Elizabeth was currently doing a stick massage upon her (sticks are used to help deep massage the muscles by allowing both hands to push down and roll the stick. Think rolling pin and Illyana being the dough).

Illyana had never really had massages before and found them to be... pleasant. Very pleasant.
Illyana groaned. "I'll talk. I'll talk. All my secrets are yours if you but stop this torture." She was only partially joking, shards her leg hurt.

"This is not torture... but secrets are fun to know." Elizabeth replied as she firmly kneaded Illyana's leg to the sound of even more grunts and groans from Illyana.

"Ask and I.. might answer." Illyana replied with a grimace. Then she sighed an Ahhhhh of relief as her leg finally stopped cramping.

"What is your world like? You always avoid speaking of it."

Illyana groaned in relief and replied. "Violent, but in that regards I suppose it is not much different from yours. Thing... differ in other ways. I suspect that you would find it to be... lacking in civility. And many of the women engage in public displays of undress that would... well your mother would likely faint. And there are frequent public displays of affection that your culture would find... indiscreet."

"Sounds very indecent" was Elizabeth's response as she began a foot massage that Illyana found booth delightful and somewhat disturbingly erotic.

"It can be." Snicker. "How some of the woman I know dress for combat would be so scandalous here... although I suppose Lydia would be game to give it a go."

"That girl. Mother is always encouraging her. I fear nothing good will come of it."

"Yes, Lydia does appear to be rather... wild at times." Groan. "Once I am better I hope I can impose upon you to teach me the art of massage."

Elizabeth grinned unseen as she continued to reduce Illyana to pudding.

"Agreed. As you know Jane is the only other so skilled as the others prefer to receive but not to give. Jane and I would be pleased to be so attended. It would allow both of us to be relaxed at the same time."
"Would you stop doing that!" Mary shrieked in surprise.

Elizabeth had snuck up on her and had startled her yet again. It was another round of Scare The Ninja, a game that Elizabeth liked to play (inflict really) upon the others (nobody else liked the game).

You never knew when Elizabeth would do it. The purpose was to remind the girls to always be on guard. One must be forever vigilant!

Jane disapproved of the game (and hated it when she was startled), but had to concede that the girls needed to be frequently reminded about being observant.

Illyana was mildly amused by Elizabeth's antics and, as she recovered, she too began to play the game; much to the distress of the others, including Elizabeth at times (which rather delighted her sisters to see her equally shrieking about being startled).

But they found that Illyana would never shriek when startled.

"Katherine trained that out of me." Was her only reply when asked how she kept silent.

End Illyana Reflection

“Anybody else got a story to share?” Asked Illyana.

Orphan thought of the time that Illyana came for supper at Wayne Manor, but wisely refrained.
“Wayne Manor, Alfred speaking, may I help you?”

“Good afternoon, Alfred, this is Illyana Rasputin, returning Bruce's message? I'm in town for a few days...”

“Of course, Ms. Rasputin. He has left instructions to invite you here for dinner. Roast beef and potato au gratin have been decided upon; have you any preferences concerning additional vegetables or side dishes?”

“I have a liking for buttered turnips? If that's not too gauche?”

“Nothing further from, Ms. Rasputin. Buttered turnips it is. Would seven eastern time be convenient? I expect the family will be in attendance.”

“That would be fine, I'll will be there at promptly seven. I'll bring dessert.”

“Excellent! Then ten for dinner, including yourself, Ms. Rasputin. We look forward to seeing you.”

“May I bring a guest?”

“Of course, they shall be most welcome...”

That night....

Illyana arrived for supper, formally dressed for supper, not too formal, but formal, with Lockheed riding on her shoulder (Lockheed is Kitty Pryde’s small purple dragon, Lockheed also hangs out with Illyana from time to time when Kitty’s busy). She has also brought a massive, utterly decadent cheese cake with a glistening chocolate genache topping, and a dish of highly tart raspberry sauce that perfectly offset the sweetness of the confection. Suffice it to say the Bat Clan was a bit taken back by the dragon. But Lockheed was given the reserved chair next to Illyana and he contently curled up to take a nap in the chair after having some beef.
The meal was going splendidly. Illyana found the meat to be perfect, and the turnips just right. The group had conversed upon a variety of subject while staying away from personal topics… at first.

Illyana sipped her soft cider (wine was not served as multiple patrols would be going out that night) and then spoke. “I know you want to ask questions, can’t blame you. But it is still most… irritating to find that many events of my life are public knowledge… heck sold for entertainment. Rather disconcerting. So… feel free to ask but… please try to respect some privacy.”

Tim Blake (The Red Robin) asked. “Um… why do you wear such a skimpy costume? And what happened to your silver armor?” A question about her black and skimpy field uniform.

“You all wear full body costumes, with armor and all that. I used to, but… well, I still do.”

Illyana’s rather skimpy all black getup spread across her body, replacing the formal wear. The black leather short shorts, a thick black belt with the big silver buckle, black upper thigh length leather boots, black boob window top with a exposed belly, the glove on her right hand and the black armored gauntlet on her left that covered her entire arm, along with the spiky shoulder pad. Then it faded away and the formal wear returned.

“I found after Phoenix I was bored with the old look, I suppose being joined with Emma may have had something to do with it. I refashioned my armor into the current expression, which really is just a variant of how I looked as Phoenix, apart from being all black leather. I’m still fully armored, it’s just that most of it is invisible, as I like this look better. So… yea rather well protected and yet… revealing.”

Stephanie Brown (The Spoiler) inquired. “How was it like being Phoenix?”

“Wonderfully terrible. Hope to never do it again.”

Richard “Dick” Grayson’s (Nightwing) question earned him a glare from Bruce. “How do you rate the Bat Glare?”
“Threatening, most impressive for a mortal. Batman excludes a menace that hurting you is ok with him. Scott Summers could glare almost as good, but really would refrain from violence if he could. Better then Logan’s and Emma’s, but Emma really can back up the glare with unpleasant results for most people, me excluded. Kitty’s glare tends to mean that a tongue lashing is at hand rather than physical violence. I tend to ignore most glares because… well die a few times and glares just lose their menace.”

Barbra Grayson (ex Bat Girl) then asked. “How does your glare rate?”

Illyana scowled and then glared. Impressive, but not Bat grade, but then… darkness crept into the corners of the room and the light grew pale and weak, and the glare kept growing in intensity… but then the glare faded.

“I can glare with the best plus I have magic at my side, and… a propensity to violence, just like my host.”

Selina Kyle (Catwoman) inquired. “So why are you still coming around here?”

“I… kind of like it here. Always fun to take out one’s frustrations on criminals. Plus I’m contemplating a few things. Rather private things but… need to work out some kinks as it were. I must say, very pleasant being invited for supper. Half the time I get this vibe, even from the X-Men, as if they’re all wondering if I’m going to kill them all today… which is really a bit of a social downer.”

Illyana had her cool on so Lockheed decided to ruin it for her by suddenly taking wing, grabbing the denuded joint of beef, and flying up to the top of the ceiling to land upon an exposed beam, there to enjoy his theft.

A tactic that definitely broke the ice. “LOCKHEED! Come back with the roast you little stinker! You’re making me look bad!”

Just a smoky chuckle from the rafters, and the sound of cracking bone. Then Barbara giggled, and Spoiler joined in… and everyone laughed.

End Orphan Reflection
Yes… bad idea sharing that story with those not of the Bat Clan. Then a giggling Harley raised her hand…

Part 5f: Meanwhile…

The Oracle avatar was on autopilot while Illyana told the story of how she learned massage and Barbara prepared herself a small meal. She felt a touch off, almost as though she had had been drinking - the taste of good red wine lingered in her mouth, even though she had changed out her water bottle for a fresh one. Thus, something to eat, to steady herself. Just as she returned with her peanut butter and strawberry jam sandwich, the data run on the name 'Mazikeen' and all its variants completed. With the ease of long practice, she refined the search results... And carefully put the half-eaten sandwich down as she read. Then she turned to the Oracom, and Selina Kyle's phone shrilled with a ringer no one associated with the Justice League or the Bat Clan ever wanted to hear.

“Selina? Barbara. I'm dumping data to your phone. Illyana is in town tonight, she brought a crew with her, most of whom we have dossiers on. They're bad enough, especially that X-23 woman. But 'Mazikeen' we'd never heard of... Yes. Precisely. That's what Vatican Online, the Smithsonian, Miskatonic University, and the Black Library have about an entity with that name. Yes, God help me, I think it is - or close enough to make damn little difference. I put Cassie in with them to keep an eye on things, and so far so good... Because they're all drinking! No, not Cassie, she has coffee - but she is getting way beyond way out of her depth. Harley and Ivy are riding with them tonight, as well... Exactly. No one's going to say boo if the Sirens get together for a night, and I submit there's only one place in town we might want this lot drinking at...”
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

I appear to be mostly focused on humor for the moment, which is somewhat understandable as my job is not the happiest at this time (I’m currently transferring to another division so the daily angst of the ongoing politics should soon be behind me). But… this gives me something to laugh about.

Part 6a: THREE DAYS LATER

Mazikeen…

Oracle had included more then a few references in the log, and Batman read them with rising concern.

The Hebrew translation was ‘Damagers’ or ‘Those who harm’.

Hittites used the name for a demonic god that punished the wicked.

The Assyrian pantheon had a Mazikeen whose role was apparently the torturer of the evil dead.

And then there was the rather detailed descriptions of just what an entity called Mazikeen liked to engage in from Vatican Online, the Smithsonian, Miskatonic University, and the Black Library. With links to the web pages and even a few helpful paintings. Paintings that the Mazikeen photo did partially resemble… apart from all the paintings only having half a normal face, the other half looked like it had been skinned alive, the eye removed, and the skinned face rotting.

Not a companion Batman would have gone out to paint the town with.

Part 6b: Luck can be so subjective…
But before Hardly could start to tell her story, Orphan held up a hand for silence. Amazingly, she got it, and everyone clearly heard two pairs of heavy, booming gunshots. Then a young man in jeans and a dirty yellow tee shirt sprinted from a dark alley, clutching a backpack in one hand and an enormous ancient revolver in the other. He ran out into traffic, firing behind himself once more as he did, and then without pause, vaulted into the limo, kneeling on a seat and aiming back to the alley. He glanced at Illyana, a look of desperation on his face.

"Fucking make this thing go, lady!" He all but screamed at her.

Illyana obliged. "Skeeter, give us a block, eh?"

The thug promptly found himself sprawled across the laps of Mazikeen, Dani, and Jubilee (who did nothing but grin as the mouse fell into a cage full of cats) as Betsy swerved a lane into oncoming traffic while she accelerated rapidly, then slid between a pair of trucks that were at least going the right way, and then leapt thru an intersection before sedately resumed her previous pace. Laura grinned behind the desperado's back, silently popped a claw, and swung. Dozens of little baggies containing small tan lumps slid out of the gutted bag onto the seat.

Betsy came to a stop, the red light gleaming balefully before Harley couldn't keep the laughter contained as she guffawed. "Dealer, huh? Oh sweetie, your luck is so-oo much crap tonight..."

The drug dealer swung the gun around to point at Harley. "What the fuck is that supp..." He broke off as he realized just who he was pointing a gun at.

Harley grinned. "Charter Arms Bulldog, right? Nice gun. I have one."

A high, weird laugh right behind him spun the drug dealer around to face Jubilee at less than three feet distance - and he squeaked at the sight of her eyes and fangs.

"Forty-four special. Five shots." Harley continued as the revolver impotently clicked twice at Jubilee. "You're empty. Best look around, kid. You picked the wrong car to try to jack... Me personally, I'd just beat you like a drum and leave you in the gutter, but some of these broads? A few of them would just eat you up and I mean dat in a culinary sense. And kiddo, those aren't even the nasty ones."

The kid did indeed look wildly around - at Illyana of the burning eyes, at Dani, who just looked at him without expression, at Mazikeen, who idly twirled a cruelly serrated knife on her fingertip and
ignored the drop of blood it drew, and finally at Poison-freaking-Ivy who the miscreant then realized that he had pointed a gun at Ivy’s girl...!

The kid launched himself out of the limo, dropping the revolver as he did so. Baggies flew everywhere as he made for the alley. Orphan instantly went after him, taking him down before he could even gain thirty feet. "Oracle, drug dealer captured, 64th at 11th West, left of the Starbucks. Shots fired by perp one block west, this street, opposite side; unknown if any one hit. Weapon captured..." She glanced back at the limo, and Illyana obligingly tossed the weapon to her. "Send police soonest?"

Various comments were tossed at Orphan from the other Bad Girlz as Orphan subdued and zip tied the perp. The ones from Mazikeen and Harley did make Orphan blush from behind her mask as Mazikeen and Harley tried to one up each other.

Once the perp was hogtied and subdued, Illyana grinned and stood up. "Ladies, the police will be here in just about four minutes. I suggest an additional Starbucks. We need to toast Orphan when we get back, and..." She covertly grabbed the Chaos bottle. "Orphan's cup is going to need warming up."

Afterwards...

As Betsy pulled away from the curb after the GCPD had taken custody of the dealer, a toast of Starbucks' finest was offered to Orphan as she reseated herself. Orphan smiled in spite of herself, and raised her own cup, noting it was once again full and that perfectly hot drinking temperature. She sipped, and then took a larger mouthful, feeling the renewed warmth as she swallowed. It tasted very good indeed, warming her and easing her somehow. She looked questioningly at the cup and then at the group.

"We topped it up for you." Dani responded, gesturing at the receding Starbucks.

With what was a flicker thought... but an ever fading distant thought as she took another swallow. Orphan made a mental note to revisit the shop at a later time. Wow... best coffee ever!

“

“We need some tunes!” Cried out Jubilee. Healed and back in the game. A quick vote resulted in...

The lyrics of First We take Manhattan by Leonard Cohen crooned from the sound system as the car resumed its meandering journey thought the streets of Gotham.
They sentenced me to twenty years of boredom
For trying to change the system from within
I'm coming now, I'm coming to reward them
First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin

I'm guided by a signal in the heavens
I'm guided by this birthmark on my skin
I'm guided by the beauty of our weapons
First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin

I'd really like to live beside you, baby
I love your body and your spirit and your clothes
But you see that line there moving through the station?
I told you, I told you, told you, I was one of those

Ah you loved me as a loser, but now you're worried that I just might win
You know the way to stop me, but you don't have the discipline
How many nights I prayed for this, to let my work begin
First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin

…

“Just were are we going Yana?” Asked Dani as they all laid back and groove to the song.

“Iceberg Lounge, a rather unique place.” Replied Illyana.

“So Illyana, how… um… popular are you with the magical types in this universe?” asked Jubilee.
San Francisco, city by the bay, early evening. The fog is rolling in on the cool damp air, like it so often does.

We find Illyana reading a small thin book of Russian poetry while sipping some tea at the Asha Tea house, and no, the tea was not in a tea bag; it was a pot of Oriental Beauty (Dong Fang Mai Ren). She was dressed in some relaxed, but very nice, formal wear. She was sitting at a small table (two chairs, she was in one and the other is empty). Illyana was waiting for somebody, to be more specific somebodies.

But not this somebody.

Before her stood a black haired female somebody who was dressed as a female stage magician. Long black leather boots that reached above the knees, silk stockings, and feminized tuxedo. A somebody who was casting some kind of enchantment at Illyana as a certain somebody chanted words backwards.

“NOMED, I HSINAB UOY KCAB OT EHE SMLAER UOY ECAM FROM!”

Except the last part… which caused the somebody’s eye brows to rise in surprise, then she tried again.

“DEMON, I BANISH YOU BACK…” She stopped in frustration.

Illyana did not even glance up from her book. “Please stop, Zatanna, you’re embarrassing yourself… and me.”

“I UNDO THE… blazes what did you do to me?”

Illyana closed her book, took a sip of tea, then replied as she gestured at the empty chair.

“Negated your ability to speak backwards. Standby enchantment I created because… well… speaking backwards? How… Let’s just say Dr. Strange would be most embarrassed to see the art
An ineffectual glare from Zatanna which caused Illyana to look slightly exasperated. She signaled to a waitress who promptly dropped off a second brownstone tea cup. Zatanna scowled, but as immediate combat did not appear to be in the offering, sat down.

Illyana offered… “Would you like some tea? It’s very good.”

“Like I’d be that gullible to take anything from a demon.” Was Zatanna’s disdainful reply.

“Perish the thought.” Replied Illyana, who then refilled her cup and went back to reading her book.

Leaving a frustrated, and ever growing irritated, Zatanna who found glaring at a person hidden behind a book to be most unsatisfying. Finally Zatanna spoke.

“Why are you here?”

Illyana replied while continuing to read. “Having tea. As I said, it’s very good, you should try some.”

Zatanna gestured at the room, which may have been ineffective as Illyana could not see the gesture. “No, why are you here?”

“In this room?”

“Where else?”

“I don’t know. That’s why I inquired, that was a rather open ended question.”

“Don’t play games with me Demon.”
“If I answer wrongly you’ll get even more agitated, I was simply making sure I understood you question.”

“Yes… in this room.”

“I’m waiting.”

“For who or whom?”

“How is that any business of yours?”

“Because you are in my world!”

Illyana closed her book and looked about the room as if searching for something, then a small shake of her head. “Pfff, doesn’t have your name on it.”

“I don’t know what evil you are here to do, foul creature but…”

That’s when Zatanna heard a shouted “Illyana!” from behind her. She turned and… It was some of the Titans. There was Beast Boy (Garth) with four of the female Titan crew, Raven, Jinx, Ravager and Starfire. Raven had called out and was waving.

Illyana waved back as she stood. “Time to go. I’d invite you to come clubbing with us but… no.”

With that Illyana left a stewing Zatanna who tried to cast some power projection, but only a few sparkles came out of her fingers.

The magical negation did wear off… after a while.

End Illyana Flashback
“Not… popular.” Replied Illyana. “Raven’s okay. We get along fine… but the others… not so much.”

Meanwhile… a purple Lamborghini departed the Bat cave. Catwoman was en route.

Part 6c: When Harley met Illy

But now time for the interrupted story from Harley as Harley described how she and Illyana had first met…

Harley Quinn was feeling pretty good about life, as she sat alone in the public portion of the Iceberg Lounge and drank. She was briefly back in Gotham, and thanks to the Bat, Bruce Wayne, and a bunch of online lawyer and counselor types - and a very distinct lack of Joker in her life - she was a free woman; and so was Ivy. And if it wasn't for the fact that Cats had made it clear that Brucie was hers, Harls would have been plotting a seduction, in order to properly express her appreciation of what Brucie had done for her and Ivy. But Cats had, and she was one of the best friends Harley had, so that wasn't going to happen. Anytime soon, anyhow…

It was just a little after ten in the AM. The 'Berg (the public 'Berg, that is) was open for the early lunch crowd, sell souvenirs, and to accept deliveries. The Rogue's portion was open twenty four hours a day, technically... But Jaye had let her know that it'd be a hassle, and why didn't she just take a table upstairs in the public spaces? There was no reason not to so… she had gone up to the reserved tables, putting herself on display for anyone who looked up, and had called for a bottle of the strongest vodka the House had, and a carafe of orange juice. Ivy had said she would meet between eleven and twelve, so why not get a good meal, a light buzz going, and enhance the 'Berg's rep for being an edgy place? Jaye and Wren had grinned, and here she was. A new girl was serving, said her name was Cassowary, she had brought the vodka and OJ quickly and the day was looking good.

Harley had just received her food (full pound burger, hold the bread, pair of gorgeous butter fried sunny side up eggs sitting on the meat, steak fries on the side. The veggies for the burger sat in an iced bowl with oil and vinegar on standby for if Ivy wanted them when she came by) and Harley was halfway thru her second screwdriver, when a young, blonde woman came up the stairs… all by herself! This was notable because, being the 'Berg, about the only place a civvie went unescorted was the potty... But one glance at the black leather skintights, the proudly strutting legs, and most of all the glowing eyes, told Harley that this was no poser.

“Just us girls up here right now!” Harley grinned. "I'm Harley. Wanna drink? I din't even know Stoli made a one-thirty-five proof; I need ta get me some. Goes good with the OJ, though. Have a
The young woman just looked at her, and her eyes eased to human normal, a brilliant icy blue. "I will." She said, seating herself. "Is that good?" she asked, indicating Harley's plate.

"Just like steak and eggs!" Harley grinned. "Not so hard ta cut or chew, though. Tell Cassowary when she comes ya want th' number sixteen, hold the bun. She'll ask ya what ya want with it." Then Harley took an empty glass that had been brought for the absent Ivy. “Here… let me pour ya a drink!”

“That would make a kind of sense…” Replied Illyana as she sat down.

Harley offered her hand. “I’m Harley…”

Illyana accepted the hand shake. “Illyana.”

“Illy for short…” was Harley’s comment. Just then Harley’s cell phone rang. “Scuse me… Ivy…? A sale, you say…? One hour only?!?” Harley hung up and got quickly to her feet. “Got’s da run!” With that Harley ran out of the ‘Berg with a shouted. “I’ll get with ya later, Jaye! Put it on my tab!” Leaving a bemused Illyana who took a sip of her screwdriver. After all, it had been made with her private stash of vodka.

Harley passed Oswald (the Penguin and proprietor of the Iceberg Lounge) as he hurried up the stairs to address Illyana. “A thousand pardons, Mrs. Rasputin, We were redoing the private stock area, and the new girl Cassowary did not realize that the inventory in that area was not for general use.”

“No matter.” Replied Illyana, swiping a fry from the plate and then having some more of her drink. “Always fun meeting somebody who either does not know who I am or is impressed. Rather… pleasant and rare situation.”

**Part 6d: Back in the car…**

“Most people call her Yana if they abbreviate her name.” Commented Dani.
“So why are you two in the city today?” Inquired Jubilee.

Ivy and Harley and looked at each other, grinned, and replied with a cheer. “Shopping!”

Harley clarified a bit. “And shoes... Bloomingdales had a sale.”

Ivy added a bit more. “Amazon is nice, but tactile feel is very important.”

Mazikeen then commented. “We are being followed.”

“I know...” Replied Illyana. Likewise similar answers from Orphan, Laurie, Dani, and Harley.

“IT's Catty!” Proclaimed Harley who stood up in the limo and waved at the purple Lamborghini that was following them. A block behind, Nightwing was also following on his motorcycle.

With that the Limo pulled up to the Iceberg.

Part 6e: Elsewhere...

Masker Ken and Todd were confronting one of the perils of interdimensional travel. The dreaded pit of eternal peril. A rickety swinging bridge crosses a mist filled pit from which the screams and groans can be heard. Master Ken and Todd were on one side of the pit confronting the crossing. A vagrantly looking old man was waiting in front the bridge, blocking their ability to cross.

“What is this Master?” Inquired Todd.

Master Ken replied. “When one crosses the boundaries of space and time, occasionally the path involves danger. I have faced this before. To pass we must each answer three questions, failure to answer will cast you into the gorge of peril. Or groin of eternal peril as I like to call it.”
“Peril?”

“You know, waterboarding, eye dilations, politicians grand standing, aggressive panhandling… and such and so on and so forth”

“Is there not another way Master?”

“Yes… but involves even more peril.”

“Even more Master?”

“Yes Todd… it involves the IRS and lube… a great deal of lube.”

Todd contemplates the IRA, lube, and likely rubber gloves for a moment, then… “I vote for the bridge Master.”

“Wise choice Todd, the IRS has a move they call the two fisting audit. Wise choice on avoiding it. I’ll go first. Whatever you do, do not not answer a question. Make up an answer if you don’t know.”

With that Master Ken went up to the old man who then spoke.

“Who would cross must answer me these questions three, ’ere the other side he see.”

“Rather gender biased.” Replied Master Ken.

“What mean you?”

“Do women get to cross without questions? Or are women not allowed to cross?”

“I… I don’t know.” Answered the old man. With that he screamed as he was flung by forces
unseen into the pit, as if a giant hand had seized him by his privates.

Master Ken then crossed the bridge and gestured to Todd to cross as well.

As Todd crossed he asked Master Ken a question. “How did you know to ask such a question Master?”

“A master of Ameri-Do-Te is a master of many things. What would you have done?”

“I… don’t know, Master Ken…” And with that a screaming Todd was cast in the pit of eternal peril, likewise clutching his crotch.

Masker Ken sighed, then he himself jumped into the pit after Todd. Shortly after that the volume of screaming increased from the gorge as Master Ken demonstrated that one should always remember to stomp the groin.
Giggle. LordGrise and I come up with the topic of… well… you’ll see. It will help if you have read chapter five and six of What to do about Magik. Also apologies for any crudity, you’ll see why.

Part 7a: THREE DAYS LATER

Batman is a man of many grunts; so… a bat grunt of approval from Batman involving Orphan’s takedown of the perp. Then a grunt of resigned irritation as he continued to read the log, followed by a grunt that communicated that he had finally learned the answer to a long term puzzle that had vexed him.

Followed by a grumbly series of concerned grunts of as he thought upon the likely implications of that answer.

Then, another grunt, but this grunt communicated dismay at several levels, then… After reading more of the log and viewing some attached photos.

A grunt that communicated a sense of… anticipation.

Part 7b: Catwalk introductions

Selina studied the back end of the limo she was pacing. She didn't recognize the make or the model; the shape of the tail lights evoked the vertical wings of the early sixties Cadillac’s, but in a very modern manner emphasized by the clean, razor sharp incarnadine light of the LEDS. And then there was the trunk badge: a silver sword over a bonfire emblem whose flames continually twisted and curled as if they were real. The bumper sticker did make her grin.

**WARNING. Driving too close to this vehicle may involve you in events beyond your control!**
As they slid past a streetlight, the lamplight gleamed off a discreet cursive script on the lower inner passenger side edge of the trunk lid: it simply read ‘CUSTOM’. Selina blinked and then grinned delightedly: the bumper sticker had changed, and now read.

**This vehicle represented by Bilkham, Bernham, and Runne**

Why yes, this was Magik indeed! But Selina had idea as to who Bilkham, Bernham, and Runne were. A quick verbal net search only turned up a three stooges film where the stooges had worked at a law firm.

Selina’s delight was to be short lived; she grimaced as the limo, far from heading for one of the discreet drop off points the Rogues generally used, was heading for the front entrance to the Iceberg Lounge. The very, very public front entrance, the one place that the Penguin tolerated paparazzi (provided, of course, they were either on the payroll, or had paid the ‘weekly access fee’.)

**My other vehicle is a dimension**

This was problematic as Selina was in costume (purple sleek full body cat woman costume), her headpiece thrown back so as to pass in traffic with relatively little comment, and how-in-the-hell was she or any of the Sirens going to enter without exciting all the wrong kinds of attention (although they had already been on TV twice). Now none of them were technically wanted... but… paparazzi feeding frenzy would not begin to describe what would occur. The bumper sticker shifted and prompted another giggle.

**I break for nothing!**

If they were to walk thru the front doors of the Iceberg, it would make the news. Huge news, and would generate all kinds of buzz. Penguin frowned upon gratuitous crossover of his two businesses. But being edgy and never knowing who might show was part of the Iceberg’s cachet... And they had already been making quite a bit of news…

**My crossover superhero team can beat you your crossover super hero team**

While she was thinking this, Magik's limo had had slid into the drop-off lane; Selina reflexively slid her cowl up and over, and felt it slip into place as her purple Lamborghini Reventon followed suit.
Make Limbo Great Again!

Catwoman watched as the ladies of the other car stood and then clearly proceeded downstairs into
the car as the windows simply slid up and the roof folded over to form a fairly standard format
medium length limo... that clearly only had one level. Which meant that here was a car with a
basement… mused Selina. That… was new. But again… Magik was involved.

The bumper sticker now read.

What you lookin' at, puddytat?

Selina’s cellphone rang. The screen read simply MAGIK. Catwoman sighed, and answered. "Hey,
Illyana! Room for one more?"

Illyana's voice was uncharacteristically laughing. "Of course! Just mind the first step."

Several seconds later…

The tenth-of-a-second actinic flare was all the warning the occupants of the car got before
Catwoman literally dropped in on them. She made a perfect four point landing in front of the bar,
and was standing even as everyone spun to face her. Catwoman grinned and sensuously stretched a
touch before advancing predatorily towards her chosen prey.

"Welcome back, Illyana. We recognized everyone you brought with you... all except this one."

She stopped in front of Mazikeen. "At first, we thought she was Monet St. Croix, but then Orphan
joined up, and we learned your name is Mazikeen." Catwoman's fingers slipped between
Mazikeen’s, and thus Catwoman was holding Mazikeen's wine flute (containing some of Illyana’s
chaos beverage). She inhaled the scent appreciatively, and then sipped while watching Mazikeen
for any reaction.

"Oracle's been doing research on that name, how's this universe's version of you taking your
presence?"
Mazikeen actually saw the magic take hold: Catwoman's eyes widened a touch as the pale blue vapors swirled up as Selina purred her approval. "Oh, that's sublime. Verona, cream and... Chambord? No, not quite..."

She handed the flute back after taking a second sip and finished addressed Mazikeen. "The online artwork that depicting the you-of-here doesn't do you justice at all. Incidentally, love your lip color."

Mazikeen smiled savagely as she responded. "She'd have been enraged beyond words. But, according to Illyana, the Mazikeen of this world liked small children raw, with salt and olive oil. Her opinion is as irrelevant as she as she was vanquished thousands of years ago." While eyeing the back leather whip that hung coiled at Selina's hips. It was marginal as it was but a product of this world's technology (demon whips are so much more... resilient), but a whip was a whip, and she was going to show the little kitten just how it was used...

"Don't get your Frosties in a bunch, Maz..." Came Illyana's laughing comment before Mazikeen could make her move. And with that, Harley was off and running.

"Oh, hey, you guys got them too? Ain't they the greatest panties a girl could ask for? They don't stain, they don't take stink, they breathe..." Harley grinned, totally oblivious to the looks she was drawing. "An' they kill bacteria too! You can wear 'em for a week straight, an' ya don't smell like fish! Why... I once used my bra to bandage up Mister J after he got a head wound. Funny looking but worked just fine, plus they were bullet resistant which helped to protect him when the building collapsed. Did make a funny looking mug shot."

Jubilee had heard the starting gun too. "The stretch, the feel of them... Emma makes a mint making 'em! Yeah, they're pricey, but they're worth every penny! There's almost no super or villain in the free world who does without them, man or woman! I was real concerned after becoming a vampire about the vampire trick of turning into vapor, clothing and all, wouldn't work for them because, you know, unstable molecules. I mean, who wants to turn to mist and have their bra and panties fall to the floor, am I right? Well... not this girl, let me tell you! I mean... you can't just leave them because of the cost; not to mention souvenirs for a bunch of creeps to abuse. And the thought of a cloud of vapor somehow holding on to a set of bra 'n panties is just so not right. And it would be really hard to sneak up on people; although I suppose folk might think it was a weird kind of ghost with a panty and bra fetish. I wonder if that's how some ghost stories get... started..." Jubilee wound down as she noticed the stares and silence.

The sudden silence was ringing (both the topic of Frosties and Jubilee's verbal deluge). Jubilee actually looked self conscious as she took in the stares. "What? We're all wearing them...Right? Apart from Illyana that is as she tends to go commando, and Wolverine never did cause I guess it's
manly for your privates to be on fire if you can regenerate. Like... my coat is made of unstable molecules as well..."

Jubilee gestured to Harley, who grinned. "She is, she just said so! Uhm... show of hands...?"

All the Marvel universe heroines raised their hands (except Illyana who was slightly put out about Jubilee announcing to one and all that Illyana liked to go commando; she was but no need to just tell one and all).

“I don’t wear undergarments.” Stated Mazikeen with a tone of dismissal as the vote was taken; so... two commando then.

Of the DC ladies, only Harley and Catwoman raised their hands (Harley and Jubilee did a high five).

Catwoman dryly commented. "A long time ago I traded a Renoir painting for the three I have. Nobody has ever found a reliable provider. And I will not do business with the one woman who does sell them from time to time..."

Ivy's comment was bitter. "Zatanna Zatara, I'll bet. I tried to get a pair, and what she wanted in return... I couldn't do it. Even if she did promise they'd be..." she made quote marks in the air “in my theme.”

Harley looked at Ivy in astonishment. "What'd she want, Red? One of your babies...?"

Ivy's voice was calm, but in her eyes was anger. "She wanted me to sign a Contract. In a language I neither read nor speak. I said no."

“Wise.” Commented Illyana as signing such documents from a magic user was less then healthy.

“How do you procure yours?” Inquired Selina.

“Bloomingdales, they have an exclusive world wide contract with Frost Industries.” Replied Dani.
“Bloomindales!?” Cried both Harley and Ivy at the same time. “You mean you get to just walk in and buy them!? No black market!? No triad wars over panties?”

“Um…” Dani was suddenly at a loss for words (likely the idea of gang wars over undergarments). But no worries, Jubilee still had plenty so say.

“Yeah… heck a while ago they were even on sale for the first time ever and boy was it a mad house. Like a bomb had gone off. Now Megan is a Hello Kitty kind of girl, but Hello Kitty is no longer popular with the in teenage mutant or super human crowd… although I swear I once saw this human sized turtle-guy wearing a pair on his head, at least I think it was a he, he was shouting ‘cawabunga dude’ while eating a slice of pizza as he was riding a skate board… damn I miss pizza… and coffee… loved espressos. Anyway, the suckers aren’t cheap. I mean… Outrageous… Damn Emma sure knows how to screw people over, especially for money! Wait, that didn’t come out right… Anyway. You’d think the X-Men at least would get freebies… but No-o-ooo! At least they’re unbelievable durable. Plus you can always put in a special order, Ivy, if you have a specific fashion need, but that’s extra of course, and can take a few weeks.”

“How much?” Inquired Orphan, joining in on the conversation. Orphan greatly desired her own set of Frosties), any pair; like many of the DC heroines and villainesses. Why… many only had one or the other, and more then a few had non matching pairs (oh the fashion horror, heck one of the reasons why Harley tended to always wear non matching undergarments).

“Couple hundred bucks for the plain white ones.” Was Laura’s casual answer. An answer that was shocked all the DC women as the price for such was a hundred to a thousand more in their universe, not as addition to the price, a multiplier. So, three hundred becomes three hundred thousand. Assuming you could find them, which was almost never.

Harley almost pulled a gun to demand… DEMAND… that they forthwith be taken immediately to their universe’s Bloomindales, but she stopped herself as that would be Buzzkill Maximus, not to mention just so not how to treat your new pals. And hopefully… unnecessary. All they needed to do was ask nicely, and Harley was willing to bet they'd be in like Flynn. Why… she could get Ivy a green dozen pairs! Assuming her Gotham Charge Card (A.K.A a Gothcard) would work there.

Harley imagined the conversation might go as such. "Hey Illy... Think you could get us into this Bloomindales of yours? If so I gotta first hit a stash, got to grab me couple gold bars; they take gold right? I bet they'd cover the bill, even if Ivy gets a dozen custom, you think? I mean, you guys know the prices there. Maybe I could get a couple pair in red an' black, you think?”

But this is how it really went, to the wide eyed astonishment of the Marvel gals. Harley dropped to
her knees and begged. “Please! Please take us! **PLEASE!** I’m begging ya! I’ve give you my best Mallet! The silver revolver! Ya like hyenas? I got two so you can have one!

**PPPLLLLEEEAAAASSEEE!**”

More silence broken only by Mazikeen slurping upon on straw on yet another drink.

**Part 7c: Decisions, decisions**

Then Selina spoke with a controlled intensity. “I think… we would truly like to visit this Bloomindales if it is at all possible Illyana.”

Things were suddenly tense with the DC gals. Not hostile tense, but like this could be the start of a very unpleasant disagreement. Imagine you’ve been eating gruel for months, even years, only to have a roommate announce that the fridge has been stocked full of all manner of non gruel goodness all this time (Didn’t you know?). And now you’re wondering if they’re going to start eating those goodies in front of you, but you can’t have any; or… is sharing allowed?

Ivy was more diplomatic. “I think… Harley hit it on the head, as to our feeling, even though she did go over board.”

Barbara chimed on the audio channel. “Oh my god, pick me up a pair! Black and lacy!”

Orphan said it best. “Please.” She had no Frosties and… well… what heroine would not wish to visit the Frosties promised land?

A quick huddle by Illyana with Jubilee, Dani, and Laura. A discussion the others were noticeable unable to overhear. Then Illyana vanished in a teleportation circle, only to appear a few seconds later (which stilled the sudden panic that the opportunity to acquire Frosties had come and gone).

Illyana announced that. “It does not violate the rules, but full costumes would.”

“I’m fine with just Panties and Bras!” Was Harley’s overly enthusiastic agreement.
“What rules?” Inquired Selina, who caught the implications of Illyana’s statement.

“The rules… Hell Lord rules…” Was Illyana’s cryptic reply.

Everybody wanted to inquire as to such rules but… they then forgot all about it (not by Illyana’s doing, just that the rules kind of said you can’t talk about the rules and Hell Lords are just now allowed to change certain things).

“Now?” Breathy stated Ivy.

“Now.” Replied Illyana as she walked to the back of the limo and opened the door to the armory, but instead a dark and empty department store was shown, except for the Frosties department, that was lit and two clerks were standing by.

“Do we have time to swing by a stash that I have? Several bars of gold and…” Began Harley, but Illyana finished for her, somewhat smugly.

“Your Gotham charge cards will work, but I suppose gold is okay as well.”

Gold it was as Harley was first allowed to retrieved a few bars.

Part 7d: Frosties

Illyana made a after you gesture and it was Harley who was the first though (she ran in with her mallet), followed by a more sedate Ivy, Orphan, and the Selina. Then the Marvel gals, Mazikeen, and finally Illyana who closed the door after her.

“Why is it dark?” Whispered Jubilee. Why a whisper? The DC Gales were in awe as to the selection, the variety, and the prices; and Jubilee did not wish to dispute the mood.

“After hours.” Whispered Illyana. “Special event.”
“They opened just for us?” Whispered Dani.

“Emma asked them to.” Whispered back Illyana.

“Since when does Emma do favors?” Was Jubilee’s sarcastic reply.

Illyana’s reply was not detailed but did answer quite well. “Quid pro quo.” A reply that just made Jubilee annoyed that others (meaning Illyana) apparently rated favors from the Ice Queen herself, favors that Jubilee did not rate. But the truth was harshly simple, Illyana could do and provide things that Emma wanted.

“Red! White! Blue!!” Cried Harley as she grabbed a bag from the counter and started filling it. “Spring motif Ivy! They have spring colors!”

Orphan was a bit more discreet as she selected several bras and panties in her size, with different colors and styles. Likewise Selina was picking and choosing with discretion (Why… they have purple!). Well… a bit less discretion once the purple attire was found.

And of course a pair of lacy black ones were picked for Barbra, several in fact, and a very naughty pair of red ones.

The attendants were most helpful, and the event was just so complete when a tea cart with several pots of tea and some delightful cakes was wheeled out. Ahhh, refreshments and Frosties… a perfect event.

“What… Illyana… what do we owe you for this.” Asked Selina as she took another nibble of her lemon poppy cake.

“Nothing…” Giggled Illyana as she, Jubilee and Dani gave a cheer and a toast for Harley as she was modeling dissimilar undergarments (currently it was blue panties and a red bra). “Oh… I almost forgot.”

Illyana gave a nod at the attendants, one departed only to return with two gift wrapped boxes, one shoe box sized, the other much larger. The smaller box was given to Ivy who was surprised to receive the gift. She squealed in please as she opened the box to find a custom bra and panties that were green and leaf shaped.
The second box was given to Selina. Who likewise opened it to find a plethora of black silky bras and panties. All… risqué batman symbol shaped. The panties were g-strings with the bat symbol being the edges, think }{. The bras were likewise the bat symbol }. Each set had a little name tag attached. There was a set for all present, one for Oracle, and additional sets for all missing female batclan members.

“Oh… my.” Was Selina’s response as she showed the contents.

“You mean we get them too?” Squealed Harley, who snagged her set and immediately changed into them right there and then. The others at least made use of the changing rooms, even Orphan after Illyana assured her that nobody would be able to tell her identity, she kept her face mask on but everybody thought she was a different race; even Ivy who swore that Orphan’s skill color was light green.

Why… even Mazikeen had dawned her’s, with only some slight false protests.

So… we see our damsels, four DC heroines, four Marvel heroines, and Mazikeen; nine in all; dressed in nothing but bras and panties. They poised some selfies, group shots, and continued to partook of tee and cake as they chatted (the consensus was that the rest of the DC universe was going to turn green with envy; take that Amazon Island!). And the some of the group shots were very… interesting.

Orphan nudged Selina as she pointed to the bags holding the selected items “Think small.” Then she pointed to the Frosties department. “Think big.”

Why… yes was Selina’s thought. At these prices she could… and with that she had a brief conversation with the clerks and after the card was scanned again, the transaction was done. All the DC universe was going to have to kowtow to this Kitty, and apparently Harley who wanted in on the deal as well (in like Flynn!) as the entire remaining inventory was purchased to be squired away for future DC universe sales.

What a perfect girl’s night out event.

But they were not as alone as they supposed.
Part 7e: Interloper

Deadpool (Wade Winston Wilson) took in the delightfully erotic display as he continued to silently record the scanty display with his mirrorless DSLS in both photo and video mode. It had been hot, really hot, when they had all just been trying on the normal Frosties (especially Harley’s tendency to just change out in the open). But with all of them dressed in the bat themed Frosties, the very tight and revealing Frosties… why… Deadpool just had to silently groan to himself.

These photos were going to make him a fortune. He’d heard a rumor that there was a big bust going down at Bloomingdales and the rumors were right! A whole bunch of big busts!

*Oh my… is it cold in here or is the chicken done? Why… some of those nips looked hard enough to key car paint!*

Where was Deadpool hiding? In the discounted oversized bra bin in the normal undergarments sections.

Deadpool focused on a particular DD close-up and tried not to drool. But… all this visual stimulation was stimulating little deadpool, meaning his costume was unconformable tight, and getting tighter. Yeah there was a gun in his pants and yes he was happy to be here, but that just meant there was even less room. So… some repositioning was desperately needed as the twins were protesting most urgently. Deadpool carefully moved his left hand down and silently adjusted himself; or so he thought.

Unnoticed by Deadpool, Laura’s eyes has briefly flicked to the where Deadpool was hiding, then she announced she needed to take a tinkle and gave Orphan a nudge. A nudge that Orphan correctly interpreted as she joined Laura in departing. Deadpool paid them no mind as he shifted his focus to the next set of bosomly goodness.

He continued to record, right up to when Laura and Orphan tipped the bin over spilling Deadpool in a pool of oversized bras at the feet of those he had been recording.

Part 7f: Busted…

Deadpool was in his red and black full body costume (Google it if you don’t know who Deadpool
is), armed with a Japanese sword over his shoulder, several knives and guns secreted about his person, and also wearing a

Spidy Underoos thong that kept horrifying Spiderman whenever it was shown (and yes, Google that as well, but remember that what has been seen cannot be unseen).

Deadpool sprang to his feet, while grabbing a pink frilly LLL sized bra, as the girls likewise sprang into action. Illyana summoned her soul sword and swung down as Wade dodged to the side and then leapt over Illyana and wrapped her head in the both cups of the bra and quickly tied it behind her head as he landed (yes a LLL sized bra can envelope your head). This was all done as Wade commented upon the scene to you, dear reader, as Wade loves to break the fourth wall as only the Merc with a mouth can (Wade comments to the reader are in italic without quotes)

Okay… I concede this plan has more then a few flaws. But in my defense nobody told me that one of the busts tonight at Bloomingdales involved Magik. If I’d known that little detail I’d have skipped this cleavage clearance party. But man… she looks sexy in that bat bit of nothing she’s got on. Dodge the sword… leap… and tie her head up in this She-Hulk grade hooter holder.

Wad turns, but not before… Nice ass, not quite Charmin squeezable but… no I shouldn’t… really shouldn’t butt (ha ha butt… get it)… It loookkks so tight and firm. Hells, it’s not my fault… I mean… she should have her spiky armor on her butt instead of her shoulder… To be honest, I’m the victim here as talk about leading one into temptation. Let’s give a quick squeeze as we.… Deadpool gives Magik’s ass a firm two handed grip (and a squeeze) as he flips her into the using her butt cheeks as handles.

Hope I don’t get another ass whipping like I did the last time (See What to do about Magik chapter 15) but... I think I’ll be in the clear this time. A-Lister babe. A List!

We see Magik go sprawling as Wade turns. I mean… who’s your daddy Marvel? I’m your number one crossover costar! The go to guy! I can’t count the number of times I’ve been in a comic with Wolverine? Or Spidy? Daredevil. Hulk. Cable… Cables like a son to me; I mean… the series Cable and Deadpool, I let him have top billing, did fifty issues! And we know who the star was because I moved onto bigger and better things while Cable… he got reduced to guest star status at best before Marvel… well… punched his ticket shall we say. I don’t mean to name drop, but… Spidy and I are best buds! After all, he did lean how to quip from me. (Note to the readers, the only person Spidy does not quip with is Deadpool as Deadpool just appalls him that much. Another thing to Google and some of the situations are… well you will see why Deadpool just frustrates most of the Marvel characters) And then there’s the Punisher, Avengers, even the DC universe from time to time; not that they ever remember. Heck… let’s face it folks. I’m the reason that Disney’s buying Fox. Not Logan… not the X-Men. It’s me! Loveable o’ll A-List Deadpool!
We now see Dani running up to Wade and throwing a wicked right cross that Wade dodges by ducking. Guess it’s time for some New Mutant leftovers, and barely a C-Lister at that. Poor Dani, years and years of exposure and just… nada. Oh the fickle public can be so cruel. Let’s see… I got my start with this sassy wench back in New Mutant Issue 98, when I burst upon the comic scene; in more ways then one I’m somewhat sorry to say as I had a little incontinence problem back then but all better now. I may have started out as a villain, butt (ha ha, that’s a joke that never gets old) even then I know I was destined for bigger and better antiheroic things.

A dodge to the left by Wade as he pushes on Dani’s shoulder blades causing her to spin off balance and then fall upon Illyana who was just beginning to push herself up off the floor. Shame, the ultra long ponytail is a really good look for her, and that bat themed titty cage she’s wearing, has those bad boys locked up and secure! We see one of Dani’s breasts pop free due to her collision with Illyana. Or… not. Guess that dohicky just wanted to be free. Would now be a good time for a chorus of Born Free? Born free, free as the breast goes, free as the cleavage shows… No? Okay, I can see how some might find that inappropriate.

Continuing to make his getaway, Wade confronted Ivy as she leaps to grab him. Green! What is it about a green chick that makes them just so damn hot!? Which reminds me, I always admired Captain James T. Kirk because man was he a horn dog, there wasn’t anything the man wouldn’t hit!

A leap he steps into and to the side as he reached under with his left hand and over with his right hand, right on her ass, and just helped Ivy on her way right into the pile of Illyana and Dani. A-Lister! Damn, I just got the touch, and I’m copping a few as well. Butt to be honest fans… something like this is one of my fantasies so… I get to cross this off the bucket list, right next to the nude nacho cheese Amazon wrestling festival. I know… I know. I make it look so easily… but I am the best of the best… That’s why when Marvel needs help on a weak title it’s o’l Wade to the sales rescue. Even X-Men titles, not that they let me on the teams… hey… you don’t suppose Kitty blocks me emails do you? I mean… that would be rude… butt she never responds to my texts…

Harley enters the fray with a that massive mallet, which Wade grabs with both hands, spins a few times and flings Harley and her mallet right through the O of the Frosties department sign. It’s… up up and away! Home run fans! Lately, my publishing work tends to be Deadpool vs. Fill in the hero, or Deadpool kills (fill in the patsy). Those were totally my idea and the studio just ran with it. While I have lots of crossovers with the X-Men and Avengers, for some funny reason Marvel has never had a Deadpool and Magik team-up… Hint hint Marvel… just imagine the sales and the body count! As I’ve alluded to, I do swing both ways so sometimes I do DC as well. I again gracefully let Batman have top billing on Batman vs. Deadpool, but we really know why the fan were buying don’t we? But the truth is I did that gig to meet our next contestant.

The end of Selene’s whip wraps around Deadpool’s throat as his left hand reaches up to grasp it. Now that’s a pair of DDs! Wish I could say I’d hit it, but that’s a negatory ghost rider; that pussy… cat belongs to da Bat. And can you blame him? Just look at the goodies in her bat boobe bracket! Wow! Talk about Battastic!
Selina jerks the whip to force Deadpool off balance, but instead he does a forwards flip and lands on the whip which jerks the handle from Selina’s hands as it jerks her down and forward, a position which Deadpool takes advantage of by continuing his forward momentum as he grasps her outstretched arm and flings her over his head with a Judo threw right into the growing pile of woman, flattening Illyana yet again as well as Dani and Ivy. *Not as big as Power girl’s fun pillows, heck, almost nobody is that well endowed, but nothing to complain about… I mean, just look at all the eye candy. Speaking of eye candy, meaning… not, here’s Jubilee. One of the few X-Men who just doesn’t fill out her uniform if you get my drift. Has not ‘grown” into her role. No… maturation as she’s aged… Um… you do know I’m making boobie jokes... right?*

Jubilee comes into the mix in a half vapor form shouting a battle cry, while Wade retrieves a small breath spray from his utility belt. *It’s not just Batman who has a belt of things. I mean… I like Jubilee, but talk about the most under endowed of the X-Men. You’d think Beast would cure that considering everything else he tinkers with. She’s A cup C-Lister most of the time and that bat double-barreled slingshot she’s wearing is only walnut… na… peanut grade. And Jubs, I’ve fought Vampires before. A few quirts of liquid garlic juice and Jubilee instantly rebodies as she flips end of over end right into… you guessed, it the pile of fallen women, and manages to tea-bag Dani right in the face just was Dani had managed to stand back up, causing Dani to fall on Illyana yet again.*

Deadpool makes a few sliding dance moves as he encounters Orphan. They exchange a flurry of martial art moves, with Deadpool getting the worse of the fight as Orphan can read his moves.

*Which brings me back to just what is an A-Lister? Is it power? Na… Galacticus has been here like… a bazillion times and lost every single time. Even to squirrel girl for crying out loud. My guess is the three stooges could take him down. No… an A-Lister means sales. Sales are what makes you a A-Lister or other grades. It’s the money, simple as that. How else do you think Wolverine had time to be on like… five teams at once? MONEY! Just look at how awful the Fox X-Men films are, and… how… Wolverine is in almost every single one! Wolverine here… Wolverine there… Wolverine everywhere! Now that’s A-Lister! Another tell is just now many fanboards and hits you have at Comic Book Resources, also known as community dot cbr dot com forward slash forumdisplay. (Author’s comment. Note that X-Books always has the most activity, A-list baby, A-List).*

But, Deadpool then took advantage of Orphan’s talent by making a grab for her chest goodies causing her to block the lecherous attach, which results in a wrist grab by Deadpool and Orphan is likewise flung into the entwined female mass.

*Felt a bit pervy doing that, but the girl can read moves so… had to do something inappropriate to get a grip on her. Damn, she’s almost a fast as Laura… speaking of…*
Laura popped her hand claws with a snick and slashed which Deadpool did not attempt to dodge, instead he let Laura stab him in the chest while falling backwards, getting a foot planted on Laura’s chest while grabbing both of her wrists and… fling! Yet another airborne babe! Laura was just able to retract her claws before knocking down the girls yet again.

**Strrrriikkee!**  Damn I’m good. I mean… do you know how many times Wolverine’s stabbed me? Of course I’d come up with some counters. With great power comes great marketing opportunities, and chimichangas. **Lots and lots of chimichangas!**

Wade did a little dance of mockery while holding up both hands to flip the bird only to discover that both middle fingers were missing, so only red blood spurts instead of the finger.  *Damn it Laura! Crap, that’s going to take an hour or more to grow back. And no time to find the fingers. Well… tootles girls!*

Deadpool resumed his fleeing, only to then confront the final foe.

**Mazikeen.** Dressed only in the bat bit of nothing and armed with two knifes.

“**Hey Maz.**” Was Wade’s nonchalant statement. “**We good?**”

“**We’re good.**” Was Mazikeen’s reply as she and Wade then exchanged a brief but passionate hug and kiss; a rather bloody kiss as Wade was bleeding all over her (and no Maz did not mind the blood). *What would you expect? She likes me with my mask off, not too many gall’s into this bod. And she’s one hottie you don’t what to get on the bad side of. Plus she’s got this little knife that let’s you and her go all night! Or… am I over sharing? Na…*

Wade fled, leaving a breathless Mazikeen behind as the other woman finally got to their feet and dashed after him, all but Illyana as she had been on the bottom of the female pile and was rather squished.

Deadpool pulls a small box with a button from one of his pockets, pushes it, and tosses it aside. Behind Wade the outraged pursuing posse started to close in. But… as Wade runs past various bins of female undergarments (tomorrow was a big clearance sale) the small explosive changes that Wade had previously planed started to go off after he passed. *Yeah… I mined them… what? Is that a problem?*

Explosions that filled the air with bras and panties, handbags and stuffed animals.
In slow motion we see Deadpool running away, arms raised high giving a bloody missing middle finger salute to the women.

A giant leather clad teddy bear is hurled into Dani by an explosion, taking her down in a sexy tackle.

A tsunami of undergarments buries Orphan, Jubilee, and Harley.

The handbags are Ivy’s undoing as she’s tangled by all the straps.

Laura and Selena vanish beneath an avalanche of nighties.

*Now that is pure awesome! I mean... is this great or what! Now this... this would sell a bunch of comics! What to call it...? I know. **Deadpool strips the Marvel Universe!** Talk about Stoppemfromfloppe! A-Lister bitches! A **lister!** Although I think the cast would change as we need more... presence (meaning acres and acres of boobage); so... Ororo, Emma, Jean Grey (the adult one), Psylocke (yeah, she’s well equipped) Rogue (oh you naught girl) and let’s get some Avengers action by tossing in the Black Widow. Now that would be an event of epic proportions!*

That’s when Illyana finally staggered to her feet, still blindfolded by the massive LLL pink bra. But then... flames erupted upon her body as horns grew from her forehead piercing the bra, likewise a tail flicked into existence from her tailbone while she ripped the now burning bra from her header reveling yellow eyes glowing with power.

She snarled “**WADE!**” from a mouth that now had very long incisures. Mystic red chains of power sprung into existence around Deadpool, binding him and causing him to fall to the ground and roll into a male manikin clothed only in a jock strap (a manikin with a very prominent bulge). The manikin broke and fell upon Wade resulting in the manikin’s bulge tea-bagging him.

Wade commented as he struggled to escape. **“Oh the irony!”** As the pursing woman rose from the fashion debris and converted on him. **“Then again... this is a good way to die.”**

*Oh, and remember kids, writers love reviews so if you liked this then drop a comment.*
Deadpool is beneath submerged by the scantily clad lynch party with one last war cry.

“Chimichangas!”

Part 7g: Or… was that really what happened?

“What is Wade going on about?” Inquired Dani (they were now re-clothed, but all were still wearing the bat bras underneath their clothing).

A tied up Wade was one the floor of Bloomingdales, a very unwrecked Bloomingdales, mumbling “A-Lister… I’m an A-Lister…”

“I think Harley’s mallet knocked him silly.” Answered Illyana.

“Or when Orphan kicked his across the room.” Was Jubilee’s opinion.

“Perhaps when Selene’s whip handle hit him right in the head?” Mused Ivy.

“There’s a reason I have that weight in the handle.” Grins Selina. Wade had jumped on the whip and Selena just let go of the handle resulting in a conk on the forehead from the handle. “But Illyana, was it necessary to repeatable impale him with your sword?”

“Yes.” Was Illyana’s satisfied answer.

“Is he… okay?” Inquired Orphan, concerned that the beating from the Marvel gals had been excessive, not to mention the multiple stabbings from Laura and Illyana; Laura had even stabbed Wade in the head.

“He’ll be fine.” Groused Laura, still peeved. “Logan used to always stab him in the head. Heck, I could cut his head off and he’d still be making quips… shall I demonstrate?”
The DC gals demurred so Deadpool got to keep his head for now.

“So what do we do with the perv?” Inquired Harley, after giving him a kick. She raised her mallet. “I could always give him a few more whacks?”

After an additional brief discussion, Deadpool ended up in the trunk of the limo (still tied up) with the intent of dealing with him later.
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

LordGrise came up with the opening of the last chapter and the majority of this chapter is mostly his writing. Why Frosties you ask? Well… that was a minor accidental bit of dialog that just grew as LordGrise and I decided that the DC universe had only restricted and haphazard access to unstable molecule ladies undergarments; which of course just makes them that much more desirable. I came up with the idea of Frosties in Chapters 5 and 6 of What to do about Magik (still not sure how I came up with that idea). Having created the idea that Frosties are rare, it just led to the need for the girls to all visit the Marvel universe for some shopping. With the result of Selina and Harley nowcornering the market for Frosties in the DC universe (and likely not sharing with anybody who was/is rude; just know that is going to cause problems… oh well).

Which, of course, brings humorous thoughts as to the value of Frosties. Somehow I get the image of the Penguin having cash, diamonds, passports, and a pair of untouched black lacy Frosties in his private safe; and the image of Catwoman opening said safe and taking just the Frosties. Leaving an outraged Penguin shouting that somebody has taken his panties… Yeah… a very unique and possible disturbing thought.

Why Deadpool? I figured somebody had to ogle the feast of female flesh and who better to perv on them then Deadpool? Which… means that Deadpool is… well… you just know that will cause problems (giggle). But, this is a humorous work after all.

This chapter is dedicated to Thisisfunwhattooksolong as LordGrise and I just so love his reviews (hint hint).

Part 8a: THREE DAYS LATER

Opportunity meant risk. That was the prime thought of Bruce as he glanced at the attached inventory spreadsheet. Hmmm, apparently Selina had cleaned out the Men’s wear as well. Opportunity, in this case, was that Selina and Harvey had apparently cornered the market in Frosties. A market that would significantly decrease in value if the entire supply was released onto the market in one fell swoop.
Risk in that having several billions in underwear, dear lord, that was the actual potential value at current prices if the attached Excel spreadsheet was correct, which meant that panties and bras were worth far more then their weight in gold, or even diamonds. Bruce then had a thought that prompted a chuckle: The idea of central banks having keeping Frosties as a reserve currency or even monetizing Frosties ETF (Exchange Traded Fund…). Bruce could see the headlines now: Today the Dow Jones rose 200 points while the Frosties index rose 310 on anticipation of increased demand on news of a successful bank heist by the notorious all female crime gang named Pussy Riot…

Also risk in what would the super powered female population do if they discovered that Frosties were being kept off the market? Bruce had another chuckle over the thought of Amazon island finding out… then a grunt as Batman thought about Amazon island finding out…

Apparently this was a one time thing according to a note from Selina, her acquisition, while ‘legal’ had apparently annoyed some interdimensional powers that be rule committee that governed such things involving Hell Lords so no more mass acquisitions of Frosties via Illyana; but apparently gifts to actual friends were still allowed.

Batman shook his head. No… this sudden influx of Frosties was just going to be trouble. Better get with Diana to let her know about the situation. Hmmm… apparently there were also custom male Frosties underpants for each of the male bat clan members; see attached photo…

Another bat grunt. One that communicated some slight embarrassment at the revealed bat thong which had a little Catwoman emoti grin next to it. Then a grunt of resigned acceptance to the inevitable. Then a grunt of enjoyment upon seeing the group photo.

Batman decided to impatiently skim ahead to learn just what had happened to the Batmobile.

**Part 8b: Skeeter (Some time after the ladies had gone into the club)**

In the final analysis, it was absolutely not his fault.

So the ladies had gone inside, and with them all the paparazzi who were taking pix and trying to name the unknowns. Skeeter, with the limo, had not even rated three minutes; a measly half dozen photos, all of them focused on the ladies as they left, and he was left in relative peace to find his spot in the secured garage. There were already half a dozen other vehicles in there; among them were a pair of limos for the Ghost Dragons, and a ten-man van for the Demon's Head dudes, and of
course the Rolls that belonged to the one and only Oswald Cobblepot (A.K.A The Penguin).
Strictly speaking, it was hard dry parking spots, and every man for himself; but the little guys were little guys, and it was just easier for everyone to be cool. So there was a couple benches and a picnic table; there was heat, and one of those food truck set-ups right outside the actual garage space, where you could get water or sodas or a decent coffee, and anything from a Danish to egg rolls to a semi-home made personal pizza if you liked.

Skeeter had just settled down with a set of eggrolls and a bowl of something kinda Mongolian something or other that smelled tasty when the whole thing started. First was the cycle, parked in the alley while its rider, the redoubtable Nightwing, decided to spend a bit of time in the upper floors, presumably harassing the Penguin and/or his closest associates.

In the usual run of things, that would be that... but the Ghost Dragon guys were bored, the Demon's Head guys were bored, and the Iceberg's people were pissed. And the bike was just sitting there. So some circular no-names-dropped powwow was had, and a bunch of high-tech bits and pieces might have been salvaged… or just plain lost. That would have been enough… but then a certain chimbichanga-eating not-a-hero unceremoniously took way more then his two cents worth, and while momentary allies were still taking the taillights, Deadpool dropped-and-rolled out of Betsy's trunk and rode right out of the neighborhood, on a certain somebody’s supercycle!

As he rode out of sight, he caroled back behind him. "And a good night to all - and to all a fun night!"

It took Nightwing about zero-point-three seconds to figure out there was a problem with the cycle... and ninety seconds to figure out that the bike was not just missing, but gone an not responding to any tracking attempts. An eternal eight minutes to bring Batmobile #2 from under the WayneCorp Towers, and Nightwing was back in the game and wanting some payback. And there was no better place to start than in a certain secure parking garage.

Of course, by the time he got there, the Ghost Dragons and Demon's Head guys had long since skedaddled... but Skeeter was still listening to his tunes, and finishing off his last egg roll, with extra sauce. So what better place to start than with the supposed no-name flunkie-driver? Alas, that Betsy loved Skeeter every bit as well as Skeeter loved her...

"My bike is missing. And you're involved. Start with the names, and maybe you'll be released. If not, Blackgate gonna be good for you till the Feds come to take you away." Nightwing was on a roll.

From Betsy came the quietest murmur of an engine note, more an indication that she was online than anything else. Skeeter was nearly as calm. "I been here the whole time eating eggrolls. You go chase wherever your cycle is - it's nothing to do with me."
Nightwing had had enough. There were more than enough bits of his cycle by the 'Custom' limo, and Skeeter's cool-boy act did not cut any slack with Nightwing. Robert 'Skeeter' Smith was going to jail tonight, after some time in interrogation explaining what happened to a certain high-powered motorcycle. Nightwing went to open the door…

And Betsy reacted, all four doors locked tight and recessed, even as Skeeter took the two seconds to lock his five point harness in place and engage his stealth system. "I think you can get on with your search; I'm heading out in Betsy. Have a good night."

Betsy/Skeeter eased out of the lot and onto the street, heading for the elevated highways. The Boss-Lady could give a holler when she was ready; he was going to move around some and let things cool off.

Of course, from Nightwing's perspective, Skeeter had just re-designated himself from stupid criminal to stupid criminal attempting to run. The fact that he was Illyana’s driver was completely forgotten in the angst of the missing bike and the perceived disrespect.

By the time Betsy had made it to the elevated highways that criss-crossed Gotham, the Batmobile had caught up, and was edging for a push over. For an eternal seven moderate-speed minutes, the Batmobile was the aggressor, attempting to force the limo off the road and/or to a stop in various ways. Skeeter was on full defense, jinking, suddenly shifting lanes, at one point actually falling behind the Batmobile to avoid a full side force maneuver before sliding the full eight lanes over and regaining the lead in the inner breakdown lane, all the while not so much as scratching the paint on any of the civilian vehicles also on the road.

And then Betsy diagonalled across twenty yards of actual grass, and suddenly Betsy was not on a ring road in endless circles, but on an outward bound highway. Moderate speed was quickly no longer in play, and Nightwing was unpleasantly surprised when suddenly Betsy was dead center of the two lanes northbound at a hundred seventy miles an hour, and accelerating. Betsy's board lights were suddenly brilliantly lit, deep-phased luminescence flaring as she began the process of jumping universes.

Nightwing, in full-on single-minded attack mode, closed to within ten feet of the custom limousine and launched a coherent Electro-Magnetic flare/crashworm program, intended to end the situation before they got to the Canadian border. The actinic flare erupted across both vehicles...

And…
Suddenly they were most certainly Elsewhere. Which is when things got unpleasant.

**Part 8c: Interruptions**

Right before her cell phone rang, Illyana suddenly was quiet. No one noticed for about three seconds, then she flexed power, and suddenly the ladies were inside the bubble of privacy as Illyana opened the phone in conference mode.

Skeeter was **NOT** happy. His voice was thin, and subtly distorted, as a never-ending moan of frigid wind blew in the background, even thru Betsy's armored windows. *"This was **NOT** my fault! I **TRIED** to get away from the stooped… uh, the hero guy, the young one. Nightwing! Uhm… Boss, why is this an open call?"*

Illyana groaned as she noticed the photos from Skeeter, then she answered with a tone of irritation. *"I wish that escape could have been conducted without the wrecking of the Batmobile…! The Bat is going to be so pissed. Is Nightwing okay?"*

Skeeter's voice was small. *"He's fine, Boss; he's in the lux seats in the back on account of how Betsy won't let him sit up front. Uhm… can I tell you how things went down? Betsy still needs to calm down a bit, anyhoo..."*

Illyana's entire mood changed, relaxed back into her restrained amusement. *"Tell Betsy to put him thru to Oracle so he can tell his side of the story, and you tell us yours, and Bats and I will sort it out next time I'm here. Just tell it from the top."

Skeeter also relaxed. *"Calls placing now, Boss. Okies, so Nightwing back there, he decides he's going to rattle the Penguin's cage right after you ladies went in the front, and leaves his cycle in the alley while he goes to the roof access, okay? So there were Demon's Hand guys, and Ghost Dragon guys, and a couple of Penguin's guys, right? They decide to do a bit of undo to the cycle. I had no part in it; I had food, and I wanted nothing more than to eat an' drink, okay? Yeah I watched but… not my problem. Right?"

Illyana was patience personified. *"Of course, Skeeter. Go on."* But did make a mental note to remind Skeeter that Bat property was to be thought of as a topic of concern going forward.
Skeeter continued, his confidence growing. "So they're in the middle of unhooking the taillights, and the Merc with the Mouth makes his break, scatters them all, and steals the cycle, okay? Last seen going west. Still nothing to do with me, okay? I didn't untie the guy, or unlock the trunk, or anything. I was in the driver's seat with my eggrolls and a pony of Flying Monkey's fermented ginger ale, okay? Next to no alcohol, I swear. Uhm, Betsy might've dumped him out of the trunk... he was really nasty in the seat, if you grasp my meaning, and she's fastidious about that sort of thing. You'd have to ask her. Anyway, he leaves, and all the various gentlemen all decide to go elsewhere. Still nothing to do with me."

Illyana was almost dreamy. "Of course, Skeeter."

"So Batboy takes almost ten minutes to come back down, and I'm the only guy in the secure garage, right? So he has to rattle my gourd, right? I tell him I have no part in the whole thing. And instead of letting me be and going after his cycle, he decides to flex a grudge in my face, and tells me I'm going up the river if I don't tell all! Like I even knew, right? Then he tries to pop the door open so he can pull me out, okay?"

Harley broke in. "The nerve of it, Skeeter-dude! You're cool as a cucumber! So what happened next?"

Skeeter was in fine form. "Well, what da hell was I supposed ta do? Just let The Boy Blunder buttclaw me before shipping me off to Blackgate and the Feds? For nothing I actually did, just like the first time, right? So me and Betsy, we tried to leave, okay? Calm, quiet, just another set of wheels in the night. Yeah, Nightwing tried to fender bend us before we were even on the highway, then tried to run us off the road about four or five times, then he jiggerpoked Betsy electronically when we were getting ready to Jump!" A moment's shouting was overheard thru the phone, Nightwing was defending his actions to his wife apparently, and then Skeeter was back on the line. "Then the freaking idiot is in another reality with us, and we're his only way back, so what does he do? He tries to blow out a tire while I was still loopy! Betsy kinda got mad at that last bit, and uhm... well she ended the mess. Forcefully, yeah, but non-lethally, I'd like to point out, Boss? It could've been a hell of a sight worse."

Orphan and Catwoman were clearly in on the call Oracle was presiding over, and they were both nearly as unhappy as Oracle, but not, it seemed, with Skeeter. Harley and Ivy, by comparison, looked smugly amused. The Marvel heroines were simply calm, awaiting details, while Mazikeen looked bored.

Illyana's voice was on point. "Skeeter, where are you now? Right now?"

Skeeter's voice was rattled a bit. "Uhm, Niffleheim, pretty sure. Outer Winter Wastes, Betsy says? That's when Junior tried to drop an RPG on us, and Betsy lost it. Oh yeah, the Dragoness says hi,
and she'd love to hang out with you sometime. She asked me to pass that on, next I saw you. This counts as, right?"

Illyana's right eyebrow rose, and she might even have smiled a touch. Her voice remained immaculately calm and in control, though. "Skeeter? Who is the Dragoness?"

Skeeter was clueless. "What? Uh - local top critter, I guess? She offered to eat Nightwing... I explained she'd need to wait in line, that you had first dibs, okay? I uh, I kinda explained who you were. I mighta exaggerated a touch, keep him from becoming a chew-toy. I graciously got his stupid ass in the back, he's at least not being pissy, at least not while he was talking to me. Look, the thing is, Boss-lady, this is not my fault, okay? I tried to leave. Several times. Now the Batmobile is still technically salvageable, right? Mostly, anyway... it's gonna need some stuff... and... a lot of work..."

Skeeter stopped for a moment, and Oracle took advantage of the silence. "He wants to speak to you, Magik."

Illyana was all business. Put him on."

Nightwing was embarrassed; how many times had it happened that his life was unequivically saved by the criminal who put him in harms way in the first place? "How do you... I accused him of being involved in my cycle being stolen! And then he ran!"

Around the table, the Girlz expressions were all mixtures of embarrassment and amusement; he really was whining. Illyana's voice was courteous. "Nightwing, when you come on too strong to someone, it's not unnatural that they flee, regardless of guilt or innocent. And I don't think my driver had anything to do with the stealing of your cycle if he says he didn't. My people tend not to try to lie to me."

Illyana's words were like a cold splash of water to his face, awakening him to just how utterly unprofessionally he had acted tonight. "Uhm... So your associate... Wasn't involved in wrecking and then stealing my motorcycle?"

Illyana was the avatar of grace and serenity. "No. Apparently the other hoodlums in the parking garage began matters, and then this... individual named Deadpool ended matters. Deadpool was our prisoner, and escaped custody, so some portion of the matter falls upon me as well. Thus, allow me to correct matters as much as possible tonight."
Illyana returned to the open line, and business. "Skeeter, call Frankie and the goblins, and put a rush order on the job."

“Sounds like a good band name.” Opined Harley, to the agreement of the other girls.

Illyana continued after a snort of a laugh. “Full nine yards, including munitions. Good thing Frankie likes a challenge. I agree this was not your fault, or Betsy’s, either. I'll settle it for now, and Batman and I can make things right the next I drop in.” The a tone of awe. “Dear Gods, Mazikeen is starting a dance off.”

Illyana hurriedly finished the conversation. “Deal with it, Skeeter: either he comes home with rebuilt Batmobile tonight as in here local, or he rides with you when you come to pick us up. Under no circumstances do you leave him with the goblins, you hear me? I'd never hear the end of it; his father and his wife would BOTH come and hunt me down to make their displeasure known. I'll call you when we're ready for pickup."

**Part 8d: Voice mail (hours later)**

Message 1: *Lady Resputin? Frankie heah. Okies, dis 'Batmobile', first time I ever worked on one a' dese, is screwed but good, but not so badly we can't get her good again. Betsy says, kinda sulky, that she hit twenty t'ree times. My scrying matches: I got thirty shots fired, twelve -point-seven by ninety-nine mil mixed feeds; seven clean misses, eleven bounces, an' fifteen paydays inta da front end, full auto. Somewhere in dere towards da end the forward munitions on'na Batmobile kinda started cooked off, just ta make things interesting; dats when da driver, Nightwing fellow, I heah? bailed. Hey, you do like da best, so what d'ya expect when Betsy fires for effect? You should be damn glad she decided ta shoot at da engine, an' not da driver, awright? Now it happens ta be I got a fair match for da front end from another reality where things didn't end so good. So, rear end from one reality, front end from another, and lots of elbow grease an' welding in the middle. A little bondo, some paint, better than new.*

Message 2: *Forgot to mention, munitions, Fritz is hardcore about dat; your guy is gonna hafta pay cash dere. He says it's cool? So, all in all, one medium favor owed by youse, an' we agree it ain't gonna be a hit job.*

Message 3: *We'll have da job done by da end a da night, Batmobile back in town before dawn or we owes you da favor. Might be ten minutes ta dawn, but we'll get'er done.*
Message 4: Fritz has a question for ya: dis batman guy, he ain't a vampire, right? Ya know how Fritz gets about vampires.
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Remember, Batman skipped ahead, and now he returns to the storyline in chronological order. And yes… Deadpool is loose in the DC Universe, which was not planned at all I might add; just kind of… happened. LordGrise has claimed dibs on writing the story as to how Deadpool gets back to the Marvel Universe.

Oh, and in Cat Tales, the definitive Cat Woman fanfic series of stories (and if you haven’t read them you should), we see that having your possessions stolen by Cat Woman is considered bragging right for many of Gotham’s elites; and there are even advertising campaigns built upon that idea (yes the world is a strange place at times).

I also wrote an oblique reference to the comic Dirty Pair (one of my favorites and possible, in hindsight, the basis of which I might have, in part, modeled this story). I really should be working on other things, but LordGrise wrote some content so it was time to flesh out this chapter.

Well… I hope you enjoy!

Part 9a: THREE DAYS LATER

A bat grunt of extreme annoyance. The Batmobile Nightwing had wrecked had been… rebuilt, extra-dimensionally, by an unknown third party. It would have to be completely scanned, both hardware and software; the potentialities for unintended noncompatibilities, for intentional errors, for intrusions of one sort or another… and he was going to have to bring in Dr. Fate and likely Raven to ensure any more exotic possibilities were not present.

Hmmm… a note from Alfred as to the replacement of all male and female underwear holdings in the mansion and associated residential localities for all Batclan members, his included, by gender specific Frosties. Which, at today’s black market prices… was… just slightly less then the value of the mansion itself. A few blinks by Bruce as he decided that he really did need to think about monetizing the Frosties; doing such would reduce the black market price, and the resultant desirability index would decrease. Another matter to consider was the bringing Diana in on the matter before the inevitable rumors got out as the possibility of Harley keeping her mouth shut was only slightly more likely than… than… he couldn't think of an appropriate comparison. A Starfleet ship taking up orbit, perhaps?

The obvious escalation of events was of concern to him. The M-factor was definitely out of control, magic that was, not Magik herself. Hmmm, an attached JPEG file… With a sigh, he clicked on the file.
Part 9b: Toast!

The ladies stood within the car, admiring each other’s costumes. They were dressed to kill, and for these woman, the description was multi faceted... and very accurate.

Shot glasses raised high in toast. “To a fun time!”

“And confusion to all bad doers!” Giggled Jubilee as the glasses clicked and they all downed their shots, even Orphan.

Shots that had come from the chaos bottle.

Part 9c: Grand entrance

The custom limo sat outside the Iceberg Lounge with a red carpet stretching from the closed car door to the closed club door. The place was a whirlwind of activity as every paparazzi within a five mile vicinity had frantically descend upon the Iceberg. They were setup and ready for whatever was to come forth.

Foremost, in front of everybody outside the unique limousine, was a Latina reporter from Channel 11 (Gotham! All News, All The Time!). She had been first on the scene as she had actually reporting on the event being held at the Iceberg when the Bad Girlz’s Limo had rolled up. She was wearing an elegant light blue evening gown, entirely appropriate for the evening’s activity and venue, and she had just caught a very lucky break.

She welcomed the viewers, and she speaks with a roll on her r’s. “This is Miranda Veracruz de la Jolla Cardinal, the reporter from the country named after the equator, reporting for Channel 11! Gotham! All News! All The Time! We’re reporting from the infamous Iceberg Lounge as we eagerly await the Bad Girlz, Gotham’s newest and most exciting super hero team, to exit their limo! The Bad Girlz are the sensation of the moment as they…”

The limo’s passenger door opened slightly with a hissing sound, almost like some kind of airlock,
as a light blue fog billowed forth from first the cracks; then more enthusiastically as the door opened wider. A spray of lights glittered off on the door rim as the first person emerged from the swirling mists as a song blasted forth from hidden speakers. It was Let’s Get This Party Started, by Pink.

I’m comin’ up so you better you better get this party started
I’m comin’ up so you better you better get this party started

Get this party started on a Saturday night
Everybody's waitin' for me to arrive
Sendin' out the message to all of my friends
We'll be lookin' flashy in my Mercedes Benz
I got lotsa style, got my gold diamond rings
I can go for miles if you know what I mean

…
…
It’s…

“Mazikeen!” Announces Miranda Veracruz de la Jolla Cardinal, somehow still able to be heard by the viewers, the only known name of the Bad Girlz band of heroes as Mazikeen had announced it quite prominently at the prior news event. “Likely soon to be voted the heroine I’d most like to be beaten to a pulp by in the weekly Gotham Times poll! She is wearing an elegantly debauched Bat-Woman themed evening gown!”

Tight, skimpy, black, showing endless legs, and, of course, cleavage for miles (we are talking Mazikeen after all). Mazikeen paused, smiled for the camera as a barrage of flashes go off, although the smile is more of a friendly snarl, then she moved on.

…
…

Pumpin up the volume, breakin down' to the beat
Cruisin' through the west side

We'll be checkin' the scene

Boulevard is freakin' as I'm comin' up fast

I'll be burnin' rubber, you'll be kissin' my ass

Pull up to the bumper, get out of the car

License plate says I'm the Number One Superstar!

...

...

Next up, Laura and Jubilee emerged from the mists, likewise dressed in elegant evening gowns of their signature colors and styles. Jubilee is wearing a yellow gown with black and pink highlights; difficult to carry off, but she manages to do it; its light on the cleavage but lots of leg. Laura is in a pure black gown of simple elegance having a split leg and a strapless bar back. Jubilee grinning and waving to the crowd, while Laura is expressionless and on guard, then she does a pirouette while briefly popping her wrist claws; then they continue walking.

Miranda Veracruz de la Jolla Cardinal is most enthusiastic in her announcing. “Their names are unknown, but two more lovely predators of the night to fill Gotham’s villainous scum with fear.”

...

...

Makin’ my connection as I enter the room

Everybody's chillin' as I set up the groove

Pumpin' up the volume with this brand new beat

Everybody’s dancin' and their dancin' for me

I'm your operator, you can call anytime

I'll be your connection to the party line

...

...

Two more ladies now emerge, it’s Selena and Cassandra. Selina is in a tight purple gown of
sublime perfection while wearing a cat masquerade mask. Cassandra is garbed in shimmering white silk gown, she is likewise masked, wearing a blank mannequin masquerade mask with no mouth. Like the others, they pause, give a few waves, then walk on.

“More goddesses of destruction! Fitting garbed for tonight’s exclusive entertainment at the Iceberg.”

…

…

*I’m comin’ up so you better you better get this party started*

*I’m comin’ up so you better you better get this party started*

…

…

Illyana and Dani now emerge. Dani is dressed in light brown Native American garb as she wanted to make a very unique impression; there is a single eagle feather in her hair. Illyana is dressed in a dark blue gown, with blue gloves, and an opal brooch upon her left breast. The opal flames in all colors of red, green, blue, but the sword shaped flaw was a blazing white. They wave for the crowd before proceeding on.

“Even more emerge! Dressed for a night on the town! Unknown but lovely angels of destruction!”

…

…

*I’m comin’ up so you better you better get this party started*

*I’m comin’ up so you better you better get this party started*

…

…

And lastly, Harley and Ivy.
Ivy is wearing green, like you couldn’t see that coming, an elegant deep emerald green gown with green emeralds woven into her red hair; with lots of leg and cleavage on display. Harley is in a gown that combined her trademarked red, white, and blue colors. A bold choice, and yet again, due to the styling, one that works. Harley does have a very unique accessory as she has her giant mallet over her shoulder.

Of course Harley blows kisses to the crowd while Ivy gives various poises. Then…. Harley gets an impulsive smirk as she declares.

“Red, let’s give them something to talk about.” Harley sweeps Ivy off her feet as she gives her the classic Sailor returns home kiss.

The flash intensity is almost enough to give sunburn. Then Ivy does the same to Harley to an equally intense photo flash barrage.

Miranda Veracruz de la Jolla Cardinal is breathless with excitement. “The infamous duo of nature and nurture! Former villains now turned occasional heroes!”

... …

Get this party started

Get this party started right now

Get this party started

Get this party started

Get this party started right now!

Harley and Ivy walked forward and though the main Iceberg entrance, where the other Bad Girlz had likewise vanished into.

The music fades… and the reporters all breathe a sigh of journalistic contentment; apart from the Gotham Post photographer who had just discovered that none of his photos had properly exposed. Not a single one, and the editors were to find that none of the freelance photographers had any left to sell as exclusivity is… exclusivity. Just a bad break, or was it? Catwoman hated the Gotham Post, and thought of them as bad doers; and how did that wording of the toast go?
We now see, in lights above the door, the marquee for tonight’s event. **The Iceberg welcomed Leonard Cohen for an evening of song.**

It was a one night engagement, sold out months ago. Oswald was branching out on his legitimate restaurant to feature one night engagements of high end acts. A new undertaking that was turning out to be surprisingly lucrative (especially since he controlled the ticket scalping).

“This is Miranda Veracruz de la Jolla Cardinal, signing off!”

Then the news cuts to a commercial.

We see a young bountiful well dressed blond debutante sitting at a table with other equally young bountiful well dressed debutantes, all bedecked in elegant jewelry. The others are brightly lit, chattering about something as they sip tea and nibble delicate nibbly delights. She, on the other hand, is dimly lit and looks depressed, and her jewelry looks bland. An announcer’s voice is heard.

“Not measuring up? Feeling left out? Do the others have all the good stories?”

A sigh from the blonde.

The announcer is sympathetic. “It’s not you… it’s what you’re wearing.”

A look of puzzlement as the camera focuses in on the sad blonde. The announcer asks a question.

“Is it… Cat worthy?”

The eyebrows of the blonde raise high in comprehension.

“Yes… Cat worthy. Would not the best be desired by the best? If your accessories are not the topic of conversation then you need an upgrade. Elegance is more then just a price tag, it’s about refinement, history, pedigree, fine taste.”
The scene now fades to an elegant set of bejewel pins, earrings, rings, and necklaces on black satin.

“Consider Van Cleef and Arpels. The most Cat worthy purveyor of find goods in all of Gotham.”

We see a purple gloved hand, with claws, pass into the scene and linger over the collection, as if the owner of the hand can’t make up her mind as to what to take.

“Van Cleef and Arpels, discover what those already in the know... know. Grace Kelly, Elizabeth Taylor, Duchess of Windsor... the list goes on and on... Why not add your name?”

**Part 9d: An evening with Leonard Cohen**

The ladies strode in just as Leonard started one of his best songs, the Tower of Song. Accompanying him was a small band consisting of a base player, acoustics guitar, violinist, keyboardist, plus a female backup singer. There was sufficient room in front of Leonard for dancing, which a few couples were taking advantage of as Lenard crooned.

The Bad Girlz were escorted to their table, which was off center and to the right, as the aged resonate notes of Leonard filled the air (Google it on youtube if you want to hear the master at work, and you should.) They sat down and proceeded to enjoy the song.

Well, my friends are gone and my hair is grey
I ache in the places where I used to play
And I'm crazy for love but I'm not coming on
I'm just paying my rent every day in the Tower of Song

I said to Hank Williams, how lonely does it get?  
Hank Williams hasn't answered yet
But I hear him coughing all night long
Oh, a hundred floors above me in the Tower of Song
I was born like this, I had no choice

I was born with the gift of a golden voice

And twenty-seven angels from the Great Beyond

They tied me to this table right here in the Tower of Song

…

…

“Wow…” Whispered Dani, who had never heard the song before.

“Yeah… wow back.” Whispered Illyana, equally impressed.

…

…

So you can stick your little pins in that voodoo doll

I'm very sorry, baby, doesn't look like me at all

I'm standing by the window where the light is strong
don't let a woman kill you, not in the Tower of Song

…

…

Swiftly, a flight of wine bottles was brought for the table, plus a bottle of Stolichnaya Paper vodka for Illyana, and a signature ginger peel vodka martini for Selina.

…

…

Now, you can say that I've grown bitter but of this you may be sure

The rich have got their channels in the bedrooms of the poor

And there's a mighty judgment coming, but I may be wrong
You see, you hear these funny voices in the Tower of Song

…

…

“How on earth do you have tickets for this, much less this table?” Quietly asked Selina of Illyana, soto voce. “And with no prior reservation..?”

“Concierge service… I’ll explain later.” Whispered back Illyana.

“It’s a hell lord thing.” Whispered Mazikeen. “Lucifer uses it all the time.”

“Kitty is so going to have a talk with you about this.” Whispered back Selina. Specifically a talk with Illyana about tickets to some upcoming events. Let’s just say that kitty had just seen a tasty mouse is it were.

“Does that like… work for anything?” Whispered Harley. “There’s this upcoming Nirvana performance at this cub I like and…”

“Hush... later...” Whispered Cassandra. "He's singing."

…

…

I see you standing on the other side
I don't know how the river got so wide
I loved you baby, way back when
And all the bridges are burning that we might have crossed
But I feel so close to everything that we lost
We'll never, we'll never have to lose it again

Now I bid you farewell, I don’t know when I’ll be back
They're moving us tomorrow to that tower down the track
But you'll be hearing from me baby, long after I'm gone

I'll be speaking to you sweetly from a window in the Tower of Song

Yeah, my friends are gone and my hair is gray

I ache in the places where I used to play

And I'm crazy for love but I'm not coming on

I'm just paying my rent every day in the Tower of Song...

Silence, and then applause from the room. Lenard took a small break as he was only singing about four or five songs an hour.

Jubilee made the obvious conclusion. “Hey, that’s the same guy who was singing First Manhattan, Then We Take Berlin.”

“You should give him a sexual spin…” Stated Mazikeen to Jubilee. “Looks just like your type.”

Which elicited a hiss of annoyance from Jubilee. “Why… because he’s old? Damn it! I told you that I’m not into the elderly. That was a one time thing with Steve!”

“So you wouldn’t go hang with Steve if he walked in and gave you a hello? Guess I’ll let him know.” Stated Illyana with a deadpan expression.

A statement that stopped Jubilee in her tracks. “Wait… I didn’t say that… Wait… You know Steve?” A question that Illyana ignored.

“Man can this guy sing.” Was Dani’s comment. “Heck… considering how well he sings, I’d do him. Talk about crooning a girl right out of her Frosties.”

Both Ivy and Harley nodded in agreement and eyed Lenard like he was a particularly tasty slice of beef, then glanced at each other before turning their heads to the table and announcing “Dibs!”

“That was a complement, little vampire.” Sneered Mazikeen, after taking a sip of wine... well she chugged half a glass. “He may be old… but experienced is that one. And… tonight, stamina should
“I can’t believe I’m having this conversation.” Whined Jubilee. “I am not getting the reputation of a geezer chaser.”

Laura had a question to Mazikeen. “How do you know that he has taken Viagra? Smell?”

Mazikeen attempted to explain. “No… it is in his… call it his aura of intention. The man is primed and ready for action. Likewise his skills at the arts of intercourse are plain to one such as I.”

“He’s looking this way.” Was Cassandra’s sudden statement. A statement that that drew all of the ladies eyes back to Leonard’s, who tipped his black fedora at them in greeting from where he was sitting.

**Part 9e: Nightwing takes wing**

Nightwing was lurking in the Iceberg Lounge’s parking garage observing the events unfold.

First Catwoman had slipped out of her purple Lamborghini Reventon (a gift from Bruce) and thru a blazing portal that had actually been slightly below street level. Not two minutes later, she and the entire entourage of the limo had promenaded from the limo and thru the front doors of the Berg, dressed in haute couture, some with masks, that projected strong thematic elements of their individually styles while simultaneously offering at least arguable anonymity. The hovering paparazzi had gone into a collective feeding frenzy.

Nightwing’s jaw had nearly dropped as inspiration hit. With a collective entrance of that sort, Penguin was guaranteed to make an appearance, he simply couldn't not do so. This was utterly unplanned, but when opportunity knocks…

Nightwing launched from his cycle and made for the upper floors of the Iceberg’s building, and Penguin’s home. Batman had described it, of course, and made it clear it wasn't worth invading, but in the moment, he simply couldn't resist.

You might think the home of someone like Oswald Cobblepot, the Penguin, would be a fortress,
massively defended and insulated place in the middle of the city block sized mass of construction that he lived within. Well, in Penguin's case you would be wrong. Penguin's apartment was built into the south eastern top three floor corners of the massive block spanning building that housed the Iceberg Lounge; he had the Iceberg's massive sign look like it was depending from his Victorian styled building front, with his turret styled living room, study, and bedroom all above it.

Access into Penguin's home was ridiculously easy, he had left the patio door to his study-slash-office on the middle floor of his turret ajar. Nightwing would later have cause to realize that that should have been an alert that something was wrong... But in that moment, he simply eased in, staying to the shadows and his equipment to warn him if he had been made.

The first thing he noticed was that Penguin's home was an odd mixture of messy and tidy. The furniture was in very old-fashioned styles, and Penguin had a particular appreciation for cushioned heavy bentwoods and gloriously colorful wingbacks, and the tables were all heavy braced. The layouts were understandable... but there were books, magazines, and local newspapers on every surface, all current, and many dog-eared or left open. It was clear Oswald Cobblepot read voraciously, heavily running to current affairs and international business, but other publications were on array, including current trends, and even the music industry. Surprisingly, there was a heavily read book of Rudyard Kipling's poetry laying open on his desk, turned to the poem simply titled 'If'. Next to it lay a large four-time-a-day pill bar, with a gamut of colors and shapes of medications within. Nightwing recognized two of them, as Commissioner Gordon took a blood pressure med as well as a cardiac rhythm control med.

The desk was a massive secretariat style roll top desk, and likely hadn't been closed in years. Every open space was absolutely stuffed with opened envelopes and folded documents of every kind, and several additional organized trays had been placed around the edges of the space to hold pens, inks, tape, glues, paperclips in various sizes and styles, and other bits and pieces. An ancient annunciator and intercom panel was set into the wall beside it. It viscerally came to Nightwing that this might be what the home of an individual with photographic memory looked like. He glanced at the pill bar again. Batman believed Penguin to be in his sixties, could he be slipping...?

Anything resembling a quick search would be not just worthless, but actively counter productive as the Penguin would know if anything was moved. But there has to be a computer around here somewhere...?

The computers, (there were two of them) were carelessly placed in a magazine rack at one end of the heavy couch. A sleekly new, top of the line Wayne Electronics tablet/laptop and an ancient PeachTree that had to be twenty years old. Nightwing's electronics swore there were no cameras, no scanners, in fact, no security of any kind in the room, and Nightwing went to work on his finds.

Five minutes later, Nightwing was groaning. The WE laptop hadn't even needed to be opened; he had a full suite of Oracle's finest wares, and the laptop figuratively rolled over and purred. He
simply flashed the entire RAM memory for later examination. But the Peachtree was so ancient that nothing he had would be able to access it. He didn't so much as dare power it up...

Nightwing dove behind the couch as a door opened. The scent of an old fashioned cologne that he knew so well came to Nightwing's nostrils, along with the off tempo of a limping stride and the clack of a cane. Damn, Nightwing silently groaned to himself. He knew full well who it had to be even before that somebody spoke.

"Nightwing, I believe? Do please come out; you were seen coming in, and you haven't yet left. I'm alone, and I hardly think a man of your abilities has much to fear from me. I come up to partake of some food; you're welcome to stay put wherever you have taken cover, but it's rather undignified. I would have thought that you outgrew this behavior when you stopped running around dressed in bright red and green…"

Nightwing stood up, his face set, his body poised for action. "Alright, you have me. Now what? The police? A gaggle of your goons?" Nightwing gestured at the patio window. "Or a simple sniper round?"

The Penguin seated himself gingerly before reaching for his pill bar. "Of course not. Don’t be an imbecile, that’s why I left the door ajar. This is a conversation, not entrapment, legal or otherwise, and certainly not an ambush. Not to mention placing myself in this position." Oswald glanced out the window before looking back at Nightwing. "We should speak, is all. The Bat and I have had these conversations before. I'm pleased that he doesn't simply break the door any longer; I gave him my word I'd leave it unlocked for his convenience if he'd cease."

Nightwing gave no expression, but internally, he set several disconcerting thoughts aside for later consideration. "So what should we speak about?"

Penguin glanced at the annunciator. "I shall be having my meal brought up momentarily; the Bat knows the routine, but you don't. The server will be John; you have likely met him before as I'm sure you've punched him at some point. He will ask where I would like it. I routinely tell him to leave it at the door; if I ask for the food be brought to the table, he knows something is wrong, but not necessarily what. I ask that you don't assault him at the door now that you know he is coming."

Before Nightwing could answer, there was a light knock at the door. "Your meal, boss. Where'd ye like it, hm?"

Nightwing ducked back down to conceal himself as the Penguin touched a key on the comms panel. "Come in John. Just leave it at the door." Which he did.
Once the door had closed, Penguin looked at Nightwing’s direction for a moment, and then slid around in his chair as he reached for his cane. Nightwing found himself standing and, feeling a bit odd about it, went and brought Penguin his meal. Buttered whole wheat toast, an omelet with vegetables in it, and a pot of tea. The crime fighter had a better idea than most what inventories of crimes the man before him had committed... and yet he still brought his food, because he found he wanted to hear what the Penguin had to say to him.

"Humph. Thank you, Nightwing. Not often I thank a crime fighter for anything, much less something so trivial. But as many times as I have complained about the small courtesies, I would be remiss if I didn’t...” So saying, the Penguin took a small bite of his omelet, chewing and swallowing it with no particular expression of enjoyment. He then reached for his pill-bar and selected an evening pocket to empty. He took two of the tablets with a mouthful of hot tea, and readdressed the small meal and his guest simultaneously.

"Quite the selection, indeed..." Penguin said bitterly. "Yes, if it appears that I am in my final decline, to make use of a poetic phrase, it's because I am. Two years I’ve been told. Perhaps three. Sooner or later, my issues will begin to snowball... and I have no desire to experience the full run of that." Oswald partook of another small bite of eggs and toast. "Which is why I wanted to speak to you in particular. I've spoken with the Bat on this subject; he has been non committal, as no doubt you will be. But it needs to be discussed, as much as the Bat finds the subject distasteful."

He took another mouthful of tea. "Who takes over for me, after I have passed?"

Nightwing couldn't help himself; his jaw dropped a millimeter or two. "After you're dead...?"

Penguin sighed. "Nightwing, why do you think the Bat permits this place to exist? He... and you, and the rest of you lot, clearly know all about the Rogues and the establishment I run to cater to them; not to mention some of my various side activities. The Iceberg itself is quite legal... but the second establishment, that would be quite a quagmire, from it's licensure to its tax status thru to its stores. You've all roughed the place up several times... But you've never attacked any of the staff, nor have you unduly destroyed the stock, let alone sending in the police and the blithering bureaucratic inspectors. Usually the aftermath of one of your lot's visits is little more than cleaning up the broken glass and the spills, and perhaps replacing a few pieces of furniture. Well... why?"

Nightwing bridled a touch. "Because better the dive that we know than one that we don't."

Penguin flourished his fork before taking another bite. "Precisely, although I would argue about the word dive. But take it back another step, padawan." He then chuckled at Nightwing's look of
surprise. "Yes, I've seen the movies. I'd be a Rebel sympathizer beyond a doubt, although I'm sure we have different ideas as to just who the Empire would be. But why is it better to know, than to not know?" Oswald sipped his tea, watching Nightwing closely over the rim of the cup.

"Because... because..." Nightwing sputtered to a stop.

Penguin chuckled. "Ahhhh.... My night is made; I've bettered you." He took another bite, another pill, and another sip. "Because the Bat knows full well that I live in this city full time, right in the middle of it all, and I suppose I have affection her in my way... and because I know as well, if not better than the Bat does, that every now and again, one of those blithering madmen comes up with an idea that needs to be stopped. No other place in this town could possibly control them, but I can, and do, when necessary. Property values are a great motivator on avoiding excessive damage; enlightened self interest and all that. To name one example, do you recall when he, the Joker, had a nuclear weapon? It was I that convinced him to make a big show of it, to give warning and a chance to get it disarmed."

Penguin took the largest tablet and swallowed it with a mouthful of tea, before refilling his cup. "Gah, that one's bitter... I am getting old, Nightwing. Who, after me? And how much blood will be spilt first? There hasn't been a relatively peaceful transfer in this town since Mad Max Marazani, back in the nineteen-twenties. I confess that I have actual worry about Gotham once I pass. Who would have thought that going even partially legit would mean that I'd end up in this mutually distasteful co-dependent status with the Bat and his unruly ilk. Bahh... almost makes me want to run for office, just to annoy the Bat and Gordon, but I have not real desire to deal with the actual running of Gotham."

Oswald turned to point to a city map on the far wall. "Corruption is not confined to the poor districts, it is..."

A beeping interrupts the conversion as Nightwing’s cycle’s alarm goes off, prompting a hurried. "Gotta go." Statement from Nightwing.

Oswald turned back. "Another time then Nightwing..." But Nightwing was already gone, eliciting a sigh of annoyance from the Penguin. "Of course he takes after the Bat... well..." Oswald decided to go and enjoy the show the remainder of the show. Leonard was always entertaining, and the surprise guests were likely going to make it a most memorable evening, and he did have his own private table...

A decision likewise made by one of the Rogues as he watched the evening news broadcast on his cell phone screen while enjoying a drink, after first, of course, flipping of a coin.
Part 9f: Death to Ameri-Do-Te!

We see a milling mass of the League Against Ameri-Do-Te Ensemble assault squad assembled at one end of the rickety bridge that spans the pit of eternal peril.

The ninja master gave a sniff, then wipes the look of sudden distaste from his face as he then pretends to examine some marks on the ground. “Master Ken and his apprentice have passed this way.”

“Well duh…” States the master kick boxer. “I’ve encountered that stench before.”

“Don’t try and give us any of that ninja special training senses bullshit.” Groused the Karate Master. “Yes they passed this way, we can all sense it, that stench lingers on the breeze like a dead whale in summer.”

What stench you ask?

They are all sensing, and complaining, about Todd. More specifically the issue of Todd’s lactose intolerance. A condition that had not stopped him from eating a two plus pound triple jalapeno bean burrito for lunch. A burrito packed with extra sour cream, and triple cheese. Washed down with a strawberry shake, some soda, and two pickled eggs.

The Judo Master complained bitterly. “I had to sit behind him at the last martial arts convention and the stench was eye watering. He was out gassing every five minutes! I demanded a refund or a different assigned seat and they just laughed at me. Me! The master of the secret arts of the hidden dragon of Lanzhou, long lost to humanity until I undertook my epic mystic journey to the lost land of…”

This has happened when Todd had binged upon milk based smoothies and ghost pepper enhanced sauerkraut, supposedly to cleanse the colon, but mostly to horrify as Master Ken was annoyed at the Judo Master. Once Master Ken had realized where the Judo Master was sitting, he had weaponized Todd’s affliction and turned it loose upon the whinny Judo Master; and all who sat in the vicinity (they’d had to throw away Todd’s chair after the convention).

The Krav Maga Master interrupted the beginning of a long self praising monolog. “Yeah, yeah, yeah... we’ve all heard the story before. More importantly, the guardian of the bridge is missing.”
“Which means we can all cross without questions!” Shouts the Tae-kwon-do Master. Resulting in a charge of the milling mass, apart from the busty Swedish Ninja who attempted to stop them as she cried out.

“Wait! The bridge not strong enough for…”

Too late.

The bridge gave way with a snap, dumping the entire screaming mass into the pit of eternal peril.

Sigh…

“Idiots.” Groused the Swedish ninja. She knew she should have just gone on her own, flashed her bountiful DD goodies to stun Master Ken, and then stab him…

But, best not to be separated so… she then likewise leapt into the pit.
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Dhalpin note: This chapter contains the last joint writing efforts of LordGrise and his friend Nick. As such, I’ve done almost no editing of that content, maintaining the original phrasings and structure; which is a bit rough as it was just a first cut. But... it works well in that it reflects the ‘person’ who tells the story in this chapter.

LordGrise note: Well met, dear Readers. The piece I call 'Eastern Europe', which you will read in this chapter as a memory from Harley, was originally going to be the first piece of a sequel to a story my now deceased co-writer Nick Lorance, (AKA Machievelli) and I wrote, entitled 'In God's Hands'. It's still on Fanfic dot net as far as I know; it's most easily found by searching for Nick's handle and then scrolling thru his works.

Nick and I were true partners on these things; we generally would role-play out any given scene, then fill in the backgrounds and details to make it a decent piece of writing, as opposed to a movie script. This was the last thing for Batman we ever finished; right after this, he discovered there was money to be made in writing 16XX fiction, also known as the Ring of Fire series. Eric Flint was the creator of the series, and eventually others were allowed to start doing short stories for it. Nick desperately wanted me to work with him on these stories, and I did, as much as I could, assisting behind the scenes with some of his Sergeant Hartmann stuff; medical and trauma stuff particularly. We even had a go-ahead for a full length story, where an expedition was going to go to Scotland, drag Scotch whiskey as we know it now into being a couple hundred some years early, and coincidentally prevent the Clearances... but our lead characters were functionally axed, I never got a good answer as to why, and without them, the expedition plot was just gutted, and the extended plot was simply no-go. I still have all the stuff he and I worked on together. Later, when I started the Arkham Asylum cross-over, he helped me out there. And then he started having neuro issues, and three months later he was dead because he couldn't pay for even proper diagnosis, let alone medical treatment. Had he lived in any other first world country in the entire world, I believe he would have lived.

I love you, brother not of my blood. Rest In Peace...

Part 10a: THREE DAYS LATER

Batman briefly set aside the God-awful mess the report represented, obtained a glass, filled with mineral water, and revisited at the report on the Batmobile. Visually, it was externally identical to the other Batmobiles, but internal views showed some slight differences, most notably a different...
shade of matte grey for the seat upholstery... and three bobble heads on the dashboard. There was a note from Alfred that they were supposedly unremovable. Well… he'd see about that.

Hmmm… Apparently Dick had managed to get an example of the APHIDS (Armor Piercing Hypergolic Incendiary Discarding Sabot) round used by Illyana’s limo; which Batman mentally translated to mean a mini-rocket or mini-missile that fired from a .50 heavy machine gun. The details of the round resulted in a Bat grimace; it certainly explained why the round had been so effective. There was a Stark Technology logo on the sabot... but he'd best get Oracle composing yet another long-run search worm to seek out anyone in his world developing these. He closed his eyes and sighed, sipped his mineral water, and resumed perusal of the report. Then…

A Bat-grunt. A very male bat-grunt in that he had just discovered that Selina had procured tickets to an upcoming private showing event that literally nobody not already on the waiting list was able to get tickets to; just twenty seats, four to a table for the performance, and Bruce Wayne had not been one of those people. It was rare, but it happened; Bruce Wayne couldn't be everywhere. And yet… Selina suddenly had acquired four tickets, two primaries and two plus-ones. Two for Barbara and Dick, and two for her and him. The show was a traditional Japanese Kabuki presentation of Phantom of the Opera with kumi-daiko drums. That sounded so odd that... Bruce found himself smiling faintly as it actually intrigued him.

Impossible, and yet… apparently Illyana’s concierge service had reach. Serious reach. Bruce found himself wondering what Catwoman might have done for Magik that she could get such tickets... or if she owed a favor now. Then upon further reflection, maybe not. From the looks of things everybody had been… call it under the influence at that point; and likely Magik might have just been showing off.

Then another, deeper grunt as he found that Barbara had attached a PDF file of the weekend fashion magazine that the Gotham Times put out. A magazine that had Harley smooching Ivy on the cover. For those conversant in bat grunt speak it would have communicated a complaint that could be summed up with one word.

Publicity.

A bad word if you spent your time hiding in the shadows fighting crime. Live TV broadcasts, interviews, close up zoomed in photos, all a bad idea.

A final soft grunt, that sounded suspiciously like a sigh, as he opened the file and perused the contents.
Part 10b: This Waltz…

After putting his fedora back upon his head, Leonard slowly sauntered over to their table as all of their eyes followed him (and yes, they all sat up straighter as well).

“Ladies” Was his grumbly welcome. “For the next song I request a dancing partner. Do any of you dance? A waltz to be specific.”

Let’s just say that that he had a plethora of volunteers from the table, all but one to be precise. That one being Cassandra. A lack of volunteering that attracted Leonard’s attention.

“You do not dance my dear?”

Cassandra is lethal grace in combat. Fluid, dynamic, form and function. Death in high heels was one description given to her by a fellow Batclan member. So… contrast that with her current frozen posture as she became quite the deer in the headlights.

Leonard offered his hand to Cassandra. “Just follow my lead.”

A breathless moment, then Cassandra took his hand as she stood.

The band began to play as Leonard led Cassandra to the center of the dance floor. They paused, then Leonard began to sing the song Take This Waltz as they started to dance. And Cassandra, being Cassandra, was able to follow his lead as if she anticipated his every move.

Now in Vienna there are ten pretty women
There's a shoulder where Death comes to cry
There's a lobby with nine hundred windows
There's a tree where the doves go to die
There's a piece that was torn from the morning
And it hangs in the Gallery of Frost
I, I-I-I

Take this waltz, take this waltz
Take this waltz with the clamp on its jaws

Oh, I want you, I want you, I want you

On a chair with a dead magazine
In the cave at the tip of the lilly
In some hallway where love's never been
On a bed where the moon has been sweating
In a cry filled with footsteps and sand

...
...

Harley and Ivy looked on with a touch of envy as Lenard danced Cassandra around the room while Selina was busy recording the dance with her cell phone.

...
...

...I, I-I-I

Take this waltz, take this waltz
Take its broken waist in your hand

This waltz, this waltz, this waltz, this waltz
With its very own breath of brandy and Death
Dragging its tail in the sea

There's...

There's a concert hall in Vienna
Where your mouth had a thousand reviews
There's a bar where the boys have stopped talking
They've been sentenced to death by the blues
Ah, but who is it climbs to your picture
With a garland of freshly cut tears?

“So… I think you were going to tell a story before we got interrupted?” Inquired Jubilee of Harley.

Harley shook here head. “What… oh yezz. It was about the big score the me and Ivy got after going legit.”

I, I-I-I
Take this waltz, take this waltz
Take this waltz, it's been dying for years

There's an attic where children are playing
Where I've got to lie down with you soon
In a dream of Hungarian lanterns
In the mist of some sweet afternoon
And I'll see what you've chained to your sorrow
All your sheep and your lillies of snow
I, I-I-I
Take this waltz, take this waltz
With its "I'll never forget you, you know!"

...
Harley filled her glass with a dollop from Illyana’s chaos bottle as she got comfy in preparation of telling her tale.

Leonard and Cassandra arrived back at the table just Lenard sang the last words. A kiss from Leonard upon her hand and a smile from him as he thanked her.

“A pleasure my dear. Thank you for humoring an old man.”

With that he strolled back to his chair, after first liberating a small glass of Champagne from a
Harley raised her glass which suddenly smoked as she proposed a toast. "To good memories! Lemme tell you a story..."

Part 10c: Sirens in Eastern Europe

The security guard looked up from his monitors, scanning the private road. The home was set back into the mountains far enough that no one should be driving up here; especially at this time of night. The guard shack kept him warm enough that he wouldn't freeze, yet cold enough to make sure he wouldn't get too comfortable.

The owner of the Schloss (Germen for small palace or castle) was the son of a Nazi officer from the Second World War. The Nazi had been in charge of shipping, specifically materials from Western Europe, and while about his duties, he had been an art collector. He had missed being rounded up for a war crimes trial after the war because all he did was order freight cars to go from here to there, and none of them had been bound for the Death Camps.

But those freight trains had occasionally 'stopped and dropped' in the way trains did in times of war, and no few of those containers he had sequestered; and then later 'inherited' when everything fell apart. He had been known as someone who handled things, back then and he had simply continued to do so after the Iron Curtain came down. When the Soviet Union collapsed, he had come out of the shadows somewhat, disdaining drugs and guns and all similarly lurid idiocies (as he considered them), and going online to become the extremely well connected Obrabotchik Veshchey or 'Handler of Things'.

By the turn of the millennium, the 'Handler of Things' was winding his dealings down and eventually retired. His son, he was proud to say, was practically legitimate in the eyes of the International art world. By then, his art collection, widely flung at the end of World War Two, had been pared down to just a few dozen pieces, small enough to keep in one (large) building. These were the ones that either he had decided to keep, or his son had indicated he wanted to retain.

The guard didn't know. Except for the guardroom, he had never seen the inside of the house, and was indifferent to decades past foibles of his employer. He was paid to guard, and he did, well.

And so he scanned again. Nothing. But what had made him curious?
He stood, picking up his G3 rifle, flipping the safety off, and opened the door. Something swung into view, and he saw just for a moment a crudely drawn human face, and words upside down. His mind failed to translate them into 'Your Face Here' in the tenth of a second before the maul punched him off his feet.

Harley Quinn gracefully vaulted inside, landing straddling the guard in case he wasn't out. He was; Harley was oddly pleased that his nose wasn't even broken, and he was breathing evenly. She pulled him away from the door, then turned to the control panel. Ah, that one. She pushed a button, and the gate slid open. Two forms moved through the opening, and Catwoman joined her along with Ivy.

“The next part will be the dogs... Ivy, you'll have point.” Catwoman said, as she drew zip-ties from her belt.

Before Ivy could answer, Harley caught Ivy's arm. “Gimme your lipstick.”

Ivy looked at her confused. They were about to approach the mansion after downing the security guard, and she was thinking of touching up her make up now? “Why?”

Harley gestured at the man she had taken down with her maul. He was large, buff, and would have had a good shot at a movie career with that blonde hair and his rugged features. At Ivy's questioning look, Harley told her, “I saw him first. Well actually I hit him first. But if I use the lipstick?”

“What are you going to do, Harley?” Ivy asked, amused. "Take him back to the island and make him be our cabana boy by day, and your..." She stopped talking, because Harley's eyes had glazed, and she had what could only be defined as a shit-eating grin. Ivy sighed. He looked good, but certain Somebodies would not be amused. “No... Complications, Harls. He'd never go for it, you know that.”

Harley shrugged, still tickled pink at the idea, it wasn't like she'd been serious. “Well it was only a thought. He'd look good in a speedo, though, I bet.”

Catwoman stood from where she had bound and gagged the man, anchoring him to the desk legs so avoid having him eel up and hit any of the buttons. “If you two are done playing?”
Harley grinned. "Never done, Cats. But yeah, done here..."

Catwoman hit her talk. "Oracle, we're in clean. Proceeding onto the grounds."

"Copy that, Catwoman." Oracle answered from Gotham. "External cameras are co-opted. Ten dogs ranging, all but three on the west side. No handlers in sight. Internal cameras are isolated and I have good data tracks; ready for phase three on your mark."

They went through the trees edging the trimmed grounds rather than up the road to avoid the possibility of random viewers from the windows. Behind them, the drone that was once Batman's Little Brown Bat #57, and was now Catwoman's drone (dubbed Munin) posted on top of the guard shack where it had a clear view of all the guard had once watched. Hugin (formerly LBB #58) was already physically clamped onto the inconspicuous antenna on top of the Schloss that received the remote feeds from all the cameras, and had been for four hours, transmitting a copy of the signal to Oracle, half a world away. She had successfully decrypted the relevant signals, and Hugin was now relaying the computer modified take of those cameras, deleting the Sirens while maintaining all other aspects of the feed.

Harley had her revolver loaded with underpowered rounds tipped with Ivy's 'sleep dust' pollen in her hand, but she deferred to Ivy, who was striding thru the grass as if she owned it, which, in a very real sense, she did. As the dogs charged, the grass simply pulled them down and enveloped them. There was no noise beyond the whisper of their paws thru the grass; their vocal cords had been cut long ago, and they couldn't even whine as they were betrayed by the very lawns they had always considered their territory. Then the three women simply walked up to the panic-stricken animals and crushed some pollen pellets under their noses, thus sending them into deep dreamless sleep. After Ivy assessed the rest of the grounds and assured her team that all the dogs were accounted for (they counted ten, the expected number) they moved on.

The trio moved around until they came to the door leading into the guard room of the house proper. Ivy took what looked like a large pepper shaker, and held it in her hand. Catwoman moved to the door and listened intently a moment before scanning the walls as if she could see thru them. Which, thanks to her new eyeware, she could, and did, in the IR spectrum. She made a motion with one finger up, then turned the knob gently.

The female guard on duty in the room looked up, but before she could move Harley smacked her with a sleep pellet. It was nothing but a paint pellet loaded with DMSO and her own recipe of knockout juice, but it was less nasty than the knockout formula Joker had favored, and infinitely less nasty than the original pellets that had been loaded with straight SmileX. She still had some of those, and indeed, had two in one of her thigh pouches for dire emergencies, but… she ran with the Sirens now, and Cats had made it clear: no fatalities. The guard inhaled deeply, the DMSO speeding the payload thru her skin into her bloodstream, wavered, then gently collapsed.
Ivy moved past and, at Catwoman's gesture of four fingers and a nod, moved to a closed door that proceeded further into the house. At the door, she opened the canister she carried and poured it out into her hand. She then opened the door to reveal four more guards, all men, playing cards. She blew the handful of her pollen into the room, dosing each of the guards with the same potent concoction the dogs outside had received. When she was satisfied none of the guards would awaken for at least four hours, she departed the room and quietly closed the door behind her. Harley and Catwoman looked at her, she held up four fingers and the shaker, and they nodded and got back to placing the female guard on the couch where she would be out of the way.

Ivy counted to herself silently, and at twenty said, “Clear”, indicating to Catwoman that it was now safe for her to enter the ready room. Harley grinned and went first, bee-lining for the sideboard in the room, where supper had evidently been laid out: a bowl of German potato salad, another of sauerkraut, and a platter of small chicken drummies in a dark sauce. Without hesitation at all Harley, who was largely immune to most drugs and poisons, at least until you got to insane dosage levels, grabbed the top drumstick, stuck the entire thing in her mouth, and stripped all the meat off in one pull. She sighed happily as she chewed, then swallowed and reached for another. She stopped when she realized her partners were both staring at her.

"What?" Harley asked soto voce, picking up the second drummie. She made as short work of it as she had the first.

"What..." Catwoman began at the same time as Ivy breathed "How..."

Harley picked up a third, holding the bones of the first two like throwing knives between her fingers. "These? Piece of cake, well, chicken. Good hoisin sauce, too. You just open wide, stick it in, and pull." So saying she suited actions to words, enjoying the looks of disbelief on Cat’s and Ivy’s faces. She swallowed and reached for the fourth; there were plenty more, she was pleased to note. "Oh c'mon, it's no big deal! I've had much larger things in my mouth."

“Harley, we don’t have time for this.” Catwoman snapped in a whisper.

“But I’m hungry.” Harley's whisper had a touch of whine to it.

“Later. We’re on a clock here.” Catwoman led them to the inner door through the kitchen, then down the hall to a stairway leading down. While Oracle had gotten a lot of the layout from her own sources, the security alarms were not included. No worries, Selina had always believed that no matter what Murphy said, she would be able to manage. Judging by what she's seen so far, she doubted Herr Voegel had updated his security in twenty years...
Her new eyepieces were performing as promised, combining IR, UV, exotic radiation spectrums, sonar (transmitting too high to be heard by even bats), and electromagnetic sensors to detect pressure sensors and wiring impedances where she stepped. She scanned left and right, watching for any lasers in her path to the vault, tripwires, of pressure panels. But Oracle had been right as far as the vault. Behind her, Harley and Ivy stepped precisely where she stepped. Soon they were before the armored door, it could not be properly called a vault door, that stood between them and the likeliest place for the artworks they were there for.

Catwoman knelt and looked at the lock. It was a duplex, combining an ancient mechanical lock. Inside her cowl, Selina raised an eyebrow, they hadn't made them like this since before the rise of the Soviet Union., with a much more modern electronic, with what were once heavy weight security alarms attached. Yep, almost twenty years old... Since they had not been sure what to bring, Catwoman had brought just about every piece of lock picking equipment she had. Since Harley always carried that damn gym bag, they had space for it. "Harley, hand me the Hollywell 7-21-J." She instructed. There was a muffled reply, and she looked back.

Harley was digging in the bag industriously. She would have looked very professional, except that there was a drummie clamped in her mouth as she did. Catwoman reached across, snagging the piece, and pulled. Harley's teeth were sunk into it, so rather than ripping free, it dragged her along until they were eye to eye. "Bite down hard." Catwoman said, laughter in her voice. As Harley did as instructed, Catwoman pulled the rest away. "Did you save me one?"

"Uh-huh!" Harley replied helpfully, then swallowed. "You bet, Cats! Ivy didn't want hers, so I was just finishing it off. I got yours right here!" She waved the hand holding the bag; there was indeed another drummie between her pinky and third fingers. It looked to be the biggest of the lot. "I was real careful too, didn't get grease or sauce on anything! See?" She pointed at Ivy who helpfully held up her arm, which had a towel draped over it as a butler might.

"I see that. Do you have the Hollywell 7-21-J?"

Harley pulled it out of the bag, spotlessly clean, and Catwoman made swift work of the lock. As the door opened, and both of her cohorts slid through, Harley pulled the other towel out of the bag, still wrapped around the bones of the other drummies, and carefully wedged it in the space the door's latch would occupy before following. "Five second rule applies..."

Ivy cocked her head and nodded at Harley's work. "Five second rule?"

Harley grinned. "When in rooms with only one way out, make sure it takes at least five seconds to close the door."
Ivy pursed her lips thoughtfully as she sashayed in. That makes a lot of sense.

The armored door opened, not on a small cramped space, but into a cellar viewing room. Catwoman motioned the others to stay at the door as she padded over every inch of the floor to assure that there were no traps. She found one, and wanted to grin when she did. A few minutes work deactivated it, and Catwoman turned her attention to the contents of the room. Three wingback chairs and a small coffee table rested in the center of the room. Obviously the man doesn't bring many people to look at his private collection, and on the walls were wonders. Catwoman stared at them, unable to catalogue their worth. Only two were on Oracle's wish list, but she recognized four more recorded as lost for almost a century! And there were others that she didn't recognize by name, but would bet her payday she could name the artists of...

Ivy glanced at Catwoman, who was standing with her jaw slack, looking wildly at the walls. After a minute or two of silence, she commented. "What we need now is a wine and cheese board... So we're here for that one?" Ivy asked, pointing.

Harley was sauntering around the room, peering at the paintings like she was examining individual brushstrokes. She straightened in front of one off to the side. "Y'know, I nevah understand these things... but this one I like." She looked over at Cats. "Maybe we can take this one too?" But it was clear she was a bit overwhelmed by the room.

Catwoman shook her head as if coming out of shock. Then she started pointing at other paintings. "Ivy, that is Oranges and Apples, lost since 1890! That is Handlemann's Expulsion from Eden! And that one - that one, I swear, that looks like Apolliao's Orpheus and Euridice, but it's been lost for so long, there's only descriptions and a single black-and-white photo of the piece! I don't even know if there's a recovery on it... But Oranges and Apples, and the Expulsion, if Oracle can validate them, we could likely triple our take on this job!"

Ivy looked at them, and sniffed. "What do you want to do? Take them all?"

Selina looked at them. "Well, yes."

Harley looked at the paintings, then at the collapsed carrier she had brought. "We need more carriers. Oh, and I want this one, the one that's not finished."

"What?" Ivy and Catwoman chorused involuntarily. They came over, and Catwoman's jaw dropped again. What on Earth was a Nagel doing in the room? And an unfinished Nagel, at that? This was
going to need a new plan...

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While Harley and Ivy stayed in the vault, Catwoman went back to the door and recalled Munin. "Oracle, you need to see what we're dealing with."

Oracle sighed and brought the backup plan online, redirecting a Batman Inc. satellite to keep an eye on the estate. She grimaced as she checked the time; Bruce was definitely up, and not currently officially occupied with Wayne Enterprises business; he was absolutely going to notice...

By the time Catwoman was back in the vault, Ivy and Harley were already there, gathered in front of the unfinished Nagel. From a strictly monetary point of view, it wasn't even chump change compared to the next least of the beauties in the room... but Harley liked the Nagel...

Harley waved when Oracle's visual interface came up. "Hiya, O! Hey, guess where we are! We couldn't have done it without ya! I always knew you had it in you! Welcome to the Rogues!"

Harley could not have timed it better if she had been psychic, and trying really, really hard. Barbara snarfed her hot coffee, and then reflexively sprayed it all over her console... just as Bruce came up on an auxiliary screen. Her expression was priceless.

Catwoman, sublimely unaware of events in the ClockTower, was making a concise report of the contents of the room. She finished in front of the Nagel. "I don't understand this collection, Oracle. We have sixteen Old Masters, about two dozen Romantics and post-Romantics, another dozen Impressionists... and the Nagel. It's like three separate collections in the same room, and storing the extra..."

Oracle was frantically cross-referencing the artworks with recovery postings. Her voice was distracted as she worked, even thru the Oracle interface. "Hobbies sometimes span generations. Voegel's grandfather was in World War One, and those painting missing since then could have been grabbed then. His Father was in during the Second World War. You're right, the Nagel doesn't make sense, though..." Data was coming in, and the news was good and, not good. Almost half of the artworks had recoveries attached; the others had simply been missing too long. Most of them were believed destroyed... The Nagel was interesting, though.

"Catwoman, over two dozen in there have recoveries attached. The rest have either been missing..."
"too long, are presumed destroyed, or are not listed." Munin slid to the side, then hung motionless in front of the Nagel. "I have one possible lead on this one. Right before he died, Nagel supposedly received a commission from Steve Jobs: The Superbowl ad for the Mac. It was never found, and it could not be confirmed it was ever even begun. This might be it."

"God, I wonder what Apple would give for it now... or Job's family..?" Catwoman mused,

"You can't take them all, Catwoman. Some of those artworks use paints that still might not be dry even after centuries." Oracle's voice seemed to add a shrug. "You're not getting a recovery for something if it's damaged. The Nagel I can't even begin to guess; it would be chump change, compared to all the others, even allowing for it being his last. And it's far too big."

Harley held her voice to a murmur, but otherwise couldn't contain herself. "But O! I like it! Can't we take it? PLEEASE??"

Oracle sighed. "It would look good between your pictures of the kitten's picnic and the dogs playing poker, Harley..." A laser shot out, and the LBB turned smoothly in the air as it scanned. "I've got a scan of the work. I'll print it out for you, hon."

Harley nodded, not unhappy. "Okay, that works. Thanks, O!"

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The Sirens were on the way out with the three paintings when Murphy struck. They were almost at the kitchen door when there was a soft sound on the stairs to the upper floor. Harley spun, the gun coming up, but she reversed quickly, for it was a girl of perhaps nine, looking at them in wonder.

Harley slung the gun. "Liebchen, what are you doing up?"

"I wanted some water, Frulein. Are you faeries?" She asked.

Harley was caught off balance, then suddenly gave her a grin. "Yes. We are art faeries. Whenever someone takes something that doesn't belong to them, we are sent to take it back."
“It could not be papa.” The little girl commented. “He thinks it is horrible to steal even a paperclip.” She sipped again. “It must be Grosspapa. I love him, but he is not a nice man to others.” She opined. “But he is up very early.”

Oracle’s voice interrupted, hard and sharp. "Alert. External door to the kitchen has been opened. Silent alarms are tripped… Eight men, all armed, pistols and AK-74s. The family has no guards available, you three are it. Contact imminent."

Harley was looking before she asked who. The intruders were typical Mafia muscle, black balaclavas and waving their weapons around like the muzzles could ward off evil spirits. They froze when they saw the three women.

“Be still, suki.” One snarled. “We came for her.” His muzzle indicated the girl, who was now behind Harley. "Try to stop us and you die.”

“Suki?” Harley commented. “Cats… Did he call us what I think he did?”

“Yes, he did.” Selina snarled.

“Was ist?” A male voice roared. Two of the men raised their guns aiming up at the elderly man who had appeared at the top of the stairs.

The spokesman sneered. “We take the girl to convince you to work with us.”

Harley laughed, attracting everyone's attention. “Over my dead body. Liebchen, I need you to stand over there by the cabinet.” The girl quickly complied, getting behind the heavy cover.

“As you Americans would say, it can be arranged.” The spokesman stepped forward, the pistol with its silencer lifting to aim between her eyes.

“Hey Schatzie, want to see a magic trick?” Harley looked down the barrel unblinkingly. “But you have to close your eyes!” She handed the girl the grip of her maul.

“But I cannot see with my eyes closed!” The girl protested.
Harley was insistent. “Just do it.”

The girl gave a put upon sigh, and closed her eyes. Harley's hand snapped out, catching the slide of the man's pistol, sliding it back far enough to disengage, then her asp snapped out in her other hand and she smacked it against the side of his head. "Ivy!"

Ivy merely reached out, and the two Ficus beside the door ensnared the men with the submachine guns, tearing the weapons from their grasps even as they were wrapped up in the leaves.

For her part, Catwoman drew and snapped her whip, spinning it around the last man's neck, then jerked him close enough to snap a kick into his face, sending him flying into the other men in the hallway. Then she and Harley were in their midst, and the thugs did not stand a chance before women who have stood against Batman. The men went down almost as if choreographed.

Harley looked around, then back at the girl. “Now open your eyes.” The girl did, then at the men laying on the floor.

“How did you do that?” She gasped.

Harley grinned and winked. “Oh, we have our ways.”

Back in Gotham, Oracle and Batman sat back in their respective chairs in their respective lairs and breathed sighs of relief.

As the girl went running up the stairs to her father, Harley knelt and started searching the first goon. "Would'a been more fun if I'd had grenades..."

"What are you doing, Harley, looking for their wallets?" Catwoman asked teasingly.

Ivy's attention turned to the old man coming down the stairs, pistol still in his hand. "You don't need that, I don't think..." She murmured gently. "We're not threats to you or yours."
The elder Herr Voegel looked at the pistol, then slid it into the pocket of his robe. "Quite." He said in only slightly accented English.

Harley didn't look up as she worked. "Looting the dead, of course! I mean sleeping, cuz they're still breathing an' all. I'm grabbing their guns an' clips! Wouldn't do to leave 'em laying around with a kid in the house, you know? Nevah know what mischief she might get up to. Besides, I know how to use 'em better. Huh. Hey Cats, look!" She held up a pair of metallic ovals with handles and pins. "Grenades!"

She glanced up at Catwoman, who did not look happy. "Hey, you said not to bring any, not that I couldn't pick them up on the way out!" She dangled one by the pull ring, which promptly fell free. Faster than anyone could blink, Harley grabbed the explosive before the spoon could shift. "Besides, if I don't keep them, you never know when these pins might fall out!"

Catwoman looked as if she was getting a headache. "Harley... Just put them in your bag. If, IF, mind you, we need them on the way out, all right. But they are NOT going on the plane with us."

Harley grinned as she looted the second fallen thug of his grenades, and his pistol. "Oh heck no! Even though these are just flash-bangs, it'd be a waste of good explosives to give 'em to the customs goons!" She deftly retrieved two more, and another pistol. "Huh... different gun. I'll just package all this up when we're ready to go an' send it to Pengy! He'll keep 'em for me, he always does..."

Down the hallway, Ivy softly giggled as she and the elder Voegel witnessed the byplay. I do love seeing her with new toys... she thought.

Catwoman was checking the carrier with the priceless artworks securely fastened within. "Harley, we are so going to have to have a talk about this... obsession you have with things that go boom..."

Whatever she was going to say next was interrupted by Harley's squeal of delight. "Oh here we go! This guy has Willie Petes! These are always fun. Firefly was always looking for these, and I never gave 'im any!" She looked archly at Catwoman. "Now, THERE'S a guy what has an obsession. Besides..." She moved on to thug number four, deftly kicking him in the side of his head as he started to moan. "The shrink me an' Ivy talk to has it on the list, Cats." Harley grinned. "But I'm sure she'd like to hear from you too!"

Catwoman stood, satisfied that the carrier was secure. "Not if she has to report it to the police, Harley..."
Harley shook her head. "Nah, patient confidentiality covers me as long as we're talking about stuff in the past, Cats. Trust me, I know. Now, if I talked about stuff I wanted to do, or was PLANNING to do, then, yeah. But I know better than that..."

Ivy's voice was amused. "The advantage of having been both Doctor and patient, eh Harley?"

Harley had worked her way down to the two goons wrapped in ficus leaves. She deftly tapped each of them with her asp, and they slumped unconscious. Unbidden, Ivy commanded them released, and Harley deftly relieved them of two grenades each, two pistols, and a total of four clips for the folding stock AK-74s they had been carrying. "Thanks Ivy..."

"De nada, Harley. You done there?"

Harley was shoving one of the AKs in her bag, which was now bulging. "Yehp. This'll do till I find something with a belt-feed... Do they make those over here, Cats?"

Catwoman snorted. "You're asking me? Ask Batman."

Harley snorted. "Like he'd tell me... Hey. You". She nudged one of the goons. "You know where I can get a belt feed something or other? Heavy is fine, I can handle it..." She sighed and looked back at the rest of the Sirens. "He's still sleeping."

The elder Voegel leaned over to Catwoman. "Is she always like this?"

Catwoman snorted. "Sometimes she's worse. Harley, We. Are. Leaving...!"

Harley was looking the last of the goons over. "Hey, this one's almost as cute as the gate guard. But that turtleneck, ugh..." So saying, she scooped up her bag with one hand and the other AK-74 with the other, and rejoined everyone at the foot of the stairs.

She hefted the weapon in her hand. "Think we should leave this for Grandpaw? He looks like he knows his way around a gun." She looked upstairs, where the daughter and her father could be seen. "Dunno about the son, though, he looks mousey. Of course, the Hatter does too..." She offered the assault rifle to the elderly man. "You want it? Or we can make 'em go away for ya..."
The elder Voegel blinked at the modern weapon. "I still have my old StG 45 Sturmgewehr from the war, so no, thank you."

Harley grinned and slung the weapon expertly. "Suit yerself! More for those of us as likes 'em!" She glanced at Catwoman. "Aw, Cats, what? You got that look in your eye..."

Catwoman's headache was coming on strong. "Harley, we do not have time for this. So let's take what we came for and go."

Harley grinned and twirled in a pirouette. "S'Okies, I'm good!" She looked at the elder Voegel questioningly. "You ain't gonna make a fuss, are ya?"

The man shook his head, perversely amused at the American who had just in absolute sincerity offered him an assault rifle and was now asking if he wanted to make an issue of being robbed. "Oh no. You acted to protect my son and my grand daughter. Besides which..." He looked at all three of them. "I know who you are. I am not so foolish, even if I had not just watched you take down eight men. Speaking of which, what of my men?"

Ivy answered. "They are essentially unharmed and are merely sleeping. We drugged them. They ought to be waking soon."

"So. Gerhardt, why do you not take Helga and go to the flat in Bonn for a week or two? You can walk our guests out, and I'll clean up here."

Part 10d: In conclusion

"...and that is how we became semi-honest women! Gramps died a month later, in his sleep; the kid is following the family traditions, and is studying art in one or another of the private schools in Europe..."
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

So… time to get to that dance off alluded to several chapters ago. I fear this will be the prelude to a wicked next chapter (grin). Oh, and a shout out to the comic Empowered by Adam Warren (you’ll see why) and I some stolen dialog from Empowered as well. Empowered is a great comic, and is now being published online, but (warning!) it has a significant amount of adult naughtily content (but the story, when it’s not being naughty, is great). Oh, and he did the Dirty Pair comic as well (another comic that I love and own). Hmm, I actually own most of his work now that I think about it.

Congrats to LordGrise on the Penguin and… (you’ll see) dialog.

Part 11a: THREE DAYS LATER

Batman gave more of a sigh of minor despair then a bat grunt as he closed the PDF file of the physical magazine. It was mostly Ivy and Harley, but there were also pictures of most of the newcomers; with a two page spread of Mazikeen, which, considering the size of her bosom, and the quantity on display, was definitely needed. Metas in general seemed to wear less and less each year... was his internal thought. At least there were no photos of Selina, Cassandra, or…. hmmm…. Illyana for that matter. A fact that gave him pause. No photos of any of the Batclan, not that Illyana was part of the Batclan but… likely not a coincidence. A more contemplative grunt came forth as he thought about the wording of the toast they had offered, and how any inappropriate information or disclosures involving any of the Batcan that night would not count as a fun time. Then a second bat grunt that definitely communicated the phrase ‘Oh Dear…’ as he recalled what he knew of Magik’s definition of fun; suffice it to say that it was not quite in sync with his definition.

He returned to the ongoing log with a grunt of Bat satisfaction as he opened the next section. Selina had included a MP4 file of Cassandra dancing with Leonard Cohen. Bruce watched the dance with approval and more then a little surprise. To his knowledge, she had never danced before, something he had intended to rectify at some point, but it appeared Mr. Cohen had taken that from his hands, or at least begun the process. Her willingness to even do so in public spoke volumes to him concerning the improvements to her socialization. Afterwards he watched a second time, like any proud father would.

He then returned to his review of the log, and promptly groaned. But of course Harley was unable to keep a secret for even one day, no, not even one hour... Damn it, he just knew this was going to be trouble.
Part 11b: Two-Face

Two-Face was bored.

The night was warm, and storms were supposedly scheduled to roll in after two AM, but the 24/7 weather channel was suddenly hedging their bets due to some surprise high pressure zone showing up out of the blue. He grimaced, thinking of all the times he had experienced the weather over Gotham as it went sideways, and fingered his coin in his pocket. If only the weather could be that easy...

His gang had irons in the fire... but nothing was to go hot tonight, or even this week, which left him without much to do. He flipped thru the stations on his pirated cable TV service some more... and stopped as a news blip played on the fifteen minutes all-news all-the-time station. Penguin's club... and the lovely, mysterious Bad Girlz who were sashaying in on the red carpet to the entrance of the Iceberg Lounge. He recognized Ivy and Harley as they walked the walk... But who were the one in haute couture Bat-theme walking from the same limo? And he was certain that was the Catmobile behind the limo. He impatiently paced the room as the channel relayed the sports scores and stories (The Gotham Rogues had picked up three first-round picks, Two-Face noted) and then the news, international and then national both... and then finally the local news played again, and Two-Face could watch the entire bevy enter. Without even consciously thinking, the coin was glittering as it fell into his hand, heads, heads, and heads... and so it was an elegant two toned silk double-breasted suit, a wad of cash, and the Lincoln town car, down to his preferred entrance into the maze of tunnels under Gotham and the Rogue's bar.

While on the way, Two-Face made a phone call, to arrange a 'special booth'. He wanted to see them himself, and Leonard Cohen was not to be missed if opportunity presented itself.

When Two-Face walked in a quarter of an hour later, Wren was waiting for him. "Good evening, sir. Your usual double scotch is awaiting you with is Mr. Cobblepot. If you would follow me?"

Part 11c: Sales talk

Selina rolled her eyes a bit as Harley finished her story. Selina definitely had different memories of the events, for one she was sure she’d not eaten any drummies... but best to just let it go.
Several of the girls at the table began to softly chatter with Cassandra (Jubilee, Dani, Laura, Harley, and Ivy). Cassandra, while wearing a three quarter face mask, definitely gave the impression of being very pleased about the dance. Harley and Ivy both looked like they were putting on a brave face to hide their disappointment at not being the one selected by Leonard.

And then Harley's cell phone quietly jangled like an old fashioned cash register. Harley took a look, and the only thing missing from her double-take was the screech of a record player needle permanently scarring a vinyl record. *Hell yeah! They all just sold! All of them!* And then Harley showed the cell phone to Ivy, whose jaw dropped. They whispered a moment before Harley grabbed Selina, likewise showing her the cell phone screen. Selina blinked, and Illyana leaned over to see, which ended with the cell phone making the rounds of the table, while Harley jumped up on her chair. Her voice bugled clearly thru the entire room.

"Jaye! Gimme the best in the house, those Chatateau bottles with the white cloth labels an'na red writing! Those two big gold ones in'na stasis cooler! We drinkin' the BEST stuff tonight! JAYE!"

Jaye hurried over, intensely aware that a non-trivial selection of the cream of Gotham, as in, everyone in the room, was staring at Harley as she continued to gesticulate. Jaye spoke quietly but intensely as she got into range of the table. "Harley, your tab won't begin to stretch..." Dani tossed the phone up to Harley, who one-handed it, spun it around expertly, and shoved it in Jaye's face. Jaye's eyes widened. "Holy bejesus..." Her face split in a grin to match Harley's as they high-fived. "You got it, girl! Right away, we just got to get them uncased! WREN!" And with that Jaye ran from the room as murmuring sprang forth from more then a few tables. Leonard raised an eyebrow and quietly gestured for his band to go to song selection twenty five. He had a feeling that he shouldn't overshadow what was about to happen.

**Part 11d: A few minutes earlier**

Cobblepot looked up as Wren held the door open to the covert box suite, one of several situated into the wall behind and slightly above the table seating that ringed the dance floor. Two-Face nodded as he entered; while the two men were not and never had been friends, they had history, and respect for each other. "Cobblepot..." Was Two-Face's laconic greeting as he slid past the young lady and sat down, angling himself he could see the door, his host, and the floor. "Full house I see. Cohen's a good act for you..."

Two-Face dropped three largish pieces of ice into his rock glass, cracked open the bottle of double-malt scotch previously left by Wren, and poured a most generous dollop. He raised his glass, even
as Penguin raised his brandy snifter, and they both sipped appreciatively while Cohen sang. Once done, Cohen stepping to a small table for a mouthful of water and a small break before beginning his next selection. That’s when Harley stood on her chair and started her performance, causing Cobblepot to likewise jump to his feet.

Penguin groaned as he remembered what happened the last time Harley Quinn was refused something she wanted (and with a full house of the Gotham’s best as innocent bystanders and witnesses!!) Why… The insurance payouts alone would make the national news if she behaved like last time! Wren took one glance and ran out the door to back up Jaye as the Penguin sat back down with a groan of anticipated pain. But moments later he received a text on his cell phone. Upon examination his eyebrows rose, causing his monocle to fall free to rest on its silken cord upon his vest, then he hurriedly tapped in a short response. He then reseated his monocle and pocketed the cell phone before he sipped his drink with attempted casualness, while making a comment to Harvey.

“Observe, you don’t see this every day...”

Wren and Jaye were coming out to the Bad Girlz table, as Cohen sipped from his water and watched the drama unfolding. The double size bottles the ladies carried were hit by spotlights as they came forth. They were large, golden, and bore the incarnadine-on-linen script of La Chateau Mont-Genalise du Lac. Gasps arose from the more knowing of the cognoscenti in the audience.

Two Face commented as he sipped his scotch. “A pair of double magnums... of... Chateau Mont-Genalise du Lac I believe? I recognize the label as I once stole a crate. Insanely expensive stuff, thirty thou or more for a regular bottle. Worth it, though. Are they real, or... counterfeit?” A snort of a laugh. “Brave move, if they’re fake.”

Penguin snorted in dismissal before taking another sip of his drink. ”Harvey, would you attempt to pass off such upon Selina? The others perhaps, but with her I wouldn't dare. She might know even before she ever took a sip, but certainly afterwards.”

Two-Face thought a moment, and likewise sipped more of his scotch before replying.

"Mmm... No. No, I would not. You're right, she would know, especially considering who her boyfriend is. I wouldn't put it past her to bathe in the stuff from time to time, knowing Wayne's tendencies to... excessiveness. So who are these others calling themselves the Bad Girlz...? Pammy and Harley are the only two I know for sure, although that must be Catwoman based upon her strut, and I did see the Catmobile on the TV before I came down. The other blonde I don't know... And the one dressed Bat themed...” He snorted a guffaw. "The Bat won't be happy at that. But...” He raised his glass in a mock toast. “Cheers to this Mazikeen."
Penguin adjusted his monocle a tad. "The 'other blonde' is known to us, the one other than Harley. She’s... a long time associate, but one rarely seen. I believe she's the hostess tonight, as it were, although with Selina present that may no longer be true." Hmmm… he thought to himself, he had been considering visiting the table, but now after spending such an amount… why, he must make an appearance.

“Cat plays second fiddle to no one.” Snorted Harvey while focusing his attention on Mazikeen. Dark, sensuous, and dangerous if that battleaxe she’d been waving about on TV was any indication. Hmmm, suffice it to say, both sides of Harvey were in agreement as to their interest.

I mean… bosoms and battle? What was there not to like?

**Part 11e: Girl talk**

Moments later the two double magnums were delivered, along with champagne flutes to properly display the drinks. Both bottles were cracked open, and all glasses were generously filled and partaken from, except for Jubilee. Who had to settle for more blood wine.

Cassandra was certain that there was something she was supposed to remember, but… *must not be important* she thought as she first sipped, and then downed her glass in a long slow series of swallows; if it was important then Selina would remind her was the fading thought. The wine was like… wow… A reaction that likewise came from all the other women, who then promptly refilled their glasses, after first sending a glass over to Leonard.

Which just leaves Jubilee looked longingly at her full glass. “Wish... wish I could try it.”

A statement that prompted Illyana to wet her finger with some of the wine and hold it up in the air, like she was trying to find the direction of the wind. Then with a smirk she said. “Give it a try.”

The smirk drew a suspicious stare from Jubilee. “Really bad things happen when I try to drink something other then blood.”

“Like what?” Inquired Harley. Dani, having seen the reaction in question, shuddered lightly.
“Gross things.” Replied Jubilee with a grimace. “Like heaving up everything.”

A statement that prompted those sitting next to Jubilee to move their chairs back a bit at the thought of a vomiting vampire.

“Trust me, take a sip.” Was Illyana’s reply.

“Why? Did you do some kind of spell?”

“Naa, it just that that the chaos level is off the scale, so I think you’re covered for tonight. Call it a special situation, and you’re in the heart of it.” Normally such levels of chaos would have concerned Illyana but… just like Cassandra, the thought just drifted away.

Jubilee showed the subtle side that so defined her. “If not I’m barfing right at you.” Okay… not so subtle but still very Jubilee. She took a tiny tiny sip and…

“WOW! That’s… good!”

“Of course it is.” Purred Selina as Jubilee took a sip, and then an even longer sip. Illyana’s chaos statement had… concerned her? No matter, things were fine as Leonard’s next song washed away her, and Cassandra’s, concerns about chaos levels statement.

Illyana smiled as she sipped and the music resumed, the smile few ever saw. Yes, Cat’s definition of a Fun Time had gone into play, and while Harley may have placed the order, all bills came to her tonight. She took a deep mouthful, and held out the flute for the second pouring. Illyana didn’t care about the costs, financial or otherwise; Hell Lord Dinners Club Card are accepted everywhere but one place (and that place only takes American Express). Her smile became a touch more wicked as she noticed that both the double magnums were now breathing the lightest blue tinge of vapors...

Leonard began his next song, it was You want it Darker. and his dark lyrics filled the room.

*If you are the dealer, I'm out of the game*

*If you are the healer, it means I'm broken and lame*
If thine is the glory then mine must be the shame
You want it darker
We kill the flame

Magnified, sanctified, be thy holy name
Vilified, crucified, in the human frame
A million candles burning for the help that never came
You want it darker

Hineni, hineni
I'm ready, my lord

There's a lover in the story
But the story's still the same
There's a lullaby for suffering
And a paradox to blame
But it's written in the scriptures
And it's not some idle claim
You want it darker
We kill the flame

They're lining up the prisoners
And the guards are taking aim
I struggled with some demons
They were middle class and tame
I didn't know I had permission to murder and to maim
You want...

Hineni, hineni
I'm ready, my lord

Vilified, crucified, in the human frame
A million candles burning for the love that never came
You want it darker
We kill the flame

If you are the dealer, let me out of the game
If you are the healer, I'm broken and lame
If thine is the glory, mine must be the shame
You want it darker

Hineni, hineni
Hineni, hineni
I'm ready, my lord

Hineni
Hineni, hineni
Hineni

Cheers and applause from the crowd. With that it was time for another short break as a plate of various hors d’oeuvres arrived (including the little shrimp thingies that Selina loved). That’s when Dani purposed a question to the table as she munched. “Who’s the most scary hero? Meaning somebody the bad guys wet themselves over? I’ll start and no repeats, so pick somebody else if your pick is already selected. Illyana goes last.”

The circular seating order was:

Illyana
Mazikeen
Harley
Dani started. "Wolverine is my pick." Which earned her a glare from Jubilee as that would have been her choice. "He totally freaks out people with the crazy smile of his and the popping of his claws. Man, you should see the people scramble to flee." Then she turned to Ivy, "Your turn."

A look of thought, she decided to not say the Bat as Ivy wanted to leave that to Selina, but that left her grasping for somebody. In the end she blurted out "Starfire." To looks of confusion by all but Harley, whose turn was next.

"Yeah, I can relate Red. She is just sexy as hell, makes all of us other gals just look inadequate when she's in the room, and she dresses as skimpily as well. Talk about side boob for miles, and orange at that! But she has the highest body count of any of the Titans, and when she loses it, not just her hair burns; so do her eyes. I don't want none when she's like that!" She sipped delicately. "Now, my pick would be Nightwing when he's had a bad day..." Harley was likewise leaving the Bat for Selina.

Mazikeen’s answer was rather obvious in hindsight. "That would be me. All the boys wet themselves in hell when they first get there, specially when I whip out my castrator knife." Which she promptly did and proceeded to give a graphic description that made several of the surrounding tables uncomfortable. Jubilee wondered just how the hell the topic of castration had resurfaced yet again! Harley, on the other hand, was busy taking notes on a few napkins.

Mazikeen ended with acting out the throwing of something into a fire, and then it was Laura’s turn, as Illyana was being skipped until last. Her choice had agreement nods and sips from all the Marvel gals.

"I would go with Daredevil."

Then it was Selina’s turn and of course she said "Batman." Her smile was as wicked as any as she
Cassandra had to be nudged as she was spacing out. “Oh... um...” Darn it, she was giving up a hint to a secret. “Um... Raven. Not my story to tell...”

Jubilee gleefully announced. “Deadpool!” To the groans of all present.

And then it was time for Illyana. Why had Dani said Illyana had to go last? Well, Illyana always had odd things to say in such situations, weird as in fun. Boom-Boom had said it best, just more of Illyana’s weird shit. Which if you dimension hop, is rather the norm. Dani was expecting Illyana to say Doctor Doom but instead she said...

“My first choice would be Maidman, my second choice would Kei and Yuri.”

“Maidman?” Was the universal outcry from the table. “Who the hell is that?”

“He’s this alternate dimension hero, dresses up in this French maid outfit and has a broom that is filled will all kinds of science thingies. Bumped into this group called the Superhomeys when I was playing dimensional tourist. They thought I was an invading demon, and so there was this big fight before it all worked out. I met Maidman at the big karaoke party that night, man he has this creepy voice, sounds like broken glass, and apparently the criminals are all freaked out by his panty flashing, with a big groin bulge I might add. He’s baseline human but loves to beat up criminals. I think it’s a sexual identity thing for the criminals, like they’re afraid he’s going to do something really nasty with that broom of his. Anyway, I ended up singing ‘I did it my way’ with the Violator of Worlds, who is another demon lord, but he’s is imprisoned in a set of power draining bondage gear, he’s kind of a geek in the demon world. He lives on Emp’s coffee table because of city zoning laws and loves to talk in the third person. Trust me, you have not seen a kegger until you see the Superhomeys have a kegger. Emp is nice, but Sister Spookie and I did not get along at all as she really hates blondes. No loss that she skipped the party.” Illyana sipped, and held out her flute for a third pouring, which Jaye promptly provided.

Strike, and a home run on Illyana weirdness, thought Dani.

“What about Kei and Yuri? Who are they?” Asked Cassandra, not believing a word of this.

“Trouble consultants with really bad luck. They work for a group called World Welfare Works Association or 3WA for short. They have this cool panther like cat with them as well. I bumped
into them once on a little… problem. Which I think got a lot worse after they showed up, but not really their fault that the comet hit the space station. But that bad luck of theirs has everybody there terrified of them. I liked them. They're also into karaoke, and I think their cats cool.”

BEGIN ILLYANA FLASHBACK

VORP!

That was how it began. One second Illyana was sitting on a park bench feeding some nice ducks and the next second she was blasted in the air and across the pond by a massive power blast that sounded like ‘VORP’ while a female voice behind her screamed insults as the ducks scattered.

“How dare thy attempt to pilfer my look with thy exceedingly miniscularily dimensioned midriff! Unto you shall be a most atrocious beat-down you filthy blonde monkey! That look is trademarked, and my boot shall enforce it upon thy rump, oh demonic strumpet!”

Illyana’s drink has likewise been blasted (a tea based coco drink called an Aztec mocha, Illyana had just discovered it and was totally loving), and it was now rather all over her. And, because Illyana was dressed in her usual black garb, more then a little had gone down her chest through her boob window.

Horns grew upon Illyana’s head as a devil tail snapped into existence. She was on the downward descent when she noticed some costumed idiot striking a heroic poise below her while he raised his fist to strike at her. "I strike the poise heroic, and give forth the challenge of Scuse me while I cry forth havoc!" Was his most unremarkable and annoying cry of war, lame due to his wont of endless repetition.

Illyana’s soul sword flashed into existence as she descended upon Major Havoc and lo did'st she smite him down. Smite him down with great smiting so that he did'st blubber and cry out for she who spawned him even as he sorely befouled his brightly colored breeches with numbers both one and two. Struck down he was, with the following ringing in his ears: “Woe unto thee, thou'st who doth resemble the hindquarters of a most enormous equine!”

What that Illyana turned and blocked another VORP of a magical strike from the unknown assailant. An assailant who was being harassed by the before mentioned ducks, as the ducks were annoyed, mightily annoyed. Ducks know an easy mark when they see one, and Illyana had been a gold mine of unending tasty treats, whereas her assailant was marked with the secret duck stigma known only to those most fowl, and those wise in the ways of the bird, a secret mark that showed
she never fed the creatures of the air.

“*What manner of a cluelessly caviling comprehension-challenged cretin art thou? And how dares’t thou cowardly strike upon my most trim and athletic posterior!*” Cried out the wench of Magik at the unknown assailant.

And lo did Sistah Spooky fly forth from the avian squad of fowl pecking harassment and excrement besmirching. Similarly garbed was she, dressed in darkest blue with midriff similarly bare but no boob of window to show forth the line of cleavage to capture the male gaze. Sistah was as dark of skin as the wench of Magik was light. Likewise long gloves did she wear but different was the cloak and hood that shielded the identity secret of Sistah Spooky.

“*Presumptuous primate!*” Volleyed back Spooky as a much unpleasant comparison of the wench of Magik was made with a screech that resembled the sound of thousand felines in direst estrus. “*Begone you middlingly mediocre hellfire hussy!*” As Spooky let loose more magical blasts, resembling greatly the blaster of laser from the War of Stars, as wielded by the troupers of storm. And a mighty sound was let loose as the magic blasts went forth.

**PHEW!**

**PHEW! PHEW! PHEW!**

**PHEW!**

And her assault helped Spokey, and her pert behind, but not. Mighty did the two wenches of magic contest, and lo, more of the Superhomeys didst come to the aid of their boon companion, but it was for naught as the wench of Magik did strike them all down, strike them down with great bitchatitude as she bound them all in a manor that you, Alpha wench, are most familiar with! Bound with the cry. “*Mute thyself, oh maddeningly mewling morons of unprovoked mayhem!*”

“*And the Caged Demonwolf’s retelling is verbally correct?*” Inquired Ninjette (Kozue Kaburagi, female ninja from New Jersey) of Emp. Ninjette was with Empowered (Elissa Megan Powers, also know as Emp) and Thugboy (Boyfriend of Empowered), scattered upon the couch were they, as the Merciless Monarch of Menace recounted the tale.

“*He whose name is too scary to be spoke, The Fusion-Phallused Molester of Worlds, is correct in describing the altercation that took pace at Ducky park.*” Sighed Emp. “*This… demon girl was present and Spooky decided that she had to be a villain, the word choice is his but they kind of recount what was said that in the most entertaining of ways.*”
The before mentioned Violator of Worlds was currently imprisoned in a set of power draining bondage gear and resided on the living room coffee table, his empire reduced to now but the remote control of the television.

“I take it she’s blonde.” Ascertained Ninjette as she took a sip of her beer.

“Massively, and somewhat dressed as Spooky, which I think really pissed off Spooky.” Replied Emp.

“So how did the fight end?”

“I got there late, and I asked her if she was actually attacking, as all she did to the others was disarm and tie everybody up before proceeding to shout at them. Turns out she’s just a tourist. She ended up getting invited to tonight’s Karaoke kegger. And Yea! I didn’t get tied up that time! Oh, and the horns and devil tail faded after the fight.”

The eldritch 12-cylinder engine of destruction much preferred his rendition of the events and he continued to recount the tale to the Alpha wench, to the female friend of her bosom and the male fondler of her bosom. “Jackanapes! Cease thy dullard interruptions and let the Cataclysmic Snuffer of Civilizations continue!”

“Geez, okay, no need to get worked up oh Silver-Tongued Sovereign of the Spaceways.” Answered back Elissa. “Um… do you know her by chance?”

Thus answered the Nigh-Omniscient Netherlord. “The All-Knowing Hellspawn has heard of her, but not yet met. Fated are we to sing the song of absolute triumph this very night as we duet My Way?” With that the Cosmic Cognoscente continued his version of events.

“And thus verily cried the wench of Magik. ‘A smiting upon thy backsides shall be thy reward, oh ye profanely, dystopianaically dullard of a doxy, for besmirching my gaze arresting cleavage of display!’ And with that did the wench of Magik did spank the quivering backside of the before mentioned pert behind possessed by the wench named Spooky with the flat of her giant sword. Great was the lamentations of the punished as she…”

“Really?” Whispered Ninjette to Elissa.
Elissa whispered back. “I think... maybe only twice. She was really annoyed about what happened to her drink.”

END ILLYANA FLASHBACK

Part 11f: Opportunity strikes

Illyana suddenly went still, and then her phone rang a few seconds later. She answered it and began a conversation with Skeeter (as told in Chapter 8). She sighed a bit and refilled her glass with more of the wine; she definitely wanted to be lubricated for this conversation.

Finally... Illyana was distracted and Mazikeen could return to baiting the vampire. Mazikeen took the opportunity to start pointing out some older men in the audience, but more like geriatrics, and asking Jubilee’s opinion as to their desirability.

“Is that one wrinkled enough?”

“Almost no hair on that one... he should do.”

“Yeah he looks like he has a bit of the shakes, think of it as extra stimulation.”

Jubilee’s glares and replies were ignored by an apparently oblivious Mazikeen. Jubilee’s replies were mostly about the taste of demons in sexual practices and dressing habits (and a reference to Mazikeen as Count Rackula which Mazikeen took as a complement).

Then Selina’s phone rang as Barbara called, after some words, both Cassandra and Selina refilled their glasses as well. Both Harvey and Ivy were watching the Jubilee and Mazikeen interactions with amusement, and apparently had made a silent bet as who would lose their tempter first; Ivy picked Mazikeen.

Laura and Dani were enthralled by the music (Leonard has started singing again) and were not paying attention to the growing fight, likewise Illyana, Selina, and Cassandra.
It was Mazikeen’s last comment that finally pushed Jubilee’s button - right thru the snap-down cover.

“Now that’s full head of silver hair. Opps… female, my mistake… unless… golden girls lights your fire as well? Wow, that takes the idea of a golden shower to a new place. Well… Takes all kinds I always say…”

“That’s it you demonic bitch!” Cried Jubilee as she stood up. “I challenge you!”

Which of course sufficed to attract everybody’s attention. And by everybody I mean…

**Everybody.**

Part 11f: Amazon thanks you for your…

The posting came up dispassionately, green on a black background, with the item, still in the Frost Industries Frosties packaging, laid out on a pink bedspread. The bidding was moderate, and the seller had thoughtfully presented a picture of the reverse, to show the packaging was intact. The seller was claiming that the item was brand new, NRFB in fact, which was entirely appropriate, since the packaging was actually a heat-sealed Mylar wrapper containing the lingerie.

But what got the Amazon's attention was that the seller was offering multiples of the item, in a range of sizes, one style, one color, virgin white.

The supervisor leaned over the chair to read the entry in response to the agent's raised hand. "Such quantities are of personal interest to the Queen. Forward to the immediate attention of Palace Security."

From there things moved very quickly indeed. Within five minutes, a buy-them-all proposal had been sent, not to the unit posting, but to the direct attention of the double-blind site hosting the sale. Said site was amused at the amount offered, and fully believing someone's nought key had bounced at least once in error because… well… They were just panties, for f-all's sake was the thought of the ignorant man as he read the email, he then turned to carry out his duty. Not mine to wonder why, but to submit the purchase order.
Said intermediary carefully read the proposal a total of three times to ensure accuracy as he manually entered the email verbatim into another laptop on another service altogether, and then forwarded the email on to the attention of the vendor's agent. He was not going to be the one to take it in the neck, maybe literally, considering who some of their clientele were, if the offer was wrong on this one...

That agent, who had a standing instruction to approve a sale whenever the proposal exceeded a certain percentage of the base price, which this one did by lots and lots, and them some more, not believing it would actually go thru. But it did, instantly, thanks to the wonderful world of cryptocurrencies. The customary fees were deducted along the way for the various services, and then Harley Quinn had more money than she had ever had in her life. Which was saying something, since her primary income as a Siren was now precious artwork recoveries.

With that the chief of the Amazonian palace guard dispatched a full combat squad to reprieve their newly purchased goods and… to find the seller.

With that a dark voice echoes through the cognospheres.

“A great battle state of woo is set! Mightily are the forces that converge on the upon the place called Gotham oh Jackanapes! Does not the Nigh-Omniscient Demongoat transcend your simple view of time and dimensionality? This Sinister Savant is able to break the fourth wall at will and views the span of time as but a single moment. What future portents are in store you cry, groveling for details? But this taste will he who strides upon existence with a foot most firm share with thy. Meat of the Loaf shall surely be sung, as good girls may go to heaven, but the Bad Girlz go everywhere!”
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Well, that was fun. I had been re-reading all of the Empowered graphic novels I own and the idea of adding Empowered popped in as I thought of Illyana possible interactions between her and the Star-Striding Savant, that Malevolent Mythpoet, the Fusion-Phallused Molester of Worlds, the sayer of sayings most profound… which resulted in some fantastic dialog. He is apparently the nerd of the demon lord world, but I suspect he has a crush on Illyana, which now that I think about it, is likely true of so many.

LordGrise is likewise intrigued by Empowered, although his initial comment upon reading was (does she do anything other then get tied up?) A valid observation on the initial Empowered stories, and the answer is yes, she does do more, quite a bit more as the comic progresses. And a yes to the question asked in one review, more Empowered will be showing up in this story (grin… I mean… just look at the dialog that’s possible…).

Thanks as always to LordGrise for helping to craft this story.

Part 12a: THREE DAYS LATER

Guano. Bat droppings. Crap. Such was Batman's surprised bat grunt.

Not at the events in the log, it was at the email he’d just received from Wonder Woman. We need to talk. That was it, just a subject line; no content, let alone any relevant issues.

No man likes to get a note from a woman saying they needed to talk. That just promised pain, display of things the man thought hidden, and likely the man saying the wrong thing at the wrong time in desperate defense. Especially when the woman gives absolutely no details as to what the talk was about, which is so often a ploy to have the man start talking about those embarrassing things in the first place. Batman was hardly likely to fall for such ploys, and Diana of Themiscyra even less likely to attempt such, meant that Batman actually initiated one of his own security protocols to confirm the note was actually from whom it represented to be from. The grunt came when the origin was confirmed. He could easily guess the topic of discussion was Harley's rash sale of some of her Frosties inventory. Although… being Batman… there was always the chance that Diana had discovered… hmm… best to hold that thought.

An Oh-boy kind of bat grunt as he drained the last of his smoothie. Who would have guessed that panties and bras could cause such consternations? Guys don’t get worked up about boxers or
briefs, but female logic dictated that the irrationality of the topic not be mentioned in mixed company unless the man had a death wish.

He glanced back at the log, well, at least somebody had a fun time.

**Part 11b: Oswald and Harvey part A**

"Wak!" Was Oswald’s outcry as he started to stand. *Incinerate these idolatrously inaccessible inamoratas and their infernally interfering interruptions!* Here he was, trying to run an honest business, an absolutely and utterly, provable honest business, nothing at all to do with those greyscaled schemes and questionably legal rackets that went on elsewhere in the block of interconnected buildings... but this kind of outburst was going to ruin him yet! He really was going to have to...

"*Brilliant Cobblepot! Utterly brilliant! Our hat is off to you...!*" Stated Harvey with what sounded like awe.

"What... this...?" Was Oswald’s reply as he gestured at the latest outburst from the Bad Girlz's table. Outbursts that had all of his guests and customer’s attention. *And who in blazes had put a spot light on them?!*

Two-Face was beside himself. "Yes, brilliant! How on earth did you managed to have them attend this of all nights? Beyond front page! We can't but imagine the prices you'll be able to charge for the next event. Why... those in attendance will long recount this night and their luck at having been here..."

Harvey was actually in agreement with himself, Penguin realized as he slowly sat back down and got himself back under control. Oswald belatedly noticed that his glass was empty as he attempted to take a sip. "Well... Yes, much... planning was needed..."

"Afterwards you must agree to introduce me to this Mazikeen...” Harvey touched his arm as he used to do to bring a point home. "We are most interested in making her acquaintance, among other things..."

*Wak!* was Oswald’s internal thought at Harvey’s statement. *How in the blazes am I to arrange...*
His cell phone chose that moment to chime, and he busied himself with the priority text that had arrived.

**Part 11c: Challenge made**

Finally communicated the wicked grin from Mazikeen. Time to teach this sorry excuse for a vampire just where she really stood. "Accepted. I choose combat by…"

But Mazikeen didn't finish, as her sixth sense apprehended the seething storm suddenly massing next to her. "Maz..." Was the dangerously toned, softly whispered comment from Illyana. The glare was a much less soft, lambent enough to be a good thing that it was turned away from the audience.

Mazikeen turned and glared back at Illyana, her eyes darkening towards night as they did when her ire was raised. "What? She challenged me. You know the rules...!"

Illyana just gave Mazikeen the stare as she continued to talk on the phone. Mazikeen suddenly sounded guilty, like Illyana's stare was one side of a dialog. "Okay, so she doesn't know the rules. That's not a valid excuse...!"

The rest of the women present just watched the discussion between Illyana and Mazikeen (apart from those who were likewise engaged in a phone call with Barbara). Partially from surprise, partially because some of them had never seen Illyana stare down a demon before and they wanted to see what would happen. Dani and Laura leaned back, sipped their flutes, and shared a look of shared schadenfreude at Maz's comeuppance.

Suddenly a defensive tone from Mazikeen. "I'm not trying to put a downer on the night...!"

That was followed a moment later by a much more conciliatory tone. "I'm not trying to embarrass you..." Immediately followed by "I wasn't going to kill her..." An eternal moment passed between them, while all the while Illyana accepted her chauffeur's explanation for the near-disaster that had occurred elsewhere, before Maz conceded. "Fine I'll let her choose..."

Which appeared to defuse the situation as Mazikeen turned to Jubilee. "We toasted a good night. You decide the manner of our contest."
Jubilee wasn't quite sure what had just happened. But suddenly the idea coalesced in her head that challenging a demon might, just might, not be the safest thing to do. The idea from the movie, Bill and Ted's Great Adventure II, where they had to fight Death and they chose a game to do so, suddenly made a great deal of sense. She was just about to say Twister when the thought that Mazikeen might get a bit too hands on deterred that idea. But no way was she doing to back down. Then…

"Dance off! That is my challenge!" Was Jubilee's triumphant cry.

Gasps and cheers from the audience, and more then a few appraising glances at the two. Why... this must be some kind of special performance! Oh this would be the talk of the town! How lucky to have gotten tickets!

An enchanting rift from a piano suddenly drew all eyes from the table to the stage, while a most seductive voice eased amusedly thru the assembled. "Maz, Maz, Maz. When you said you were off to do bad things with Magik, I had no idea you meant something like this. Why..." A few more soft caresses upon the piano. "To think I almost missed it..."

He was tall, dark haired, dressed to for a night on the town, and if good looks could kill then half the of the club would already be in His hands, and not so metaphorically, were He not on sabbatical, so to speak. A few more keystrokes and then He stood and casually strode over to the Bad Girlz' table. He did point with both hands at Leonard with a 'You da man!' gesture. Leonard knew whose presence was nigh, and returned the recognition with a respectful tip of his hat. Then He continued as He arrived at the Bad Girlz table.

"Picking a fight as usual, I see, Maz... and with a fledgling vampire at that. Tsk tsk tsk... Not very sporting of you. And such an attractive looking fledgling at that." He flashed that supernova smile at Jubilee, who had no hope of resisting it, and smiled back.

Half of the table looked upon him with suspicion, the other half with fascinated awe.

"Morningstar..." Was Illyana's genial but reserved greeting. "Why are you here? And why now?"

The smile that so entranced Jubilee touched Illyana not at all, but the Morning Star was undeterred. "Can't a bloke just wander by? And please, like I told you before, it's Lucie. No need for formal titles between us. Why, we were on a first name basis when you helped the Detective and I solve that little murder...?" His smile had an edge to it for a moment, as a secret shared.
"No" was Illyana's reply. "As I recall, she thought I'd done it, plus she shot at me. And you have not answered my question.”

A long, languorous inhale, as if to divine a perfume or the bouquet of a fine brandy, and then His eyes lit up. "That was a mere misunderstand, Illyana. But a trivial issue that was promptly cleared up. The why is the brewing chaos storm that has everyone so.... Ahh. Such opportunities. I’d hazard a guess that it’s sweeping up things across the dimensions. Something about a fun time I think, and as to the specifics of my presence, I can only suppose somebody here has a secret desire involving a sexy devil. For now, consider me but musical accompaniment. So, O contestants, by whom shall ye be judged this night of nights?"

"Um..." Was Jubilee’s eloquent reply. Mazikeen, surprisingly, shook her head and refused to give answer. After everybody exchanged silent looks, it was quiet Laura who spoke up. "They each dance, and those at this table will be the judges. Majority vote wins."

Mazikeen and Jubilee both nodded in agreement. Then a purr from Mazikeen, and a razor smile. "The vampire goes first."

Jubilee thought of complaining, but it made sense as she was the challenger. She stated the song that she wished to dance to, to nods of agreement from the table, and cheers from the crowd. Lucie turned to Leonard, who simply smiled and wetted his mouth before picking up his old-style microphone. There was a short delay as some props were found for Jubilee.

**Part 11d: Penguin and Two-Face**

Penguin's tapping at his cell phone was now near constant, and his mutters, Two-Face noted, were hardly in line with a man in smooth control of his operation. These thoughts were only in odd corners of his mind, however; both of his heads (and minds) were thoroughly focused on the wicked, wicked woman across the room...

For his part, Oswald was, in a very odd way, in his element. He was not a micromanager; he was a big picture man, with a gift and skill for finding competent henchies who could then take their pieces and go on. But he liked being in control, and riding the tiger that was this all-but-hijacked entertainment tonight was wonderfully distracting from the myriad of ailment symptoms that had come to consume his days and nights.
Laura and Cassandra had been exchanging glances ever since they had met. Appraising glances in that both recognized what the other was; and wondered how they would measure up. The takedown of the criminal gang and the freeing of the hostages had provided more examples of combat prowess, but apparently no conclusions as Cassandra asked a question of Laura after first exchanging seats with Selina so she could sit next to Laura.

“Who better?”

Another look of assessment from Laura, then her right hand suddenly snatched a butter knife from the table and drove it at Cassandra’s right hand, which was resting on the table.

A hand that was no longer there as the butter knife stopped but millimeters above the table as that hand had dodged out of the way.

All the while the two had just continued to stare at each other, then Laura’s hand began to fly about attempting to pin Cassandra’s dodging hand to the table. A blinding fast dance of knife and hand that somehow always had Laura just missing. An almost silent dance as the knife never struck the table.

Then…

A flick of the hand from Laura popped the knife into the air and now it was Cassandra’s right hand that grasped the knife and strove to strike Laura’s left hand. Again a silent flashing flurry of motion between the two girls that ended as quickly as it had begun, and likewise Cassandra had been unable to pin Laura’s hand.

Laura was faster, but Cassandra had better reactions. The conclusion from the observers was that two were evenly matched. The look between the two indicated that some other venue of testing was needed.

“You are very good.” Was Laura’s statement.
“Likewise.” Was Cassandra’s reply.

Laura then showed Cassandra a combat move that involved deliberately impaling the hand to strip the knife from an attacker (not that she actually did it as that would involve blood and this was a formal event so need to alarm the crowd). A move that is very useful if one can almost instantly heal.

“Sneaky.” Was Cassandra’s comment. She did know the move, but such ploys are more of a desperation move for non healers. One needed to remember that traditional attack and defensive moves with people like Laura, or Logan for the matter, were likely ineffective. One reason they tended to get cut up in some fights, especially Logan, was that they were relying upon their healing ability, and unbreakable bones in Logan’s case, to disrupt most conventional attack sequences as such moves just don’t fall into any traditional attack/counter system of training.

“Very…” Was Laura’s reply.

Selina had observed the whole knife and hand combat dance, at first with concern, then some bemusement after an exchanged glance with Illyana. Why… it looked like Cassandra was making friends. She knew this would both please Bruce, and likely alarm him due to the nature of the friends. Then a bit of a grin and an internal chuckle as Selina thought about the Batboys engaging in combat practice against both Cassandra and Laura. Ahhh…. Silly silly boys.

Cassandra had another question for Laura. “Is he really best at what he does?” This being a reference to Logan (i.e. Wolverine) as that was his common phrase in the comics (yes the Batclan had done a great deal of Marvel research).

“He’s currently the best at bleeding all over everything.” Was Dani’s snorted laugh of a comment before Laura could answer. “But yes… he’s very very good.”

Cassandra just looked at Laura, who then gave a small nod of her head. Yes, he really was that good.

Harley asked Illyana a question at the conclusion of the game between Laura and Cassandra. “Do you play video games? I mostly go for the Sci-Fi or Fantasy ones. I gots this one character, female magic user with cat’s ears and a cat’s tail, really fun stuff.”

“First person shooter ones’ are my vice.” Was Dani’s unsolicited comment.
Illyana got a far away look in her eyes. “I liked the one where I’m flying this big boat. It’s medieval, has sails, black power cannons, and yet has several helicopter electric motors that lets it hover as it’s also a zeppelin as well. We’re attacking this dark lord’s castle that has this magical portal that needs to be closed. Well, my boat got hit and I ended up crashing it right into the castle as I jumped from the boat. Massive explosion and slaughter all round. Really gave me an opportunity to cut loose in a big way, both with magic and my sword. Plus there’s like this heroic soundtrack playing. Man that was fun… Orcs, furry critters, elves, humans, lots of bad asses, but the orcs had really weird tooth issues. I did find it odd seeing purple skinned elves but heck, takes all kinds.”

(Dhalpin’s note, see kiko10061980reloaded on Youtube and the Dos Brains feat Uyanga Bold – Burning Sky. I love the music and how kiko10061980reloaded has blended various images together).

Harley enthused back. “Sounds like World of Warcraft, that’s one of my favorites. I gots a team-up that I run from time to time.” Unbeknownst to Harley, Barbara was one of the team members, she played a female elf assassin magic user.

“Well, you certainly dress like a game character.” Pointed out Jubilee as she walked up, she was ready to do her dance. She meant T&A, not to mention the jiggling of female anatomy that is so prevalent in games. She was talking to Illyana, but both Harley and Ivy took the statement as a complement.

Illyana lost the far away look. “Um… don’t recall… um… game?” Yeah. The game. Heroic fantasy can be fun, but really unrealistic.”

Dani had sudden insight that Illyana might… not be talking about a game. Hmm… she needed to have a private talk with Illyana and get in on some of that action.

Part 11f: Jubilee’s dance

It was not one of Leonard's songs, but his rendition of it turned out to be epic, especially with Lucie on piano. We see Jubilee on the dance floor, dressed in a white suit with a blue blouse, white tie, and black shoes. At the last moment, Leonard tossed her his fedora. She grasped the hat, and Michael Jackson's Smooth Criminal began to be sung by Leonard, along with dramatic piano playing by Lucie, and accompaniment by the band. (Viewing the video on YouTube is recommended).
As he came into the window

It was the sound of a crescendo

He came into her apartment

He left the bloodstains on the carpet

She ran underneath the table

He could see she was unable

So she ran into the bedroom

She was struck down, it was her doom

Illyana whispered to Dani.  "I didn't know Jubilee was this good of a dancer."

Dani leaned into Illyana's ear.  "Girl loves to dance in clubs.  It isn't a traditional dance, but it's one that does let her show off the moves, and being a vampire she’s capable of all the things the gloved one did."

…

Annie, are you ok?
So, Annie are you ok
Are you ok, Annie
Annie, are you ok?
So, Annie are you ok
Are you ok, Annie
Annie, are you ok?
So, Annie are you ok?
Are you ok, Annie?
Annie, are you ok?
So, Annie are you ok, are you ok Annie?
Several of the more athletically inclined guests stood up and began to likewise dance between the tables, swept up in the moment and the music, providing a very complementary background scene.

"Annie, are you ok?"
"So, Annie are you ok?"
"Are you ok, Annie?"
"Annie, are you ok?"
"So, Annie are you ok?"
"Are you ok, Annie?"
"Annie, are you ok?"
"So, Annie are you ok?"
"Are you ok, Annie?"
"You've been hit by"
"You've been hit by"
"A smooth criminal"
"So they came into the outway"
"It was…"

Jubilee was able to do the deep leans due to vampiric powers as the crowd grooved to the completely unexpected performance. And of course the fedora figured prominently in the dance moves.

"So they came in thru the out way"
"It was Sunday - what a black day"
"Mouth to mouth"
"Resuscitation"
Sounding heartbeats  intimidation

(Then you
Ran into the bedroom)
(You were struck down)
(It was your doom)

(You've been struck by
A smooth criminal)
...

"She good..."  Whispered Cassandra to Selina.

"She s showing up a foe, and demonstrating her abilities and skills." Replied Selina.
"Demonstrating who she says is the boss."

...

Aaow!
(Annie are you ok?)
I don't know!
(Will you tell us that you're ok?)
I don't know!
(There's a sign in the window)
I don't know!
(That he struck you - a crescendo Annie)
I don't know!
(He came into your apartment)
I--- don't know!
(Left the bloodstains on the carpet)
I don't know why baby!

(Then you ran into the bedroom)

I don't know

(You were struck down)

(It was your doom - Annie!)

Dag gone it - baby!

(Will you tell us that you're ok?)

Dag gone it - baby!

(There's a sign in the window)

Dag gone it - baby!

(That he struck you - a crescendo Annie)

Hoo! Hoo!

(He came into your apartment)

Dag gone it!

(Left the bloodstains on the carpet)

Hoo! Hoo! Hoo!

(Then you ran into the bedroom)

Dag gone it!

Aaow!!!

Rousing applause sounded from the crowd as Jubilee bowed before returning Lenard's fedora, rolling it down her outstretched arm, and then sending it flying to his right hand as if guided. In the audience, those who had danced seated themselves, not even wondering where their new fedoras had come from, all with vapor-blue hat bands.

Mazikeen likewise joined in the applause, honestly impressed. "Well done little bat, well done..." She then rose and stepped to Lucie's side to let it be known what she wanted.

Jubilee watched her go, surprised by the compliment as she thought 'She thinks I'm a Batsie! How
totally cool is that!

“So does she have a chance?” Whispered Dani Illyana, suddenly unsure.

Just a look from Illyana to Dani that clearly said no. Why, you ask? It’s simple, Illyana had seen Mazikeen dance before.

**Part 11g: Penguin and Two-Face**

Oswald looked up, vaguely surprised to find the first dance was done. He’d been dealing with a sudden, massive influx of text messages from various and sundry of his operations, each one minor but precisely the sort of potentially critical detail that demanded it be handled exactly right to ensure smooth sailing. That’s when he realized Harvey was no longer in his seat, but was instead standing.

It was Mazikeen's turn. She simply rose, walked to the center of the stage, nodded at Lucie and…

Silence.

Mazikeen's clothing had vanished but for a slip formed of torn scraps. Her head was down in shame as her arms and legs strove to conceal her near nudity.

In the alcove, Harvey tensed as he stood at the curtain, his fist clenched around his drink. The eroticism, the trembling fear and involuntary desire Mazikeen communicated. It was if all of Harvey’s buttons were being not so much pressed, as smashed flat and held down.

Oswald simply gave a soft ‘Rawwk” of stunned amazement and stayed in his seat...

**Part 11h: Mazikeen’s dance**
The piano started softly. Just light notes, hesitant, almost like the shivering of Mazikeen’s body.

Then Mazikeen began to move. Her body echoed the notes, her moves hesitant, as if she danced almost against her will, forced to move by the music. Forced to participate when all she wished to do was escape.

A strong harsh note jerked her arms up, as if wrenched skyward by the music. Then a scattering of notes sounded as she tried to flee, only to have a different chord pull her back, no matter how she strove against the music. Then stronger notes forced her to turn around, to face the audience. Harvey leaned forward, his face against the heavy lace that concealed both him and Oswald from the room.

At first she resisted, both the music and herself. But as the music continued, she danced more and more with the music, and as she did, her dance became slowly ever more erotic, as if the music was seducing her.

Forcing her to respond.

Enticing her.

Rousing her passions, though she resisted with all her might.

Intensity ever rising.

An intensity that all in the crowd felt as the dance approached… something. Call it a climax but that would not do it justice.

All were breathing in sync with Mazikeen, all could feel the caresses of the music, light and harsh.

The question (Is Mazikeen winning the dance?) was self-answering; Jubilee’s enthralled expression said it all.

Yes.
Part 11i: Aftermath

And then Harvey's hands on the lace of the curtain became too much and it tore down in one long pull of aged fabric. Mazikeen froze as the full weight of Harvey's needs were felt by her. Anger, rage, lust… such was the intoxicating spiritual brew that wafted off of him. And… his face… his beautiful face! The music, with a discordantly jarring lingering note as Lucifer followed her movements perfectly, as he had been all thru the dance. Then Mazikeen's clothing returned as she strode right thru the crowd, as Two-Face vaulted and charged out onto the floor. They met in the middle, their faces mirroring each other to the gasps of the audience, as half of Mazikeen’s morphed into scars.

Not a single cell phone dared flash in the near darkness. Mazikeen grasped him by his vest and threw him over her shoulder as she stated to all present: "He's MINE! I'll find my own way home, Magik! He and I have business! Damn, this night just keeps getting better and better." Stunned silence reigned as Mazikeen and Two-Face departed in a burst of inky smoke.

Oswald blinked a few times before concluding that either Harvey was going to kill him, or that he was going to be owed the most massive of favors.

Lucifer chuckled. Then, for the show must always go on, His will eased thru the bandstand, and Leonard sang the opening lines of What is Love by Haddaway.

What is love?
Baby don't hurt me
Don't hurt me
No more

Baby don't hurt me, don't hurt me
No more
What is love?
Yeah
Selina wasn’t sure if she should raise objects to Illyana or toast Harvey on his good luck (Selina considered Harvey a friend). Hmmm, in the end she went with the toast.

A very surprised Illyana smiled at the stunned table as they all looked at her. "I guess... Jubilee wins. Congrats."

Jubilee preened, but then a question occurred to her. “Hey... what did I win?”

A seductive voice purred an answer to her from over her shoulder. “I can offer few suggestions...”

It was Lucie, with a devil may care grin.

**Part 11j: Gotham Time’s review (the next day)**

It was a completely magical night as Oswald Chesterfield Cobblepot’s latest offering rivals the best that Broadway has to offer. Who knew that underneath the external of a criminal genius (alleged) lurked the heart of a master showman. But of course it is obvious in hindsight if one just examines his past (alleged) deeds.

Rumors are already swirling that Beyonce has demanded that she be booked forthwith! And that a number of other band (a little bat told me the Rolling Stones are one) are also clamoring for a chance to perform as the Iceberg is not the hottest place in Gotham.

Why one can not but...  

**Part 11k: Meanwhile... at the Gotham convention center**

“Pharaoh!” Declared Doug Marcadia with delight at seeing the black garbed Filipino man.

“Doug!” Likewise stated Pharaoh back with glee. “Grandmaster told me you were coming. Glad
“to see that you could make it.”

“I was in town for some Forged in Fire promos and I never could miss a FMA (Filipino Marshal Arts) gathering.” Stated Doug as they exchanged handshakes. “So… is supper still on?”

“Yeah…” Replied Pharaoh with a bit of a grimace. “Grandmaster said to meet him at the Bazillion barbeque in Times Square.” Why a grimace you ask? Well… suffice it to say Pharaoh was buying, he was a student of Grandmaster and one must honor one’s master.

A pat on the back from Doug in sympathy, but not that much sympathy as he was also getting a free meal as well. “Is Master Ken still coming?”

The headed to the subway station as Pharaoh replied. “Last I heard.”
Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

Keep in mind for this story Illyana, and the others are rather drunk off their ass on chaos at this point, not to mention booze and possibly a few other substances as well (after all I’m sure a few went to the ladies room to power their nose, or whatever those of the clan female actual do in there and we are talking Harley and Ivy here who likely have a few party favors).

The wine that the group had ordered did give Bruce an idea for a rumor of a possible foppish antic to help re-enforce the idea of Bruce Wayne as a playboy.

Thanks as always to LordGrise for both reviewing, suggestions, and his Penguin contributions. The delay in publishing is in part due to LordGrise having higher priority personal tasks to do and I refrain from publishing this story, or Mother Of Darkness, without his contribution and agreement.

Part 13a: THREE DAYS LATER

Bruce looked over the attached hospital admission form for Harvey (A.K.A Two-Face). Moderate dehydration, several dozen lacerations which were all healing and looked like they’d not leave any scars, exhaustion, some embedded glass lodged in the gluteus maximus that had to be removed, and a grin on his face that disturbed the doctors. So apparently a yes on Harvey having a good time.

Then he examined a police report of an altercation and a fire at a biker bar. A man and a woman had entered, both with scars on their faces; the patrons had been… call it antagonistic, to the presence of the two. Unsurprisingly, a fight had developed, and unsurprisingly the two outsiders had won. The report noted that the bar had caught fire during the fight, according to several witnesses.

Oracle had gotten her hands on the bar surveillance and Bruce choked on the water he was drinking as he viewed the footage; which did at least explain how Harvey had gotten glass in his ass cheeks. Bruce had to give Harvey credit, not everybody could brag that they’d been sexually ridden like a stallion on the surface of a bar while said bar was burning down around him. Bruce shook his head in disbelief, great… just great, Harvey finds a girlfriend who was more extreme then he was.

Bruce paused, then again… there was a good chance that Harvey may have shifted in his obsessions.
Which… might be even worse.

Part 13b: Prelim to departures

And so the evening went on. More songs were sung by Leonard, and more alcohol and tasty nibbles were consumed. And from Oswald’s perspective, thankfully no more interruptions.

Lucie ended up taking Mazikeen’s empty chair and sitting next to Jubilee, who was beyond okay with that. Suffice it to say that He kept whispering… suggestions to her that she appeared to find quite interesting if her giggles were any indication.

But the group conversation was far from over as Jubilee enthused about an idea she had involving the Lord of the Rings

“Who’s the worst actor to play a character in Lord of the Rings Films?” Enthused Jubilee.“

Illyana just had a questioning look, not one of misunderstanding but… call it disinterest. Illyana was not a fantasy fan for the most part.

Dani on the other hand loved Tolkien. “Worst? What the heck Jubs? Who would want the worst when they had that guy who played Aragon, that Viggo Mortensen guy… Man, talk about being a Stud… I mean, I’d totally do…” With that Dani went silent and drank some of her wine as she felt she’d been sharing a bit too much.

Jubilee was on roll, and one supposes a role as well. “Worst, not the best. And I’ll start. I pick Cher for Galadriel!”

“What!” Was Dani’s outraged outcry as she spit out her drink.

Selina thought for a moment and then “Jerry Seinfeld as Sauron.”
Cassandra likewise had a suggestion, and a verbose one as well. “Arnold Schwarzenegger as Merry, dressed as the terminator, guns and all. And Sylvester Stallone, dressed as Rambo, as Pippin, again with the guns.”

Dani recoiled. “No... stop... Images so... bad.”

Harley was game. “Eddie Murphy as Legolas, wearing a blond wig.”

Cassandra and Selina both ohhh’d in awe at the awfulness of the choice. Then Ivy added some garnish and a selection. “And of course he keeps dropping out of character... Hmm... How about Woody Alan as Aragon?

Just gagging sounds from Dani at the horror.

“Shaq O’neal as Samwise?” From Cassandra.

“Snoop Dogg as Elrond?” From Laura.

“Anthony Hopkins as Gollum?” From Harley.

“Nooooooooooooooo!” Wailed Dani, striving to remove the thoughts from her head. “You’re destroying my childhood.”

“Jack Nicholson as Bilbo?” Stated Lucie. “Always liked Jack, would have loved him as John-Luc Picard in Star Trek, they really missed an opportunity by not casting him in the role; just imagine the character interpretation he would have brought to the screen. Make it god damned so Number one.”

“Monty Python cast as the Nazgul!” Giggled Jubilee.

“Stop, please no more.” Begged Dani, although her horror was being replaced by laughter.

And then Illyana hit it out of the park. “Howard Stern, in the role he was born to defile, is
And that was that… I mean… How do you top that?

“The transvestite Sister Boom Boom as Frodo.” Was Dani’s answer, and I guess she rather did top it.

And some where… some when… in a most defiled and perverse locality of reality, due to the ever rising intensity of the chaos field… It was so.

BEGIN REALITY SWITCH

“I can’t go on a quest in this.” Sniffed Frodo. “Quests need fall colors and I have nothing but a spring ensemble and that will just not do.”

“I don’t be knowing that Master Frodo.” Ah shucked Samwise as he tried to sit in a real hobbit sized chair, only to smash it to bits.

“Adrian!” Screamed Pippin as he unleashed a full belt from his thirty cal machine gun into the pantry; how dare there be no Stilton!

Gollum just had to add a correction. “I do say sire, not only is that the wrong thing for your character, I must offer the observation that adding spikes to a gun does not in any way make it medieval.”

“I’ll be back.” Said the black leather clad Merry as he went off to find some shades so he’d look extra cool.

“This sword is just too heavy.” Complained Aragon. “Can’t we just re-break it? It was much lighter when it was broken.”

“Damn bunch of honky crackers. Don’t you be looking at my ass, it get hot if anybody of you look at it too long” Snorted Legolas as he took a puff of his cigarette, only to then remember to put on the blonde wig as he recited. “Green are the leaves I leave in Mirkwood… Shit… doesn’t this
Mother Fxxxer have any good lines?"

Bilbo of course had a bit of criticism. “Frodo you dumb piece of crap, stop wearing the ring as an earring!”

Elrond spoke after a long toke. “Well… shittttt. Speaking of which, I got little pouch of it right here, have a hit of this… I call it Elvish Wisdom. Don’t bother with that Hobbit weed, this is the good stuff.”

Sauron, or at least his really big burning eye spoke off screen. “Damn… um… does anybody have any Visine? I think I a got a lash stuck and now everything’s red. And why is it called More Door anyway? Are we stealing doors now?”

And that’s when the Nazgul burst in and began to do a nobody escapes the Mordor inquisition sketch.

The actual Gimli spoke to the actual Boromir. “See… dwarfs never get respect. Can’t even get a sarcastic version of myself.”

Boromir’s answer was less then pleasing to Gimli’s ears. “What… like having Roseanne Barr play your part? At least she’d be more attractive, even if she had a beard.”

“Nobody disrespects a dwarf!” Shouted Gimli as he waved his axe about. “I’ll have your ears for that! Why... why... let Macaulay Culkin play your part!”

Meanwhile a radio was playing in the background... “And welcome back to the Gandalf radio show... Today I have a special guest for you. It’s Galadriel! Let’s just cut to the chase babe, time to unwrap those goodies and show us your fun pillows.”

On the plus side, electricity was free in that universe because the corpse of Tolkien was connected to a generator, meaning that yes, he was turning over in his grave at light speed.

END REALITY SWITCH
Dani gave a kind of snorting laughter. “Thank God that’s not possible.”

Part 13c: Some conversations

“So... you’re an actual Psychiatrist?” Asked Dani of Harley.

“Doctorate and everything.” Sighed Harley. “And lots of experience on both sides of the doctor patient relationship, not to mention unique… field research.”

“So... was Freud right?”

“About what?”

“You know, the whole penis envy thing that woman are supposed to have.”

“O’ll Sigmund really helped create Psychiatry and he did have lots of insight into how sex figures into lots of aspects of our internal self and motivations.”

“So he was right?”

“Naaa, just describing women in a suppressed society. Wanting to be in control meant you wanted to be a man so you must want a dick. Not really applicable anymore in our sociality. Although…” Harley thought about her preference for a huge mallet and baseball bats. “There... might be some... valid examples.”

Dani gave laugh. “So does my .50 cal Barrett sniper rifle count?”

Harley’s response was confusing. “Does it have a flame thrower?”

“Why on earth would you put a flame thrower on a sniper rifle?”
“Just asking, it’s not really a phallic symbol if it’s missing a flame thrower.”

“Hu?”

“Trust me honey, who’s the doctor here? Although a grenade launcher will do in a pinch.”

“Um…..”

Dani was saved as it were by Selina’s astonishment at viewing the Master Ken video of one hundred groin strikes (Jubilee had it saved on her phone). Much giggling resulted and discussion, but then Jubilee noticed the ad at the end of the video.

You too can now posses the wisdom of Master Ken by buying The Dow of Master Ken volume 1 by 11th Degree Black Belt Master Ken. Followed by a shot of Masker Ken holding the book and saying “Buy my book!”

“Oh My God!” Exclaimed Jubilee. “He has a book! We’ve got to get it!”

Illyana, feeling very relaxed, held out her hand and Jubilee passed her the phone. Illyana reviewed the ad and then pulled her phone out (from somewhere). A few clicks and the page on Amazon is shown. She bought it and hit the Hell Lord deliver it now option (only available for those with the special app).

Moments later a waiter came up to the table holding a package. “Um… we just got a package for this table?”

Jubilee eagerly took the box, unwrapped it, and ta-da! The wisdom of Master Ken’s was hers! She turned to a random page and… the thrust of freedom was shown, pictures and all!

Put your hands on her hips and:

You can thrust to left, or right

Thrust behind, and more importantly
Thrust forward!

Practice makes perfect so, to practice put your arms out and your butt cheeks back, then pull your arms back and thrust your pelvic forward at a slightly uplifted angle. Do this repeatedly until you achieve mastery.

1: Say some ruffian rolls up on you and applies a front bear hug without consent.

2: Place your hands on his hips and cock your thrust (put your butt back).

3: Apply a front thrust to his groin area. If you’ve been conditioning this part of your body by thrusting small trees, concrete walls, or piles of sand then this should cause him more pain then it causes you.

4: When he drops to a knee from the intense pain make sure to align his head with your hips for a second frontal thrust.

5: Deliver a front thrust to the face. This move will be the finishing blow!

6: As he lies stunned, feel free to stomp the groin.

All at the table were stunned, but likely for different reasons.

Part 13d: Oswald

While everyone was giving rapt attention to the elopement of the two-faced woman, Two-Face slung over her shoulder and cursing mightily, Penguin exited upstage left out the actual door of the masked box. He wasn’t terribly concerned about the box being exposed; the fact of their existence was something of an open secret… but it would be mildly embarrassing to be publicly noticed seated with Two-Face as he detested having to use an alibi unnecessarily…

Once clear of the room, he made his way to the kitchen, passed his glass off to one of the servers, and from there worked his way around to the Control Booth, which was currently manned by Jaye, one of his close associates. She shrugged at his mild query concerning the Dance-off; she had gone with the flow of the thing, since if she’d done anything else she felt that it would have ruined the night. Penguin nodded and withdrew, nonplussed but satisfied.

From there, taking his time and seating himself whenever possible to reduce his exertions, he began doing the rounds of his biggest and most well represented tables, fulfilling his role as Master of the House. Penguin’s mood was mellow; all his many, many issues of the night had resolved at
least satisfactorily, the three most prominent of the night, Two-face, Harley, and those libationous white elephants he had held in the stasis tubes for so long, had all ended spectacularly well… and all three were due to the ladies who had so imperiously commandeered his best table, his best event of the year, and his most expensive vintage for their own. All to his considerable profit. As he approached their table, he took advantage of the Lounge’s acoustics to overhear what was being discussed.

Jubilee had just asked Illyana a question as a thought occurred to her. “Did I do something wrong on the challenge?”

Illyana replied after the latest song ended. “You made it too formal. Demonic formal declarations of challenge are usually done to replace a person. Which is very rare as normally you just attempt to kill them.”

“So what would you have done?”

“Kzinti logic as… “ Illyana paused as she recalled a flicker of a memory. Then a shake of her head as she continued (and because that memory is another story called Fanged God’s cat’s-paw).

“…Kitty would say, she really liked the books. Which basically means scream and leap. Next time I just recommend screaming and throwing the first punch.”

At which point Oswald arrived at the table. “My ladies, I must say… I deeply appreciate that option NOT being employed.”

Penguin made eye contact with Illyana, intending to congratulate her on the impromptu scene… but Illyana had leaned back to sip of her flute. Under cover of doing so, Illyana gestured ‘Pass’ to Oswald, all but imperceptibly indicating Selina Kyle, the Catwoman. So, Penguin bowed to Catwoman, intending to toast her, and realized he had not a glass in hand, having neglected to pick a new one up in the kitchen. Damned meds making me thoughtless again… He said to himself. He gracefully translated his hand gesture into an indication of the table in general and the closer of the two double magnums. “I hope my establishment’s expectation were met, if not exceeded?”

Harley giggled and emptied her flute. “Oszy, the night has been magnificent, and this wine is the bomb! Have you ever tried it?”

Penguin raised an eyebrow and shook his head, having slightly winced at the bomb statement from
Harley. “I fear not. There were only the two bottles, and for obvious reasons…” he looked disappointed for a moment, “I was unwilling to open one just to taste it. I am delighted it lived up to its reputation.”

Orphan, sensing the Penguin was perhaps a touch overextended, gracefully rose to her feet and subtly eased an empty chair around, just as Penguin would have visibly wavered. The net result, for all to see, was Penguin being seating like the visiting royalty he was, welcomed at the table of the night. As the spotlights faded away and Leonard Cohen began what he privately swore would be the last set of the evening, (but wouldn’t be, he somehow knew, as long as that table was occupied…) Illyana waved a hand, and an invisible magic veil slid between the table and the rest of the hall. “We may speak freely; we are seen, but not heard.”

Lucifer thoughtfully produced a flute from somewhere, and Jubilee filled it from the one of the now three golden bottles on the table before passing it around the table. Penguin accepted the flute with gracious thanks, not intending to do more than wet his lips; with his medication load, alcohol in any amount was unwise, and he had already imbibed brandy. But his concerns wafted away with the vapors of the flute, and the thought came to him that he never had sampled anything of Chateau Mont-Genalise du Lac, let alone this, their absolutely most exclusive vintage. Harley and Jubilee softly cheered, and everyone drank deep of the joining of Arbane and Petit Meslier grapes and Chaos in most wonderful fashion. Oswald felt something loosen deep within him, as if a load eased from his bones. He sipped again, the vintage drawing his attention again with its complexities, and he relaxed a touch. Harley took that as her cue.

“Hey Illy! So tell us some more about this MaidMan guy!”

And so… Illyana recounted what had happened at Superhomey Karaoke Night, a recounting what included the disturbing statement “…Imagine Batman in a frilly French maid's outfit with a massive panty groin bulge that he likes to flash…”

BEGIN REFLECTION OF SUPERHOMEYS Karaoke Night

Earlier the Superhomeys had fought, and lost, to the vacationing Magik who had been mistaken for an attacking demon by the Superhomeys. Illyana had sarcastically commented after the event that apparently drinking a chocolate tea based drink and feeding the ducks was considered very demonic and showed evil intent on EMP’s world. EMP had been the only one to actually ask if Magik was attacking, EMP had shown up late, as the supposed Demon was not actually killing anybody other then incapacitating those who had attacked her and giving a bound and gagged Sistah Spooky a spanking with a giant sword (it was just a few swats but Spooky was enormously mortified).

Magik had been invited to Karaoke night as a sort of apology for the attack (since when do demons
vacation was one common compliant). An invite she took them up on, much to the surprise of some. Karaoke night you might ask? Heroes in the universe of EMP (Empowered) fought hard, and partied harder, and Karaoke night allowed them to cut loose with a vengeance with both alcohol and mournful melodramatic vocals of questionable artistic quality.

Magik had shown up in her Darkchilde form, partially as a bit of a snub, and partially as Sistah Spooky had been quite upset at Illyana’s black costume as it had so resembled Spookies own costume. So instead Illyana had attended wearing a chainmail bikini, cloven hooved, and lashing devil tail; with some small cute red horns. Her presence had surprised some, and had generated a few annoyed glares and whispered comments (especially from Major Havoc, but he hastily looked away and shut up when she gave him a stare).

She was currently nursing a Blue Moon beer bottle and thinking of leaving. If you’ve attended such an event (or read the comic) you realize that she was far from the oddest thing there. But… being of questionable character, nobody had as yet sat at her table or conversationally engaged with her. A hero by the name Heavy Ordnance (picture a male torso with a howitzer for a head) was singing (badly but with passion) Sometimes when we touch by Dan Hill.

...  
And sometimes when we touch  
The honesty's too much  
And I have to close my eyes  
And hide  
I want to hold you till I die  
Till we both break down and cry  
...

Illyana was not feeling welcomed (a not uncommon condition for her). The whole demon thing was partially to blame, plus the fact she’d defeated them on battle, and EMP was not present (she had yet to arrive with her friends). Illyana was just about to depart when a figure that had been observing her from the shadows approached and sat down at her table.

It was Maidman, who has not been part of the fight. He was the broom-swinging cross-dressing crusader of justice. Dressed in his signature frilly French maid costume, stiletto heels, white panties, and fishnets (with garters); sans his techno broom. He had been voted by villains as the guy they’d least like to arch-antagonize. Also known as Garter-belted Gladiator, the Dark Knight Domestic, the Delicate Cycle Detective, the Hard-hitting Hygenist, the Sanitary Sentinel, the Iron-handed Immaculist, the Manservant of Steel, the Squeaky-clean Samurai, the Corset-clad Crusader
and the Velveteen Virtuoso of Violence. He gave a grunt of disapproval as he gazed upon her. A grunt that Illyana understood (she was very conversant in gruntology) as she replied.

“Yes, why not dress the part as it were.” Meaning her Darkchilde form.

A questioning grunt from Maidman.

“No, I’m not ‘planning’ anything. I figured that I’d show up and have a few drinks before taking off. I was invited after all.”

A snort of a grunt from Maidman which caused Illyana to chuckle.

“Like you have a leg to stand on trying to complain about my appearance. At first I thought you were just another odd fetish dressed pretend player like that fake Catwoman over there.” Illyana gestured at a scantily clad cat themed hero who went by the name Ocelotina who was actually a provider of heroine Stripperiffic bound and gagged softcore imagines (there was a surprisingly large demand and it was quite lucrative). “But on closer examination I see I was mistaken. You’re actually the real deal. I hope you don’t have an arch nemesis with you dressing like that, and please tell me that you don’t have a side kick called Leather Lad.”

A rather satisfied grunt from Maidman.

“Yeah, I can relate. I once had a bunch of duffuses blast off my clothing and post it on youtube, that was the first and last time anybody did that.”

Another questioning grunt from Maidman as a waitress brings a beer for him.

“No, I didn’t kill them, really wanted to, but my friends talked me out of it. Instead I had them do a series of tasks, one of which was to dance wearing just thongs in the New York gay parade on a float of a giant male thingie. Then they had to defeat Gaylactus.” (Author’s note, see chapters 5-6 of what to do about Magik, and in her defense she was very drunk at the time).

A statement that resulted in Maidman spitting out a mouthful of beer (thankfully not on Illyana), then giving Illyana a growling kind of grunt.
“What… They totally deserved it. I did finally accept their apology, after they first bought all the good chocolate in New York; I guess billionaires are good for something.”

A suspicious grunt from Maidman.

“Just passing though, I’d heard of a world where…” Illyana suddenly went quiet, causing Maidman to give her a hard stare.

“No need to get grumpy at me, man that’s a good glare. It’s just that I don’t know how much of you know about just why things are the way they are here.” Meaning the massive plethora of both heroes and villains that were granted their powers from aliens or mystic sources who did it for reasons that were not actually in the long term interests of humanity; in reality earth was kind of a reality show and the producers were not opposed to having the set burn down if the rates were good.

A grunt from Maidman that sounded rather… resigned about something. The something being things that Illyana had hinted at (Maidman was one of the heroes in the know).

“I can relate, sucks when you’re the playthings of those who like to pull wings off of flies, and then eat the flies.”

Illyana was slightly tired of the one sided conversation so she then gave a kind of questioning grunt, which somewhat surprised Maidman as he was used to being the gruntie in most grunt conversations. After some thought he answered in a voice that sounded like he gargled with gravel and lye.

“Hetro, the costume is more about striking fear in the hearts of evil doer’s, but I do confess I like the feel of female underwear. But… high heels are murder to run in.”

Another questioning grunt from Illyana.

“Most criminals are easily daunted about things that confuse them. A guy dressed in a French maid’s outfit is amusing; a guy beating the crap out of a gang of criminals while wearing a French maid’s outfit is terrifying; plus many of them are afraid that I might take… improprieties with them. And no, I find the idea of dressing up as some animal to fight crime to be just this side of being a Furry, and this Lady has standards.”
A snort of a grunt from Illyana, like she’s trying not to laugh.

“I agree, the sexual identification of most capes, villains or heroes, can be used to great affect.”

A short grunt from Illyana.

“The whole idea of having an arch nemesis is silly. This is neither a game or a hobby. I treat those who might harbor such concepts with extra… measures so as to discourage such… obsessions.”

Illyana nodded her head in agreement. She likewise lacked any arch enemies, ones that were alive that is. Another questioning grunt from her.

“Yes, keeping the costumes clean is a major chore, one can’t just try to bleach away blood stains. That doesn’t work and one must think about the delicates when washing.”

A comment that left Illyana giggling with laughter. After that the ice was broken and the two of them engaged in vigorous conversation. Maidman preferred hand to hand combat, nothing like the feel of a good bone crunching punch. Whereas Illyana preferred sword and dagger work; although giving a good beating with sticks was also satisfying. That’s when EMP, Thugboy, Ninjette, and the Caged Demonwolf (imprisoned in the power draining bondage gear) arrived at the table. The DemonWolf was being carried by Thugboy who put him down upon the table.

Illyana stood and gave a small bow to the Demonwolf. “I great you Destroyer of worlds, Merciless monarch of menace, He who trods upon the grapes of wrath and serves the results with fiendish relish.”

The Demonwolf returned the greetings. “Likewise does the Eldritch engine of destruction greet the Darkchilde, Queen of Limbo, Hell Lord and slayer of the dark and annoying Elder Gods.”

Uncertain was the scene (meaning Illyana’s demon form was off putting to the new comers), but… as in most socially awkward situations, sufficient quantities of alcohol smoothed things over. The conversation was hesitant at first, but progressed over time, until…

The Darkchilde and the Demonwolf sang upon the stage, each alternately singing one lyric. It was Frank Sinatra’s My Way.
Illyana: And now, the end is near
DemonWolf: And so I face the final curtain
Illyana: My friend, I'll say it clear
DemonWolf: I'll state my case, of which I'm certain
Illyana: I've lived a life that's full
DemonWolf: I traveled each and every highway
Illyana: And more, much more than this
DemonWolf: I did it my way

Illyana: Regrets, I've had a few
DemonWolf: But then again, too few to mention
Illyana: I did what I had to do
DemonWolf: And saw it through without exemption
Illyana: I planned each charted course
DemonWolf: Each careful step along the byway
Illyana: And more, much more than this
DemonWolf: I did it my way

Illyana: Yes, there were times, I'm sure you knew
DemonWolf: When I bit off more than I could chew
Illyana: But through it all, when there was doubt
DemonWolf: I ate it up and spit it out
Illyana: I faced it all, and I stood tall!
DemonWolf: And did it my way!

...  

END REFLECTION OF SUPERHOMEYS Karaoke Night
Harley and Jubilee had the giggles, while the rest were just blinking in disbelief at the story Illyana had just told. Oswald did have to admit to himself that all in all, he preferred the Bat. But… one’s duty of a host is to move on before one’s presence becomes a hindrance.

Oswald rose smoothly, the amount he had drunk allowing him to ignore his everyday stiffness, aches, and pains, and swept a bow to the table. “Ladies… I must seek my bed soon and this night is yours. I confess, this has been a most enjoyable evening.” He raised his glass and offered the first toast that popped into his head. “A fun time to all in the group!” A toast that gave Lucifer an internal chuckle as he could feel the esoteric potentialities of the ether deepen and broaden as the seminal toast of the night was spontaneously offered anew.

The flutes (and bottles) refilled spontaneously as Ivy rose to her feet, taken by a sudden impulse to support her fellow Rogue. The veil vanished at Illyana’s gesture, and Ivy’s voice rose clarion across the entire hall, her flute effervescing cigarette blue in the spotlight.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, raise your glasses! We give you Oswald Cobblepott, our host! To him Good Health and Long Life!”

Cheers from all as Oswald took a bow, and drank to the toast.

Part 13e: Departures (some time later…)

Leonard had begun to sing the last song of the night, appropriately it was Closing time. Ivy and Harley had joined the female backup singer on the stage (who looked rather putout about that little fact) were likewise singing the female chorus. They had made their goodbyes as they were taking off with Leonard after the show.

Ah we're drinking and we're dancing

And the band is really happening

And the Johnny Walker wisdom running high

And my very sweet companion

She's the angel of compassion

She's rubbing half the world against her thigh
And every drinker every dancer
Lifts a happy face to thank her
The fiddler fiddles something so sublime
All the women tear their blouses off
And the men they dance on the polka-dots
And it's partner found, it's partner lost
And it's hell to pay when the fiddler stops
It's closing time
(Closing time)
(Closing time)
(Closing time)
...
...
The girls were still occasionally giggling over the complaints from Two Face as Mazikeen had carried hem off.

"Is he going to survive?" Whispered Selina to Illyana.

"If not, I can personally assure you that he’ll die with a smile on his face." Whispered back Illyana.

Catwoman’s look of concern prompted Illyana add more assurance. “I’m sure he’ll be fine and nothing will happen that he doesn’t want to have happen.”

...
Yeah the women tear their blouses off
And the men they dance on the polka-dots
And it's partner found, it's partner lost
And it's hell to pay when the fiddler stops
It's closing time

...“Where’s Jubilee?” Whispered Dani, suddenly realizing the Jubilee was absent.

“She took off with Lucifer.” Whispered back Laura.

“You don’t mean that she’s…”

“Yep, Steve Tyler all over again.”

...“Ah we're lonely, we're romantic
And the cider's laced with acid
And the holy spirit's crying, where's the beef?
And the moon is swimming naked
And the summer night is fragrant
With a mighty expectation of relief
So we struggle and we stagger
Down the snakes and up the ladder
To the tower where the blessed hours chime
And I swear it happened just like this
A sigh, a cry, a hungry kiss
The gates of love they budged an inch
I can't say much has happened since
But closing time

(Closing time)
(Closing time)
(Closing time)
Selina sighed. “So... down by four. Should we call it a night or...”

“Night is still young.” Interrupted Cassandra to the surprise of all, and some private groans from Barbara who was still listening via Cassandra’s phone.


I swear it happened just like this
A sigh, a cry, a hungry kiss
The gates of love they budged an inch
I can't say much has happened since
(I can't say much has happened since)
We're closing time
Closing time

“Then time for some... prowling?” Prompted Illyana.


I loved you for your beauty
But that doesn't make a fool of me
You were in it for your beauty too
And I loved you for your body

There's a voice that sounds like god to me
Declaring, (declaring) declaring, declaring that your body's really you

And I loved you when our love was blessed
And I love you now there's nothing left
But sorrow and a sense of overtime
And I missed you since the place got wrecked
And I just don’t care what happens next
Looks like freedom but it feels like death
It’s something in between, I guess
It’s closing time
(Closing time)
(Closing time)
(Closing time)

…

“Yeah.” Was the agreement from Laura, Dani, Selina, and Cassandra.

…

Yeah I missed you since the place got wrecked
By the winds of change and the weeds of sex
Looks like freedom but it feels like death
It’s something in between, I guess
It’s closing time

…

“Where?” Asked Laura.

“Broadway.” Was Selina’s grinning reply. “It’s a bit late, but there’s always something going on.”

…

Yeah we’re drinking and we’re dancing
But there’s nothing really happening
And the place is dead as heaven on a Saturday night
And my very close companion
“Shame Nightwing is having such a crappy night.” Mused Selina. “But I guess he learned your car has a wicked set of claws.”

“Well it is girl’s night out, not boy’s night out.” Observed Cassandra, again with casual conversational interaction. Why you might ask? Well… call it lubricated conversation ease, and she had taken a mint from Ivy when they had visited the Ladies room that may, just may, have had more then mint in it.

...
Of closing time

Closing time

...

“Now I feel guilty.” Groused Dani. “Least we could do is drink a toast to him.”

Nods of agreement all round. Illyana reached out and… once again the chaos bottle was in her hand.

...

Oh the women tear their blouses off
And the men they dance on the polka-dots
It's closing time
And it's partner found, it's partner lost
And it's hell to pay when the fiddler stops
It's closing time
I swear it happened just like this
A sigh, a cry, a hungry kiss
It's closing time (closing time)
(Closing time)
(Closing time)
(Closing time)

The gates of love they budged an inch
I can't say much has happened since
But closing time (closing time, closing time, closing time)
I loved you when our love was blessed
I love you now there's nothing left
But closing time
I miss you since the place got wrecked

By the winds of change and the weeds of sex

With that the song was done.

Shot glasses all round and a toast was given by Dani. “May Nightwing’s next boy’s night out be as fun as ours.”

And so it was to be (but that’s a different story).

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