

UNDERLAND

Pilot

Written By

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INT. ABANDONED SUBWAY STATION - DAY

Sunlight streams through gaps in the ceiling and lands on an other-worldly type flower... the WYVERN.

A dirt-stained, nail-bitten hand plucks the florescent blossom from the vine that has twisted around the rusted, fallen beams across the abandoned tracks.

MAE, 15, a vacant, broken teen, far too old for her years, holds the flower up and studies it in the sunlight. The tiniest smile creeps across her face.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Sheets of RAIN pound the pavement as ragged, mismatched, Converse high-tops with ripped laces knotted at the eyelets, sprint down a long, abandoned road.

The worn sneakers leap up onto a chain-link fence, and in three steps they fly over it.

They land on the opposite side with a THUD then dash off, and disappear among a sea of long-forgotten vehicles.

INT. ABANDONED SUBWAY STATION - DAY (BACK TO PRESENT)

Mae spins the flower between her fingers - its shape could almost look like the face of a dragon.

She plucks a petal and places it to her lips. A moment of ecstasy... with a lick of her lips, she swallows it.

She stares ahead, somber, as she waits for the flower to do its magic... silence the screams inside of her.

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The relentless RAIN hammers every exposed surface.

From a distance, it becomes clear that it's Mae, a drowned rat in the Converse sneakers, as she slides down the mud-soaked hillside and lands at the edge of a broken fence.

A quick glance over her shoulder -- the coast is clear.

She turns her focus back to the dense forest just beyond the fence. Mae shakes off any hesitation, then squeezes her slight frame through the opening.

And vanishes into the thick, black forest.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY (BACK TO PRESENT)

Free as a bird and high as a kite, Mae strolls down the middle of the city street, arms outstretched as she relishes in the euphoria. Her mismatched Converse shuffle across the pavement with every carefree step.

As she glances around, the city vibrates with COLOR and MUSIC.

A soft colorful glow swirls over DEEP, LONG CLAW MARKS etched into the side of a building - the MUSIC SKIDS TO A STOP.

Mae's brow furrows, as the chaos within bubbles back up.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

HARLAN, 17, baby-faced militia soldier, wipes the RAIN from his face. His eyes light up as pure joy radiates over him--

DEEP GROWLS grab Harlan's attention. He turns toward SOMETHING UNSEEN behind him.

SLOW MOTION as horror falls across his face and he points then mouths "GO, NOW!" Harlan lifts his rifle and turns to run.

Mae, a deer in headlights, stands frozen in the RAIN.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY (BACK TO PRESENT)

GUNSHOTS followed by GUTTURAL SCREAMS echo as present day Mae drops down into a seated position in the middle of the street. She closes her eyes. A single tear rolls down her cheek.

RYA, 9, an urban street-kid, seen through Mae's hallucinogenic lens, races straight toward us, in her hand dangles a DEAD RAT.

RYA

I got one!

Rya steps in close, the dead rat hangs over Mae's head.

RYA

You found some wyvern?

Mae looks up to Rya as she opens her hand to reveal a small bunch of the bizarre flowers.

RYA

Wanna hide them in the rat?

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EXT. SOUTH SIDE FAMILY CAMP - DAY

Mae and Rya hike through what was once a busy city, now in ruins. Several DEAD RATS hang from Rya's belt as Mae lugs her overstuffed backpack, full of the day's finds.

As the girls near the makeshift walls that enclose a concrete camp in the city's center, Mae ties her hair up - ON THE BACK OF MAE'S NECK a stick and poke tattooed "S" and beside it, a "B" with an "X" over it.

Ahead of them, CULLIN, 12, rifle in hand, stands on a precarious platform as camp lookout.

CULLIN

(to someone below him)

They're back. Open the gate!

A corrugated iron slab on rollers slides open.

The two girls pass through the gateway. As it rolls closed behind them, BRIAN, 12, makes a beeline for Mae's backpack and digs through it before she can take it off.

BRIAN

Did you find any blades?

She opens her mouth to respond as he pulls out a small pocket knife and opens it. He glares at the tiny blade...

BRIAN

Couldn't find anything smaller,
huh?

MAE

Then give it back--

She reaches for the knife, but Brian holds it away from her, snaps it shut, then takes off in a sprint across the camp.

Tents, most made from rigged up plastic sheets, lay scattered across the pavement. On the far side, CHILDREN (6-14) work in raised gardens while others wash clothes by hand then hang to dry on the rope strung behind them.

As Rya and Mae cross the camp, DAISY, 6, the last spark of innocence buried beneath overused hand-me-downs, skips over.

DAISY

Can I help you clean them, Rya?

RYA

No.

DAISY
Why not?

RYA
You don't know how.

DAISY
So?

RYA
So, you'll ruin them.

Mae's eyes land on PETER, 17, projects coolness greater than his small build and acne ridden complexion would suggest, as he struts across the camp like a king.

She drops the backpack at her feet.

MAE
Here, Daisy, you can take this to
Suzi for me.

Mae makes a beeline for Peter as Daisy whines behind her.

DAISY
But I want to gut the rats.

RYA
Well, you can't.

Rya abandons little Daisy with the heavy bag as she crosses to the tents with the rat carcasses.

Mae passes a small GROUP OF TEENS as two corral TODDLERS and one breastfeeds an INFANT.

VESPER, 16, her baby bump just starting to show, crosses Mae's path and pauses to look her up and down.

MAE
What are you looking at?

VESPER
Nothing important.

Vesper, pleased with herself, moves on as Mae glares at her.

Mae turns her focus back to the task at hand...

Peter is nowhere in sight.

MAE
Fuck.

She hurries off in the direction he was headed.

EXT. PARKING STRUCTURE IN RUINS - DAY

As Mae half-jogs past, Peter jumps out from behind the wall and grabs her by the waist.

Mae yelps, but he jams a hand over her mouth and shoves her backward, against the wall.

PETER

Did you think I wouldn't notice
you following me?

Mae, too calm, shakes her head.

Peter glances around to make sure there are no onlookers, then drags her inside the lot.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE IN RUINS - DAY

Peter tosses Mae against an abandoned van. She slams into it and stumbles, but finds her footing and stands tall as she turns back to him.

PETER

There are rules, Mae. You can't
just--

MAE

Fuck the rules.

Peter grabs her throat. She stares back, unemotional.

PETER

One word is all it would take to
destroy you.

MAE

I know.

His frustration builds with every non-reaction she gives.

PETER

I matter!

MAE

Okay.

He looks into her eyes then releases his grip and steps back.

PETER

Your eyes are dilated.

Peter clenches his fists as he paces, an internal debate tears at him... He turns back to her.

PETER
You bring any back?

Victory is hers and she knows it, Mae opens her clutched fist to reveal a single wyvern petal.

MAE
Just for you.

His GQ cover grin flashes as charm pours out of him as easily as anger had the moment before. He reaches for the petal.

Mae closes her fist.

MAE
The rarest items are always the most expensive.

She leans back against the van, places the petal on her tongue. Fear washes away his arrogance as the payment becomes clear.

PETER
Fuck you.

She licks her lower lip. Her eyes dare him to come get the flower petal.

Everything inside him screams don't do it, yet can't pull his eyes away from her.

Mae arches her back as she lays back, against the van, and slides her shirt up. She closes her eyes as her hand caresses her abdomen... fingers tease the top of her pants.

Peter swallows hard...

PETER
Fine. Give it to me!

He grabs her and licks the flower petal from her tongue.

They stare at each other, bodies close. Peter kisses her.

INT. ABANDONED VAN - PARKING STRUCTURE - DAY

Windows steam as Mae and Peter make out on back bench seat.

He lifts her shirt over her head. His hand runs over several thick scars across her back, he freezes--

PETER
If they find out--

MAE
Stop talking.

He watches her unfastens his pants. His head spins as the wyvern takes hold. Mae's hand slips inside his pants.

Fuck it. Peter gives in... to Mae, to the drugs, to his desire. He yanks down his pants and moves on top of her.

She lays her head back on the seat, eyes closed, ready...

The van door FLIES OPEN--

SUZI (O.S.)
What the hell do you think you're doing?

Peter jumps back, off of Mae, hands in the air.

PETER
We didn't do it! I swear!

Mae doesn't bother to move. She just sighs and glares at...

SUZI, 16, very pregnant, stands outside the van with the attitude of an uptight den mother.

SUZI
Out. Now!

It's a stare-down between Mae and Suzi as Peter clambers to pull up his pants.

He stumbles out of the vehicle.

PETER
She drugged me!

Suzi shoots a look of fury at Mae who lays back and rolls her eyes with a laugh -- he's such an asshole.

Disgusted, Suzi turns back to...

MYKIE, 15, tomboy with an attitude problem, and DREW, 14, the biggest kid in camp in height and width.

SUZI
Get her out of there.

She shakes her head at Mae one last time before she walks away.

SUZI
And get her dressed.

Mykie and Drew climb into the van.

EXT. SOUTH SIDE FAMILY CAMP - NIGHT

All heads turn as Mykie and Drew drag Mae through the campground. Suzi marches behind them with Peter, flying high now, by her side.

SUZI
 (whispers to Peter)
 Get it together or I swear I'll
 turn you in.

Peter lifts his head high, focuses on a sober appearance.

Mykie and Drew shove Mae down onto a cobbled together stage in the center of camp. Rya, rat blood smeared clothes, races over.

A CROWD of youths, 5-15, gather. Tattoos mark the back of all necks for those age twelve and older with either an "S," "H," or a "G."

Among the crowd, Rya, stares up at Mae, helpless.

Mykie and Drew strap Mae's wrists to a post with old leather belts. Mae's eyes meet Rya's with a little shrug. Mykie retrieves a leather strap and holds it out. Suzi steps forward, looks down on Mae.

SUZI
 You brought this on yourself.

Mae stares at Suzi's belly, then into her eyes.

MAE
 Did I?

Head high, Suzi snatches the leather strap from Mykie and takes her place, center stage, before the crowd.

As Suzi holds the leather strap high - all MURMURS CEASE and a hush falls over camp. The "B" on the back of Suzi's neck now prominent as she speaks.

SUZI
 Mae, while under the influence of wyvern, has been caught partaking in behaviors outside her class... Luckily, before any damage was done.

Suzi glances at Peter. He lowers his head, ashamed.

SUZI
 For some reason, Mae seems to believe she is above our laws.
 (MORE)

SUZI (CONT'D)
 Obviously, five lashes wasn't
 enough to convince her
 differently. How many should she
 get this time?

Excitement builds among the kids.

CROWD MEMBERS
 Seven! Ten! Twelve!

Daisy reaches for Rya's hand, but Rya snatches it away as she
 looks over the group with disgust.

Vesper steps forward, the "B" on her neck prominent.

VESPER
 Twenty!

Suzi, taken aback, looks to Mae then back to Vesper.

SUZI
 Accepted. Twenty it is. To be
 delivered by the one offended.

She hands Peter the strap and steps aside.

Peter stares at the strap then looks up to the crowd... A
 psychedelic glow floats over all the faces. He sways a bit,
 steps forward, and bends down close to Mae.

PETER
 You can't touch me.

Peter stands and delivers the first blow across Mae's back.

WHACK! The strap rips her shirt, a few spots of blood seep
 through the fabric. Mae clenches her jaw.

WHACK! It rips into her back again. WHACK! WHACK! WHACK!

Mae can't hold it in any longer - she cries out in agony as
 blood soaks through her shredded shirt.

The crowd CHEERS... all but Rya.

Peter pauses. The cheers wash over him like heroin. He resets,
 his hand tightens around the strap, ready to go harder, faster.

WHACK! WHACK! WHACK!

Half conscious, Mae whimpers as the final blows tear her flesh.

Suzi, unable to watch, stares straight ahead, chin held high,
 she feigns confidence.

Rya pushes back through the crowd and races for her tent.

INT. MAE AND RYA'S TENT - NIGHT

A makeshift tent. Old, heavy tarps strung up with rope create three sides and a concrete slab, covered in chalk drawings, for the fourth wall. A lantern on an overturned crate beside two sleeping bags spread over small cots. On the far cot waits...

Rya, a bowl of water and a pile of rags by her side, jumps to her feet as the tent flap opens.

Mykie and Drew drag an unconscious Mae in and dump her on the ground then turn to exit. Mykie stops to look back at Rya.

MYKIE
She's not your problem.

Rya studies Mykie.

RYA
Drives you nuts, doesn't it?

MYKIE
No. What?

RYA
You'll never mean as much as she did.

MYKIE
You're a little cunt.

Mykie nods toward the bloody mess that is Mae.

MYKIE
Take a good look where you're headed.

She storms out.

Rya bends down beside Mae to assess the damage.

EXT. FAMILY CAMP - NIGHT

Mykie marches through the camp as its RESIDENTS gather around rubbish-bin fires. Some roast rats while others tell stories.

CULLIN
(to kids)
The ground shook as it came near.
Boom. Boom.
(MORE)

CULLIN (CONT'D)
 Then with a growl and flash of
 it's teeth--

Drew sneaks up and grabs Cullin from behind - the boy jumps out of his skin. Drew and the other kids laugh their asses off.

CULLIN
 Fuck-tard!

Brian races over to Mykie, out of breath.

BRIAN
 Where's Suzi?

MYKIE
 Why?

INT. BREEDER HOUSING - NIGHT

The basement area of what was once an office building, re-imagined as "family quarters," fashioned from scavenged leftovers of a world long gone.

Mykie descends the stairs as Vesper climbs past her.

VESPER
 Oh wow, is it ass-kissing time?

MYKIE
 Ew, your face does a weird thing
 when you get jealous.

VESPER
 Play pretend all you want, but we
 all know you're just a hunter.

MYKIE
 And good with a knife. Where is
 she?

Vesper glares at Mykie then nods down the stairs, toward a table in the far corner.

VESPER
 Trying to enjoy a minute without
 you nagging her.

Mykie pushes past Vesper and marches down the stairs and crosses to the "dining area."

Lanterns strung along the walls provide light as Suzi sits alone and picks at the cooked rat on her plate.

MYKIE
You need to eat.

SUZI
I am.

Mykie glances at the plate... no, she's not.

MYKIE
Brian's looking for you.

Alarm washes over Suzi as she turns to Mykie.

SUZI
A pigeon?

Mykie nods and Suzi jumps up, grabs a lantern, and hurries for the stairs. Mykie on her tail.

EXT. ROOFTOP - BUILDING RUINS - PIGEON HOUSE - NIGHT

Brian reaches into a large pigeon cage, pulls out one of the small birds, and removes the note attached to its foot.

BRIAN
Arrived about ten minutes ago.
It's a guard pigeon.

He hands the note to Suzi then returns the pigeon to its house. Mykie watches Suzi read the message.

MYKIE
One of ours?

Suzi shakes her head.

SUZI
North Heights.

BRIAN
Then why us?

Mykie slaps Brian upside the head.

MYKIE
They don't exactly have any
replacements to send now, do they?

BRIAN
Right.
(to Suzi)
Who you gonna send?

SUZI
Don't be a nosy shit.

Suzi crumples the note in her hand as she heads toward the fire escape. Mykie races after her...

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - CONTINUOUS

Mykie follows Suzi down the fire escape.

MYKIE
You have to send her! She's next
in line!

SUZI
Don't tell me how to do my job.

She takes a few more steps down, then looks up at her.

SUZI
She's not in any condition to make
the journey. Who's up next?

MYKIE
Me.

Suzi stares at Mykie -- fuck.

INT. MAE AND RYA'S TENT - DAY

Face down on her cot, Mae winces as Rya applies a homemade salve and fresh bandages to the cleaned wounds.

Daylight streams in as Suzi steps through the tent flap.

SUZI
(to Rya)
Leave us.

Rya clocks the note in Suzi's hand. Her wide eyes meet Suzi's in search of confirmation.

Suzi gives her a nod - not the answer Rya wanted.

SUZI
Rya, come on, don't make me ask
again.

Rya secures the last bandage and exits the tent as Mae sits up with a grunt and pulls a clean shirt over her head.

SUZI
Why do you do this to yourself?

MAE

Pretty sure you delivered the sentence.

SUZI

It's my responsibility.

MAE

Oh, I'm sorry. It must have been so hard on you.

SUZI

Jesus, Mae, stop acting like you're the only one whose suffered. We've all watched our families die--

MAE

No. You watched them walk away.

As Mae reaches for her canteen, Suzi snatches it from her and gives it a sniff.

MAE

It's water.

Satisfied, Suzi hands it back to her.

SUZI

We used to depend on you.

MAE

Spare me the pep talk.

SUZI

You should never have gone after Harlan--

Mae jumps up, in Suzi's face.

MAE

Don't.

SUZI

You act like you're the only one who cared about him.

MAE

I said, don't!

Tears well in Suzi's eyes.

SUZI

I miss him, too.

Overcome with rage, Mae shoves Suzi into the wall.

MAE

You are so full of shit!

Mae clocks the fear in Suzi's eyes and steps back, hands up.

MAE

Why are you here?

SUZI

I came to deliver this.

Suzi holds out the crumpled note.

Mae stares at it. A pained silence between them.

MAE

I was marked breeder. Just like you!

SUZI

You lost that status.

MAE

When you took it from me!

SUZI

You surrendered your position when you broke the law.

MAE

Peter is older and he, literally, just broke the law!

SUZI

You illegally fed him wyvern then tried to seduce him to get your status back. Thinking if you got pregnant--

MAE

He asked for the wyvern! He made the first move--

SUZI

We need him!

The subtext lands heavy on Mae. She struggles to hold back the tears as she avoids eye contact.

SUZI

You're a scavenger now, eligible for the Guard.

She shoves the note into Mae's hand.

SUZI

And you've been called. Leave
before sundown. You already know
the way.

Suzi turns to go.

MAE

I could still tell... What do you
think they'd all say if they knew
the truth?

SUZI

No one would believe you.

Suzi exits.

Rya ducks back in, a dead rat in hand. She holds it out to Mae.

RYA

It's the one we stuffed.

Mae takes it.

RYA

I liked you.

Without waiting for any kind of response, Rya hurries back out.

Mae stands alone with the wyvern stuffed rat in her hands.
Behind her, a child's chalk drawing of a tall, thin monster
with huge teeth on the concrete wall.

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - SUNSET

Mae, backpack on, homemade spear in hand, stands before the
same broken fence we saw in the earlier flashback.

She stares at the ominous, dark tree-line just beyond.

EXT. TREETOP - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

RAIN drenches, a blood spattered Mae as she clings to a high
tree branch. THROATY GROWLS reverberate from beneath her.

Eyes wide, her face quivers with fear as she tries not to shake
or breathe. Tears streak her blood-stained face.

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - SUNSET (BACK TO PRESENT)

Mae tosses her backpack over the fence, then squeezes through the opening. She lifts her pack up over her shoulders with an audible wince, then takes a moment to recover from the intense pain before she trudges on into the forest.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Mae's hand CRANKS the flashlight's wheel until the LIGHT SHINES onto the overgrown path ahead of her.

A RUSTLE of trees and SNAP OF A TWIG. Mae freezes. Fear washes over her. Panic sets in.

She listens hard... Her eyes search the surrounding forest for any sign of movement. Her breath increases with each moment.

Mae closes her eyes and inhales.

With a slow exhale, she opens her eyes. Searches... Silence. The light from her flashlight dies. She walks on, in the dark.

EXT. HILL - NIGHT

Mae, muddy and sweat-soaked from the journey, pauses at the top of the hill.

Below her, small lights flicker around what appears to be a fence line, smoke rises from a fire in its center.

She looks down at the crumpled paper in her hand. Then maneuvers her way down the hill toward the camp.

EXT. BASE CAMP - NIGHT

Mae steps out from the dense tree-line into a clearing.

She crosses to the barbed wire fence, armed with dozens of tree branches carved into spears, that encircles the camp. Lanterns strung haphazardly from the fence sprinkle light onto a dilapidated cabin on the far side.

Mae holds up the note and a YOUNG SOLDIER opens the barrier and allows her to pass. He nods his head toward...

A group of MILITIA SOLDIERS, 17-24, gathered around an open fire as they pass around a bottle.

YOUNG SOLDIER
Report there.

Mae takes a deep breath and heads for the group.

FIRE PIT

She approaches the group, note in hand.

MAE
Who do I report to?

The soldiers fall silent as they turn to her.

LUCAS, 17, swallows his sip of whiskey then grins up at her.

LUCAS
What are you, like ten?

MAE
I'm fifteen and the oldest
eligible. But, if you assholes
would prefer I leave--

Mae turns...

PAULA (O.S.)
Halt!

She turns back as PAULA, 23, troop leader, stomps toward her.

PAULA
Name?

MAE
Mae Claire.

Soldiers all share a look.

PAULA
Harlan's baby sister?

Mae nods. Paula looks her up and down, unimpressed.

PAULA
You've earned yourself quite the
reputation.

Mae stares ahead -- unflinching.

PAULA
See these faces...

Paula gestures to the troop behind her. All eyes on Mae.

PAULA

They're the last you're going to see. Whatever games you've been playing and any life you thought you might have had back in the family camp, is over.

She steps in close enough to smell Mae's breath.

PAULA

Because when they come, and they will come, you sure as hell won't be watching from up in a tree this time like some goddamn monkey.

(to Joe)

Take her to the wash, she smells like shit.

(to the troop)

The rest of you, turn in.

Paula marches off toward the cabin.

JOE, 24, tosses his tin cup to the ground and stands.

JOE

You heard her, little Monkey, follow me.

Mae glances at Lucas as he and the other soldiers imitate monkeys and laugh. She follows after Joe.

EXT. WASH BAY - NIGHT

A rusted sheet of corrugated iron propped up beside a hose.

JOE

Strip that shit off and stand over there.

Mae drops her bag and removes her clothes.

Joe eyes the bloody bandages on her back.

JOE

And Harlan always said you were sweet.

MAE

I'm not.

JOE

Good.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)
 Cuz we'd be calling up your
 replacement within a week if you
 were.

Joe flips on the water and sprays her down with the high
 pressured water.

Mae gasps.

JOE
 Cold, ain't it? Probably stings,
 too...

Mae presses her hands up against the sheet of iron as blood
 drips down her legs and washes away.

INT./EXT. SHED - BASE CAMP - NIGHT

A partial shelter with a roof and two walls.

Mae, now dressed in mis-matched militia style remnants, huddles
 in the corner as Soldiers sleep on the ground around her.

Without a sound, she pulls the dead rat from her bag and
 glances around to ensure no one sees.

With her pocket knife, Mae cuts the stitches in its belly.

She stuffs a finger deep inside the rat and retrieves a small
 cloth pouch, opens it, and slides a wyvern petal out.

Relief washes over Mae, she closes her eyes and swallows the
 tiny piece of flower.

Feeling the weight of someone's stare, her eyes pop open.

Across from her, Lucas watches.

LUCAS
 Looks like Monkey's a junkie.

MAE
 You gonna tell?

Lucas ignores her, turns over, packs some hay together to form
 a pillow, and lays down.

EXT. SHED - BASE CAMP - DAY

Bustles with morning duties. Soldiers criss-cross the camp,
 each busy with their daily assignments.

Mae climbs out of the shed and glances around at the activity.

Joe spots her and taps Paula on the shoulder. The two make a beeline for Mae.

JOE
Well, well, baby Monkey finally
decided to join us. Rough night?

MAE
No one woke me.

PAULA
They tried.

Paula drops the gutted, DEAD RAT at Mae's feet.

PAULA
Any left?

Mae shakes her head.

PAULA
It happens again, I'll tell them
to shoot you, got it?

Mae nods.

PAULA
Lucas!

Joe shoves a rifle into Mae's hands as Lucas jogs over to them.

PAULA
Take her out and show her how to
use it.

Paula storms away, Joe on her heel.

Lucas snatches the rifle from Mae and slips the strap over his head, along with his. He walks off, then turns back to Mae.

LUCAS
You coming?

MAE
No breakfast?

LUCAS
You slept through breakfast. This
way.

Lucas walks off into the forest and Mae follows.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Lucas marches at pace as Mae struggles to keep up.

MAE
How much further?

LUCAS
No unnecessary gunfire within a
five-k radius of camp.

MAE
They're drawn to the sound?

LUCAS
We don't know what draws them.

MAE
I get the sense you don't like me?

LUCAS
I don't.

MAE
You don't even know me.

Lucas turns back to her.

LUCAS
I know your type. Addicted to
wyvern, doesn't care about anyone
but themselves, always in
trouble... You're a ticking bomb
that's about to explode, and
you're gonna get any poor assholes
who stand too close killed along
with you.

MAE
That why you're walking so fast?

LUCAS
And everything's a joke.

He continues onward. Mae follows.

MAE
How long you been with the Guard?

LUCAS
Long enough.

MAE
What camp you from?

LUCAS
Do you ever shut-up?

MAE
I just like to know a bit about
the assholes around me before I
get them killed.

Lucas raises a brow and walks on, unamused.

MAE
Ah! I know your type... wasn't
marked breeder so went into the
woods and stuck a stick up your--

LUCAS
I'm from North Heights.

Mae stops in her tracks, her face pale.

MAE
I'm... sorry.

He shoves the rifle into her hands.

LUCAS
We're here.

Lucas slides down the hill toward an open field below.

Mae slips the gun strap over her head and follows.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

In the middle of the field stands a TARGET built from junk to look like a monster. Sharp teeth drawn on an old tire, where the face would be, an old street sign for the body, and dead tree limbs hang down as long arms.

THROATY GROWLS and HARLAN'S SCREAMS echo from memory as Mae stares at the target before her, her rifle up as she takes aim.

Lucas stands at a distance behind her.

LUCAS
Hold it firm so you don't knockout
your teeth.

Mae focuses. Her finger squeezes the trigger.

And FIRES! Mae cries out in agony as the kickback slams into her shoulder. She drops the rifle and falls to the ground.

Lucas stomps over and snatches the rifle.

LUCAS
What the hell was that?

MAE
Nothing. I'm sorry.

LUCAS
Come on, go again.

He grabs hold of her arm to pull her up, pauses, then looks down at his hand: blood.

LUCAS
You're injured?

MAE
It's nothing. I'm fine.

She grabs for the gun, but he holds it out of reach.

LUCAS
Show me.

Mae rolls her eyes then lifts her shirt to reveal the gashes on her back - her skin now bright red and inflamed.

LUCAS
Jesus! What the--

She sighs, woozy, and sits back down on the grass.

LUCAS
I thought it was the wyvern making you look like shit. Are you hot?

MAE
What?

He kneels down and feels her head.

LUCAS
Fuck! Did you think maybe you should have mentioned your back was infected before we came all the way out here?

MAE
It's infected?

LUCAS
We need to get you back to base.

Lucas yanks her to her feet. Mae sweaty with fever, focuses as she takes a step. Lucas reaches to support her, she pulls away.

MAE
I've got it!

She sways and closes her eyes.

MAE
I just need to sit down for one second.

Lucas, exasperated, scans the area -- they're in the middle of fucking nowhere.

LUCAS
Just... stay there. I'll be back.

He tramps off toward the bush, then pauses to look back at Mae.

LUCAS
Stay put!

He disappears into the trees.

Mae crawls toward the target, then sits back, her head rests against the fake beast.

She reaches into her pocket, pulls out the little pouch, and removes a tiny piece of wyvern. She glances behind her to make sure Lucas is gone, then swallows it.

Head back against the target, she closes her eyes.

MEOW. Mae's eyes open wide. She looks around... MEOW.

A long-haired CAT rubs up against the base of the target. MEOW.

Mae stares at it in disbelief.

Her hand reaches for a lower leg pocket. Her fingers unbutton it and slide out a switch blade.

Eyes on the cat, she opens the knife and winces as she scoots herself a little closer.

The cat freezes. It stares at Mae, as if to dare her--

HANK (O.S.)
Don't touch it!

Mae spins toward the voice...