2459 Gang Violence  
  
"What are you waiting for?! Kill these bastards!"  
  
That was what the senior thug had wanted to say… however, since he was choking on blood and clutching his face with both hands, what actually came out of his mouth was a jumbled, angry howl.  
  
Sunny was already turning to face the other Black Snakes, whilе his partner was still frozen in shock. Her eyes were opened wide, and there was a stunned expression on her face.  
  
"H—hey! That was not very… detective-like…"  
  
She did not have time to say anything else, because by then, the thugs finally realized what had happened and lunged at them.  
  
'Tsk, tsk… things have really gone to shit after I left.'  
  
Sunny knew some of these men, even if he had not seen them in a long, long while. Most were strangers... however, he only needed one look to determine that the Black Snake gang was not what it used to be.  
  
There was no real viciousness in these men, no chilling readiness — desire, even — to take lives or lose their own. They were no killers. The Black Snakes had grown soft and fat on the money they were making from their sordid business without competition, and on the handouts they received from the powers that be, who occasionally needed thеm to do the dirty work.  
  
It made sense, really. Those of them who had been the real deal would not have bowed down to the new authority, and therefore, they were either dead or rotting in prison by now. Only the trash remained.  
  
So, even though there were close to twenty thugs in the boxing gym, all of them bursting with muscle and well-trained…  
  
Really, all Sunny had to do was take out the trash.  
  
Instead of waiting for the crowd of Black Snakes to descend upon him, he dashed forwaгd to meet them instead. His heart was cold, and his mind was clear. There was no point in getting worked up about this scuffle… it was simply a chore.  
  
Sure, if these twenty men had been determined and really knew how to work together, he would have been overwhelmed in mere moments. But they were men of inferior quality — thugs, not fighters. That gave him the initiative to hurt the first few, and once the rest sаw it, their resolve would be shaken.  
  
Their fear and hesitation would become their undoing.  
  
Sunny might have been a featherweight, but his fists were anything but light. He knew where to hit to inflict as much pain as possible, and how to deal as much damage as possible. He also had a lot of experience — too much, really — fighting with his life at stake. His first strike connected with the solar plexus of the swiftest thug, sending shock through the larger man's nerves and forcing him to stagger. A split second later, a vicious uppercut sent the thug falling to the floor with a suffocated scream.  
  
Diving under the slow and sloppy punch of the next bruiser, Sunny ruthlessly kneed him in the groin, then slammed his elbow on the back of the poor bastard's head.  
  
The third was already upon him… and that one had to serve as a lesson for the rest.  
  
Catching the man's arm, Sunny moved like a ghost to twist it, and then brought his palm down on the elbow joint.  
  
A disgusting squelching crunch was drowned out by a piercing shriek of pain.  
  
'Strange…'  
  
Sunny knew himself well, and he knew that he was a fierce fighter. But this… this felt almost too easy, as if he had become many times more skilled and experienced without noticing. As if fighting two dozen thugs who were more than willing to break and maim him was no big deal — inconsequential and pitifully trifling, even.  
  
Not in any way comparable to the great and dreadful battles he had fought in his nightmares.  
  
Could one's combat skills improve in a dream?  
  
Letting go of the screaming man's mangled arm, Sunny push-kicked him in the side of the head and looked at the rest of the thugs with a mad glint in his eyes.  
  
'Three down, seventeen to… huh? Thirteen to go?'  
  
In the time it took Sunny to bring down three thugs — which was no more than a few seconds — his oddball of a partner had not been wasting her time, either. Honestly, he had not known how the rookie would react, and did not really care… but what he did not expect was that he would act without any delay at all, joining the fight with the same relaxed attitude.  
  
Effie simply grabbed two thugs by the sides of their heads and slammed them together, all but cracking their skulls, then delivered a picture-perfect roundhouse kick to a third one, folding the man in half and sending him flying back into his buddies. She finished it all up by simply slapping the fourth one to the ground.  
  
Through all of it, she seemed calm and unruffled, amused even… no, she was definitely having fun.  
  
'What… the hell kind of mom is she?'  
  
Sunny was surprised, somewhat dismayed at the fact that the rookie had taken down one more thug than him… and a little disturbed.  
  
That calmness, that judgment, that effortless skill was not something a green and inexperienced detective was supposed to possess. Effie had been an athlete before becoming a cop, and although she did spend some time as a patrol officer, that alone could not have made her into a bloodied fighter.  
  
These qualities were something people only developed after a lifetime of conflict and bloodshed.  
  
Either Sunny did not know something about his easygoing partner and was thus underestimating her… or she was not who she seemed.  
  
His paranoia suddenly rose like a tide, making his eyes narrow.  
  
But he had no time to dwell on the strange and ominous incongruity between who Effie was supposed to be and who she really was. First, he needed to deal with the Black Snakes.  
  
Seeing seven of their own go down in a matter of seconds, the thugs were getting serious. Before, they had been planning to beat the two cops to a pulp with their fists… probably do some other, way more vile things to them. But now, Sunny saw knives and steel pipes appearing in their hands.  
  
He smiled darkly.  
  
'Don't blame me for being ruthless, then.'