

This is the continuation from Chapter 6: All Is Revealed of Vengeance.

Friday, 17th June, 2016

That night

Safehouse Q – Chatham Road, Glenview

After the fight, it was time for everybody to get some sleep ready for a big day on Saturday.

Apart from Natasha and Cameron pretending to not want to share a room together, and the three girls not wanting to sleep, everybody was finally settled down! The house was large and had five bedrooms. The youngsters were all very excited about everything that they had seen and heard over the previous few hours; their lives had changed in a very dramatic fashion.

The adults were all very tired and they were desperate for sleep, even if the overtired kids were not!

The following morning

Saturday, 18th June

Safehouse Q

Despite the previous late night and the intercontinental travelling, the three girls were full of energy when they awoke.

The adults, though, were not . . .

“Harper – if you want to live to see your tenth birthday, then you shall do an immediate about-turn and take your little friends out of this bedroom,” Keira said calmly.

“What are you going to do?” Harper sneered.

Keira dug her hand beneath her pillow and produced a bright yellow device.

“A Taser!” Naomi exclaimed.

“That is so low!” Kaitlin added as she noticed that the Taser was the latest X3 model which could Taser three subjects before it required a reload.

“You win . . .” Harper hissed as she backed out of the bedroom with her friends. “For now!”

Later that morning

“Morning, guys!”

“Morning, Mindy – fancy some bacon and eggs?” Cameron asked.

“Don’t worry – I ain’t cooking!” Natasha commented dryly.

“Got enough for another five?” Dave enquired as he followed his wife into the Safehouse.

“Plenty, Dave,” Cameron confirmed.

“Sarah, Keira, girls,” Mindy said. “Please meet my other children, Anne-Marie and Danny.”

Stephanie pointed each one out in turn to the three girls.

"I think they can tell us apart, doofus!" Anne-Marie growled as she said hello to Harper, Naomi, and Kaitlin. "You are all *Predators*?"

"Yes, we are," Naomi confirmed. "Are you two vigilantes . . . like Stephanie?"

"Kind of – still in training," Danny replied with a grin. "I'm Ravage, and my sister is Rogue."

"Nice!" Kaitlin commented.

"Does that mean we get cool names?" Harper asked with an excited grin.

"You do," Natasha advised the three girls. "Harper will be Polaris. Naomi will be Prowl. We considered something to do with destruction for Kaitlin . . ."

Kaitlin gave Natasha a 'we are *not* amused' glare and Natasha laughed.

"Kaitlin will be Glide."

"Cool!" Naomi grinned as she looked at her grinning cousin and the very pleased Harper.

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After breakfast – the second that morning for Stephanie, Anne-Marie, and Danny – the kids ran off to 'play' together although Natasha decided to 'supervise' and prevent any intended or unintended destruction of building or body.

Mindy and Keira sat down in the living room.

"Why am I here?" Keira asked.

Mindy looked over from the other couch.

"You're a pilot, I understand."

"Yes. I fly naval helicopters."

"What are you qualified in?"

"I have been current in the Lynx HMA.8, the Wildcat HMA.2, and the Seaking HAS.6 – at least I was, until they got rid of them. I transitioned into the Merlin HM.2 helicopter and that is what I am presently current in."

"So you can fly almost any helicopter, from the smallest to the larger ones?"

"Yes."

"Could you fly either of these?"

Mindy passed over two photos.

"In a heartbeat," Keira replied with an approving expression but then her eyes narrowed. "Is this a job interview?"

"You want the job?" Mindy replied. "You've seen what *Fusion* and *Vengeance* do."

Keira turned as Harper came into the living room and she sat down next to her big sister. Harper looked imploringly up at Keira with irresistible puppy-dog eyes – one of the nine-year-olds little tricks – until Keira finally shrugged and smiled down at her sister.

“In for a penny, in for a pound.”

Harper almost screamed with joy and she hugged her big sister.

“Would I get a cool name?” Keira asked as she winced with the strength of Harper’s hug.

Mindy said nothing but she simply handed over a white-bordered, black woven patch with Velcro on the back. Keira recognised it instantly. It was very much like the patch worn on her own Royal Navy flight suit but instead of it reading ‘ROYAL NAVY’ and ‘KEIRA SHARP’ above and below the ‘wings’, it read ‘VENGEANCE’ and ‘SCORPION’.

“But I can’t fight – not hand to hand,” Keira said dejectedly.

“I’ll teach you, sis,” Harper offered as she looked at the insignia in awe. “Give me a few weeks and you’ll be able to kill a man with a single finger!”

Early that afternoon

Safehouse F

“Keira?”

“Yes, Naomi.”

“It’s Harper – she won’t stop crying.”

Keira got up from the couch in the Briefing Room and she followed Naomi around the walkways to a bedroom which Harper had occupied. Harper was sitting on the bed and her head was in her hands. She was sobbing. Beside her sat a worried looking Kaitlin.

Keira walked over and she sat down beside her sister.

“What’s she crying for?”

“We don’t know. She won’t tell us.”

“Okay – thanks, girls. Please leave us.”

Once the door was shut, Keira pulled Harper’s hands away from her face. Keira was shocked to see that they were real tears and there were a lot of them.

“Talk to me, Harper.”

“I was really happy that you wanted to become a vigilante and join us, but then . . . on the ride over here, I started thinking. I realised that I was going to be the cause of you giving up the best thing in your life. I know that you love the Royal Navy and it was your biggest ambition to become an officer and then a helicopter pilot. Now I’ve destroyed it all for you.”

Harper sobbed even harder and sank into Keira for comfort. Keira hugged her distraught sister tightly until the tears eased. Then she turned the nine-year-old’s head upwards to look into her dark brown eyes. Keira gently smoothed away the remaining tears and smiled. Harper smiled back.

“The best thing in the entire world happened a few weeks back. You know what that was? It was something much better than becoming an officer. Much better than getting my wings. It was finding out that my little sister was alive. I cared for nothing else other than you. I will admit, it shocked the hell out of me to find out what you had become, but I didn’t care. I had my Harper back. The Harper that I loved for so many years. You being born was the best thing ever. You are all I have and all I want, Harper.”

“I love you, Keira.”

“So, no more tears?”

Harper shook her head and looked a little sheepish.

“I love you too, Harper.”

As I sat there hugging my sister, my mind drifted back to the final hours of my torture. It was both the scariest moment of my life and my happiest.

The day that Hit Girl had burst into Dormitory A and begun our wild ride to freedom would forever be seared into my memory. I could remember it like it was yesterday. Twelve of us had been herded into the dormitory by six guards. Nobody had told us anything. We could hear explosions and gunfire. Then those same explosions and gunfire had come closer and closer . . . until . . . the door to the dormitory was smashed open.

I actually felt a stab of fear as five very well-armed people burst in.

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Nobody said anything for a whole minute as the atmosphere grew very tense.

If anybody opened fire, there would be a bloodbath. The guards seemed very jumpy but the invaders were rock solid and focussed. Each wore an identical dark grey uniform with integrated body armour, however, each suit had different coloured markings. I instantly recognised the insignia worn on the upper left chest of each suit – it was *Fusion*.

One of the shorter ones stepped forwards. She (I thought it looked like a she) had blue and red markings on her suit. The girl was short and thin which made me think that she was not much older than about ten-years-old. She looked directly at us kids as she spoke in a weird, electronically enhanced voice.

“Phase 1?” She asked as she looked directly at the younger kids, and they nodded.

“Phase 2?” She asked as she looked at us, the older kids, and we nodded. “I was Phase 2 – at least I was before I was terminated. You might have heard of me; I go by the name: *Psyche*.”

There was a collective intake of breath as most of the kids, including me, recognised the name. There were also some scowls and quite a few muttered words – I heard ‘traitor’ and ‘rat’, among others. I had heard of *Psyche*. She was a Phase 2 *Predator* who had killed another *Predator* in a shower, apparently. Then the girl had apparently gone rogue.

“I saw the light; I am free – I kill when *Psyche* says to kill. *Nobody*, tells me to kill – not even Hit Girl; we are equals...”

A taller armoured individual stepped forwards; she had purple markings on her suit and it was pretty obvious who she was supposed to be.

“I am Hit Girl.”

She paused for a few seconds to let that sink in.

“I see that you know my name . . .”

“How do we know it is really you?” I called out. It was too good to be true.

“Well, I could show you my Driver’s Licence, but I didn’t bring it with me. So, you’ll just have to trust me – besides who else would have the balls to take on the CIA?”

There was a chuckle or two at that remark and I laughed too. We all began to whisper amongst ourselves and the guards were getting more jittery. We agreed to make a stand and fight – we had to; it was our only chance of a remotely normal life. We moved so that the Phase 2 kids were closer to the guards. The invaders took our cue and they distracted the guards as we moved.

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I found myself behind a tall man, maybe six feet tall. I was on point and all were watching me for the cue to attack. I reached up and without warning, I wrenched the man’s neck around. In the following scuffle his body took a while to hit the floor. Two minutes later, the guards were no more. We just stood there with absolutely no idea what to do next. I had just killed a man in a second without conscious thought on the matter. Had I done right? I damned well hoped so. It had been a first for us all. I was brought out of my thoughts as Hit Girl spoke again.

“You did well; very well – you all have my respect!” she assured us and her tone, while electronic, appeared genuine. To receive a compliment from somebody as famous as Hit Girl . . . well, I felt good inside and it pushed some of my reservations to one side.

“Seize a weapon,” the traitorous Psyche ordered and almost immediately ten of us were armed – I grabbed up a pistol from the hand of a dead guard.

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After that, everything else was a blur until French Police appeared and we were disarmed and taken away. We were kept separated as we were interviewed – I called it interrogated – by French and British security services. I was stripped, showered, medically inspected, and then dressed again in new clothes. I was provided with paperwork which identified who I was. Somehow, they knew who I really was – they knew that I was not Harper Brown. I had forgotten what my birth name was and I was surprised to be told that I was born Harper Sharp.

I was also surprised to be told that I had an older sister who would take care of me. Nobody would tell me what had happened to my parents and I eventually gave up asking. I had not recognised Keira for who she was and it had taken a day or two to remember her as Keira showed me photos of us growing up together.

Strangely, I was *not* shown any photos of our parents.

“One more thing, Mindy . . .” Keira asked as they headed into the Armoury.

“Oh?” Mindy enquired.

“The swearing – what can I do about it?”

“Yeah – me too,” Cassie added with a glare at the three girls.

There was laughter as Harper, Naomi, and Kaitlin blushed. Mindy grinned.

“I have a perfect solution for that – in fact, I can personally vouch for its effectiveness.”

“Oh, you three have had it!” Stephanie growled. “You all get pocket money?”

“When we’re good,” Kaitlin muttered grudgingly.

“Well, say goodbye to it,” Stephanie warned in a slightly disgusted tone.

Mindy had vanished but she soon returned with a large tin in her hands. The tin jangled and clinked. Stephanie scowled at it and she backed away like it was something evil.

“The swear jar!” Mindy said proudly. “Rakes in hundreds a month, guaranteed. I keep one everywhere Stephanie goes. Marty is working on one that can take cards.”

“Don’t forget that *you* lost four-hundred and eighty bucks last month across various jars, mother dearest,” Stephanie reminded Mindy with a sly grin.

“I like to set a good example,” Mindy retorted sourly.

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Everybody gathered around the large central steel table in the Armoury. The three girls stood at one side with Stephanie to their right and Cassie to their left. Mindy was opposite them, with Chloe beside her. Keira and Sarah stood together beside Chloe.

“Okay, girls. Don’t worry about the questions. I just want to find out what you know and what you can do. Last night, we saw that you can all handle the hand-to-hand aspects; now for the firearms.”

Mindy placed a pistol down before Harper.

“Beretta PX4 Storm,” the young girl commented.

Another pistol was placed before Naomi.

“FN Five-seveN Mk2,” Naomi yawned.

Mindy smirked at Kaitlin as she placed one before her. Kaitlin rolled her eyes.

“That the best you’ve got? A SIG Sauer P238 in Desert?”

Chloe chuckled. Mindy laughed.

“Which pistols did you prefer to shoot with, girls?”

“S&W M&P 22 Compact,” Kaitlin offered.

Chloe walked over to the rack of pistols and selected a black pistol which replaced the P238.

“SIG Sauer P938 BRG,” Naomi responded.

Chloe again walked over to the rack and she retrieved the mentioned pistol and swapped it for the FN.

“SIG Sauer P238 Combat,” was Harper’s selection.

Once Chloe had swapped the PX4 for the P238, Mindy instructed the girls to pick up their allocated weapons. Chloe, Stephanie, and Mindy watched very closely as each girl picked up the pistol, ejected the magazine, pulled back the slide and visually checked the breech before releasing the slide, reinserting the empty magazine and clearing the action.

“Thank you, girls, that was very well done. If any one of you had not cleared your weapon, I would have taken it from you and you would not touch a weapon until suitably trained.”

The three girls smiled at the praise.

“Now, follow me to the range. Naomi, stay with Stephanie. Kaitlin, you’re with Chloe. Harper, with me. Take your pistols with you.”

The Range

“Okay, girls. I assume you each know how to behave with live ammunition on a range?”

“Yes, Mindy,” the three girls replied together.

The demeanour of the three girls had changed dramatically once the firearms had come into play; they were all business and there had been no messing about or giggling. Joshua placed a box of the correct ammunition beside the first three firing points and the girls each placed their pistols down in front of them.

“I am the Range Safety Officer. Headsets on, please,” Joshua ordered and everybody present picked up a set of ear defenders.

The headsets had built-in communications allowing everybody to converse despite the anticipated background noise.

“Girls, load your magazine with five rounds each, please. Do *not* insert the magazine. Raise your right hand once ready.”

Within thirty seconds, three hands were raised in the air. There had been no rushing as each girl had carefully loaded five rounds into their previously ejected magazines.

“Err, Mindy?” Harper piped up. “Who’s the guy on the target?”

Each target was a full colour, full scale, face on body form.

“Oh, that’s a good friend of mine – Dave and I find that him being the target improves our aim. His name was Frank D’Amico.”

“Oh – was he a bad guy?” Naomi asked.

“The worst,” Mindy stated.

“Dead?” Kaitlin asked.

“Yes.”

“Did you kill him?”

“No. Dave did – with a bazooka.”

Three young heads and one older one snapped around and said in unison, “*A bazooka?*”

“Oh, yeah.”

“Ladies, please insert your magazine, keeping your weapon pointed down range at all times and ensure that you are using the fitted safety devices,” Joshua intoned as he watched the girls intently. “Five rounds . . . in your own time . . . commence firing!”

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Each girl took up their preferred firing stance with their pistols pointed down the range. Naomi appeared to favour ‘The Fighting Stance’, while her younger cousin used the simpler ‘Weaver Stance’. Harper stood facing the wall to her left, her right arm elevated horizontally and her right hand pointing at the target, her feet wide apart. She expertly controlled the recoil as she aimed and squeezed off five shots before the slide of her pistol locked back on an empty magazine. The two cousins were equally expert, although Kaitlin was a way behind the older girls but the quality of her shooting was high.

“Cease firing! Clear all weapons!” Joshua ordered and the girls did exactly that, clearing their weapons and placing them down in front of them with their hands in clear sight.

The targets came down the range on runners and stopped before each firer. Mindy walked behind each girl and checked the target. Kaitlin’s shots were spaced out but all five were on the target and had scored.

“Well done, Kaitlin, we need to work on your spacing.”

Next, was Naomi. Her target grouping was closer together and accurate. All five rounds were in the target’s chest area.

“Nice grouping, Naomi.”

Harper was last. Mindy grinned as she saw all five rounds, tightly grouped . . . in the man’s groin.

“Nasty!” Joshua commented and everybody laughed.

“You appear to have issues, Harper, but your shooting is spot on!” Mindy commented as the girl blushed.

Mindy allowed the girls to shoot for another half-hour. The girls enjoyed themselves greatly and both Keira and Sarah got in a few magazines each. Both were qualified on pistols as per their Royal Navy training. The two Royal Navy officers were both trained in the use of the Glock 17 Gen4 pistol and both shot with the Glock very well.

One all were finished on the range, everybody retired to the Galley for some much-needed sustenance.

The Galley

“Why do the girls revere you so much, Stephanie?”

The ten-year-old looked up at Keira and smiled darkly.

“When I was eight, I killed a twelve-year-old girl in the shower. We were both naked at the time. She attacked *me* – so I killed her. The establishment rewarded me by giving me my codename early. Then I kind of left the program – I was marked as a traitor and marked for death. Saoirse? She was intended to be my nemesis. She tried to kill me three times. How she failed, I will *never* know?”

“You were too good for me, Steph,” Saoirse chipped in.

“You’re friends?” Keira asked slightly incredulously.

“We have to be. There’s not many like us – Naomi, Kaitlin, and Harper; they have each other and I have Saoirse. Behind Mum and Dad, and my brother and sister, she’s the most important person in my life.”

Saoirse blushed at the compliment.

“I’m struggling to understand what all you girls went through. I just can’t imagine the hardships . . .” Keira said with a pained expression.

“Thanks to Mindy and her team, that is all history. We can try and get back to a normal life. Only, that isn’t possible. We are all damaged and we all have certain . . . urges, I suppose . . . that need to be fulfilled,” Stephanie explained. “Being a vigilante helps to focus our skills down the correct track; using those skills for good, rather than for bad as was originally intended.”

“I understand that Harper will never go back to the way she used to be before. But are there any chances of her going crazy; I understand Kaitlin went a little bit nuts one evening, back in Scotland.”

Kaitlin growled and scowled as Cassie laughed.

“That’s one way to put it!” she replied. “Kaitlin, just like the other girls, needed an outlet for her pent-up energy and rage. We never realised until Kaitlin wrecked that Police BMW. That was why we looked to arrange this visit. We had hoped that the girls could lead normal-ish lives, but that did not seem to be on the books, so we decided to show them *Vengeance* and *Fusion*.”

“This is a kind of interview, I suppose,” Mindy said as she looked at the three girls and Keira. “From what I have seen, so far, you three are perfect. But . . .”

“But?” Kaitlin asked.

“It is voluntary. Nobody can force any of you to risk your lives as vigilantes. However, there are rules to being a *Vengeance* or *Fusion* vigilante. You break the rules, or you ignore them, people die. Do you understand that?”

The three girls nodded seriously.

“How about some fun?” Mindy finished.