

**Thursday, May 5<sup>th</sup> 2016**

**03:25**

***Ocean Vigilante***

“Contact!” Abby shouted from the Command Centre.

“Where away?” Commander Perrin demanded instantly.

“Bearing green one seven – range six thousand yards and closing at twenty knots... I’m getting IFF – she’s a friendly; HMS Sutherland...”

Commander Perrin quickly dug into a locker and he came out with a large white bundle. He threw it to Dave: “Get that up on the mast, quick!”

Dave ran out onto the deck and then headed up a ladder onto the Sun Deck. Commander Perrin pulled out a small bag from the same locker. Out of the bag came a Royal Navy Officer’s peaked cap, complete with gold braid along the edge of the peak.

“Plan B, Mindy...” Commander Perrin grinned as the radio jumped to life.

“Vessel on our port bow, this is British warship *Sutherland*, British warship *Sutherland*. Identify your vessel and state passengers and cargo. Over.”

Commander Perrin picked up the radio handset and began to speak.

“*Sutherland, Sutherland*, this is *Oscar Victor* – authenticate four-two-delta. Over.”

There was a slight pause before a response came back.

“*Oscar Victor, Sutherland* – go to discrete channel alfa-whiskey-seven. Over.”

“Copy, *Sutherland* – changing to alfa-whiskey-seven.”

Commander Perrin winked as he switched to another radio and changed the channel. “We have them!”

“*Sutherland*, this is *Oscar Victor* on alfa-whiskey-seven. Over.”

“*Oscar Victor*, this is Commander Jacobs, please state the nature of your situation. Over.”

“Commander Jacobs, this is Commander Perrin, we have taken one, maybe two, missile strikes to our port side and we are in need of urgent docking facilities. Please communicate with Northwood and request a docking at the nearest facility for Quebec Four Seven. Over.”

There was a short pause.

“Do you require any damage control assistance? Over.”

“Negative; the fires are out and the pumps are clearing the flooding and standing water. Zero casualties on our side. Over.”

“Standby, *Oscar Victor*. Over.”

There was a longer pause of several minutes during which time the 4,900-ton Royal Navy Type 23 frigate had formed up on our starboard beam eighty yards distant and she adjusted her speed to match our own ten knots. I took a moment to step foot out onto the starboard bridge wing and as I

looked up, I noticed that we were now flying the same ensign as that flown by the nearby British warship.

Commander Perrin had given myself and Dave a briefing on his 'Plan B', soon after we had come aboard. Apparently, 'Oscar Victor' had been listed as a 'Q-ship' – basically, a vessel that looked civilian but was, in fact, hiding weapons within its civilian façade. Q-ships had not been used since World War II, however, some countries were seriously considering using them in the fight against pirates.

For that moment, we were with a friendly warship and, I hoped, on the way for some much-needed repairs.

*"Oscar Victor, we are sending over a boat with instructions for you. Sutherland out."*

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Within ten minutes, a RIB was being lowered down *Sutherland's* side.

The Pacific 24 Mk4 RIB flew across the short gap between us and came alongside at the stern. Commander Perrin met the RIB and a single figure jumped off. The man had three gold stripes on his shoulders – he must have been the *Sutherland's* commanding officer. I stood with Dave at the rear of the Sun Deck beside the port side mini-gun. We both wore our anti-flash hoods, as were every other member of the crew that were visible on the upper deck – the youngest remained below decks, out of sight.

"Commander Jacobs, I presume."

"Correct, Commander. You are in command here?"

"I am."

Commander Jacobs passed across a sealed envelope.

"From Northwood – Eyes Only."

"Thank you, Commander..."

"You sure you don't need any help?" Commander Jacobs enquired as he studied the smoke-blackened bulkhead around the hatch that led toward the Tender Garage and Engine Room.

"Looks worse than it really was but thanks for the offer," Commander Perrin replied.

"I'll be shoving off then – well have been ordered to provide escort to Gib. We would expect the transit to take about eighteen hours at present speed and the powers that be would like you to arrive after dark..."

"That would be *most* appreciative, Commander."

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### ***That night***

#### ***The Rock of Gibraltar***

We needed backup and that backup was, at that moment, winging its way across the North Atlantic even as we made our way towards the fortress that guarded the gates of the Mediterranean, often known simply as The Rock of Gibraltar.

The 426-metre high monolithic limestone promontory is located in the British Overseas Territory of Gibraltar, on the Iberian Peninsula. Gibraltar has a land area of only 2.6 square miles and shares its northern border with the Province of Cadiz in Andalusia, Spain. At the foot of The Rock, live over 30,000 people.

An Anglo-Dutch force captured Gibraltar from Spain in 1704 and the peninsula was later ceded to Britain in 1713 under the Treaty of Utrecht. Gibraltar, and that treaty, were a constant thorn in the side of Anglo-Spanish relations, which were steadily getting worse with regard to Gibraltar and her residents.

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**Friday, May 6<sup>th</sup> 2016**

**Mid-morning**

To get to the Main Terminal at the airport, you took Winston Churchill Avenue and you actually drove *across* the main, and only, runway that served the airport!

I understood that the landings and take-offs could be quite harrowing for those flying to and from Gibraltar, as aircraft travelling to and from the isolated peninsula were not allowed to use Spanish airspace. This, therefore, forced aircraft to bank sharply when landing from or taking off towards the west.

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I parked the rented station wagon in the airport car park and I headed inside the air-conditioned building and I waited near the arrivals. The wait was not a long one as I soon saw some familiar faces appear from the gate with their bags. I felt my face breaking into a broad grin as I saw four smiling people advance towards me.

“Mindy!” Curtis called out excitedly and he hugged me tightly.

“Good to see you, little guy...”

“Hi, Mindy,” Morgan said with a grin.

“You look good, Morgan...”

“How’s the family?” I asked the third person.

“Doing really well, Mindy, Thanks,” Kim replied as she gave me a hug.

The fourth person seemed uncharacteristically shy as she approached.

“Hi, Saoirse – welcome to Gibraltar.”

“Thanks, Mindy!”

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We walked back to the carpark in near silence as everybody lugged their bags to the car in the humid air. Everybody was glad when I had the AC going in the car and conversation resumed.

“SD has a boyfriend,” Morgan commented as we drove away from the airport.

“Shut up, Morgan!” Saoirse growled. The embarrassed girl blushed bright red and then she glared at her sister.

I laughed which did *not* exactly help the situation.

“She thinks he’s cute and...”

“One more word, Morgan...” Saoirse hissed.

“She’s considering whether to let him bone her...”

Curtis cringed while Kim and I burst out laughing. Morgan just giggled away while Saoirse looked like she might actually explode.

“Immature idiots!” Saoirse complained bitterly as her face continued to burn.

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### ***South Barrack Road***

We were staying in a large house which overlooked the port and dockyard.

The moment that I had stopped the car, the front door had flown open and Megan had burst out. Curtis had walked maybe a foot before he was violently pinned against the car and Megan went into full ‘I’ve missed you’ mode...

The poor boy blushed madly as Megan kissed him repeatedly. He managed to return one in five but Megan was *on fire*! They both vanished minutes later – I decided not to enquire where, nor why...

Kim enjoyed greeting everybody and she spent some extra time with Hailee. Morgan and SD were welcomed by all, especially Saoirse by Stephanie. Saoirse seemed a little overwhelmed and she vanished off for a shower.

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After the long flight, I had decided on a long shower to ease my aching muscles.

Executive jets were not all that they were cracked up to be! While I was busy washing, I heard the bathroom door open and then a little voice.

“Only me; I need to pee...”

It was only Anne-Marie, so I just ignored her while she went about her business. Then there was silence and as I turned around I found the same girl staring at me.

“Problem, Anne-Marie?”

“Err, sorry – how come you get to have a cutie mark and I don’t?” The eight-year-old demanded as she seemed to ignore the fact that I was completely naked.

“Cutie . . . what?”

“A cutie mark – you know; what ponies have...”

“I know what a cutie mark is – just what does... Oh!” I stopped and I had an idea what Anne-Marie had seen. “It’s a remainder from my time on the *Urban Predator* side.”

I turned around slightly so that Anne-Marie could see my right buttock where I had an elongated tattoo of a fox, about seven-inches long, with a bushy tail – a Foxtail... The young girl seemed disturbingly mesmerised by my butt!

“How come you get to have one?” The girl persisted.

“I wanted something to connect my codename to me: Saoirse to Foxtail. I liked it – it was painful to get but I liked it,” I explained as I shut off the shower, stepped out and wrapped a towel around me. “You are *way* too young for a real tattoo, Anne-Marie – trust me.”

“Okay,” The girl replied begrudgingly.

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### ***Later that afternoon***

In hindsight, it was probably a *big* mistake.

I had wandered into the kitchen and asked Dave if Megan was about. Dave had grinned fiendishly – should have caught that...

“Megan? She’s in her room...”

It was only when I pushed open the door of the room that was being shared by Stephanie, Saoirse, Abby and Megan that I realised why Dave had been grinning – I wished people would lock their goddamn doors when they... The view I had of Megan was *not* one which I would *ever* have wanted to see – she was on her bed, completely naked, and she was kissing somebody with her legs open and her bare ass in the air and it was pointing at *me*; I also had a good view between the legs of whomever she was kissing.

I coughed and there was some furious activity as Megan dived under the duvet and I saw a very sheepish and embarrassed looking Curtis lying beside his furiously blushing girlfriend. I stuck my head out the door.

“Not funny, Dave!”

I heard laughter from the kitchen as the only response.

Once back in the bedroom, I glared at Megan.

“You need to lock your door if you're gonna be... you know...”

“Cunt here was supposed to lock the damn door!” Megan growled as she elbowed the grinning Curtis.

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### ***An hour later***

We all sat down to supper, which was a somewhat crowded affair.

“You seem a little unsteady on your feet, Curtis...” Dave commented with a smirk and the eleven-year-old boy blushed.

Megan said nothing, but she licked her lips.

“You are a scruffy little hussy!” Chloe declared.

Megan glared at Chloe, who just grinned.

“Like *your* legs are *ever* closed – skank!” Megan retorted.

“Bitchy!” Chloe laughed. “I like...”

“I’m *not* a dyke – unlike some...”

“Dyke, no. Bi, yes,” Chloe replied casually before she paused. “You actually had anything up there yet?”

Megan blushed deeply before she responded.

“Curtis, no – and no other cock either – although we did try a banana one time...”

“I ate it afterwards – Megan tastes good!” Curtis added.

Chloe laughed and I had to admit that it was kinda funny, although a little creepy too! Stephanie’s expression was priceless and Anne-Marie just looked confused, as did Danny.

“Up where?” Anne-Marie asked innocently.

Joshua, typically, decided to lower the tone of the conversation even further; if that were actually possible!

“Between your legs, you have a hole or two – it’s the front one.”

Cassie and Natasha burst out laughing while Chloe smacked Joshua hard across the face with the back of her hand. Stephanie looked horrified, as did Anne-Marie. I had a feeling that Eric and Cameron, not to mention Hailee and Abby were about to piss themselves as they could barely breathe through their laughter. I kind of lost track of things, myself, as I was laughing too hard to watch what was going on although I did catch sight of Morgan and Saoirse as they fell off their chairs.

Dave gripped onto me hard as he shook with his own laughter.

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Needless to say, supper had been fun.

Time was spent bringing the newcomers up to speed with what had been happening and with what we had planned. Megan had taken the time to explain to Curtis what had happened to her and for the moment, Curtis was not allowing Megan out of his sight... He even sat on the floor outside the bathroom when she went to pee!

It was a good time for everybody to unwind and Dave and I got to spend some time with the twins. Anne-Marie and Danny had been side-lined a bit during the past couple of weeks and we had not spent as much time with them as we would have liked.

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“Dad – has Mom ever hurt you?” Danny asked that evening.

“Yeah – she stabbed me in the thigh with a kitchen knife,” Dave replied with a grin.

“I thought we agreed never to mention that again,” I growled.

“Tell us, Dave...” Anne-Marie demanded excitedly.

“Yeah – I want to hear this,” Chloe added as she walked past.

Once Chloe had sat down and Anne-Marie was perched on her knee, I reluctantly began to relate the story.

“Dave and I got ourselves trapped in a big store, over in New York. We were with Brooke – we had to make do with what was available. Dave actually took down two men with a pair of wrenches! I got a bit carried away when four gunmen appeared and I flung several kitchen knives in their direction – only one went astray...”

“Astray!” Dave wailed. “It embedded itself in my damn thigh!”

“You *missed!*” Anne-Marie was astounded. “You’re Hit Girl – how could you *miss?*”

I rolled my eyes and glared at the eight-year-old.

“It had been a tough night...” I offered weakly.

Anne-Marie was like Megan – she assumed that Hit Girl was invincible and infallible; if only...

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Joshua decided that it was time for another one of his dirty and politically incorrect jokes.

“What is the difference between heaven and hell?” He asked.

“Do we really want to know...?” Chloe grimaced as she closed her eyes.

“In heaven, the English are the policemen, the French are the chefs, the Germans the mechanics, the Italians are the lovers, and the Swiss organize everything. In hell, the Germans are the policemen, the English are the chefs, the French the mechanics, the Swiss are the lovers, and the Italians organize everything.”

There was some minor chuckling and Joshua looked offended at the lack of response but then I realised that he was just warming up.

“A couple of New Jersey hunters are out in the woods when one of them falls to the ground. He doesn’t seem to be breathing and his eyes are rolled back in his head. The other guy whips out his cell phone and calls the emergency services. He gasps to the operator: ‘My friend is dead. What can I do?’ The operator, in a calm soothing voice, says: ‘Just take it easy; I can help. First, let’s make sure he’s dead.’ There is silence for a moment before a shot is heard. The guy’s voice comes back on the line. He says: ‘Okay, now what?’”

That got everybody laughing and then Stephanie joined in.

“What has two legs, but can’t walk?” She asked.

There were a few puzzled expressions and Stephanie hit us with her punchline.

“Half a dog...”

Joshua laughed and so did Dave and Cameron.

“That’s sick...” Anne-Marie stated.

“That was cool...” Danny said with a big smile.

“Boys!” His sister growled.

“You better get used to it, girl – boys never grow up...” Hailee advised the younger girl.

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**Saturday, May 7<sup>th</sup> 2016**

*Ocean Vigilante* had been alongside at the Gibdock dockyard for an entire day.

The pumps were controlling the leakage and emergency repairs were well underway. Gibdock engineers were busy scouting out the all damage and applying emergency patches where necessary. Our list to port was now only four degrees, instead of the eight when we had first docked late on Thursday night. The engineers expected it to be at least another day, at the earliest, before we could put back to sea.

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The eighteen-hour transit to Gibraltar in company with *HMS Sutherland* had been uneventful and it had been a wait of everybody's mind to have help only a few hundred yards away. We had been an obvious curiosity to the crew of the British frigate. As dawn broke, we were still flying the White Ensign alongside our own defaced Blue Ensign. During the early morning darkness, we had stowed all our weapons in the magazines and we had done our best to make the *Ocean Vigilante* look like a badly damaged civilian yacht.

The cover story was that we had suffered an explosion in the Tender Garage – a fuel spill.

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For the majority of the crew, it had been a chance to rest after the very tense actions of the previous night. I had personally gone from person to person ensuring that everybody was uninjured – I checked Megan twice... All the kids slept for a good ten hours or so of the transit. The adults managed almost eight hours sleep in shifts.

I had been horrified when I had examined the damage below. Dave actually hugged me as I felt tears building – not only for the damage to my beautiful yacht, but also for the lives that could have been lost if things had gone differently.

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We had been met a mile southwest of the South Mole that protected Gibraltar Harbour, by a pair of tugs; one for us and one for the *Sutherland*. The tug had deposited six Gibdock engineers aboard who went to work examining the damage and arranging for us to go alongside at the dockyard. The *Sutherland* moored just ahead of us at the dock and almost immediately, armed sailors appeared to provide a dockside guard for *Ocean Vigilante*. *Sutherland* had dropped her pair of Pacific 24 seaboats into the water which I gathered would remain to seaward of us as a further guard.

All that remained was to move everybody ashore to our temporary lodgings and hand *Ocean Vigilante* over to the dockyard. Spook and the two Commanders would remain aboard.

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As for 'the enemy', *Cummings Delight* was moored, not five miles away to the west, in Algeciras – she appeared to be heavily damaged and did not expect that she would ever sail again. She had been impounded by the Spanish Navy the moment that she had made port an hour or two before us, however, discrete checks made by Spook had ascertained that our targets had not been aboard at the time when the vessel had been boarded by the Spaniards. That meant that Vossen and his team had very probably come ashore onto the fortress that was the Rock of Gibraltar.

They had no chance of leaving The Rock via land, or by air for that matter, and the Royal Navy was keeping an eye on every boat that left Gib.

I decided that it was time to go searching...

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### ***That afternoon***

It was minutes after noon when the Wayne Enterprises CN-235 transport aircraft taxied to a halt alongside the Wayne Enterprises hanger at the airport.

Forty minutes later, there was the roar of engines, just not the expected roar of the CN-235s twin General Electric CT7-9C3 turboprops. Instead, it was the roar of sixteen-hundred-horsepower of two-wheel thrust. Twelve motorcycles roared out of the warehouse before they turned towards the road south and out of the airport. I had outdone myself but I had impressed everybody!

Twenty-one people were now astride those twelve motorcycles.

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Gibraltar was tight on space, to put it mildly, so motorcycles were a much better option than cars.

I had purchased three very different models.

I was astride a 2016 Ducati Multistrada 1200 Enduro, with Anne-Marie holding on tight behind me. There were three other Ducati Multistradas: Chloe and Danny rode one, Hailee and Mathilda another, with Jason and Nicky on the fourth.

Dave, with Stephanie behind him, were riding a BMW R 1200 GS Adventure motorcycle, as were Saoirse with Abby, Kim with Curtis, and Morgan on her own.

The third model was being predominantly ridden by the Brits. The first of the four Triumph Tiger Explorer XCX machines was being ridden by Natasha, another machine by her twin brother, Cameron, while Cassandra and Eric rode the third. The fourth and final Triumph was ridden by Joshua, who had Megan seated behind him.

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At the Victoria Stadium roundabout, we split up.

Team 1, which consisted of Dave & Stephanie, Kim & Curtis, Cassandra & Eric, and Cameron, turned east along Devil's Tower Road and towards the east coast.

Teams 2 and 3 continued in a southerly direction, towards the harbour.

At Main Street, Team 2 continued south past the Parliament, while Team 3, which consisted of Natasha, Hailee & Mathilda, Morgan, and Jason & Nicky, turned east and started to climb the north end of the rock, where they headed for Signal Hill.

The other members of Team 2, led by me, headed further south. As we passed the dockyard on Rosia Road, Anne-Marie spoke.

"Is she gonna be okay?"

She was referring to *Ocean Vigilante*.

“Yes, she’ll be fine.”

“She saved our lives, didn’t she...?”

“Yes, she did – I am very proud of her.”

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It was awesome being back on two wheels again; I had not been on two wheels since London – God, that felt like months ago, even if it had only been two weeks.

The roads were perfect for the high manoeuvrability of two wheels. The noise of the engines as they roared when we passed through a short, and very narrow, tunnel was awesome. We emerged back into the sunlight before we dived back into yet another short tunnel.

We took a moment to pause at Camp Bay and we enjoyed the sun while we all ate an ice-cream. To be honest, it really wasn’t warm enough for ice-cream but nobody seemed to care. Anne-Marie and Danny enjoyed the time as they laughed and licked their ice-creams while Megan and Joshua teased the fuck out of each other which resulted in Megan having ice-cream splattered all over her face.

Saoirse, Chloe, and Abby were happily chatting about boys – Saoirse wanted to know how far Abby had gone with Eric...

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Once we had rested, we climbed back onto our motorcycles and continued south, where we followed the coast road.

Very soon, we dived into a much longer tunnel, that was lined with concrete near the entrance, but the rest was just roughhewn rock. There wasn’t much in the way of lighting in the tunnel but the roar of our combined engines – I could not stop grinning... Finally, daylight appeared ahead and we shot out into the sunlight – I hated dark enclosed spaces, given the choice.

We came out of the tunnel to find ourselves at the very tip of the peninsular. To be brutally honest, the next stop beyond the radar station was North Africa, but you would have to swim across eight miles of busy shipping lane to get there – Chloe declined the opportunity. We proceeded north up the east coast and stopped as we met up with Team 1.

Stephanie was really enjoying herself and she was grinning madly. Curtis and Megan exchanged a few words – and much to Chloe’s disgust, a long and drawn out kiss. After a very short pause, we headed north again – Team 1 would continue around and head north by climbing the rock and would ride past the military barracks and then the Royal Navy hospital.

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For us, the ride north was beyond stunning and I’m sorry, I kept stopping to take photos!

As we passed around the outstanding beauty and extreme ruggedness of the north bluff of The Rock, we just had to stop and gaze up at it. You could see openings painstakingly chiselled into the rock from the bad old days. The capture and holding of Gibraltar for nine-months in 1704 was what gave the Royal Marines Commando a considerable amount of their prestige in the world.

I had to admit that I liked Gibraltar; maybe I should get a house there . . . for holidays...

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## ***That evening***

### ***South Barrack Road***

We all sat down to go through what we had found.

Apparently, not very much. Alright, it had been a longshot in the first place but it had been fun! Then it came. Spook strolled in and he looked cool aloof. He dropped a folder onto the table in front of me.

“He’s been hiding, along with that damn woman. They all jumped ship and came ashore at Ailsa Craig on the east coast. They’ve been holed up in an old tunnel that crosses the rock and has not been used for decades.”

“And?” I prompted as Spook smiled.

“GCHQ has come up trumps, Mindy,” Spook replied. “Miss Cummings has been communicating with a Spanish helicopter rental company – they’ve booked a Sikorsky S-76 helicopter for tonight...”

“So he’s making a run for the border?” Dave enquired.

“Seems like it,” Spook responded.