

Saturday, May 7th 2016

That Night

Spur Battery Road

Gibraltar

Hit Girl

It was dark as we made our way up the road and thanks to the time of day, the tourist attractions had closed so we had the place to ourselves.

I had to admit that the view was stunning as I looked in a westerly direction towards Algeciras and the Spanish mainland. Spook was holed up with Abby in our rapidly sourced and surprisingly well-equipped Command Van – where and how Spook acquired it, I did not ask... Those two were to be our eyes and ears for any surprises while Eric was at the house. Spook and Abby had parked the van up at St Michael's Cave, a short distance from the top of the road with Petra as their last line of defence.

Hailee had argued to get back into the action. I was not convinced that she was ready but I knew how helpless she felt being kept out of the action. She had fought well on *Ocean Vigilante*, so I had agreed for her to be our backup and for her to guard the Command Van.

..._...

The enemy stepped out into the road ahead of us as we advanced on foot, two abreast, and in line. As the bullets hit the tarmac at our feet, we dived for cover. Now, we were hundreds of feet up the side of a giant chunk of granite, so 'cover' was a very relative term! To our left, was the aforementioned sheer wall of granite that provided a *small* amount of cover thanks to its undulating manner. To the right, there were trees, bushes . . . and the quick way back down the rock...

We were less than a hundred yards from the top of the road – our only option was to make it to the top or die in the hail of bullets; the alternative did not bear thinking about. We laid down covering fire which allowed pairs to move forward from cover to cover. Both sides were using suppressed weapons; it would keep the authorities from getting too curious – at least for a while. If we were to prevent Vossen from escaping, we had to corner him.

"Fusion, Hal – helicopter closing on your location from the northwest!"

It had been fairly obvious that he was up there to escape by helicopter, as we had discovered – he would be only minutes from safety in southern Spain, not to mention out of our reach. HMS Sutherland was providing assistance with her powerful 3D search radar – I just wished that she could blow the damn helicopter out of the sky but I figured a British warship shooting down a Spanish helicopter might cause a slight international incident.

..._...

The darkness and the dark colours of our combat suits helped to shroud us. Many of the bullets were going wide but it would only take a lucky strike and our force was small... Kick-Ass and Jackal went first, followed by Nemesis and Crimson. I moved up, with Raven to my left – I felt exposed, so close to the lethal drop on my right. I sent several three-round bursts up the road, towards the remote muzzle flashes that indicated the enemy's position. Ahead of me, Trojan and Wildcat moved up, followed by Psyche and Foxtail.

Then it was our turn as we were covered by Drift and Shadow. I felt two bullets strike my chest armour, which caused me pain but did not hinder my advance in any way. The advance up the road was agonizingly slow but we had no choice but to push on and not turn it into the Charge of the Light Brigade. Bullets hit the concrete that edged the road and ricocheted off where they posed yet another risk for us to face.

As we got closer, the gunfire became more accurate and much closer but then so did ours and I managed to score some hits. I saw Foxtail go down but she soon jumped back up again and followed her partner. I hoped she was enjoying her baptism of fire!

Foxtail

God dammit, those bullets hurt!

My armour had protected me but I was going to be bruised to fuck. It was my very first experience of a real battle. Up until that moment, I had generally fought small skirmishes at best and never more than five or six at a time. The gunfire was disconcerting and so was the tactical situation – it sucked to be brutally honest but it *was* fun!

Beside me, Psyche was in her element and I knew that she had done this kind of thing before, so I followed her lead.

Hit Girl

We had finally reached the top of the road and we were fighting in the circular casement where a large gun had once rested. On three sides of us was an eight-foot-tall chunk of solid concrete that was all there was between us and oblivion.

Somehow, we managed to have the twelve of us, plus about fourteen of them, all fighting hand-to-hand in that one small area! One man died as Kick-Ass threw him bodily against the concrete; the impact smashed his head to pulp. There was no sign of Vossen but he had to be around there somewhere. As I looked around me, I could see movement above us, up near a microwave station. There were six men and they were all guarding at least two others – there! Our eyes locked and I heard myself growling like a Rottweiler as she identified her prey.

..._...

I ran towards the concrete steps that led up to the transmitting station but I felt somebody grab me around the waist and throw me to the ground. I reacted immediately; I kicked out and heard a scream of pain as I followed through with a punch to the unfortunate man's jaw.

I was up again and I jumped up the four-foot wall at the back of the casement and there I received a punch to my upper left arm which sent me sprawling. I kicked out and put a boot through some bastard's teeth; he fell away screaming as blood erupted from his mouth. Then I felt myself seized around the arms and chest – the arms must have been from a gorilla; they were fucking huge and I struggled to breathe.

I was thrown bodily to one side by the 'ape'. I landed on a large square block of concrete that made up a rear corner of the casement and was the roof for the shelter beneath. As I landed, I rolled towards the edge of the concrete and I screamed as I rolled off into oblivion...

Jackal

The life of Jackal was never dull!

I grabbed the head of the nearest thug, rammed my armoured knee into his face and then smashed the head onto one of the many pieces of rusty iron which stuck out of the casement wall – I had to admit I felt sorry for the poor schmuck that would have to clean up the bloodstains before the next tourists arrived – before I let the body drop to the concrete and stone floor.

As I turned, I heard a scream.

It had to be one of the girls – I looked around me; there was Wildcat – going wild with her claws as expected, I could see Crimson and Shadow ripping some poor bastard apart and . . . up on the edge of the casement – no fucking surprise – Psyche and Foxtail; Psyche's Sais dripped with blood as were the Butterfly swords of Foxtail. I was momentarily distracted from counting girls as Foxtail sent a head flying over the edge of the casement and down below into the houses beneath us – God knows what somebody down there would think as a severed head suddenly appeared out of nowhere!

I realised that there was one girl missing – where the fuck was Hit Girl?

Hit Girl

How the fuck did I get myself into these goddamn situations?

I kicked out with my feet and I gained purchase on something that felt solid. I thanked my lucky stars that one hand had caught a protruding piece of iron whose original purpose was long forgotten. I managed to get one hand over the edge above me but then I felt a boot on my gauntleted hand. It hurt but nowhere near as much as it would have done if I had not been wearing armour on my hands.

“Bye, bye, Hit Girl...” The ‘ape’ growled.

I felt my hand pushed inexorably towards the edge and I once again faced off against death. Then, out of the blue, the pressure on my hand eased and I heard a yell as the ‘ape’ went over the edge and fell four hundred odd feet straight down...

“What the fuck are you doing down there?” Psyche demanded incredulously.

“I saw something interesting!” I growled. “Now fucking help me up, or so help me God...”

“Ungrateful bitch!” Psyche growled as she and Jackal heaved me over the edge with the help of Foxtail.

“What happened to him?” I asked as I indicated the cliff edge behind me.

“He had no head for heights...” Psyche muttered.

“He got the boot...” Jackal added.

Psyche and Jackal fist-pounded before they turned and ran back to the fight.

“For God’s sake!” Foxtail muttered as she ran to join Psyche. “Hey! Leave some for me to kill...”

I chuckled for a moment before I was brought back to reality as a bullet ricocheted off the concrete by my feet. I pulled my pistol and sent half a dozen rounds upwards, towards the microwave station above me.

Kick-Ass

The gun casement resembled an abattoir.

Blood was everywhere and the substance was very visible on the white-painted concrete. As far as I could tell the enemy numbers were dwindling but our own numbers were not. I found a submachine gun being thrust towards me, I grabbed the muzzle and wrenched it out of the man's hands before ramming the butt into the unfortunate man's face.

Blood exploded out to join the rest as the man screamed out in pain. His scream ended quite quickly as Crimson stabbed him through the heart. She and Shadow seemed to be having fun, I thought. I looked around for my wife and soon found her standing at the back of the casement.

I ran towards her, my pistol raised.

Hit Girl

I ignored the gunfire and I ran towards the transmitting station.

My focus was Vossen but I registered somebody as they ran towards me; it was my husband, Kick-Ass. His pistol was out and I could see muzzle-flashes as he covered my advance. I took advantage of the men as they shot at Kick-Ass. I put a bullet in the knees of two men and both toppled over the edge of the cliff – their cries vanished in the night, drowned out by another noise.

Above the sound of battle and above the sound of men dying there was the unmistakable sound of a helicopter as it closed on our position.

The helicopter approached without lights.

I was keen to be able to send some bullets towards it but firing by sound alone would not help as The Rock distorted the sound of the rotors. Vossen's men upped the amount of gunfire – they must have held men, ammunition, and automatic weapons back for just that moment.

I returned fire with my SIG MPX-K – only short bursts as my ammunition supply was dwindling fast.

..._...

The helicopter was close and the men guarding Vossen began to move down from the microwave station. I was forced to retreat with Kick-Ass providing covering fire. Then the unthinkable happened... Vossen had raised the stakes but I was game for anything.

"Grenade!"

Trojan's yell caused all heads to turn in his direction. I could see the explosive device as it flew through the air. I was safe, as was Kick-ass and most of the others. The explosive device was aimed at Wildcat who had *not* seen the grenade, nor it appeared, had she heard Trojan's dire warning.

Trojan moved faster than I had ever seen the kid move before. He bolted directly at Wildcat and he shoved her out of the way without any hesitation. Wildcat was sent sprawling across the concrete where she rolled and then hit the concrete casement. I heard a scream of pain as she lay still – she was hurt. I turned back to Trojan...

I tried to see the grenade but I was too late; the grenade detonated with a bright flash and a thunderous explosion which echoed around the granite outcrop. Silhouetted by the flash and in a weird slow motion, I saw a small body as it was flung to one side like it was nothing.

“NO!” I yelled out.

..._...

The grenade had proved to be the perfect distraction as the helicopter hovered and I saw Vossen and the other man clambering in along with their surviving escort. I raised my SIG MPX-K and emptied the remaining rounds from the magazine at Vossen. I caught several of his men but I had no idea if I had actually hit Vossen or not – one could always hope. However, the helicopter dived away and I was sure that I had seen smoke billow from an engine...

I ran towards the fallen Trojan who lay against a railing at the entrance to the gun casement. The rest of Vossen’s men all pulled back from the firefight and ran off down the road – their job was complete. Jackal put down the last viable target and he joined me as I quickly fell to my knees beside the supine form of Trojan.

His combat suit was ripped and torn but there was not much blood – a good omen? I reached up to his mask, disabled the anti-lift and I pulled off my gauntlet to check for a pulse at his carotid artery – nothing. I tried again, still nothing . . . as the seconds passed I began to feel panic rising within me; what was I doing wrong? His pulse *had* to be there... I pulled off his left gauntlet and checked for a pulse in his wrist.

“No pulse!” I yelled out.

Hit Girl, Shadow, Wildcat and Trojan

I heard an engine race and I saw the Command Van skid to a halt just a few yards away.

Spook had heard my everything and he had raced up the hill – I noticed blood on the front of the van and a cracked windshield. The team rapidly sprang into action – we had a drill for exactly the type of event that we were experiencing at that moment.

..._...

I grabbed up Trojan and carried him over to the Command Van. Once we were inside and the doors were closed, I pulled off his mask and began to remove the top of his combat suit. Megan appeared as she pulled off her own mask; she had tears which spilled unimpeded down her cheeks.

“You okay?” I asked. “You hurt?”

“Fuck *my* injuries...”

Chloe appeared with the portable defibrillator that we always carried but surprisingly, and thankfully, had never had to use to that point.

“Please, no!” She said, tears of her own fell down her face as she knelt down to begin CPR.

..._...

Chloe checked Curtis’ airway and she breathed air into his lungs twice before she commenced thirty chest compressions. Megan had her finger to Curtis’ carotid artery; she shook her head and I could see the panic on her face. I placed the chest electrode pads from the Automatic External Defibrillator, or AED for short, onto the boy’s chest in the correct locations while Chloe continued to administer CPR. I turned on the AED.

The machine issued a verbal command: ‘Stop CPR, do not touch patient, analysing.’

A few seconds later the prompt changed: ‘Preparing shock. Move away from the patient.’

Once everybody was clear, I hit the ‘SHOCK’ button and another prompt was issued: ‘Shocking in three – two – one...’

At ‘one’, a thousand volts pulsed between the two chest pads for exactly ten-milliseconds. The voltage was delivered along the length of Curtis’ heart, from the right atrium to the left ventricle. The machine ordered CPR to be continued, which Chloe did without a moment’s hesitation; she breathed twice to inflate Curtis’ lungs followed by thirty compressions to his chest.

..._...

Megan and Chloe both sobbed and Megan held Curtis’ hand tightly. Just as Chloe finished the next round of CPR, Megan suddenly stopped crying. I stared at her not wanting to tempt fate...

“I’ve got a pulse; I’ve got a pulse!” She shouted happily.

Chloe immediately stopped CPR and I could see Curtis’ chest begin to rise and fall on its own, just as the AED advised: ‘No shock required.’ The boy coughed a few times before he opened his hazel eyes. Chloe and Megan both burst into another round of crying – that time, they were tears of joy. I felt my own tears as they spilled unbidden down my cheeks – tears of relief.

“Who was that wonderful kisser?” Curtis asked.

Chloe blushed and cried even harder with the relief. Megan hugged Chloe and both sobbed too hard to speak.

The Command Van

Hit Girl, Shadow and Wildcat

With Trojan out of immediate danger, I turned to his girlfriend.

“Your turn, Megan...”

“I’m fine...” She began.

“We’ve been here before; don’t lie to me,” I warned.

Megan hated to show any form of weakness, but hesitantly she unzipped the top of her combat suit and pulled up her t-shirt. Her chest was purple on her right side – a direct result of her landing on the concrete. The girl screamed a couple of times as I prodded the area.

“No ribs broken – lucky.”

"Is he...?" She asked.

"He'll be fine; he saved your life, you know..." Chloe commented.

"He loves me, what more can I say."

I laughed – only Megan could brush off a grenade attack!

The Command Van

While Megan talked to Curtis, I looked over at Spook.

"What's your story – I saw the cracked windshield?"

"Oh!" Spook replied offhandedly. "Some prat ordered us to stop with his mouth instead of with the gun in his hand. Unfortunately, with all the excitement, I stood on the accelerator instead of the brake – I'm only human; anybody can make a mistake..."

I laughed.

"It was awesome!" Abby exclaimed. "The man's head hit the windshield and went *splat!*"

"You are really starting to worry me Abby," I commented dryly.

Abby just grinned.

It was time to leave.

Between the grenade and the helicopter, the authorities would be mobilising. However, before I could do anything, I heard a voice in my headset.

"*Fusion*, this is *Oscar Victor – Dolphin Three-Seven-Two* is approaching to extract – signal your exact position with smoke. Over."

"I copy, *Oscar Victor*. Popping smoke."

I had a shrewd idea what *Dolphin Three-Seven-Two* was as I pulled out a thin canister and pulled the pin. I threw the smoke grenade into the casement. Despite it being dark, I knew that while the smoke would be invisible, the heat generated by the grenade would be like a flare to the FLIR system on the Royal Navy Merlin HM2 helicopter.

I heard the rotor blades of the monster, three-engine, fourteen-tonne helicopter as it closed on our position.

"We going flying?" Jackal asked eagerly.

"Courtesy of the Royal Navy, yes," I replied.

..._...

The large grey helicopter appeared out of the darkness and I could make out a crewman in the open door on the starboard side. A red glow was visible which illuminated the interior of the helicopter. The pilot did not land; he hovered with the starboard rear undercarriage a mere inch from the top of the large square concrete slab from which I had fallen a while earlier.

I counted everybody aboard and once Kick-Ass had shoved me aboard ahead of him, he clambered aboard. As we took off there was a flash from below and the Command Van burst into flames. The Merlin helicopter banked around The Rock and headed directly for the dockyard. Below us, I could see the many lights of Gibraltar at night. I could also see a certain yacht all lit up from stem to stern.

We passed *Ocean Vigilante* and *HMS Sutherland* before we banked around hard and came in for a landing on the floodlit flight deck of the *Sutherland*. The touchdown was perfect and the engines rapidly spooled down. The door slid open and we were waved onto the flight deck. From there, we made our way ashore and then along the dock to the gangway of *Ocean Vigilante*.

Ocean Vigilante

As we made our way aboard, I noticed a very annoyed looking Commander Ryan Bennett.

"This had better not be bad news," I cautioned.

"She's gone..."

"Who?"

"*Cummings Delight*, that's who!"

"How?" I demanded. "I thought..."

"Money talks, obviously... She put to sea about an hour ago, however, she is damaged and I understand that she should be operating at reduced power..."

"Fuck!" I almost screamed. "That would explain them pulling back so quickly once Vossen had vanished... When can...?"

"How does 'within the hour' grab you?"