

Scotland

Neither Cassandra, nor her alter ego, Nemesis, had seen much in the way of any *actual* action.

After her initial training in Chicago, she had returned to Scotland and once there, she had put what she had learnt into more training under the tutelage of the twins. The nineteen-year-old had spent many hours sparring with Cameron and Natasha; the young woman was determined to be the best that she could be, and she often pushed both herself and her body to the absolute limit.

Due to this audacious behaviour, Natasha would often need to cut short a training session so that her friend could rest.

There was much more to Cassie than met the eye.

The young woman could drive and she had been able to since she was seventeen. For the past couple of years, she had been riding a moped so the upgrade to a real motorcycle had not been too much of a stretch. Much to her mother's annoyance, Cassie had decided to ride a motorcycle for short trips, instead of using her Ford Focus – she had selected a pacific blue Triumph Scrambler.

She and Natasha had become fast friends almost as soon as they had met and both girls enjoyed winding up the two boys. At first, Cassie had been unsure about becoming a vigilante, but with the backing of her parents she had quickly become the third member of the then fledgling *Vengeance* organisation.

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Vengeance as an organisation had come into being in mid-December of 2015, mainly as just a name. Cameron and Natasha had met with a man from MI5, who had helped procure a secure headquarters and he had then provided support to equip it. Their activities were not officially sanctioned, but neither were they officially prevented. Eric had come aboard as a direct recommendation from MI5. He was a teenage boy who had been in trouble, almost since the day he had learnt to type.

Eric was a former black-hat hacker, turned white-hat, and he was on probation for various IT-related crimes and as a result, he had jumped at the chance to join *Vengeance* as our technical support. He was a very hard worker and he often spent many hours on calls to the USA, both to Abby and Marty, as well as to the mysterious Lucius Fox.

There had been plenty to setup and everything had come together remarkably fast.

Sunday, April 17th 2016

That night

Now, though, *Vengeance* had the direct support of Kick-Ass and Hit Girl, along with their entire *Fusion* organisation.

We had a big mission planned that night, which would involve the entire combined team. Therefore, with the assistance of the younger members of Fusion, we all geared up. The advance team, consisting of Petra, Wildcat, Psyche and Drift, had left soon after seven that evening while the remainder had begun to deploy an hour later.

The advance team had taken *Scimitar*. The dark grey, armoured 4x4 Range Rover Sentinel, known as *Scimitar*, was powered by a supercharged 5.0-litre V8 engine, and was one of two that *Vengeance* had at their disposal – the other, identical, 4x4 was known as *Sabre*.

An hour later, *Sabre* departed in the wake of *Scimitar*, heading west for Glasgow.

Several miles northeast of Glasgow

We joined up with the advance team, where they lay hidden as they studied our target for the night.

I quietly lay down between Psyche and Wildcat.

“What you got, girls?”

“Nice of you to join us, Hit Girl!” Wildcat commented dryly.

“The Main Act always arrives after the much less capable Opening Act,” I replied smoothly.

“Good one,” Crimson laughed.

“Is he there?” I asked, keeping on track.

My younger sister rolled onto her back and sat up to face me.

“Cartwright is there – he arrived a few minutes after we were in position...”

“He has quite the entourage, too...” My daughter added as she continued to stare through a night scope.

“How many?” Kick-Ass enquired.

“Not many – about fifteen...”

I smiled at that comment – nothing phased Psyche! But then we were eight... Other than Petra, Wildcat, Psyche and Drift, we had myself, Kick-Ass, Crimson and Nemesis.

We had an appointment with Alexander Cartwright – one that he was neither expecting, nor would he be enjoying, or for that matter, surviving...

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“Oh, crap!”

“What has our dear little kitty found?” Petra enquired in a sarcastic tone.

Wildcat ignored the good-natured snipe and continued with her sighting report.

“We have three more vehicles approaching – looks like they shop at the same place *Vengeance* does!”

I pulled a night scope from my belt and scanned the area where Wildcat was looking. There were indeed, three Range Rover Sentinels making their way up the potholed access road. They joined the four, more lightly armoured, Mitsubishi Shogun SUVs already parked outside the building.

“Okay – four men from the first, four from the third – two from the second, plus two suits...”

“Another ten security personnel – that makes twenty-five, plus the two suits and Cartwright,” I summed up.

“Eight against twenty-seven – hardly seems fair...” Psyche commented, “...for them.”

I chuckled.

“Command, this is Hit Girl – you updated the picture?”

Vengeance Command Centre

“That’s affirmative, Hit Girl – we have overhead imagery...” Q acknowledged as Hal updated the electronic status board.

On the main screen before them was a split-screen image showing a 4K-resolution, full colour image and a lesser-resolution, infra-red image. Each image was labelled with its provider: *EAGLE-1* and *EAGLE-2*. It was easy to pick out the eight members of the joint assault team, not to mention the white hot engines of *Scimitar* and *Sabre*.

The two \$3million ScanEagle X200 UAVs had been launched three hours earlier and they were each controlled by the *Vengeance* computer system. Each drone, or Unmanned Aerial Vehicle, had a wingspan of just over three metres and weighed 22kg. The aircraft flew at a speed of around 60 knots and could stay aloft for over twenty-four hours, powered by its single 1.5-horsepower engine.

The mission was also a test for the new capability provided by the UAVs for both *Vengeance* and *Fusion*.

Several miles northeast of Glasgow

We were not far from a small town, so the use of heavy weapons was not allowed – we would operate the old fashioned way.

Despite operating outside the law as vigilantes, we had certain rules to follow if we wanted to be able to operate within the borders of the United Kingdom with impunity. We were all equipped with our new combat suits and the attack would be a good test for them all, apart from their first outing the other night.

“Team 1, take the west, Team 2, the east – we’ll meet up in the middle,” I briefed, keeping everything simple. “They seem to have left two men, one from each group to guard the vehicles – Wildcat, Psyche...”

“They tell me Scotland is quite dangerous after dark...” Psyche growled and I heard Wildcat chuckle.

“We go in thirty seconds – Command, give me overhead infrared.”

I checked the four-inch colour widescreen on my left forearm and saw an image appear showing the false colours of the infrared display from over a kilometre above us.

“Psyche, Wildcat – take ‘em down!” I ordered, beginning the night’s action.

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I watched the screen and saw the two thermal blooms on the image moving slowly together, but then separating with one heading for each vehicle guard. The image was marked with a sky blue marker for the right thermal bloom, which was Psyche and a brown marker for the other thermal bloom – Wildcat. Six other, differently coloured markers existed, none moving – near the markers for *Sabre* and *Scimitar*.

As I watched, the thermal blooms merged and then the camera zoomed in to show that two of the thermal blooms were no longer moving and they were elongated as if they were lying down. They *were* lying down, permanently.

“Psyche, cunt down!” Came the cold and insular response – the girl was *all* business.

“Wildcat – fucker got blood on my new suit!” *Her* responses were getting colder too.

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I ran forward, with Kick-Ass beside me and we collected Psyche and Wildcat before heading towards the west end of the building. Team 2, which consisted of Petra, Drift, Crimson and Nemesis, headed for the east end of the building. It was like a family night out – I had my husband, daughter and sister with me; how much better could it get!

Drawing both Katana swords from the mounts on my back, I led the advance towards the end of the building. There was a steel fire escape there and it rose the four stories of the building. We had seen the men in the windows of the third floor, but that had only been in passing, so they could be anywhere.

As we understood it, the building was all but abandoned and there would be no innocents expected.

East End

I had butterflies!

It was my first mission and it was going to be the first time that I might be expected to kill... I gripped my Katana and I nervously peered over at Drift. He held his twin Ninja-To blades ready as we approached the door to the west end of the building. Crimson rested a hand on my arm to reassure me as she held her bō-staff ready.

The door was forced open by Petra, with a little help from a lightweight crowbar. The inside of the building was dark, however, there was some light visible a short distance away and we could also make out some shadows moving in that distant light...

“Lead the way, Nemesis...” Petra ordered with a nod of her head.

Me!

“Okay...”

I followed Nemesis.

Keeping close to support her as we went, I knew exactly how she was feeling; that first trip out ripped your nerves apart. Mind you, on my first night out, I had been alone... The shadows were getting closer and as we approached, I readied my combat Katanas.

The place was a mess inside, and as such, we had to be very careful not to kick anything accidentally and therefore make a noise. Speaking of noise... I could hear men talking – must have been some of the watchdogs. How many were there? At least two, obviously – but there was also a definite third voice.

“I think three – be careful...” I radioed and I saw Nemesis nod in response.

She stopped, just before the end of the corridor and she raised her clenched left fist – *stop!* Good girl – she was doing very well; I was very impressed. As I watched, she pulled out a small mirror and then angled it so that she could see around the corner – that girl had moves; she was going to make one hell of a good vigilante.

“Confirm, three!” She said quietly.

“Keep it stealthy...” I reminded everyone as Nemesis braced herself ready to move.

I was very glad to have Petra close behind me.

Her mere presence gave me the confidence that I needed for what I was about to do... I gripped my Katana tightly in both hands and I rose up, keeping to the shadows for as long as possible. I had three targets ahead of me – all large men, all armed and all men who would probably kill with as much emotion as they would show when stomping on an ant.

I was *not* about to be that ant.

All three of them had their backs to me and they seemed to be deep in conversation – bad tradecraft. I took that advantage and I braced myself to kill a human being for the first time in my life – I would become a killer at nineteen; a bit old compared to most of those in *Fusion*...

Here we go...

I lunged forwards and I executed a stabbing movement, with my blade horizontal and I drove it through the stomach of the middle man. I twisted the blade for good measure and then I withdrew it in a single, swift, smooth movement. The man on the right, he was the first to cotton onto his colleague dropping to the floor; he turned and brought up his SIG Sauer MPX, but I quickly severed both of his hands on the up-swing and then stabbed him through the heart with my Tanto.

I turned to take down the third man, but he was already falling – strangely, his head appeared to hover in the air for a moment, before it followed the rest of his body.

I turned further, to see Petra lowering her swords.

West End

The men were not as good as I had hoped – maybe Rangers...

I checked out the two bodies that lay before me – SIG weapons, each of them. So far, our entry was unknown to the enemy, however inevitably, the dead would be missed at some stage. It was highly possible that we only had minutes – or maybe just seconds before the proverbial balloon went up. I sent the two short-asses up ahead to scout out for the next watchdogs.

Psyche was surprisingly mature and able when it came to her darker side and all of the usual behaviour that you might expect of a normal nine-year-old girl, it went out the window. She was ruthless and I could rely on her one hundred percent. Even better, her serious no nonsense attitude in the field was rubbing off on her partner, Wildcat – sharpening the older girl’s already dangerous skillset.

My sister and daughter were vigilantes from hell!

Psyche made the ‘freeze’ signal with her left fist clenched.

Her right hand held one of her two, very sharp Sai weapons. She pointed forwards and then raised her free hand to her ear; she had heard something. I trusted my niece explicitly, especially her instincts when in combat. She may have been two years my junior, but she was many years my senior when it came to experience. It was like having a mini Hit Girl as my partner.

Psyche then pointed towards a doorway and beyond it, I could hear voices and footsteps. The door would open away from us, being pulled open from the other side – whoever opened the door, they would have one hand occupied. I moved to the side of the door, away from the hinges and extended my claws. Psyche kept to the darkness, opposite the doorway – drawing her other Sai. I loved seeing her in action – she was awesome . . . God, I was fangirling over my own goddamn niece!

Focus, Wildcat!

The door began to move.

The voices became louder as the door was pulled away from me – two voices. As expected, one man was pulling open the door, his weapon slung over his shoulder. He courteously waved his colleague through the door with his other hand – a bad move... I waited two more seconds and then sent both Sai flying through the air.

The men never saw death coming for them out of the darkness. Both Sai flew straight and true, the shafts of each weapon dug deep into each man’s heart. They both sank to the ground, very dead. A third man burst out of the doorway, his suppressed SIG Sauer MPX raised and his finger on the trigger. The moment he set foot through the door, Wildcat plunged a set of claws into his neck and he gurgled for a second, then dropped his weapon, before collapsing onto his colleagues.

Wildcat came around to admire her handiwork.

“Nice, I...!” Wildcat began.

I heard the muted sound of a weapon cycling and I was struck by two rounds. Instinctively, I dropped to one knee and flung my two throwing knives towards the shooter who fell to the corridor floor and the shooting stopped.

“You okay?” I demanded.

“My damn tits again!” Wildcat replied, rubbing her chest.

“Shame Trojan can’t help with that – and I damn well ain’t!”

"I wish..." Wildcat commented then she added quickly. "Not you, I mean..."

I chuckled, silently thankful that I had no tits to get injured; I was in no hurry to get any, either. I placed a foot on the chest of the first man and heaved out my Sai, cleaned off the shaft, stowed it and I then repeated the operation on the other corpse. Meanwhile, Wildcat cleaned off her claws before retracting them.

"Well done with the knives..." Wildcat commented as I retrieved them from the chest of the final corpse.

"Gotta look after my partner, eh, Wildkitty!"

I received a growl in response but a gentle pat on my shoulder.

East End

I was emboldened by my first two kills.

I moved up the staircase, my suppressed FN Five-seveN Mk2 pistol raised before me. Behind me came Crimson, an identical pistol held in her own hands. Drift and Petra had our backs on the staircase below us. I moved slowly and carefully and I ensured that my feet were moving quietly but purposely.

At the top of the staircase, I found a door – it was closed. While Crimson covered me, I approached the door and took a moment to listen. I could hear nothing... I gently pulled the door open, bit by bit. Still no sound – with a nod from Petra, I pulled the door open fully and Crimson crept past me and checked each end of the corridor.

"Clear!"

I followed Crimson as he headed to the left.

Petra and Drift headed to the right. We passed several dark, empty rooms before we reached another doorway; one door was wedged open and beyond it, down another corridor, we could make out a dim light. As we approached, we could see that the dim light was actually spilling out from a door which was slightly ajar, over to the left.

Behind the door were voices – quite a few voices, talking animatedly.

"Found 'em!" Petra radioed. "Second floor – east corridor..."

"Copy that!" Hal responded.

I knelt down beside Crimson and covered the doorway while Petra and Drift cleared the east end of the floor.

Vengeance Command Centre

"What do ya think, beautiful?"

"I think we have twelve Tangos, Q – keep your hands on that touchscreen and *not* down there!"

Eric groaned as he keyed his microphone, a big grin on his face.

“EAGLE-2 has a dozen heat sources in that room.”

“Thanks, Q – I’ll let you two get back to . . . whatever!” Hit Girl chuckled.

“Oh, I will...” Eric grinned as he reached for the cute pair of A-cup breasts before him.

Several miles northeast of Glasgow

We met up with the other team.

We still had some missing Tangos – eleven were down – twelve were in that room – that left four men unaccounted for. Kick-Ass found a window and made his way outside onto a balcony that ran along the front of the building. He would make his grand entrance from there while us mere mortals entered via the door. Psyche was in pole position, her suppressed pistol out. Being the smallest, she would, therefore, be out of our field of fire. Petra and I had our pistols out, suppressors attached, while the others readied their melee weapons.

“Standby – we go on one...” I announced.

“Three... Two... One...”

As Hit Girl said the final numeral, I threw myself at the window and cannoned through the glazing; glass shards and chunks of wood flew in all directions. A dozen men turned in my direction; three were seated at a table, while the rest were gathered around their bosses. Guns began to appear just as the door burst open and I saw Psyche appear, her pistol up; the muzzle flashed repeatedly as she sent bullets into the men. Behind the younger vigilante, I saw Petra and Hit Girl, their own pistols raised; the muzzles flashed.

The watchdogs were wearing body armour, but Psyche delivered head shots. Two men threw themselves at me and I caught sight of the table being flipped over to protect the three principals. Then there was more trouble as Nemesis reported gunfire, from out in the corridor. Three men were already down and they were joined by a fourth as I smashed his face to pieces with my fist.

Crimson and Drift reported being attacked by machine-gun fire from the west end of the corridor.

There was total confusion.

Just as the attack had begun on the room – we had come under fire from the opposite end of the corridor. I felt bullets strike my armour and I took cover along with Wildcat. She had her SIG Sauer P250 out and she fired off rounds down the corridor. I joined in with my own FN Five-sevenN, but the corridor was in near darkness and it was difficult to identify a target.

I concentrated on the targets and ignored the action going on not too far from me in the room. It was difficult keeping my focus but the adrenalin bursts helped. It surprised me that I was not scared; I was just fighting, getting on with what I was supposed to do.

I was a real vigilante!

The fuckers must have had an exit strategy worked out – I would have.

The west wall of the room exploded as the entire wall came down allowing the enemy to make their escape. The air was full of the dust generated by the destroyed drywall and it was difficult to see what was going on.

“Break out! Break out!” Kick-Ass yelled.

I returned to the corridor where I saw our targets appear down at the far end. Cartwright was running, with two of his cronies and the two ‘suits’. I bolted for the nearest staircase and jumped down several steps at a time. Drift and Crimson bolted down the east fire escape.

We could *not* let him escape!

We had three groups of four men at large – plus Cartwright.

One group, with Cartwright, was heading down the fire escape at the west end. Another group was covering their escape. The final group was distracting us with their gunfire. While Crimson, Petra and Wildcat covered our rear, Kick-Ass and I headed down the fire escape. Nemesis, Psyche and Drift were engaging the group that was covering Cartwright’s escape.

“I have five fleeing down the west fire escape...” Hal announced.

There was no way that Cartwright could escape the UAVs!

Psyche was an awesome shot with her pistol!

Two fell to her bullets while Drift dropped the other pair – I only winged one of them before he was taken down by Psyche. Once the four men were down, we ran after our primary target. Psyche stuck her head out the door to the fire escape and a bullet clanged against the steelwork from down below. I pulled the young girl back inside.

“Good way to get your damn head blown off, little lady!”

“Never gonna happen, Nemesis!” Psyche chuckled as she fired off several rounds downwards.

The young girl was extremely brave and she showed courage way beyond her tender age.

Who were these people and why were they pursuing me?

“I think we’re clear, boss...”

The mercenary immediately fell to the ground with a bullet in his head, which aptly proved his comment to be very wrong. I fired off a few bullets in the general direction the shot had come from and ran towards the vehicles. The two CIA men were *not* happy, but they were professionals and they were armed. I had one mercenary left and I was determined to escape – no matter what.

We reached the armoured vehicles and found two dead bodies – unfortunately, we found no keys! We came under fire almost immediately and we took cover behind the heavily armoured vehicles. I

caught sight of our adversaries – I saw people in body armour and of the one I saw, I caught sight of purple markings.

“Who the fuck are they?” I asked my CIA colleagues. “I saw body armour and one had purple flashes.”

“Oh fuck!” One growled.

“Explain...” I responded.

“That would be Hit Girl – if *she’s* after you... Dead man walking, my friend!”

We had the bastard cornered behind the vehicles – there was no escape for him.

The UAV showed us that he had three men with him – only one of whom appeared to be equipped with an automatic weapon. I ordered the team to close on the vehicles from left and right, with Kick-Ass closing off the rear. I made my way directly towards the vehicle they were using as a shield while their heads were kept down by Petra and Nemesis.

“Team in place – go gorgeous!” Kick-Ass growled.

I ran forward and jumped onto the bonnet of the Mitsubishi Shogun and glared down at the four men. One of them made to raise his weapon – his head exploded less than a second later as Kick-Ass came into view, his Glock 17 held out ahead of him. Of the three remaining men, two dropped their pistols and raised their hands – they were the suits.

“We have Diplomatic Immunity – you can’t touch us...”

“Out at night – in the darkness – accidents happen...” I growled as I jumped down to the ground and seized both men by their jackets and threw them both against the side of the SUV. “Oops...”

Both men were knocked unconscious as their heads hit the steel bodywork. I turned to the one remaining man who was conscious.

“I need information – give me a name, you fucking cunt!” I growled.

Vengeance Command Centre

I was shaking.

All the way back I had been silent, as I sat in the back of *Scimitar*. Had I done well? Had I made mistakes? I did not recall making any mistakes, but everything had been so... Had I let anybody down? I felt weird as the adrenalin began to leave my system. Then, with a jolt, I had remembered something...

I had killed another human-being... Three to be exact... Three men were dead, because of me...

I had felt hands grip my own; it was the girls – Wildcat to my left and Psyche to my right. Both looked up at me and while I could not make out their expressions, I knew that they were trying to make me feel better – both girls were no strangers to killing. I had returned the gentle squeeze from each girl and smiled behind my mask.

I was with friends, very good friends.

It had been a successful night, with all objectives met.

Mindy had her information, and she had crossed somebody off her most wanted list. That was not a list to be on – FBI’s most wanted; that was a bad place to be . . . Hit Girl’s most wanted; a *very* bad place to be! I turned to Vengeance’s newest member.

“How does it feel?”

Nemesis looked up at me as she sat down and pulled off her mask. Her face was strained, but there was a pleased expression showing.

“I don’t know, Nats... I suppose I should feel different; I killed three people tonight...”

“You’re staying with me for the night, Cass; the first night after your first kill – it is *not* fun...”

“I’d follow that advice to the letter, Cassie,” Wildcat commented darkly.

“Thanks, Megan,” Cassie replied as the eleven-year-old girl, appeared from behind her mask.

She braced up as Hit Girl approached, the underlying blonde girl appeared as she removed her own mask.

“Well done, Nemesis; you did very, very well. I am very pleased to serve alongside you.”

“Th... Thanks...” The furiously blushing vigilante responded to grins all around.

That same time

***24 Grosvenor Square, London W1A 2LQ
Embassy of the United States, London
Special Projects Section***

“What do we know about this *Vengeance*?”

CIA Deputy Director of the Support Directorate, Noah Vossen, almost spat the last word as he paced up and down the capacious conference room on the eighth floor of the northern side of the embassy.

“There appears to be two of them active, however there are believed to be one or two support personnel. The leader appears to be called ‘Crimson’ with her partner who appears to be called ‘Drift’. Neither seem to be squeamish about killing and our intelligence indicates that they were both trained by Hit Girl and Kick-Ass in Chicago...”

“That damn Hit Girl, *again!*” Vossen growled, waving the briefer to continue.

“They are based in Scotland and have not been known to operate away from the Central Belt stretching from Edinburgh to Glasgow. Other names associated with them are ‘Q’ and ‘Nemesis’. Sources tell us that MI5 is unofficially supporting their activity as a deniable action unit.”

“We talking Mission Impossible here?” Vossen snorted.

The briefer just shrugged.

“What about their connection with those *Fusion* nutcases?”

“There seems to be a fairly open connection and *Vengeance* are known to use very similar equipment, right down to the armoured suits, vehicles and motorcycles.”

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“Okay – tell me about *Fusion*...”

“Currently, we have identified sixteen active members with six rumoured and inactive members. The active list reads as follows: ‘Hit Girl’, ‘Kick-Ass’, ‘Shadow’, ‘Jackal’, ‘Battle Guy’, ‘Hawk’, ‘Hal’, ‘Medic’, ‘Mist’, ‘Nightmare’, ‘Petra’, ‘Psyche’, ‘Splinter’, ‘Trojan’, ‘Wildcat’ and ‘Eisenhower’. The inactive or rumoured list reads as follows: ‘Lynx’, ‘Ares’, ‘Athena’, ‘Neptune’, ‘Rogue’ and ‘Nemesis’. There may be more members of *Fusion*, but we have not been able to associate others with the vigilante organisation as yet. However, there does seem to be a credible link to a now dead assassin once referred to as ‘The Professional’. *Fusion* have an unknown, and as far as we are concerned, unnamed, sniper who may be related.”

Vossen sat down for a moment and contemplated everything that he had been told.

“You believe that they are active in the UK now?”

“Reports from the Glasgow area, only hours old, tell us that four individuals who appear to behave exactly like *Fusion* members are operating in the area in partnership with *Vengeance*...”

A man rushed into the room with several pieces of paper in his hand. He handed the items to Vossen’s assistant who read through them as the man vanished.

“Two agents have turned up in Scotland, unconscious – they reported to Police that they had been attacked by Hit Girl. Alexander Cartwright is dead – shot by Hit Girl after an extensive and apparently very painful interrogation.”

Vossen blanched.

“Things are coming apart – *we must act*, but without that Landy bitch getting involved. She gets her fucking hands on any *Urban Predator* documents and she’ll fax us into Leavenworth!”