

Friday, 15th July, 2016

**HMS Dragon
North Atlantic**

Forty minutes later, the young girl was lifted out of the seaboat and Leading Seaman Dyer took her through into the upper level of the helicopter hanger from the port boat garage and then turned right into the passageway which would take them forward. The girl looked around, her expression calculating, then she turned on Dyer, kicking him to the deck before she ran away down the passageway.

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Commander Richard Perrin was heading aft when suddenly something cannoned into him, almost knocking him down. He was stunned to see that it was a young girl – a very dirty young girl to be sure, but still a young girl.

“Slow down there, young lady – where’s the fire?”

“There’s no ruddy fire,” the girl retorted insolently.

“You came from the French ship?”

“Where the fuck else, dickhead?”

Commander Perrin paused and he took a deep breath; he was well used to angry little girls.

“Okay – let’s start again, shall we? I am Commander Richard Perrin. I am the Captain of *HMS Dragon* – this warship. Now, what is your name?”

The girl hesitated for almost a whole minute before she decided that to give up her name would not hurt her future prospects. It was obvious to the Commander that the girl had some severe trust issues.

“Electra.”

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“That wasn’t too hard, now, was it? You are perfectly safe in my ship, Electra, and you are welcome aboard the *Dragon*. Why don’t we see if we can get you cleaned up, shall we? Let me show you to the sickbay where you can get a wash and perhaps some clean clothes. The PMO will check you over and then you and me can have a little chat.”

Commander Perrin held out his hand to the girl who hesitantly reached out and took it. She was led down the corridor and then into the sickbay where the PMO, Lieutenant Andrew Bond was writing up his report of the visit to the *Dauphin*.

“Hello, again,” the officer offered cheerfully.

“Electra, here, was making a bid for freedom before she flattened me. Please see to it that she has a wash, is checked out, and she receives clean clothing. When you are done, please have her brought to my sea cabin,” Commander Perrin said.

“Yes, sir.”

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A little over an hour later, there was a knock on the doorframe of Commander Perrin's 'at sea' cabin.

"Come!"

A young female sailor entered the cabin, with a young girl in tow.

"POMA Saddler reporting as ordered, Captain. I have Electra, here, for you."

Commander Perrin studied the much cleaner young girl who was now dressed in a selection of decidedly over-large RN uniform. He smiled.

"Wow! Is this the same girl who almost knocked me down, earlier? It can't be. . ."

"Funny, err . . . sir," Electra said with a shy grin.

"Electra has some bruises – quite a few actually – not to mention a few cuts but nothing life threatening, sir. Took a while to clean her off, but we got there in the end!"

"You hungry, Electra?" Commander Perrin enquired.

The hopeful look and a smile answered his question.

"I'll take care of it, sir," POMA Saddler suggested as she handed over a file of paperwork to her Captain.

"Thank you, Petty Officer."

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Within twenty minutes, Electra was wolfing down sandwiches, crisps, and her second can of Coke.

She had not said anything other than a brief 'thank you' as the food had arrived. Commander Perrin had simply sat in his chair and just watched the young girl eat while his brain went to work. He had the girl's medical report on his desk. One item, in particular, intrigued him: '...single tattoo, behind right ear, a commando dagger...'

"You remind me of two little girls I have at home."

"Huh? Why's that?"

"They have the same tattoo as you have – the one behind your right ear."

Electra stopped eating and she looked worried.

"You know what I am?" she said dejectedly.

"Yes, Electra, I do. You are, or rather you were, a *Predator*. How old are you?"

Electra looked resigned to her fate.

"Nine."

"Okay. Nobody else on board knows what a *Predator* is – so let's just keep that little piece of information between us, eh?"

Electra smiled conspiratorially.

"Yes, sir."

That same afternoon

Vengeance Command Centre
Scotland, United Kingdom

“Okay – we start with Prowl,” Cassie suggested. “Strip – everything.”

Without a moment’s hesitation, Naomi pulled off her clothes and she soon stood naked before her cousin, Harper, Cassie, and Natasha.

“Put these on,” Natasha said as she passed her two items of clothing.

Both items were black and consisted of a pair of ‘boy shorts’ and a sleeveless T-shirt. Naomi quickly pulled them on and then awaited her next set of instructions. Natasha handed the girl the dark grey undersuit which weighed very little and it allowed the skin to breathe during extreme activities; it was also stab and bullet resistant to Type IIA standards.

The combat suit was full-body and made up of sections. The modular contoured armour, in black with a broad gold trim, clipped onto the undersuit and joined to the other sections of armour to form a semi-rigid Type II and Type IIIA armour that covered the important parts of the human body. The Type IIIA armour covered the chest and upper back. The armour was ultra-flexible and ultra-light which suited the light-framed vigilante.

The full-face mask was fitted with an anti-lift feature as well as being fitted with the standard voice changing technology as used by the other members of *Vengeance* as well as those in *Fusion*. Prowl’s mask also featured cat-like ears which were gold with black insides. For intimidation purposes, the eyes of the mask glowed a dull blue and the eyes were shaped like those of a cat.

A lightweight utility belt was fitted with a compact, integrated encrypted communications system. Prowl’s SIG Sauer P938 BRG pistol fitted securely into a holster that was mounted on her right thigh, with three spare magazines mounted around the back of her utility belt. To protect the hands, a set of armoured gauntlets were supplied.

The gauntlets were very special. They had gold backs, while the palms and fingers were black. Embedded inside each gauntlet there was a nasty set of viciously curved blades which could be deployed from the palm for the fingers to wrap around. The sharp and very lethal blades were designed to slash through skin and muscle. The claws, of Indian origin, were originally believed to have been inspired by the traditional armament of big cats.

Finally, were a pair of custom-made, black leather boots which would protect Prowl’s feet from blades and other sharp objects.

Prowl looked awesome as she turned around slowly so that everybody could see every inch of the young vigilante, not to mention the six-inch combat knife in a scabbard on her left calf. On her lower back, was the rubber grip of a two-foot Tactical Machete which was mounted from right to left, across her back.

“It feels like a second skin and it’s a lot lighter than I thought it would be,” Prowl commented as her peers looked on in awe.

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Before Cassie could say a word, Kaitlin was kicking off her own knickers and she stood before everybody, stark naked.

“Me, next!”

Natasha laughed as she threw an identical set of boy shorts and a T-shirt to the naked girl. Natasha handed the girl the same dark grey undersuit as her cousin which the eight-year-old readily pulled on. The combat suit was full-body and made up of sections. The modular contoured armour, in black with a broad blue trim, clipped onto the undersuit and joined to the other sections of armour to form a semi-rigid Type II and Type IIIA armour that covered the important parts of the human body. The Type IIIA armour covered the chest and upper back. The armour was ultra-flexible and ultra-light which suited the younger vigilante.

The full-face mask was fitted with the same anti-lift feature as well as being fitted with the same voice changing technology. Glide’s mask also featured a more rounded set of ears which were blue with black insides. For intimidation purposes, the eyes of the mask glowed a dull green.

The same lightweight utility belt fitted with a compact, integrated encrypted communications system was worn. Glide’s Smith & Wesson M&P 22 Compact pistol fitted securely into a holster that was mounted on her right thigh, with three spare magazines mounted around the back of her utility belt. To protect the hands, a set of armoured gauntlets were supplied.

The gauntlets were almost identical to those of her cousin. They had blue backs, while the palms and fingers were black. Each gauntlet was weighted to increase the hitting power of the small girl. For her feet, she wore the same pair of custom-made, black leather boots. Again, she had a six-inch combat knife in a scabbard on her left calf. Like her cousin, Glide also had a melee weapon – in her case, it was a seventeen-inch Tactical Kukri Machete. The vigilante turned to glare at her compatriots.

“Don’t push it,” she growled. “Don’t push it or I’ll give you a war you won’t believe.”

Everybody burst out laughing.

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“When you goddamn fuckwits have quite finished. . .” Harper yelled as she finished stripping her own clothes off.

“Cocky bitch!” Natasha chuckled as she passed over the same set of underclothes and the same dark grey undersuit.

The combat suit was full-body and made up of sections. The modular contoured armour, in black with a broad green trim, clipped onto the undersuit and joined to the other sections of armour to form a semi-rigid Type II and Type IIIA armour that covered the important parts of the human body. The Type IIIA armour covered the chest and upper back. The armour was ultra-flexible and ultra-light.

The full-face mask was fitted with the same anti-lift feature as well as being fitted with the same voice changing technology. Polaris’ mask differed in having a much slimmer and more conformal set of ears which were green with black insides. For intimidation purposes, the eyes of the mask glowed a dull red.

The same lightweight utility belt fitted with a compact, integrated encrypted communications system was worn. Polaris’ SIG Sauer P238 Compact pistol fitted securely into a holster that was

mounted on her right thigh, with three spare magazines mounted around the back of her utility belt. To protect the hands, a set of armoured gauntlets were supplied.

The gauntlets were almost identical to those of her friends. They had green backs, while the palms and fingers were black. Finally, there were another pair of custom-made, black leather boots. As with Prowl and Glide, she carried a six-inch combat knife in a scabbard on her left calf. However, her armaments did not end there. In scabbards on her lower back, she carried a pair of lethal Petzl Ergo ice axes which were made of green painted aluminium and had a viciously serrated head which would cause irreparable damage to a human body. The pommel was fitted with a row of steel serrations which could also cause plenty of damage.

“Yippee-ki-yay, motherfuckers!” she growled and then Polaris looked around. “Where’s Scorpion?”

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Scorpion entered the room in her full flight suit complete with helmet, weapons, and face mask.

The dark grey, Nomex flight suit covered her from head to toe and on her feet, she wore a pair of black, lightweight, tactical flying boots. Over the flight suit, she wore a lightweight support jacket which held a pistol on her left abdomen angled across her body toward her right hand. Three spare magazines were stowed on the right side. A tactical knife was worn in a scabbard on her the lower left leg of the flight suit above her boot. Communications equipment was inserted in pockets on the support jacket.

On the left chest of the support jacket, Scorpion wore the patch that bore her wings, plus her designation: ‘VENGEANCE’ and ‘SCORPION’. Her helmet bore a set of NVGs which were hinged upwards. What was visible of her face mask was blue and green.

“I don’t care how much you fine me, but bloody hell, Scorpion, you look fucking awesome!” Polaris blurted out.

“I’ll let you off, kid,” Scorpion growled as she turned away.

“Glide looks great. . .” Cassie chuckled and then she went to pat the short vigilante’s head.

“That hand touches my head and the next thing it touches will be the ground,” Glide growled.

“So evil, yet so cute!” Natasha laughed.

“I can still smack you, bitch!”

“Okay, Q – show ‘em,” Scorpion called out as she turned back.

“Woah!” Polaris commented as she studied the new look.

Scorpion had connected up her face shield and lowered her tinted visor – she looked very ominous.

“Polaris – go stand with your little friends,” Scorpion suggested.

Polaris did so and she turned to face her sister who pointed up at a large wall-mounted screen. There, an image of a heads-up-display was visible. As the three girls looked closely, they could see themselves.

“Cool!” Prowl exclaimed as she held up two fingers behind her cousin’s head like a set of bunny ears.

“Hey!” Glide complained.

“Polaris?”

“Yeah?” Polaris replied as she turned towards her sister.

Nobody had seen Scorpion easing off the clip holding her Glock 17 pistol in place. With amazing speed, she drew the weapon, sighted on Polaris’ chest armour and squeezed the trigger twice. The nine-year-old cannoned backwards into the other two girls and all three went down.

“Strike!” Scorpion yelled out.

“I hate you all!” Polaris called out as she rubbed her chest.

The next morning
Saturday, 16th July

Blairhoyle

Harper and Keira had spent the night at their former home.

That morning, after breakfast, the girls were told to dress in jeans and long-sleeved tops. That was a surprise as they would normally just wear shorts and T-shirts – it was hot outside, after all. They were told to meet up down in the central paddock for the next phase of their vigilante training. Alexandra Perrin told the girls that their instructor would meet them there at 10 o’clock sharp.

All three girls cocked an eyebrow as they found themselves standing in the middle of a six-acre paddock where there were about six traffic cones arranged in a large rectangle, plus several dozen rectangular hay bales, plus one large cylindrical hay bale which had a wooden plank leaning against it. A few minutes later, at the stroke of ten, a silver Land Rover Defender 110 drive towards them with a covered trailer following along behind. The vehicle and trailer combination stopped a few yards from the traffic cones and out of the driver’s seat climbed Cameron.

“Morning, girls!”

“Hi, Cam – you our instructor?”

“Oh, no – that would be somebody else. . .”

Cameron waved at the Land Rover and there was the sound of a motorcycle as ‘somebody else’ appeared at speed and skidded around the Land Rover before accelerating down the length of the paddock, turning, and then making for the wooden plank. The motorcycle accelerated before hitting the plank and leaping into the air. The machine came down onto the grass of the paddock, the rider making it look super easy.

After a small deceleration run, the rider headed for the three girls, skidding to a halt within inches of Harper. The rider cut the engine of the Honda XR650L and raised up the visor on her helmet.

“Keira!” Harper exclaimed in awe.

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After dismounting and removing her full-face helmet, Keira turned to the three girls.

“You have ahead of you a gruelling six-week course and I will not be going easy on *any* of you.”

“Your sister can ride a motorcycle?” Naomi demanded.

"I forgot – sorry," Harper replied.

"You were really good, Keira," Kaitlin offered.

"Thanks – but I'm still not going to go easy on you, Kaitlin."

"Aye, aye, ma'am!" the eight-year-old replied with a mock salute.

"Now – you three are going to learn to ride a motorcycle. Cassie does not think it a very promising idea – especially for you, Kaitlin."

"I'm not fragile, you know," Kaitlin commented.

"That's what I said – so, I persuaded Cassie to let you join your cousin and Harper. Either way, you guys need to be able to ride – you're all too short to reach the pedals in a car, so a motorcycle is the next best option."

Harper and Naomi bristled at the mention of them being too short but they said nothing.

"You will all take your time over this task. I will expect you to take it seriously. . ."

"God, she goes on!" Harper muttered to Naomi who giggled.

"First warning, Harper," Keira said with a glare at her sister. "If you do not take this seriously then you will not be allowed to take part – understand?"

"Yes," Kaitlin offered.

"Yes, Keira," Naomi added.

"Yes, Keira!" Harper mimicked as Naomi scowled.

"Harper!"

"She still thinks she's in the fucking Navy!"

"Enough, Harper – drop and give me ten!"

"What!"

"Drop and give me fifteen!"

Harper opened and closed her mouth twice before her shoulders slumped and she got down on her knees. The humiliation of the put-down by her own sister rankled and Harper resented it.

"Sound 'em out, too," Keira ordered.

"One . . . two . . . three . . . four . . . five . . . six . . . seven . . . eight . . . nine . . . ten . . . eleven . . . twelve . . . thirteen . . . fourteen . . . fifteen."

"Now, get up, and keep that mouth of yours firmly shut."

Harper glowered at her sister who ignored Harper's plight completely. Keira was professional to the core and if Harper wanted to fuck about then she would pay the price. Keira was determined to be a part of *Vengeance* and as a Royal Navy Officer, she had plenty of skills available. Two of those skills were taking command and instructing others in new skills.

“Okay, girls, now Harper has decided to grow up, we shall continue.”

Harper glowered at the ground, studiously ignoring the glances from her friends – and those from her sister.

“You will learn on shitty little bikes that have no power and that can’t be used on the road, but they will be easier for you to learn on, especially when you come off and you will – your rides!”

Out of the back of the trailer, Cameron wheeled out first one, then two, and finally a third, identical motorcycle: all Honda CRF125F motorcycles. He then produced three off-road helmets, in a light blue, a pale yellow, and a bright pink.

“I want to go first!” Kaitlin insisted as she seized the bright pink helmet.

Naomi rolled her eyes and Harper scoffed.

“Well, young Kaitlin,” Keira warned. “You fall and break your little neck, don’t you come whining to me.”

“That joke is *so* old!” Kaitlin growled.

“Now, Kaitlin is a little shorter than you two. . .”

“Not *my* fault!” Kaitlin complained indignantly.

Keira laughed.

“No, honey, it’s not.”

While Cameron supported one of the motorcycles, Keira showed Kaitlin how to mount the machine. Once the young girl was sat safely with her backside on the seat, Keira waved Harper and Naomi over to watch the next part.

“The controls. . .”

Keira took the three girls through the Honda’s very basic controls: ignition switch, clutch lever, front brake, throttle grip, engine stop button, rear brake pedal, gear shift lever, fuel valve, and kickstarter. The three girls were very attentive having switched into *Predator* mode. Keira explained the positions of the gear shift lever; horizontal for neutral, first gear, one notch down, and then second to fifth gears above the neutral position.

Confirming that the gearbox was in neutral, Keira directed Kaitlin to press the starter button located below the right handgrip. With the brief sound of a starter motor, the engine jumped to life, ticking away quietly. Kaitlin twisted the right handgrip and she smiled as the engine revved up and down to her command. Keira studied Kaitlin’s expression of longing and she laughed.

“You really want to make a fool of yourself?” she asked as she securely tightened the safety helmet on the little girl’s head.

The grin was a resounding ‘yes’! Keira explained how the clutch operated and she let Kaitlin pull the clutch lever, then push down on the gear change lever.

“You ready?” Keira asked, smiling encouragingly.

“Yes. . .” Kaitlin replied, sounding anything but positive – her previous bravado appeared to have melted away.

“Let in the clutch . . . gently. Remember, when you stop you must pull the clutch lever or you will stall. Ignore the front brake for now. Use the rear brake, down here. Twist the throttle backward to go faster, twist it forwards to go slower.”

“Okay . . .”

“Don't look at the front tyre, try to look ahead and don't worry if you fall, okay?”

Kaitlin nodded, still a little apprehensive.

“Apply a little gas, then let in the clutch . . . gently! Try and follow the course, around the cones, keeping it slow,” Keira instructed.

They all watched with baited breath as Kaitlin twisted the throttle gently and then let in the clutch. . . As Cameron released his hold on the motorcycle, it moved, jerkily, but it moved and kept moving. She made it about fifteen yards before she twisted the throttle too much and the machine bucked up onto the rear wheel and Kaitlin fell off onto the grass – the motorcycle crashing into a hay bale and falling onto its side.

Everybody ran towards Kaitlin as she lay on her back in the soft grass . . . she was giggling fit to burst and the look on her face was priceless; her smile went from ear to ear!

“Was that good?” Keira asked, laughing.

“Fuck, yeah!”

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“Me . . . me . . .” Harper called out, but then she stopped as Keira glared at her. “Please may I be next, miss?”

“You can both go together.”

With that, Keira and Cameron repeated the same steps that Kaitlin had taken with Harper and Naomi. The older girls fared little better at first and both found themselves a few yards away from where Kaitlin had fallen, giggling their heads off as they lay on the grass!

“A good start, girls – now let's try that again.”

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Two hours later, all three girls were gently working their way around the course in first gear, and staying on two wheels the whole time. It wasn't all that easy to coax them off the machines, but all three were very tired and offering a cold fizzy drink helped.

As the three girls sat on the grass, sweat dripping from their faces, they each sipped on their well-earned cans of Irn-Bru.

“You each did well, despite Harper's inauspicious start,” Keira commented.

Harper's face went red as she smiled.

“I agree,” Cameron added. “Well done, girls.”

All three *Predators* beamed with pride.

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Once Cameron had stowed the three motorcycles in the trailer, he took off back towards the large barn to the south-west of the grounds. Just as Keira made to follow on her motorcycle, Harper stopped her.

“Sorry I was showing off, Keira. I’m sorry I was a bitch, too. Thanks for teaching us how to ride, today.”

“While I would prefer the polite Harper, I am just happy to have my Harper back,” Keira replied and the two sisters hugged. “Enjoy your walk girls!”

Keira sped off leaving the three girls to walk back to the house with their helmets in their hands.

“That was the best day ever!” Kaitlin exclaimed.

“Yes, it was,” Naomi added.

That night

East Mayfield

“Keira. . .”

“Sorry to wake you, but I’ve just had a call from my Dad,” Cassie explained. “He’s come across another one.”

Keira knew exactly what Cassie mean by ‘another one’.

“How can I help?”

“We need somebody to fly down to Ascension – be warned, it’s a long flight.”

“No problem – I’ll take short arse with me.”

Two days later

Monday, 18th July

Wideawake Field, Ascension Island South Atlantic Ocean

The Gulfstream G550 executive jet taxied off the 3,054-metre long runway and headed for the dispersal.

Several minutes later, a Royal Navy Wildcat HMA.2 maritime attack helicopter came in from the south-east and hovered for a moment before it settled onto the concrete hardstanding, a dozen or so yards from the parked G550 jet. As the four-bladed main rotor came to a stop, the starboard door was hauled open and a man jumped out and quickly placed a pair of chocks on either end of the port undercarriage tyre. Next out was a tall man wearing the three gold stripes of a Commander. He turned to help a small girl out of the helicopter – but she jumped before she could be helped!

The man led the young girl across the concrete hardstanding towards the G550 executive jet. At the base of the steps, towards the front of the jet on the port side, two people waited. One was an adult with medium-length deep brown hair. Beside her stood a young girl of similar height and stature to the approaching girl. The girl smiled happily as the man approached and stopped before her.

“Electra, please meet Keira and . . .”

“Harper!” Harper chipped in.

“ . . . yes . . . they are going to take you back to the UK and then look after you once you are there. You will be perfectly safe; Keira holds the rank of Lieutenant in the Royal Navy and she is a helicopter pilot. Harper was a *Predator*, just like yourself.”

Harper leaned forwards and she allowed Electra to look behind her right ear. Electra smiled grimly.

“Phase 2 – you Phase 1?” Harper asked.

“Yeah . . . I was,” Electra replied.

“Cool – let’s go sit down; it’s damn hot out here!” Harper suggested.

Electra looked up at Commander Perrin who nodded encouragingly.

“Thank you, sir,” she said as she gave him a brief hug and then she hesitated as Harper held out her hand to Electra.

“I don’t bite – unless provoked!”

Electra laughed and she took the offered hand before following Harper up the steps and into the Gulfstream aircraft.

“Cassie’s jealous as hell for missing this,” Keira commented. “Not sure she’d have enjoyed almost nine hours each way in a plane with Harper!”

“I miss them, very much. Please, give them all my love when you get back to blighty.”

“I will, sir. See you at the end of your deployment, Commander.”