

Three days later
Saturday, July 23rd, 2016

Blairhoyle

It was another sunny morning in Scotland.

“Stop!” Keira almost shouted as she came into the dining room. “Don’t fucking move a muscle!”

Kaitlin froze.

“I mean this in the nicest possible way – are you just stupid?” Keira went on. “And Harper – why would you participate in this? You are two very stupid little girls!”

Harper was sitting in a chair at the table with her left hand flat on the table, palm down. Kaitlin stood to her right with her own left hand on top of Harper’s. A commando dagger was held in Kaitlin’s right hand and the point was poised, vertically, between thumb and forefinger.

“Just ‘cause you watched *Aliens*, last night, does *not* mean that you can replicate what you see. I specifically warned the three of you – where *is* the other one?”

“Naomi thought it was stupid,” Harper commented meekly.

“At least she has half a brain – unlike the two of you. A tenner, from each of you, in the jar – for being so *bloody* stupid!”

Both girls looked aghast at their hefty fine but they also felt ashamed as they thought through what they had been about to do.

Southfield Letham

Pissed as a newt!

My twin had arrived home very late the previous evening and despite her varied attempts at staying quiet, she had banged and giggled her way into the house and then fallen *up* the stairs as she had made her noisy way to her bedroom. In response, I had just turned up the TV in my own bedroom to cover the noise of her collapsing into her bedroom.

The following morning, I pushed open her bedroom door and smiled. Natasha was all but naked and she was stretched out on her bed – snoring. It wasn’t the first time I had seen my sister naked – we were both fairly casual about nudity considering it was just us in the house. As such, I wasn’t surprised to see that she had been taking the clippers to herself again. She had spent the past few years trying out different designs and currently, she had a narrow landing strip as evidence of her latest experiments.

I walked out and headed down to the kitchen where I quickly found what I was looking for and after making some adjustments, I headed back upstairs to where my sibling was still snoring. I implemented my plan and quickly jumped backwards as she screamed out and spluttered through the freezing water which I had just thrown over her body and face.

“You fucking bastard!”

“Couldn’t resist, Nats – you seemed to have had a skin full, last night.”

"Maybe a tad too much Lambs – got into a drinking competition with Jade and Matt."

"You never learn, do you!"

"Apparently not. . ."

"Wasn't Cassie with you?"

"It was *her* idea to drink Lambs."

"You *do* remember that she comes from a naval family?"

"Yes . . .?"

"You can be *so* thick sometimes!" Cameron groaned as he face-slapped himself.

Natasha scowled and she waited for her brother to continue, gathering up the duvet to restore what was left of her rather wet dignity.

"Sarah started drinking Pusser's Rum when she was seventeen, then she got Cassie drinking rum when *she* was seventeen. Those two can drink anybody under the table. Most see diminutive little Cassie and assume she's a lightweight – much to their chagrin when they're lying on the floor sometime later!"

"Okay – I forgot!"

Blairhoyle

Naomi had decided that it would be much safer to be a long way away from Kaitlin and Harper when they got crazy ideas in their heads. As such, she had returned to her bedroom to dress. She heard the shower running but ignored it as she went into the bathroom to brush her teeth.

"Holy, crap!" Naomi exploded when she saw Electra in the shower.

"Huh?"

"That!"

"Oh, you mean my scar?"

"It's like twenty feet long!"

"Considering my limited height, that might be a *slight* exaggeration," Electra deadpanned.

"Not by much . . ." Kaitlin added as she appeared to see what the commotion was all about.

Both girls stared at Electra's body. There was indeed a long thin scar running across her body; it was at its largest, just above her right breast where it then ran diagonally downwards, across her chest, her stomach, and then to where it was thinnest, ending on her left thigh.

"I don't want to talk about it – so don't ask," Electra said pointedly. "Now, could I please get on with my shower, or are you both enjoying a free look at my naked body?"

Naomi and Kaitlin left Electra to her shower.

"You see the stab wounds?" Kaitlin asked her cousin.

“Yeah – Electra’s been to war.”

Later that morning

“Okay bitch, let’s see what you can do now!” Electra growled.

Kaitlin laughed as Harper ran at Electra who neatly sidestepped the first attack but she missed the feint and then received a punch to her upper back as recompense. Electra yelled out in pain but she did not falter as she swept Harper’s left leg out from under her. Harper lost her footing and collapsed onto the mat.

“You fight well, Electra,” she commented.

“I had a good teacher.”

“An instructor?” Naomi asked, dumbfounded to hear anybody refer to an *Urban Predator* Instructor as such.

“No – another *Predator*.”

“Okay. . .” Harper commented. “How much exposure did you have to fighting?”

“A lot – but I’d rather not talk about it, thanks.”

“No sweat,” Harper replied.

They all had horrors that they did not want to talk about, so they respected Electra’s silence.

That evening

While Harper sat watching TV with Electra, Kaitlin was winding up her cousin.

“Cassie!”

“Naomi – she’s eight; she just wants attention,” Cassie replied.

“I’ll give her attention,” Naomi muttered as she tried to watch TV.

Kaitlin continued with her annoying behaviour from behind her cousin.

“Cassie!”

“Naomi – stop bleating. What would a *Predator* do?”

“Oh, right. . .” Naomi muttered as she brought her right arm back and punched her cousin in the face.

Kaitlin screamed out as blood exploded from her nose and despite her conditioning against pain, Kaitlin had tears streaming down her face.

“Naomi!”

“That was awesome!” Electra giggled as Harper howled with laughter.

A couple of hours later . . .

“Is this wise?”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, was it wise to let them watch a film like this one? Look at what happened after they watched *Aliens*?”

“It’s a kid’s movie,” Cassie pointed out to Keira.

“I know – but they could get so many ideas; all bad ones.”

Cassie laughed as the final credits rolled and she listened to the end of the theme song.

*We are the best, so screw the rest
We do as we damn well please
Until the end
St Trinian’s
Defenders of anarchy

Victorious, rebellious
We do as we damn well please
Until the end
St Trinian’s
Defenders of anarchy
ST TRINIAN’S!*

Don’t let the bastards get you down.

Only, four little girls had amended the lyrics and they had replaced *St Trinian’s* with *Predators*. By the end, all four were jumping up and down on the sofas without the slightest attempt at dignity or restraint.

It was good to see Electra finally letting her hair down and enjoying some fun.

Just over two weeks later

Monday, August 8th

MoD Boscombe Down

MoD Boscombe Down was one of the few places in the United Kingdom where you could be carted away by Special Branch if you so much as *thought* of pointing a camera at the facility. The site was where the United Kingdom tested new aircraft designs and other secret air vehicles. The operation of ‘black’ aircraft was also very common and flights, both in and out, were *never* acknowledged by Her Majesty’s Government.

As such, Keira was *very* surprised to have been waved through the main gate. They had studied her MI5 identification, then her face, checked a list, and then passed her through with a smile and a salute. Access to the airfield was strictly controlled and Keira had expected to have to go through an extended entry process as was usual for most visitors to the site. Keira followed the strict instructions provided and she parked her red Audi Q5 where designated, leaving a vehicle pass

prominently displayed on the dashboard. There, standing beside her rented Jaguar F-Pace, just a few feet away, was Mindy Lizewski.

"You ready for this, Keira?" she asked as Keira climbed out of her car.

"As ever!" Keira chuckled as she grabbed a kit bag and her flight bag from the back seat.

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"No uniform, this time?" Keira asked.

"That uniform sucked – don't know how you wore it!" Mindy laughed.

"You got used to it," Keira commented.

After visiting a changing area where the two women changed into their flight suits, they were waved into the backseat of a British Army Panther painted in a dark grey. The roof-mounted turret was fitted with an L7 general-purpose machinegun and an ammo-box. Security was obviously taken very seriously at the airbase! After a short drive, the vehicle stopped outside the closed doors of a hardened aircraft shelter. A uniformed soldier of the RAF Regiment appeared and he checked the women's identification before he signalled for the doors to open. A siren sounded and a pair of amber beacons flashed. Slowly the blast doors slid sideways before they stopped, leaving a four-metre gap.

The soldier waved the flight-suited women inside.

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Keira had waited *weeks* for the moment. She had read every damn tech-order that she could get her hands on, learning the machine right down to each individual nut and bolt . . . and now, she was face to face with her future.

She was gorgeous.

Keira thought that she might actually lose control for a moment, but she controlled herself as she examined her new command and inhaled the sweet smell of aviation turbine fuel. She was sleek, she was deadly . . . and most importantly, she was Keira's. Stats flashed through the pilot's mind as she ran her hands over the polished skin.

Cruise speed: 153 knots. Total fuel capacity: 233 gallons. Rate of climb: 1,700 feet-per-minute.

Ceiling: 11,500 feet.

Propulsion: twin Turbomeca Arrius 2K-2 turbines producing 714 shaft-horsepower each. Maximum take-off weight: 7,055 pounds.

"Scorpion – meet *Twilight*!" Mindy chuckled as she saw her friend drool over the helicopter.

The Agusta-Westland AW109LUH helicopter was state of the art and she was equally at home transporting up to seven passengers or destroying armoured vehicles with rockets and machineguns. As Mindy had mentioned, the helicopter was called *Twilight*, and she was painted in a matt dark grey while her registration code was painted in a slightly lighter grey on both sides of her tail boom: **G-VENG**.

For the moment, the helicopter was unarmed – they were only there for a check ride.

A short time later. . .

The blast doors were now fully open and the rotor-blades above the helicopter were spinning at speed. Anti-collision lights were active and flashing steadily. The aircraft was operating perfectly.

Keira depressed the radio button on the cyclic control column.

“Boscombe, this is Tango Victor standing by to taxi from Shelter Two-Three, over.”

Keira peered over at Mindy as she sat strapped into the left-hand seat. She appeared nervous but then so was she; she was about to launch, solo, for the first time in many months. It felt strange wearing an all-black flight suit rather than something more conventional but Keira was proud of her personal callsign. The all-glass cockpit was state of the art and perfectly suited to solo flight.

“Tango Victor, Boscombe. Clearance to taxi for direct launch from Shelter Two-Three. Over.”

“Tango Victor, acknowledged. Out.”

Keira increased the pitch of the main rotors by pushing the cyclic forwards and then she released the wheel brakes. The helicopter taxied out onto the hard-standing as the light began to fade.

It was twilight . . .

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The helicopter accelerated quickly as she emerged from the hardened shelter and fast-taxed across the concrete and then just before it left the concrete for the grass, Scorpion pulled up on the collective and twisted the throttle; they became airborne.

“Undercarriage coming up!” Scorpion commented as she slid a lever upwards on the console beside her.

Hit Girl felt the three thumps as the wheels locked into place – the helicopter was now perfectly streamlined and ready for high-speed flight. Scorpion was all concentration as she cruised in a straight line for several hundred yards before she then pulled the helicopter into a hover a dozen feet over the main runway. The helicopter then moved sideways to port for several yards before Scorpion pushed down on a foot pedal, spinning the helicopter on its axis and then moving the cyclic and collective to gain both height and forward speed with the nose angled sharply downwards. All movements were smooth and controlled. Scorpion sure knew her stuff – Royal Navy pilots were arguably the best in the world – at that moment, *Twilight* was flying sideways again and then, momentarily, backwards!

“Boscombe, Tango Victor. Clearance for VFR, hi-speed flight, and ACM. Over.”

“Tango Victor, Boscombe. Clearance granted as per filed flight plan. Recommended altitude for straight and level is two thousand. Over.”

“Boscombe, Tango Victor. Clearance acknowledged at two thousand. Out.”

“Am I gonna like this?” Hit Girl asked as the helicopter hovered for a moment with the nose pointed due east at an altitude of sixty feet.

“You like speed, Hit Girl?” Scorpion chuckled. “Hang onto your tampon, honey!”

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Without much warning, the two-tonne helicopter nosed over sharply and then shot skyward before levelling out at two-thousand feet. The airspeed indicator increased steadily until it stopped at 150 knots, indicated airspeed. *Twilight* was going flat out. Then, suddenly and without warning, the helicopter shot upwards several thousand feet before levelling out again, they hovered for a moment, and then. . .

“What the *fuck* are you doing?” Hit Girl queried and she hoped not to sound too panicked.

“How’s your backflip, Hit Girl?”

Hit Girl saw the horizon before her and then the night sky and then the horizon again as they executed a perfect backflip and followed through with the rest of the loop.

“Cool, huh!” Scorpion laughed.

“Fucking hilarious!” Hit Girl growled as she quickly regained her composure but she grinned as it *had* been fun.

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As the helicopter returned to flat and level flight, Scorpion turned to Hit Girl.

“How’s your little girl?”

“Getting better every day – thanks for asking.”

“The girls ask almost daily about Stephanie. She’s a really big thing for them . . . and . . . well, considering what Stephanie’s been through since she was seven. . .”

“I know. I always thought that my own childhood sucked – but at least I had my Daddy . . . until he died. Then I had Marcus. I am determined that Stephanie, Anne-Marie, and Danny will have a family life – they each deserve it. So – what’s the new girl, like?”

“Quiet.”

“Quiet?” Mindy demanded incredulously. “She’s a *Predator*, right?”

“Electra is different – she’s not like Stephanie, Harper, Naomi, nor Kaitlin. I don’t know what it is – she’s just different.”

“I look forward to meeting her – not enough time, this time around, unfortunately.”

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Scorpion figured that Hit Girl needed waking up, so she hauled *Twilight* around in a tight left-hand turn before entering a tight right-hand turn and then racing upwards towards the stars.

“Fuck!” Hit Girl groaned as she was pressed into her seat.

“Too much?” Scorpion chuckled as she pushed the nose down hard and the helicopter plummeted downwards. “Don’t go hurling chunks about my cockpit, missy.”

“Your . . . cockpit!”

After some more air combat manoeuvres, Scorpion decided that she had shaken Hit Girl around – probably a little too much, she decided.

“So, am I good enough?”

“Just get me back on the goddamn ground!” Hit Girl growled good-naturedly but with a huge grin on her face.

Fifty minutes later, once the helicopter was safely stowed in its hanger, and both women had changed out of their flight suits, Mindy turned to Keira.

“You fancy a short road trip to Ports-mouth?”

“It’s one word – not two, you ignorant colonial,” Keira chuckled. “I’m for it – what for?”

“Surprise . . .”

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The drive was not a short one, but two hours later, Mindy pulled up to Trafalgar Gate of HM Naval Base, Portsmouth. After their passes and paperwork had been checked, the barrier rose and Mindy moved forwards, followed by Keira. They turned left at the roundabout, picking up Circular Road and then followed the road around, passing by the old Unicorn Gate and finally taking a right into a carpark beside Fleet Way. Mindy pulled up first, followed by Keira. Once they had locked their vehicles, Mindy led Keira towards a long white, and tall building.

“What are we doing here?” Keira asked as she looked past the building and saw HMS Illustrious laid up in Number 3 Basin. “Don’t tell me you bought old ‘Lusty’!”

“Not quite what I was looking for; however, you may remember the vessel in here, from earlier in the year,” Mindy replied somewhat cryptically.

As they passed through a door which was held open by a shipyard worker, Keira paused as she found herself looking down 155 feet of pristine red hull. Almost directly in front of her were a pair of highly-polished, brass five-bladed, variable-pitch, propellers and two red-painted rudders. Above the red paintwork which covered the underside and keel of the vessel, the hull was a mid-grey which changed to duck-egg blue for the upperworks. Purple was much in evidence highlighting strakes on the hull. The starboard hatch for the boat garage was open and extensive work was underway inside.

“The missile struck us in the boat garage – it had to be totally rebuilt. The paint job is almost complete, I understand,” Mindy explained.

“She’s big!” Keira commented as she looked up at the highly-polished hull.

“Not seen this view of her since she was being built,” Mindy replied as they both walked along the length of the keel.

“What are those?” Keira asked as she pointed at a pair of long oblong canisters a little under three metres long and about a third of a metre in width and height that which were lying on a wooden pallet close to the bow.

“Above your pay grade, honey!” Mindy growled as she moved on.

“I used to drop Sea Skua from my Lynx, you know.”

“All will be revealed my friendly WAFU!” Mindy chuckled.

Keira chuckled.

“You been learning the RN lingo, civvy?”

“Still needs a lot of work, Mindy,” Keira commented as they set foot on the bridge.

Wiring was hanging from the main console and two technicians were busy working on a radar screen. Keira was able to look down on the bow where a framework was being assembled, to port and to starboard. The Command Centre looked little better as another pair of technicians wrestled with new consoles and miles of wiring.

“Yeah – you might be right,” Mindy admitted.

The following morning

Tuesday, August 9th

Blairhoyle

Kaitlin was transfixed by what she was witnessing.

“You wear contact lenses?” Naomi asked.

“Yes, I do,” Electra replied with a laugh as she opened up the packet for a second lens. “Here . . .”

Electra held her finger up to Kaitlin’s eyes. Kaitlin focussed on the small curved hemispherical object that sat on Electra’s fingertip, glistening in the lights. Kaitlin was fascinated, but then as she watched Electra place her second lens in place, she cringed.

“Ewww,” Kaitlin commented. “I could never put anything in my eye, let alone a piece of plastic.”

“A good friend of mine persuaded me to get contact lenses, back when she helped me become a *Predator*, when I was only seven.”

“You weren’t taken to be a *Predator*?” Harper queried.

“I was a yellow – a girl called Stephanie helped me become what I am today; she saved my life by training me.”

“Stephanie?” Naomi enquired. “Stephanie Walker?”

“Yeah – that’s her; did you know her?”

“Not when I was a *Predator*, but I count her as a best friend right now.”

“Stephanie’s alive?” Electra sounded astounded.

“For the moment,” Kaitlin said darkly.