

That afternoon

Tuesday, September 13th, 2016

While the team went off in search of Rage, Peanut needed some new clothes.

The clothing that the little girl had arrived in had been covered in mud and soaked, so Chloe had thrown the clothing away in disgust, ignoring Beck's annoyed concerns. Instead, Chloe had raided Kaitlin's clothing bag, liberating a pair of knickers, a pair of jeans, a T-shirt, and a jumper. A pair of Naomi's trainer socks and Becky's own trainers finished off the ensemble. Kaitlin was physically bigger than Becky, but the elasticated waist on the jeans prevented them from slipping down. The bottoms of the jeans were rolled up to prevent them from looking too ridiculous.

Without much conscious thought, Chloe appropriated one of the MI5 Sentinels and they headed off to the nearest mall, store, or whatever the nearest town could offer. They actually drove quite a distance, finding themselves in Christchurch where they found a giant shopping centre with dozens of clothing shops. Chloe intended to make good use of her 'emergency' credit card and she hoped that Mindy would not mind. An hour later, Chloe deposited several carrier bags into the Sentinel's boot before they headed back for some pizza. On the way to Pizza Hut, Chloe dragged Becky into a clothing shop for some more shopping.

Becky was getting a little annoyed but she went along with the shopping to keep Chloe happy - although Becky was enjoying all the attention.

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While Chloe dug through the racks of clothing for suitable items of clothing, Becky wandered around looking at this and that. Despite Chloe's warning, Becky began to drift further away from Chloe.

"Chloe!"

Chloe turned to see Rebecca being dragged through a door a dozen yards away. She dropped the clothes she was holding and bolted for the same door which swung shut and locked a second before Chloe could grasp hold of it. She had no time for finesse so she simply pulled out her suppressed pistol and blasted the lock.

"Chloe!"

The voice came from below. A set of steel stairs dropped down into the basement and Chloe dived down them, almost jumping from landing to landing in her haste to catch up. By the time, she reached the bottom, the door to the carpark was just slamming shut. Chloe yanked it open and burst out into the car park - narrowly avoiding a car looking for a parking space.

"Chloeeee!"

Chloe turned towards the scream and she saw Becky being shoved (thrown might have been more accurate) into the back of a Jeep 4x4. Chloe ran across the carpark, dodging cars as she went - infuriating a BMW owner as Chloe slid across the bonnet of his 5-series saloon. The Jeep was accelerating away as Chloe came close. She tried to get a shot off from her pistol but between the concrete pillars and the shoppers who appeared to wander about aimlessly, she never got a shot off as the Jeep vanished up the exit ramp at speed. Chloe muted her scream of anger and frustration as she ran for the Sentinel. Then, after having calmed down for a few moments as she sat in the driver's seat, she smiled to herself as she suddenly remembered something.

While she had been dressing Becky back at the Safehouse, Chloe had grabbed one of Q's trackers and secured it to Becky's left ankle under the jeans. She could not remember why she had fitted the tracker but she was glad that she had as she pulled out her smart phone and accessed the tracking app. The signal was strong and steady, travelling at forty miles-per-hour about three miles away. She was heading west. Chloe started the Range Rover and she quickly left the carpark, heading west. As she drove, she began to think: who had Becky? It had to be Scorpio - nobody else would know who Becky was and, as far as she knew, *Urban Predator* was gone and no longer recruiting.

The signal showed them heading up the Spur Road towards the A31. They were not exceeding the speed limit which indicated to Chloe that they had no idea she was following Becky. Chloe had notified Hal and Q of the rapidly unfolding events - Hal had said something unprintable and questioned Chloe's judgment but both had gone along with her scheme to recover Becky.

"You get yourself killed and Hit Girl will bring you back to life, just to kill you again!" Hal commented dryly. "As soon as Scorpion is finished at Site B, I'll get her over to you for close support."

"Thanks, Hal - I owe you one," Chloe replied.

"That'll be two-thousand I-O-U's. . ."

"See ya, Hal!"

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The transmitter attached to the girl's ankle was working like a charm.

Which was good, as the signal showed the vehicle heading to the east, along the A31. The potential destinations were infinite: London, Portsmouth, Dover. . . However, the vehicle picked up the M27 just as Chloe regained sight of the Jeep 4x4. At the M271 junction, the Jeep turned off and made for Southampton. Twenty minutes later, Chloe slowed and stopped the Sentinel fifty yards away from the Jeep which had pulled up beside a large container ship which was unloading its cargo beside the quay. Through binoculars,

Chloe could clearly see what was going on, despite the darkness, thanks to ultra-bright arc lights which illuminated the facility as if it were day.

"Hal, Shadow - I've tracked . . . err, Scamp . . . down - they're taking her aboard a container ship in the Port of Southampton."

"*You about to do something impulsive that might get you killed?*" Hal asked shrewdly.

"You know me too well, Hal!" Chloe chuckled. "I have to go get that little girl back - you understand?"

"*I do, Shadow - go do what you do best. I'll get Scorpion headed your way. Stay safe, Shadow - you're my best friend.*"

"Hey, it's me!"

"*That is what I am afraid of. . .*"

Chloe laughed nervously.

"I'll be in touch - Shadow out!"

Scorpio Special Projects Division

Command Van

Hal was not happy with what her best-friend was up to, despite understanding why.

Shadow was alone and that was not good. Yes, Shadow could look after herself and she was very capable but she was also headstrong and there were times when her brain was not part of her decision-making process. Hal was also concerned about her best-friend's mental state considering her loss only the previous week. Things had calmed down and *Twilight* was now available.

"Scorpion - we have an alert call from Shadow. Sending you vectors now."

"*Copy new vectors, Hal. Leaving orbit now and making for Shadow. Will confirm ETA en-route.*"

"Go have fun, Scorpion!"

Southampton Container Terminal

Chloe wrenched open the upper hatch of the Range Rover and then pulled down the lower section of the hatch.

There was a large steel enclosure in the back and Chloe released the catches on the lower tray. Her eyes went wide as she took in a very comprehensive collection of lethal and very modern weaponry. She

grinned happily, and thankfully, at how prepared the Brits could be - it was one thing you could always rely on.

"Bingo!" Chloe grinned. "Thank you, MI5!"

Chloe pulled out a Heckler & Koch G36C and she checked the action - it was ready for use and freshly oiled. She laid the weapon down and selected another weapon; this time a Benelli M4 Super90 semi-automatic combat shotgun - known as the L128A1 in its current British guise. After a brief check to ensure it was operational, it was, she laid it alongside the G36C and then selected the relevant ammunition for both weapons. She loaded the shotgun with seven rounds, plus one up the 'spout', and she placed fourteen more shotgun cartridges next to their host weapon. Next, came four thirty-round magazines for the H&K, arranged in. A third pair was inserted into the assault rifle with a clip securing the two magazines together. A Glock 17 pistol was added with three spare magazines while a fourth was inserted into the butt of the pistol and a round loaded into the breech - the magazine was then switched with a fully-loaded replacement.

From a larger draw above the weapons, Chloe selected a suitably-sized flak jacket and she pulled it on over her t-shirt. Once zipped up and the waist tightened, she inserted three of the six H&K G36C magazines into pouches on the front right of the jacket. The Glock pistol was secured in a holster mounted on the left side and angled slightly to the right for quick access. Three spare seventeen-round Glock magazines went into pouches mounted on the left chest of the jacket. Chloe wrapped a webbing belt around her waist and loaded the spare shotgun cartridges into a pouch on her left hip. The pouch on her right hip took the remaining H&K magazines. An 8-inch, blackened combat knife hung behind the right pouch.

The final act was to add camouflage face cream to her face and a dark green scrim scarf to cover her blonde hair.

"I'm coming for you, Peanut - you hang in there."

Aboard MV Hélène S

Southampton Container Terminal

"Get off me!"

"Shut up, kid, if you know what's good for you!"

The response was accompanied by a backhanded slap across the face which sent Becky flying back against the steel bulkhead and she banged her head. She glared back at the woman who had slapped her but the young girl was used to physical abuse, despite her not exactly enjoying it.

"You are going to die," Becky said calmly but coldly. "And I'm going to enjoy watching you suffer."

"Forgive me, for not being scared of a tiny little scrap, like you," the woman laughed.

"So, what do I call you? Daisy? I knew a bitch called Daisy, once - she had to be put to sleep for being so damned ugly!"

One of them men present laughed at the woman's angry glare before she stormed out of the steel-walled space.

"You are just making it worse for yourself, girl - Agatha is a nasty bitch with very little in the way of morals; remember that."

"Why you being nice to me?"

"I don't hurt children - but if I'm forced to. . ."

"Copy that!" Becky growled.

Chloe was twenty yards from the gangway for MV Hélène S.

Getting aboard would be dicey - getting off again with a passenger, well, she'd worry about that at the right time. Chloe picked a moment as a giant mobile something-or-other moved past her position at a very slow speed. She ran out and she rolled beneath its giant four-foot-tall wheels, following its route in the shadows. As it passed beside the Hélène S, Chloe dived out from behind one of the enormous tyres and she bolted for the gangway which was momentarily doused in shadow as the giant container crane blocked the overhead arc lights for several seconds.

The run up the gangway was exhilarating but ultimately successful. She found herself close to the main, eight-storey, superstructure with three tiers of containers towering over her head and a dozen or so rows of containers vanishing across to the port side, a good thirty metres away. The ship was, at least as far as Chloe was concerned, massive. The rows of containers occupied most of the forward section of the ship and the after deck, aft of the towering superstructure. The ship was just five-centimetres short of two-hundred metres in length.

Chloe made her way a dozen yards aft to the white-painted superstructure and she vanished inside.

***A dozen nautical miles to the west
and a mile north of Fordingbridge***

Twilight

Scorpion was closing in on Shadow's position.

Beside her, the Chief was dozing in the co-pilot's seat. Suddenly, out of nowhere, there was a loud thump and the aircraft shook from nose dome to tail rotor. The Chief came awake very quickly and Scorpion felt a chill run down her backbone as a warning siren

sounded and then she saw yellow warning lights illuminate for the port engine, followed by a voice warning from the on-board computer.

"Port engine . . . turbine failure . . . port engine . . . turbine failure."

Then a red warning light snapped on, accompanied by a sharp tone sounding in Scorpion's helmet:

**ENG
FIRE**

Scorpion automatically followed procedure and she scanned for a suitable landing zone before she shutdown the port engine and lowered the landing gear. Less than a minute later, with immense skill, she put *Twilight* down in a field and shutdown the remaining engine and all her systems.

"Command . . . Twilight is down, repeat, Twilight is down!" Scorpion radioed as she dived out of the helicopter, closely followed by the Chief and they ran a dozen yards before diving for cover.

There was a high chance of the fire reigniting and the helicopter exploding. They gave it five minutes before they both emerged to check out the damage as the rotor-blades slowly spun to a halt.

"Fuck!" Scorpion growled as she examined the damage and she rapidly identified the problem - the mass of feathers, blood, and splattered flesh indicated a bird strike in the port engine.

Scorpion paced up and down as the Chief examined the damage more closely. After two minutes, he turned to Scorpion and he simply shook his head forlornly - it would need a full engine replacement.

"Fuck!" Scorpion repeated quite a bit louder.

Then came some slight relief.

"Scorpion, Spook - I have your location. Will be there in ten, out!"

Aboard MV Hélène S

Southampton Container Terminal

Chloe found the 01-deck devoid of life.

She figured that most of the crew would be busy loading cargo or otherwise ashore. There were eight decks above and probably four or five decks below to be searched - a tall order. It would also only be a matter of time before she was discovered aboard. The tracker was no good inside a steel box such a ship, so that was of no help. Chloe moved as stealthily as she could, listening for any activity before she moved past doorways or turned a corner. The superstructure was not all that big which was a blessing.

Chloe found nothing of interest on 01-deck, so she carefully took a steel ladder, up a level, to 02-deck. She found two men snoring in a cabin but otherwise nothing that would help her find Becky.

'Two decks down - many more to go!' Chloe thought to herself as she moved on up to 03-deck.

As she peered out of an open hatch on the starboard side, she smiled and made a brief diversion.

A very soggy field with a broken helicopter and a pissed off pilot

Spook was true to his word as Scorpion looked up towards the roar of rotor-blades and gas-turbines as a helicopter descended into the field beside *Twilight*.

The McDonnell Douglas Explorer was dark blue overall with yellow upperparts. The markings were that of Dorset Police. The state-of-the-art, NOTAR (no tail rotor) aircraft was a momentary distraction for the helicopter-mad pilot.

"You just going to stand there looking like an idiot?" Spook chuckled over the comms.

"Sir!" Scorpion replied automatically as she jogged over to the helicopter.

A crewman had opened the side door for her and he waved her forwards and she climbed aboard. Scorpion's flight helmet was still in place with the darkened visor down, covering her eyes. The police pilot looked over his new passenger, taking in the helmet, pistol, and the wings: **SCORPION**. He had observed the dark-grey helicopter that sat in the middle of the field with weapons pods hanging from either side. If there was ever a time to believe in 'black' helicopters, now was the time, he thought. However, he was an ex-Army Puma pilot, so he knew when to pretend to not see something; he knew classified when he saw it, even if the Royal Navy Commander in the back had not recently spelled it out in vivid terms - along with the penalty for disobeying.

As soon as the side door was slammed shut, the pilot applied power and expertly rose into the air, turning due south and increasing speed to over 130-knots.

Aboard MV *Hélène S*

Southampton Container Terminal

Chloe

Chloe had hit pay dirt!

"Fuck you!"

It had been a little girls voice - it was coming from a cabin a dozen yards down a corridor on 05-deck which ran almost thirty-metres from port to starboard with two fire-doors at ten-metre intervals, both of which were held open by electromagnets. Chloe heard Becky's scream and she ran harder, turning to her left and kicking in the door. Becky was on the floor, a vivid purple bruise on the left side of her face. A man had just slapped her on the opposite cheek . . . the shotgun blast was deafening in the enclosed cabin as the man smashed up against the bulkhead, a gaping hole in his chest. Becky's smile was enormous as she wiped away her tears and she scrambled back to her feet.

"Move it, girl!" Chloe grinned happily, giving the girl a brief hug as she came over and wrapped her arms around Chloe's waist.

"Okay, Shadow - show me what you got!" Becky said as she stared up into Chloe's green eyes.

Chloe sent two quick bursts of gunfire into the corridor, one to the left (a scream was heard) and the other to the right of the cabin doorway before she dove out into the corridor with Becky at her back. The corridor had a dead body to the left which explained the scream. The ladder below, to 04-deck, was about a dozen metres away. Chloe ran in that direction, with Becky gripping onto her webbing.

Chloe reached the ladder, but stopped just short of it, pushing Becky up against the forward bulkhead. Chloe listened - she could hear feet pounding on the rubber-covered steel, a deck or two above her, however, the decks below appeared to be clear. Chloe moved very slowly down the ladder, keeping Becky close. Each step was torture as she expected a bullet to tear through either or both of them. They both reached the bottom of the ladder and Chloe inched her way towards the corridor, checking for trouble . . . her head was turned for just a second.

"Chloeee!"

Becky

Becky was screaming as she fell backwards down the ventilator shaft.

She had lost her footing just as she had stepped backwards - it was so stupid! The fall was many feet but Becky landed onto an angled piece of the shaft which led her many more feet towards another vertical drop which descended a long way. The young girl landed on a flexible piece of aluminium which cushioned her fall - before breaking loose and dumping her down onto a steel grating and she narrowly avoided falling into the bilges which were full of black oily water. Becky looked around her and she figured out that she must be deep in the bowels of the ship, probably in the engine room.

The place was enormous - two or three storeys in height with the centrepiece being a massive seven-cylinder, 24,000-horsepower,

diesel engine. The steel monster towered high above Becky. She looked around for a way up and she spotted a steel ladder that headed up to the next level.

"Hey!"

Becky looked up to see a man looking down at her from two storeys above her. He pointed something at her and she dove to the side just as a bullet zinged off the grating beside her.

"Stop shooting, you fool!"

Becky froze - it was Agatha's voice.

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Becky scrambled along the gratings making no effort to cover the sound of her feet, considering the loud ambient noise from the auxiliary machinery in the large open space. Above her, came the thundering of boots on steel gratings and ladders as several people descended towards her. Becky rolled beneath a large storage tank which was warm to the touch and stank of oil. Less than a minute later, a pair of large feet stomped into view followed by another pair.

"The little bitch has to be here, somewhere," a man's voice growled.

"When I find her, I am going to hurt her, so fucking badly," Agatha said coldly.

"You are a cold, bitch - she's on this level somewhere. Try the steering flat, she could have gone in there."

"You search the steering flat," Agatha suggested strongly.

"Fuck's sake!"

The man stomped off while Agatha's boots turned this way and that before they also stomped away. Becky remained where she was for another few minutes before she rolled out and she slowly moved towards the steel ladders going up. She just reached the ladders when she froze. Something was blocking out the light. A large shadow was growing before her and the eight-year-old girl began to shake with fear as she considered what was rising up behind her.

Becky turned . . . and she screamed.

Chloe

"Becky!"

Chloe ran to the ventilator opening and she heard banging and screaming.

"Chloeeeee!"

"I'm coming for you. . ."

Chloe was beside herself with panic and anger. How could she have let Becky out of her sight? How could she have lost the little girl only minutes after finding her?

"No! NO! She's Alive!"

Chloe ran down the next ladder, just as a man approached from below her. The shotgun took his head clean off as Chloe quite literally blasted straight through the man. His body, blood erupting from the severed arteries, crashed to the deck seconds after Chloe had bolted past. Chloe continued to drop down through the decks, and two men, until she reached passed 01-deck, and she reached 1-deck, the first level beneath the main deck. There, Chloe hefted open the hatch which led to the engine room.

"Holy, fuck!" she growled as she took in the enormous space which descended several decks below her.

Where the fuck was she going to start?

Chloe descended down to the first level, her eyes scanning for anything. The background noise was high, preventing Chloe from hearing anything useful. Then, she heard something from far below . . . a piercing scream!

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Chloe bolted for the nearest ladder and she grasped the hand rails, sliding down to the steel gratings below. Two men came running towards her - Chloe had no time for finesse. Two shotgun blasts and two men lay dead. She ignored the next ladder, swinging herself over the steel safety rail and dropping down on top of the enormous engine. She dodged around the cylinder heads and jumped down onto a maintenance platform.

Down below, she caught a glance of an enormous woman . . . and Becky. Chloe pulled up an access hatch and dropped down a ladder which ran down the side of the engine, dropping two levels. Chloe's boots hit the steel gratings attracting the attention of a man who had just appeared from a hatch. Bullets struck the engine behind Chloe as she dropped to one knee and returned fire with the G36C. The man was sheltering behind the steel hatch but that did not help him as a ricochet struck him in the leg and he fell forwards, allowing Chloe to put a bullet in his brain. The ricochets had also damaged some electrical cabling causing some of the overhead lighting to go out, leaving others flickering on and off.

Chloe ran around the engine and stopped. The giant woman, a knife in a hand, was moving towards Becky - they were too close for Chloe to risk using the assault rifle, she put the weapon down, along with the shotgun and she drew her combat knife. The woman appeared oblivious to the gunfire in the engine room - her entire focus appeared to be on the little girl who was backing away.

Chloe advanced on Agatha, the eight-inch combat knife held in her right hand. Becky made a valiant but vain attempt to escape,

however, Agatha blocked any escape route and finally, Becky was backed up against a steel bulkhead, cowering before the towering woman as she advanced on the little girl.

"Get away from her, *you bitch!*"

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Agatha spun around and she hissed at Chloe, her own blade glinting in the intermittent lighting. Beyond her, Becky's face was ablaze with sheer relief and happiness as she saw Chloe approaching.

Chloe was very careful as she faced off against the woman. She was *huge!* But that was nothing new; Chloe had fought against overwhelming odds on many an occasion - and won. Chloe would have to use her skill as a vigilante against the sheer brawn of the woman before her. While Chloe was acrobatic, she was nowhere near as good as Megan - but she had taken lessons from her fiery friend to enhance her agility.

Chloe opened up the fight as she somersaulted forwards, slashing the woman across the upper chest. She bellowed out in anger as she twisted around and caught Chloe on the left thigh with her own blade, inflicting a minor wound. Chloe yelled out in pain as she came down onto the steel gratings with a crash. She grinned up at Becky as she quickly rolled back to her feet and dove in for another attack. She was intercepted and thrown bodily against a steel tank with a thud. Chloe was starting to have second-thoughts about beating the woman as she felt herself yanked up off the gratings and thrown bodily through the air, coming down hard on another set of gratings further over. The breath was knocked out of her lungs as she landed but she very quickly refilled them and clambered back to her feet. Agatha moved swiftly and she kicked Chloe hard in the chest, sending the sixteen-year-old flying backwards.

"Chloe!" Becky yelled in horror.

Chloe winced against the pain as she struggled back to her feet. She bolted forwards, slashing with her knife, catching Agatha across the stomach but barely penetrating her clothing. Chloe parried Agatha's own swipe with the long blade in her hand and struck again - her blade drew blood from Agatha's upper left arm - plus a small grunt of annoyance on her part. Chloe was worried - the woman did not appear to be weakening but Chloe was. Her insides were still sore from the previous week and an all-out fight was not what her body needed, right at that very moment.

Chloe stumbled over a loose grating and she fell headlong landing on her right knee - she yelled out in agony, stopping as she was hauled to her feet and then she found herself in a bearhug from behind. Her very life was being squeezed out of her. She stabbed backwards with the combat-knife and she felt it sink into flesh. Agatha emitted a grunt, briefly acknowledging the knife before she simply squeezed harder. Chloe released the hilt of the knife and, after a second's

very quick thought, she struck it hard with her fist, then gripped it and twisted it.

The bearhug eased, just enough for Chloe to get her arms out from the hold.

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The squeeze resumed and Chloe felt her breasts being squished into her chest again and she struggled to breathe - her lungs would not inflate.

In desperation, she took a page out of Hit Girl's book of fun and she reached up with both hands, sinking both thumbs deep into the bitch's eyes. Chloe felt her thumbs sink into something warm and moist - she ignored the intense bellow of pain and surprise from the behemoth who was crushing the life out of her. She thrust her thumbs in as deep as she could against the pressure of the eyeballs before both suddenly imploded under the pressure of Chloe's thrusts. The woman screamed bloody murder as she dropped Chloe and she clasped both hands to her face. Blood and whatever was in a human eye ran down the woman's face, oozing between her fingers. The woman sank to her knees, bellowing her anger. Chloe kicked the woman onto her back and then levelled her pistol at the woman's head.

"Stop!"

Chloe looked up at Becky as she ran forward. The little girl stared down at the woman, showing no emotions.

"Remember, what I said, you fucking blind witch?" Becky said calmly but coldly in a tone which surprised Chloe. "I told you that you were going to die and that I was going to enjoy watching you suffer."

The woman had paused in her throws of agony, and she listened to what Becky was saying.

"You won, you little wretch, congratulations!"

"Can I?" Becky asked as she looked up at Chloe.

Chloe nodded and she allowed Becky to wrap her smaller hands around the butt of the large pistol and pass her forefingers into the trigger guard.

"Just squeeze when you're ready, Peanut," Chloe whispered into the little girl's right ear.

"Go to hell!" Becky growled as she squeezed the trigger.

Chloe's arms absorbed the kick of the pistol as Agatha's head absorbed the bullet before exploding with the overpressure.

"Can we go home, now?" Becky asked as she released the pistol.

"Oh, yeah!"

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Chloe grabbed Becky as she heard feet pounding on steel gratings, high above them. She leapt up the nearest ladder with Becky close behind her. They both ran towards the next ladder - then they stopped.

Men were approaching from all directions, grinning at Chloe as they advanced on her and Becky. Chloe did not wait, she simply opened fire with her H&K G36C, quickly dropping several men as she rapidly emptied a magazine before swiftly swapping out the empty magazine and replacing it with a full one. Her left leg screamed out in pain and as Chloe reached down, she felt wetness. As she probed the wound, she was relieved to find two holes in her pants, indicating that the bullet had passed cleanly through, and what felt like a flesh wound in the skin of her leg - no hole, she was pleased to find out!

Chloe scooped up Becky and she ran, firing short bursts from the G36C as she went. Her body was screaming out for rest but the adrenalin was flowing and it was keeping her muscles pumping, despite her injuries, and pushing her through and beyond the pain barrier. As they climbed up to 01-deck, Chloe reached into her webbing and she produced a detonator.

"Press the right button, Peanut," she suggested as she flicked up the safety.

Peanut did so and there was a mighty roar from the deck above them as the Dayglo-painted, starboard-side TEMPSC (Totally Enclosed Motor Propelled Survival Craft) exploded out over the water. Under the distraction of the burning craft, Chloe burst out onto the main deck, holding Becky by the hand and she ran for the gangway. Gunfire pursued them as men appeared on the port-side of the superstructure.

"Press the left button, Peanut."

Several men died as the port-side TEMPSC exploded, sending razor-sharp fibreglass scything through the men who had not been immolated by the fireball from the explosion.

Bournemouth International Airport

The police helicopter deposited them close to the main terminal and Keira grinned at the sight before her.

The helicopter had been there for an airshow. Yes, it was a relic, and it was to the final time such a helicopter would be on display. Nonetheless, it was flyable and, technically, it was available.

Keira showed her MI5 pass and the Royal Navy Lieutenant considered her request.

"You want me, a serving naval officer, to hand over to you, an ex-naval officer, a Seaking!"

"I need that helicopter . . . tell them I hit you."

The large man studied the shorter woman and he chuckled.

"Well, it has been a slow day and it would be good to have some fun. . ."

"Lieutenant, I will authorise this sortie," Commander Lawrence said as he handed the man a tablet.

The officer read through the signed document and he handed the tablet back.

"You got any ammo on that thing?" Keira asked.

"She is fully combat ready, despite her age," Lieutenant Peakes advised. "You taking the right seat?"

"Damn right!" Keira replied as she climbed aboard.

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Fifteen minutes, later, Scorpion felt right at home behind the controls of the eight-tonne helicopter. The Seaking HAS Mk.6 vibrated as the twin Rolls-Royce Gnome H1400-2 turboshaft engines spun close to their maximum 1,660-shp, propelling the aircraft through the air at a little over 100 knots.

"Crew, Pilot - lock and load!"

Behind her, on the starboard side, the Petty Officer crewman racked back the action of the doorway-mounted 7.62-mm, belt-fed, General Purpose Machine Gun (GPMG).

Flight time was to be a little over ten minutes - Scorpion just hoped that Shadow had that much time.

Southampton Container Terminal

They had run down the gangway and they had continued running until they had reached the perceived safety of the Range Rover Sentinel.

Once there, Chloe shoved Becky into the front passenger seat and then ran around to the driver's side and jumped in.

"Buckle up, honey!"

While Becky did so, she started to talk.

"It wasn't Urban Predator that made me what I am - I wasn't there long enough for them to brainwash me," Becky explained. "It was the men that took me - they made me cold and they made me into a killer. They humiliated me and made me do dangerous stuff for them. I stole for them. I became a criminal for them. I learnt to pick locks. I learnt to stab people in the heart - from the front and from the back. I learnt to. . ."

Becky burst into tears, surprising Chloe who was busy driving at speed towards the exit from the facility.

"I'm a bad person, Chloe. You don't want me. I'm a bad person."

Chloe slammed on the brakes, then she grabbed hold of Becky and locked directly into her deep brown eyes.

"Don't you ever say that, Peanut! You are *not* a bad person. A bad person would not have helped Shannon to escape. I know bad people and I can see that you are a good person inside who was forced to do bad things. Trust me, Rebecca - I am never going to leave you."

Chloe went back to concentrating on her driving as she pulled away.

..._...

The sixteen-year-old was very tired and that tiredness was creeping up on her, despite her intensive vigilante training.

First, she missed the turning for the M271 motorway, and then after a couple more miles, she looped around the next roundabout and she headed back towards the roundabout which would take her onto the M271, then she drove straight into a trap laid by Chloe herself!

A truck pulled out of a side road - Chloe was driving at over ninety on the A35 dual-carriageway . . . she had no time to stop, only to slow down and veer off at the same side road, the B3076. A white van was blocking the road ahead, a couple hundred yards ahead, and Chloe was forced to take a left turn, passing back under the A35 dual-carriageway. She smashed through a horizontal barrier with a Mitsubishi Shogun in obvious pursuit. She took a left and raced past several trucks, zig-zagging to avoid a forklift truck with a very surprised operator. A second Shogun appeared from the left and Chloe was forced to jink to the left and then to the right.

A heavy gate was set to the left and Chloe opted for a narrow lane, heading southeast. The track was raised up a couple of feet above boggy marshland and as Chloe looked ahead, the headlights illuminating their rickety pathway, she realised that she had made a grave error which could, and probably would, get them both killed. Ahead, the pathway turned ninety-degrees to the left at the base of a large electricity pylon.

Then Chloe bounced over a large rut and the vehicle skidded off the side of the pathway and dropped two feet. Chloe shook her head to clear it and she gently eased the heavy vehicle forward. The four-wheel-drive system easily handled the muddy, boggy ground as she turned the vehicle around. Ahead of her, she could make out two sets of headlights moving towards them - but then both oncoming vehicles stopped.

As the Sentinel rolled slowly forward, Chloe pulled out her binoculars and she looked over at the two vehicles. She blanched as she saw a man crouching down, about eighty yards away - he had something to his shoulder.

..._...

Chloe slammed on the brakes and she threw open her door, grabbing Becky and yanking her out of her seatbelt and over the centre console.

Chloe dived onto the ground, dragging Becky with her, and she ran from the Sentinel . . . just in time. There was a blinding flash, followed by the whoosh of a rocket and seconds later, an enormous explosion followed. Chloe felt the heat wash over her as she kept her face and Becky's down to the ground. Becky looked up after a minute and she looked back at the Sentinel.

"I guess we're not going to be leaving, now . . . right?"

It was more statement than question as they both stared at the burning wreckage of what was once an expensive armoured vehicle, not to mention their only way of escape.

"I'm sorry, Peanut."

"You don't have to be sorry; it wasn't your fault."

Chloe's heart sank as she saw armed men closing in on them. All of her own weapons were cooking away happily in the Sentinel, a little over a dozen yards away. Chloe hugged Becky to her as they crouched down on the grass. Chloe studied the closest man as he approached but then she started for a moment as the man was quite literally blasted apart while tufts of dirt flew into the air and a stream of green tracer bullets tore the man apart.

"Shadow, this is Scorpion, stand by for pickup!"

Chloe looked up as a large helicopter roared overhead in a tight right-hand bank, a door-gunner raining death down upon anybody who came close to her and Becky.

..._...

Chloe had never been so happy to find herself aboard a helicopter - even a noisy one like the ageing Seaking.

Beside Chloe, Becky huddled into her new friend. Across the cabin, a satisfied looking Petty Officer sat keeping an eye on the new passengers. Scorpion had given the crew a few key reasons for why they were doing what they were doing. A few remarks about how they were rescuing an eight-year-old girl who had suffered immense hardship and abuse at the hands of a bunch of bastards, had been all that was needed for the crew to give their all.

"Kaitlin is going to kill me - look what I did to her clothes," Becky said unhappily

"She'll be okay - if I know that girl, a quick trip to the store and she'll be fine," Chloe replied.

Forty minutes later, the helicopter settled onto the grass beside the MI5 Safehouse.

*This storyline continues in **Chapter 328: New Kids in Town of Forsaken** and simultaneously in **Chapter 24: Family of Vengeance**.*