

Wednesday, September 14th, 2016

MI5 Safehouse, Blandford Forum

Immediately after breakfast, before everybody left to travel home, Mindy gathered together all the *Predators* - a plan which Dave had thought very unwise.

"Now *this* is ominous!" Kaitlin pointed out as she sat down beside her cousin.

Mindy chuckled as she smiled reassuringly at the eight-year-old as well as the other assembled *Predators*. Cassie left the room pulling the door closed behind her, a Taser held in her hand.

"I just wanted to speak with you all, personally. All of you here represent the majority of our rescued *Predators*. As such, I want to thank you all for your support and for your allegiance. Yes, I am to blame for what you all now call your lives. When I first came across the nine-year-old Stephanie Walker, and I found out what she was . . . I was stunned. I was also very angry that somebody could do something so cruel to what I *thought* was such a lovely little girl."

Electra and Saoirse both snorted at Mindy's comment drawing a nasty glare from Stephanie.

"Yes, I know that while Stephanie *looks* like a sweet little girl on the outside, she is very different inside and I blame myself for that. She was forced to endure a life of hell from the age of six. I became very attached to Stephanie and during a rare moment of weakness, we took her into our family. I have never regretted that moment . . . no, Saoirse, 'Lectra - never!"

Stephanie gave Saoirse and Electra a very smug look indeed to which the two girls just stuck their tongues out at Stephanie.

"One key aspect I insisted on when we recovered a *Predator*, was that he or she should be given a choice as to their future. Nobody is being forced to become a vigilante and I don't want any of you to think that you are, not for one moment. Don't feel bad about rejecting the life you were forced into. Your friends will accept your decision and I, for one, will not look on you any different. I think that you are all exceptionally brave just to have made it this far. If any of you have difficulty coming to a decision on what you want to do with your life then please - come and talk to one of us in confidence.

"On that note, Stephanie and Saoirse are my representatives when it comes to *Urban Predator*. They are my senior *Predators* and I don't give a fuck what Phase you were in, nor how old you are. When they are in uniform, they will both be afforded the same respect that any of you would expect to receive. However, when they are not in uniform, please feel free to kick the living shit out of the cocky bitches!"

Loud, raucous laughter rang out at Saoirse and Stephanie's expense - they both grinned and took it on the chin.

"As some of you will know, Stephanie was temporarily elevated to a support position while she was healing. That is an option open to any one of you who wishes to remain involved but who does not wish to face combat or the possibility of having to take another life. On the subject of Stephanie, I am very pleased to announce that she will keep her new *Fusion* rank of Operator from this point on. Congratulations, Stephanie!"

Stephanie looked stunned at the news.

"God!" Saoirse complained. "She's going to be impossible to live with now. . ."

"Fear it, bitch!"

Early that afternoon

Safehouse VL, London

"The wait is killing me!"

"That is why we are here - to support you."

"Thanks, Steph."

"I understand that you were a Yellow," Jamie said.

"Yeah - you were, too - fun, wasn't it?"

"It had its moments. I enjoyed the power of being able to force older kids to strip naked and make them do as I said."

"Yes, that was the good side. The first time I ordered a twelve-year-old girl to strip, she gave me a glare so bad I almost burst into tears . . . but she did - she knew that she had no choice. I enjoyed seeing their faces when they had to use the buckets - talk about embarrassing!"

"When you two have quite finished!" Stephanie grumbled. "You two might have enjoyed it but us *Predators* did not. I for one spent longer in that damn Cage than most and it was pure hell thanks to you fucking Yellows!"

"Sorry, Steph - I know; I experienced it from the other side, too," Jamie admitted.

"So, did I," Electra added. "I tried to be nice to you, Steph."

"Yes, you did - which was why I taught a little girl to look after herself."

"Look where it got me!" Electra quipped as she hugged Stephanie.

"I can come back when you two have finished fucking your brains out. . ." Mindy growled.

"We're good, thank you, mother!" Stephanie replied stiffly.

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"Grandpa!"

"You look a lot better, Electra," Patrick Haig offered as he hugged his granddaughter.

Electra was dressed in clothing which was a lightyear away from the body armour of the previous evening. The nine-year-old girl was wearing a set of blue dungarees over a light-blue blouse with blue trainers completing the ensemble. Mindy had taken extra care (with Stephanie's help) to ensure that Electra was well presented for her family. Electra's chestnut brown hair was tied up in twin plaits.

"Thanks."

"Didn't you wear glasses?"

Electra turned to see her fourteen-year-old brother.

"Simon!" Electra yelled as she ran at her brother, wrapping her arms around the boy's waist.

"Hi, Electra . . . I've really missed my little sister," Simon replied as she hugged Electra, tears running down his cheeks.

Electra sat with her grandfather and brother for another hour, talking - Mindy, Dave, Stephanie, and Jamie sat in another room, talking amongst themselves.

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"Mindy?"

"Commander."

"May I, please, speak with your daughter?"

"Stephanie? Of course, Commander."

Stephanie looked up at the tall man, who was smiling down at her. Stephanie felt apprehensive and a little worried.

"Hello, Stephanie - I believe that we have you to thank for keeping my granddaughter alive."

"I, err - maybe. . ."

"Wow," Mindy chuckled. "Stephanie short of words!"

"I did what I thought was right. Electra helped me when I was in trouble and I chose to bend the rules and give her a little guidance. Turned out to be a good idea - until she got thrown into an exercise and she was hurt."

"I heard about the Duct Tape incident!" Commander Haig laughed.

"I did what I could - I wish she wasn't hurt but those bastards really didn't give a shit. I assume you know that the girl who gave Electra her scars was with us, last night?"

"I do. Electra explained that, after a rocky start, you have all put your differences behind you. From what I hear there is no blame and I do not put any blame on you or Abigail. If anything, I should thank you for keeping her alive."

"How much did she tell you?" Stephanie asked.

"She told me how you met. About your week of hell."

"Yeah - it was pretty bad," Stephanie admitted. "Electra helped me through the worst of it."

"I hope you two stay in contact when you go back to Chicago, Stephanie. You will always be welcome over here and I know that Electra will miss you - she really looks up to you."

Stephanie really did *not* know what to say.

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Two hours later, it was time for each to go their separate ways. Mindy and Dave could see the emotions building up in Stephanie as she hugged Electra tightly. The same emotions were mirrored in the younger girl's face. It was only seconds before there was a severe risk of major flooding.

"You stay safe, 'Lectra - if you need anything. . ."

"I'll call you, Steph - you're my best friend and you always will be. Promise me that you won't do anything stupid . . . *promise me!*"

Stephanie was openly sobbing as she replied.

"I promise, 'Lectra."

"Please - can we end this before we need to issue flood warnings!" Mindy said quietly.

Stephanie sheepishly wiped her eyes and Electra did the same.

"I'll call you when we I get to my new home," Electra said.

"It'll need to wait until I am back in Chicago - I'll call you."

"On that note," Mindy said. "This is a special cell phone for Electra. Only her fingerprint can activate it. All calls and data are fully encrypted. I'll make sure Steph calls you on it the moment she is back home in Chicago."

"Thank you, Mindy - I owe you a lot for putting up with me," Electra said as she gave Mindy a big hug.

"As Steph said - you need anything, 'Lectra. . ."

That same evening

Blairhoyle House, Scotland

Cassie was just getting herself ready for bed, after what had been a very busy few days and she was very tired.

Just as she slid beneath her duvet with an audible sigh of relief, there came a gentle knock on her bedroom door. Cassie groaned - it had to be one of the girls, although the knock sounded like Kaitlin - yes, the two girls knocked on doors differently.

"Come in!"

It turned out to be *both* girls - Naomi appeared to be following at the behest of her younger cousin and the older girl had a confused and slightly bewildered expression on her face. Kaitlin, however, appeared to be on a mission, and she proceeded to climb onto the bed where she sat looking up at Cassie, who took the hint and she sat up in the bed. Cassie looked over at Naomi who simply shrugged and maintained her bewildered expression. Whatever it was, it was Kaitlin's show. Kaitlin, herself, began to look uneasy and her expression was a mixture of hope and longing, but with worry and sadness mixed in as well.

"Cassie . . . I . . .," Kaitlin was struggling with her words - not usually a problem for the eight-year-old. "I need somebody that I can call 'Mum' . . . I miss not having a Mum. . ."

Cassie felt a knot in her stomach. It had to happen at some stage, she thought; the girls needed more than she, a mere nineteen-year-old, could give. A wave of sadness swept over Cassie and she felt like her heart was about to shatter. Kaitlin must have noticed the change in Cassie, because she smiled.

"I want you to be my Mum, Cassie. Can I call you my Mum, please?"

Cassie was stunned and by the looks on Naomi's face, so was she. However, it was Naomi who spoke first.

"Kaitlin - fucking hell! You can't go asking Cassie that!"

"Why not? She can be your Mummy too."

"We're cousins, not sisters."

"Look, I know we both love Cassie and I know that Cassie loves us both. I also know that, really deep down, you love me too. Cassie has been there for us, through everything. She does everything a mother should do: she loves us, she looks after us, she protects us, she disciplines us. Don't you want somebody that you can call 'Mum'?"

Naomi's expression betrayed her innermost feelings as Cassie found her voice.

"If that is what you both want, then I would be honoured to be your mother. I do love you both, very much, and I would hate for us to ever be separated."

Kaitlin's face lit up like Blackpool illuminations.

The following morning
Thursday, September 15th

Blairhoyle House

Alexandra was up early, as was usual.

She walked past the girls' bedroom and after peeking inside the open door and seeing the ominously empty beds, she walked over to Cassie's bedroom door and she knocked softly. Hearing no answer, she pushed open the door and then she smiled as she saw the bed very full, with three girls tucked under the duvet fast asleep.

After another minute, Cassie opened her eyes and she smiled up at her mother.

"I think, I've just become a Mum," she said simply as something wriggled beside her.

"Hi, Grandma," Kaitlin grinned.

Alexandra smiled happily.

"You couldn't have picked a lovelier pair of little girls," Alexandra admitted. "And they could not have picked a lovelier young lady as their Mother."

"I agree," Naomi said as she squirmed out from under the duvet. "About the Mother bit - not sure about how lovely we really are, though."

"She talking about us?" Kaitlin queried.

"You're both perfect," Cassie countered as she hugged the two little girls.

Later that afternoon

"Hi, Andy!"

"Kaitlin - you know he hates being called that," Cassie pointed out.

"Sorry, Andrew."

"No problem, Kaitlin."

"Can you two talk nicely while I go get changed?"

"I'll keep Andrew happy," Kaitlin grinned.

Once Cassie had vanished, Kaitlin turned to Andrew.

"We don't see you around much but I know you spend a lot of time with Cassie."

"Is there a question there?"

"How long have you two been fucking?"

Andrew laughed.

"That is not a question which a young lady should be asking," he cautioned. "It is also a question which I shall not be responding to."

"Okay. Tell us about yourself," Kaitlin ordered without missing a beat.

"I'm twenty-years-old and I live in Falkirk. I am a computer engineer and I work in Edinburgh. Happy?"

"Not really. Do you love Cassie or is she just a piece of juicy pussy for you to stick your dick into?"

"Where do you get that rubbish from?"

"One of my friends is twelve and he keeps dirty magazines under his mattress: Mayfair, Penthouse, Playboy - that kind of thing. I read the pages that aren't stuck together."

Andrew chuckled at the little girl who appeared to show absolutely no visible embarrassment when talking about sex.

"Kaitlin, I love Cassie very much. We've been together for almost a year and . . . can you keep a secret?"

"I can."

"You know I'm taking Cassie out, tonight?"

"I do."

"Well, I'm going to propose to her over dinner."

Kaitlin grinned happily.

"You know that Cassie's just become a Mum, don't you?"

"Yes, Kaitlin. I know - Cassie couldn't wait to tell me the news this morning. You and your cousin - or is that 'sister' now - you are both amazing little girls and while more than a little strange, I could do worse."

Kaitlin giggled happily.

"You two been good?" Cassie asked as she reappeared in a figure-hugging dress.

"I always am, Mum," Kaitlin replied sweetly.

"What have you done to my little Kaitlin?"

"Oh, she started normal for Kaitlin but then she started talking like an eight-year-old little girl."

Kaitlin was still smiling sweetly.

"Let's go - she's scaring me," Cassie suggested.

"You be good, now, Mummy!" Kaitlin smirked.

"Quick, before her head starts spinning!"

That same evening

Beacon Croft, Scotland

Amy Montgomery was more than happy to see her men returning in one piece.

It was a first for her. For twenty years, it had been her husband going off to sea for months on end with the odd conflict here and there. Then, within weeks of her son coming back from the dead, she was saying goodbye to both her husband and her son as they went off to fight against organised crime in their own country!

"Honey - we're both safe and neither one of us is injured," David Montgomery advised his wife as they kissed. "We're awaiting a replacement engine from Turbomeca and some parts from Westland, so there was no point in hanging around."

Craig Montgomery was hugged by his mother before the boy ran off upstairs.

Earlier that evening

Marchmont Crescent, Edinburgh

The unmarked Vauxhall hatchback pulled up to the side of the Safehouse and four people climbed out - one with obvious reluctance.

Amber Dawson was escorted into the ground floor property and then upstairs to the smaller of the first-floor bedrooms. There, she was handed a packet of sandwiches, some crisps, and a bottle of water. The door was then closed and locked. The two men and a woman then settled down for the night, one of the men remaining on the first-floor mezzanine while the other two MI5 agents headed downstairs to find some coffee.

All four had enjoyed a lengthy drive home from the West Country that day and were very tired. Amber ate her meagre rations before she undressed and slipped under the plain white duvet - she was soon fast asleep.

The following morning
Friday, September 16th

Moss-Side Hall, Stirling

"What do you mean, you're stuck in Glasgow!"

"I'm sorry - traffic is hell and we've stopped for lunch."

"You know I've got an appointment, and I have her with me."

"Excuse me - 'her' has a name; 'her' is called, Jessica!"

"Sorry, Jess," Jasper chuckled before turning back to the phone.

"So, take her with you," Lynn Collins suggested.

"I'll see you later, honey."

Vengeance Command Centre

"Girls!"

"What about me?"

"Sorry, Craig - still getting used to having a boy around the place," Natasha apologised.

"All of you - go train. Jasper is coming over and I want to at least try and make this place appear professional!"

"We can do that. . ." Kaitlin grinned.

"Honey - do anything out of turn and your little bottom will not be sitting down for a week," Natasha advised.

"I'm a perfect little angel!" Kaitlin preened as she ran off laughing.

"Us too!" Harper added as she and Naomi ran after Kaitlin.

"I do not deserve this," Craig muttered as he followed the girls.

Forty minutes later

"What is this place, Jasper?"

"Just a place I'm meeting somebody, Jess. Now - you stay in the car, understood?"

"Yes, Jasper."

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"Morning, Natasha!"

"Good morning to you, Jasper - come on in, we have coffee and cake in the Orangery."

"Sounds good! Let's get down to business . . . Vengeance appears to have had some fun down south."

Cameron and Cassie grinned as Natasha and Jasper sat down.

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A further forty minutes later, the young Jessica Kensington was getting very bored.

Finally, the eleven-year-old had had enough and she decided to go in search of Jasper. She pushed open the back door of the Jaguar and climbed out. The house was large and old. The left section was covered in ivy. Over to the right was a large glass-enclosed greenhouse. Jessica headed around to the left, following a gravel pathway which led away from the house. The young girl's curiosity got the better of her and she continued along the pathway until she reached what appeared to be an enclosed courtyard with stone buildings on three sides.

"Who are you?" a voice called out.

Jessica turned to see a young girl, at least a year or so younger than herself. The girl was shorter, and she had light brown hair which was tied up in a ponytail. The girl wore a navy-blue T-shirt along with a pair of navy-blue shorts. On the left breast of the T-shirt were a pair of sabres which formed a 'V'. Jessica's mouth dropped open in recognition.

"I know you - I've seen you at school. . ."

The girl dived at Jessica who found herself roughly twisted around and then slammed against the side of one of the buildings.

"Let go of me," she called out, but the younger girl had her easily pinned.

Jessica then found herself frogmarched out of the courtyard before she found herself up close and personal with the lawn.

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"What the bloody hell is going on?" Cassie demanded as she heard a shout and then a scream.

Seconds later, Eric's voice echoed throughout the facility, "Security breach! Sector four!"

Cassie bolted out of her chair, closely followed by Natasha, Cameron, and Jasper. En route, Cassie grabbed a G36K while Cameron and Natasha produced pistols. As they burst outside and ran towards the noise they stopped dead as they saw a girl pinned to the ground, her face almost buried in the grass. The girl was sobbing as Naomi knelt with her knee in the girl's lower back. Kaitlin stood over her, a pistol pointed at her head. Keira and Harper appeared next along with Craig.

"Jess!" Jasper exclaimed.

"Don't move!" Kaitlin ordered as Jessica made to move her head.

"She's with you?" Cameron demanded of Jasper.

"Yes - she's my step-daughter."

"Fuck!" Natasha growled.

With a click of his fingers, Cameron waved everybody inside and he then picked the sobbing girl up off the ground, keeping her head down so that she could not see any more faces.

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"So - what do we do with her?" Natasha asked a few minutes later once the girl had been secured.

"I could slit her throat," Naomi suggested.

"You, bloodthirsty, little bitch - that's *my* daughter. . ."

Jasper halted his advance on Naomi as Kaitlin aimed her pistol unerringly at his head.

"Don't you dare touch my cousin, motherfucker, or I put a new hole in your head!"

"Kaitlin - stand down!"

Jasper was very concerned. The eyes of both girls were just like those he had seen on MI6 agents who killed for a living - dark and foreboding; full of death.

"Hey!" Cassie exclaimed. "Nobody is killing anybody. Jasper, you fucked up - you brought an outsider into our facility. That girl saw Prowl's face."

"She recognised me - we go to the same school," Naomi admitted.

"We swear her to secrecy," Keira suggested.

"She'll put two and two together; then lock onto a certain troublemaker: Glide," Naomi commented.

"I am *not* a troublemaker!" Kaitlin retorted.

"Can she be trusted, Jasper?" Cameron asked the MI5 agent.

"She's eleven-years-old but very responsible. I can swear her to secrecy and keep it just between us. The poor girl is scared to death."

"You're not kidding," Kaitlin commented as she looked through the one-way window at the young girl who sat on a steel chair which was bolted to the floor.

Beneath the sobbing, frightened girl, a pool of liquid gathered.

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Jessica Kensington looked up as the door to the interrogation room opened and two people entered.

"Jasper!"

"Hey, Jess - I am so sorry."

Jessica looked up at her step-father as he approached.

"They're vigilantes, aren't they."

It was more statement than question.

"I did tell you to stay in the car," Jasper pointed out. "Go with Naomi, here, and she'll get you cleaned up and changed."

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"You're a vigilante, aren't you?" Jessica asked Naomi as she showered.

"Yes, Jessica - I am Prowl."

"You're nine, yes?"

"Correct."

There was no more conversation for a few minutes as Jessica finished her shower and dried herself off. She quickly pulled on a loaned T-shirt, and shorts. Jessica looked down at the 'V' insignia on her left breast and she smiled.

"You can never tell a soul about what you have seen today, or people may die. Secrecy is crucial to our operation. Your Dad'll be able to tell you more, I suppose."

"He's my step-dad. Several months back, my parents were murdered - me and my sister were shot. Jasper lost his daughter in the same attack. We moved to Scotland just a couple months ago."

"I'm sorry. I lost my parent's too."

"I promise you: I won't say anything. I think *Vengeance* is awesome - maybe. . ."

"You're not like us - you don't want this life, Jessica."

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Jessica had a very sheepish expression on her face as she rejoined the others in the Orangery. Jasper looked down at the young girl who appeared very fragile as she felt the stares from the other adults who were present.

"I still have some work to do, Jess. So, while your clothes are drying, I want you stay here with Naomi, and she will introduce you to the other junior members of *Vengeance*."

"Yes, Jasper."

"Oh, Jess?"

"Yes, Jasper."

"Don't wander off, understand?"

"Yes, Jasper."

Once Jasper and the other adults had left the room, Jessica looked around as two other girls and a boy walked in and sat down. They each watched her intently.

"I'm Naomi, as you know. The trigger-happy short-ass, here; she is my cousin, Kaitlin."

"My name is Harper."

"I'm Craig."

"Hi, I'm Jessica, but you can call me, Jess - I prefer that."

"Fancy a drink, Jess?" Naomi asked with a smile.

That evening

Moss-side Hall

Jessica kept her mouth shut during dinner, and it was not until after dinner that Lynne cornered her husband.

"What's wrong with Jessica?" she asked of her husband.

Jasper took a deep breath before continuing.

"Jess got a bit nosy, today, at the HQ. One of the girls caught her snooping and she was attacked. . ."

"What!?!"

"She's fine - but her clothes needed to go through the wash - she recognised one of the girls and now she knows all of the kids. Two of the girls, and a boy, go to the same school as Jess, Olivia, and Chris. It would have come out. Jess knows not to say anything and I trust her."

"Oh, God, Jasper!"