

One week later

Tuesday, October 18th, 2016

CALEDONIA

"Craig!"

"CRAIG!"

"What!"

"Oy, fuck face!"

"Kaitlin!"

"For the love of God!" Craig growled as he opened his eyes.

"Happy Birthday!"

Craig was then jumped upon by a group of scantily clad girls, one of whom gave him a kiss on the lips. Olivia blushed a deep red as she sat back on her heels and she bit her bottom lip as Craig grinned. Mary yelled Happy Birthday and blew Craig a kiss. He shoved Kaitlin, Naomi, Yvette, Jessica, and Electra out of the way as he made for Olivia. Craig kissed Olivia for several seconds before he then pulled Mary, who stood behind Olivia, down for a kiss on the lips.

"I've never kissed a Princess before," Craig grinned. "Throw me in the Tower of London if you wish, but it was worth it!"

Mary just stood there blushing as she grinned sheepishly and giggled. Olivia was giggling also as she pushed the younger females out of the cabin. Jeremy and Christopher had both been trampled by the girls but were otherwise grinning.

"Happy Birthday, mate!" Jeremy offered.

"Thanks."

Craig was very pleased to be thirteen.

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Breakfast was animated as everybody tried to outtalk everybody else - nothing new there.

Cassie had given up attempting to referee the free for all and she watched as even the normally well-mannered Princess was rudely stretching across other people for the last piece of bacon, slapping away Jessica's hand before she could grab the lonely rasher. Ginny just shook her head, knowing that Mary would have a hard road ahead of her when it came to re-learning correct manners on her return to the Palace. Craig was enjoying himself - he had his father with him for his special day and he had spoken with his mother - it was a day which his parents never thought they would see.

Typically, it was Kaitlin who pushed things a little too far when she managed to smash a jar of marmalade on the deck and spill hot tea across the table. Cassie and Natasha dived in, sending the youngster off to the galley for the relevant cleaning equipment. The other kids rapidly finished off their breakfast as they noticed that both Cassie and Natasha were getting angry. Mary and Olivia vanished below to get dressed while Jessica dragged Naomi out of harm's way and the headed out on deck for some fresh air.

Craig and the other boys headed below to get themselves dressed.

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Sarah was on the bridge with her sister.

Keira had pretty much kept herself to herself over the previous week. Sarah knew that her sister was beyond heartbroken; she was alone - her entire family was gone. Keira focussed on other things, such as being on watch, as a distraction from her loss. Keira had trouble sleeping and she cried a lot while was supposed to be sleeping. She and Sarah had talked through many night-time watches and at one stage, Keira had mooted regaining her commission as a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy and going back to flying helicopters at sea. Sarah agreed to a point - after all, Keira had left the Royal Navy to be with Harper. However, what really prevented Keira from mourning properly, was no body to mourn over.

She so dearly wanted her Harper back - even dead.

A lot had happened in the preceding week.

Ignoring the two bastards who had died in bloody messes; there had been quite a bit of surprise at how angry Lynn could get and the consequences of making her angry. Mary and Olivia had peeked into Room 101 to find a naked woman suspended from a hook on the wall and having the living daylights punched out of her. Neither had ever seen anything like it before and both had had nightmares that night. Even Natasha had been concerned at Lynn's anger, not to mention her dark side which had resulted in the woman losing parts of her anatomy as the torture had gone on and on. Despite that, some valuable intelligence had been obtained, and most of the preceding few days had been spent compiling that intelligence and sorting through it in order to identify fact from bullshit. With the help of the people from MI5 and Commander Haig's people, it had proved fairly easy to sift the intelligence for the true facts. Mary had been in touch with her father, who was also assisting as far as he could, without opening himself up to attack.

It was with a bit of a shock that the truth behind the dastardly plan had come to light. The truth was despicable and beyond belief. However, it appeared to be cold hard fact, and the events of the previous weeks had backed up those facts. It was left up to Commander Haig to alert the relevant authorities and hopefully to allow those same authorities time to act to prevent an act most heinous. As far as they could tell, *Vengeance* had been deemed to be a major concern by those behind the scheme, and a wildcard which had to be removed from the board before events could go ahead. Therefore, *Vengeance* was declared *persona non-grata* as both a requirement and as a distraction. So, while the security services of the United Kingdom were kept busy chasing around after *Vengeance*, they could easily miss what was actually going on directly under their very own noses.

A group of influential businessmen were behind the scheme and they had bribed, blackmailed, and blatantly extorted their way into a position of power over Government ministers. They had, apparently, made no attempt to subvert the Prime Minister herself, however, three ministers had retired literally overnight, 'to spend more time with their families'. On further investigation Commander Haig had discovered that these men had refused to be bribed, however, they had been allowed to 'retire' with the threat of losing their family to keep their mouths shut. As such, three families had been relocated in the dead of night while the ministers themselves had been briefed to assist with maintaining the Government when required. Commander Haig possessed a list of those who had been subverted, however, it was difficult to identify who had

been subverted willingly and who had been coerced by threats of death to them or their families.

However, things ended, there was to be a major witch hunt ahead to rebuild an effective government. All those coerced would have to go and they would have to face the music, so to speak. But that was for the future - hopefully, the near future - and only time would tell how events might play out.

That afternoon, Commander Haig came aboard CALEDONIA to provide an update.

The North Sea, south of Shoeburyness

The ORC of 539 Assault Squadron Royal Marines, 3 Commando Brigade, roared across the waves of the North Sea at thirty-five knots approaching the Blackwater Estuary.

The nine-metre offshore raiding craft carried ten people aboard. The twin Steyr M256 250-horsepower diesel engines powered the twin Rolls Royce FF270 waterjets which propelled the assault craft towards the rendezvous with CALEDONIA. In the bow, a Royal Marines Commando manned the twin 7.62-millimetre belt-fed machineguns mounted in the bow. At the stern, a white ensign billowed out in the speed-enforced breeze. At six miles, the radio squawked.

"Inbound watercraft at fifty-one degrees forty-five minutes north, zero degrees fifty-six minutes east. We are vessel not under command and you are advised to come no closer than two miles CPA. Over."

"Victor Charlie, Victor Charlie, Victor Charlie, this is Cavalier Two-Four, Cavalier Two-Four. Authenticating Seven Six Whiskey. Over."

"Cavalier Two Four, Victor Charlie. Authenticating Alfa Foxtrot Niner. Welcome. Out."

The ORC rapidly dropped down off the plane with half a mile to go and it slowly but expertly came alongside CALEDONIA's highly-polished blue hull.

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The Royal Marines Commando at the helm of the ORC smiled up at the machinegun-toting teenager who stood a few feet above him.

The boy nodded back, one professional to another. The gunner in the bow of the ORC was scanning his arc of vision, looking south across the Blackwater Estuary while members of Vengeance kept an eagle eye on the other arcs. The two passengers were helped aboard by their escort and the ORC accelerated off seawards until called upon for the return trip.

"Hi, Grandpa!"

"Electra!"

Commander Haig gave his granddaughter a brief hug before he and his rather green-looking long-suffering sergeant were escorted inside.

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"How are we doing, Commander?" Cameron asked.

"I can't get anywhere near the PM to warn her and walls are going up everywhere now that the bastards know we are on to them. We have identified a handful of loyal ministers but without the PM, we are all being lumped in with you dear people. The Defence Minister is on our side and so are a number of Whitehall brass hats which is a blessing."

"Basically, nobody is going to lift a finger to prevent a powerplay against the government," Natasha stated. "They're just going to let it happen?"

"So, our only option is a military coup?" Sarah ventured. "That would make us no better than the Axis."

"I hate what you've called these people," Commander Haig growled. "Axis of Evil, indeed!"

"We had to call them something and it is that bad, Commander," Cassie challenged. "The war is starting here in the UK. There are parts of the Axis in the USA, too; Mindy'll be fighting them very soon, so the more damage we can do to them now, the better - even should we lose."

"I know. If they succeed in subverting the government then the United Kingdom will be plunged into a nightmare which has not been seen since the 1640s and the Great Rebellion. It is inconceivable that we can potentially have a civil war, right here in England."

"What can we do?" Keira asked, focussing her mind on the positive.

"We know their plan; we just don't know when," Cameron said.

"Could they have changed things," Jasper commented. "Considering we took two of their people."

"No - they're too far along," Sergeant Woodward commented. "It would be too difficult at such a late stage."

"How about we go see her?" David suggested.

"The PM?" Cameron replied.

"Yes. We find a way to tell her what's going on."

"Easier said than done, mate," Trevor commented dryly.

"Fucking hell!" Ginny commented. "We're talking about those bastards killing the Prime Minister and uprooting Mary's grandmother, for Heaven's sake!"

"Sums things up rather nicely, don't you think?" Trevor commented.

The following afternoon

Wednesday, October 19th

They would either succeed, or they would fail and be branded as traitors to the Crown for the remainder of their worthless lives.

Serious thought had gone into who would actually go on the mission and who would be kept at arm's length in an attempt at saving their pitiful lives. Though the United Kingdom no longer made use of the death penalty, such a blatant attack might just prove to be enough to bring back the noose for those caught. However, any mention of splitting up the team for protection had not gone down well - even the French were onboard. Vengeance were about to go about something which had never happened in British history and which had failed miserably when Michael Caine had tried to kidnap Winston Churchill during the move: 'The Eagle Has Landed'. Nevertheless, the kidnapping of the British Prime Minister was deemed essential to prolonging both her life and her tenure as the leader of the United Kingdom. Whether that reasoning might mitigate their sentence as they stood in the Old Bailey charged with Treason against the Government of the United Kingdom was something which nobody wished to find out.

Ultimately, they may just vanish, with a D-Notice issued covering up anything which they had done and forbidding publication of said events.

Early the following morning

Thursday, October 20th

The teams separated at the west London town of Uxbridge, sixteen miles to the west of London.

It was critical that they got through to complete their mission, so three snatch teams were formed with three support teams. Duplication was the name of the game - actually, they had gone for triplication, just to be on the safe side. They would get but one chance at their task - it was do or die and as far as *that* went, they all knew the risks and they would all die for their country should the need arise. A large part of the mission relied on Commander Haig and Mary's father to pull off a minor miracle when it came to equipment - without that equipment, the mission was doomed at the outset.

The teams had come ashore at Southend-on-Sea and Clacton-on-Sea with a third group reaching dry land at Gravesend. They had come ashore well before dawn from ORCs, courtesy of 539 Assault Squadron Royal Marines. Vehicles had been arranged and had waiting for them at each port. The six teams had then approached Uxbridge from three different directions expecting to be stopped at any moment by the police, MI5 . . . or worse. The teams would then layup and prepare for the night's action. Only once a reconnaissance had been performed and the target was found to be in residence would the attack commence. The three snatch teams; Victor Alpha, Victor Bravo, and Victor Tango, plus the support team; Victor Sierra, were to wait at Layup Point 1, two miles to the west of Gerrards Cross, a south Buckinghamshire town, in a quarry. Once there, they hoped to receive the equipment which they required to complete the mission.

The remaining pair of support teams; Victor Foxtrot and Victor Golf, moved much closer to the target and they stopped at Layup Point 2, an industrial estate outside of the Buckinghamshire town of Princes Risborough. There, they would be less than three miles from their intended target for that night. Yet again, Colonel Sarah 'Mac' MacKenzie and Lieutenant Mathilda 'Mattie' Grace Rabb had offered their assistance and they would be the reconnaissance patsies. They would canvas the area and identify any potential problems. Should they be stopped, they would simply be a pair of 'dumb Americans lost in the wilds of England'.

At least that was the plan.

Layup Point 1

At eight, that night, after darkness had settled over the country, a deep rumbling sound was heard entering the quarry where the three teams were waiting.

Everybody jumped up and they grabbed their weapons, ready to make a stand. They were dismayed to see an array of Army vehicles cresting the quarry and making directly for them. It had to be a trap, but something kept fingers off triggers until the seven giant vehicles had stopped and a single man jumped down from the cab of the first truck. The Army officer - a major - made for them and he stopped a dozen feet away before he saluted.

"Cavalier Six - alpha, three, Zulu."

Crimson waved down the raised automatic weapons and she approached the officer.

"We thought that you might be needing these," the officer said with a flourish.

It was a simple statement from the Army officer as the covers were hauled off the vehicles being hauled by the giant Royal Logistic Corps low-loaders. The first trailer mounted behind the monster Oshkosh 1070F 8x8 tractor truck was carrying *SABRE* and *SCIMITAR*. The two armoured Range Rover Sentinels were in perfect condition and clean to the point of being parade-perfect. The second eighteen-metre trailer bore two strange humps at each end, but the shapes soon became familiar once the canvas covers were removed. *TWILIGHT* and *SCOURGE* were present and correct, their rotors folded.

"We have fuel and weapons," the officer explained as he pointed towards a pair of giant close support tankers and three DROPS trucks.

One of the tankers was a tactical air refueller while the other was marked up as carrying diesel. The Chief moved in to supervise the men from 6 Regiment, Army Air Corps, as they began to remove the tie-down straps for *Scourge*. In a little over an hour, both helicopters were sitting in the mud of the quarry and they were both fully fuelled and armed for combat. The two armoured 4x4s were similarly fuelled and the onboard weapons had been inspected and prepared for action.

He had watched the 4x4s drive off and then two hours later, as the two helicopters spun up their turbines and rotor-blades for take-off, the Army officer watched with building hope.

"Good hunting, *Vengeance*!"

SABRE and SCIMITAR

The two road vehicles had departed first as they had a twenty-mile drive to meet up with the other teams for which an hour was allowed to allow for stealth and problems.

Driving a pair of heavily armoured 4x4s through the most densely populated part of the country was not the easiest task. The usual registration plates had been replaced by borrowed sets which would be able to pass even the closest of police inspections. Still, the vehicles were heavy and obviously armoured, not to mention that they both sported certain features which did not appear on the usual Range Rover options list - armoured or otherwise. *SABRE* was crewed by Crimson, Sleuth, and La Coccinelle. *SCIMITAR* was crewed by Drift, Nemesis, and Stripe. They were the primary snatch teams and they were tasked with infiltrating what was arguably one of the most secure facilities in the home counties of southwest England. Buckinghamshire was about to hit the news - possibly.

But first, *Vengeance* was about to hit Buckinghamshire with a vengeance.

Monks Risborough

The American contingent was settling down to dinner at a pub, just outside of Monks Risborough.

It was to be their cover, should everything go bad and it also kept them close should their assistance be required. They had spent most of the day driving

around the area. They had found a heavy police presence which had simply confirmed the target's presence in the area, but then, they had hit the jackpot as the armoured Jaguar XJL had swept into the estate and up the drive towards the main house.

That fact had been called in via discrete code words.

Layup Point 2

Debbie Grey and Jack Foster had spent many hours getting to know their comrade in arms.

Prowl was pleased to be on the operation, even if it was only in a support role. The girl hated to be left out, but she understood the reasons why she could not be at the forefront of events. She liked the two MI5 officers - they were funny, and Jack knew some very crude jokes. Their Land Rover Discovery blended in where 4x4s were common. Awaiting their fate, in another Land Rover Discovery, Glide sat with La Chat Noir and Akuma. Akuma was monitoring every electronic signal in the area for anything which might show that they had been blown by the security services. A custom setup of three computers took up most of the boot and they sifted through the airwaves, decoding where possible and searching for certain words.

They awaited the arrival of the primary snatch teams.

Earlier that day

South Wales

The mood was angry, to put it mildly.

As Sebastian Radford paced his drawing room, he was simmering at a temperature only a few degrees below boiling. The Grand Plan was coming apart and it was all due to those *Vengeance* bastards. He would make them pay, whether or not the Grand Plan succeeded or failed. The previous week, he had been unhappy about putting Harper beyond further harm - but that had been deemed necessary. The Grand Plan allowed for nothing and extreme steps had to be taken to keep to the plan. Radford looked over at Susan Cummings who was sitting on a sofa, seething. The woman was annoyed at losing out on her quality time with the little vigilante bitch, but she had also been lucky to escape with her life. Many had died, defending their bosses, including that psychotic bitch, Morris. Two people were missing and unaccounted for - that was a worry.

"What about your PA and your security man?" William Fraser asked. "Won't they talk?"

"Hopefully not . . . only, *Vengeance* has proved to be one step ahead of us at each turn. It is very possible that they have tortured answers out of Angela and Reed, but it will take time for *Vengeance* to piece things together and figure out what we are up to and when," Radford replied.

"We move up the schedule?" Fraser suggested.

"My sources have told me that *Vengeance* supporters have been attempting to gain access to the Prime Minister. I have been able to forestall that for the moment - but very soon, the Prime Minister will get suspicious; assuming is not already," Radford replied. "Yes - I think we need to proceed with the culling. The pieces are in place and they have been for a few days."

"Who?"

"The whole damn lot of them!"

Kensington Palace
London, England

Mary was pleased to be home - sort of.

Yes, she was back in her own bedroom. Yes, she was back in more familiar surroundings. Yes, she was safe. Only, her friends were not. By the morning, they would either be dead or on the run at best. At worst, they would be criminals charged with a capital crime: Treason. Ginny had explained in graphic detail what awaited *Vengeance*, should they be captured . . . the vivid detail had been more than enough for Mary to expect nightmares that night. She had been sent to somewhere that was deemed safer, but also far enough away from *Vengeance* to protect her from fallout should things go badly wrong. Electra had been dispatched for protection - despite Mary insisting that she did not need it, although she was happy to have Electra to stay.

She had spent a couple of hours with her father and Electra, discussing events over dinner that night. He had given Ginny a few withering looks as he had noticed his daughter's lapse in basic table manners and polite conversational skills. However, he was very pleased that his daughter had made some real friends, especially as he approved of them which had been a surprise. In particular, the young girl, Electra Haig, had prevented his daughter from dying out on the streets of London. For that single act, Electra Haig had a free pass - she could steal the Crown Jewels from the Tower of London and the girl would avoid prison. He would forgive his wayward daughter her bad manners and uncouth language as a direct result of what she had achieved. He was very proud of Mary for what she had endured and how she had matured. She was a very different girl to that who had sailed away on the yacht with no name which she had since named CALEDONIA.

Mary's mother, God rest her soul, would have been very proud of her well-rounded daughter and how she had grown into an amazingly mature young woman.

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At bedtime, the Prince knocked on his daughter's door.

"I'm decent, Dad."

The Prince chuckled as he turned the handle and he pushed open the door. He found Ginny running a brush through his daughter's long brown hair.

"She has not been paying proper attention to her hair while she was away, Your Highness," Ginny commented as Mary grimaced, while yet another knot was removed.

"Yeah - she was eyeing up the boys instead," Electra quipped.

"Was not!"

Mary was in her pyjamas - she preferred pyjamas over a nightie and had done since she was about eight - as was Electra. With Mary's height of a little over five-feet, she was closing on her father's six-feet and the Prince was sure that the girl had gained some muscle on her upper arms and thighs. During a confidential briefing with Ginny, he had learnt all that Mary had got up to aboard. He had heard about how well she got on with all the other kids. He had learnt how Mary had maintained a neutral position during the Olivia incident.

He had also learnt about the attack on CALEDONIA which was thwarted by the submarine - that had been his doing and he was more than thankful to a certain Flag Officer Submarines for his assistance in re-tasking one of his nuclear-powered hunter-killer submarines.

"Good night, sweetheart," the Prince said as he gave his daughter a kiss. "I am so very proud of you and I am over the moon that you are back safe and sound."

"I've missed you too, Daddy," Mary said as she hugged her father before giving him a kiss.

Mary climbed into her bed and the thirteen-year-old snuggled down under the duvet.

"Goodnight, Electra."

"Goodnight, Your Highness," Electra offered as she clambered into bed beside Mary.

"Love you, Mary."

"Love you, Dad."

"Night, Electra."

"Night, Princess," Electra giggled.

"Give it a rest with the 'princess', please!"

Layup Point 2

Princes Risborough

23:30

It was 30 minutes short of midnight when the armoured Range Rovers pulled up beside the Land Rovers.

After some brief welcomes, they set down to the business of finalising their plans for the night. There was time for a quick bite, a hot drink, and a pee, but then it was time to head out. The teams faced one another for what they hoped what not be the last time as free citizens.

"For Harper!" they all declared.

Kensington Palace

23:30

Mary had no idea why she had come awake.

She checked the red LED numerals of her bedside clock to find that she had only been asleep for less than two hours. She groaned and lay back on her pillow, then she closed her eyes - but only for a moment as she heard her bedroom door opening.

"Mary!"

"Ginny?"

"Quiet - the Palace is under attack . . . here."

Mary found Ginny pushing a pistol with holster into her hand. By the feel of it, she recognised the Glock 19 pistol.

"It's loaded and one's up the spout," Ginny hissed.

"Where's Electra?" Mary asked as she found the bed beside her empty.

"Not here, obviously," Ginny replied. "Quickly, get some clothes on."

Mary was naked within a second as she shrugged off her pyjamas in the darkness. Ginny threw various items of clothing at her ward who quickly pulled on knickers, a sports bra, jeans with a belt, socks, lightweight walking boots, and a sweatshirt. The pistol holster clipped onto the belt and Ginny handed Mary three spare fifteen-round magazines.

"Where's my Dad?" Mary asked as she checked the pistol was ready to her satisfaction.

"Let's go find him . . . and Mary?"

"Yes."

"Shoot to kill."

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Mary was shocked to find that the lights were out in the ante-room outside her bedroom - just the emergency lights were illuminated as if there had been a power cut.

There should have been a policeman at the door to the corridor which led out of the Private Quarters, but nobody was there. They moved quickly towards her father's bedroom where they found Sergeant Pete Hind, the Prince's Personal Protection Officer who was standing at the partially open door of the Prince's bedroom. Behind him, the Prince waited, and a relieved look crossed his face as he recognised his daughter. He did, however, raise an eyebrow when he saw the pistol in her hands - Sergeant Hind did the same.

"Later," Ginny suggested. "Let's make for the car garage. Mary?"

"Ginny."

"You got your special phone?"

"Of course!"

Ginny grinned at the impertinent response.

"Call and tell them that we need help."

Mary dialled Natasha and hoped.

"*Mary - we're in the middle of things,*" came the tart response.

"Crimson, Belle. We're under attack at Kensington Palace."

"*Oh, fuck!*" Crimson responded. "*Hold!*"

She was back a minute later.

"*Twilight is altering course . . . ETA twelve minutes, out.*"

"Twelve minutes," Mary advised Ginny as she dropped the call.

"Okay - let's get the hell out of here."

Mary quickly tried to call Electra, but there was no response.

Hind went first, pulling open the door which separated the main Palace from the Private Quarters.

On the ground, a policeman lay dead, his pistol unfired. Before anybody could say anything, they almost suffered the same fate as they were surprised by suppressed automatic gunfire which stitched across the doorway, narrowly missing Hind who shoved his principal to the floor and he dived over Ginny, Mary, and the Prince. Ginny covered their backs as Mary made for the adjacent wall with her father and she pushed a section of panelling which revealed a small doorway.

"Your escape for Belle?" the Prince chuckled.

"Found it when I was eleven - Ginny almost caught me using it when I was twelve, but she missed me by a whisker," Mary whispered as she pushed open the door. "Comes out about thirty feet down the passageway behind the tapestry of those weird monks."

Ginny pulled the door closed as the last person through, catching sight of a gunman wearing NVG and holding an automatic weapon. Ginny relayed the information to the others as they moved quickly down the very narrow passageway which was perfect for the lithe body of Mary, but a little cramped for the men and Ginny. Mary raised her right fist as she approached the end of the passageway and everybody stopped. Hind smiled down at Ginny approvingly - Ginny just shrugged but inside, she was proud of her ward who was obviously remembering her Vengeance training. The youngster teased open a section of wooden panelling and they found themselves behind a large floor-to-ceiling tapestry which was about twelve feet in width. Mary stuck her head out, only to be yanked back by Ginny.

"Patience, young one," Ginny hissed as she pushed the annoyed Mary behind her.

Ginny checked, and she found the passageway clear, so she moved out from under the tapestry and quickly waved everybody else to follow. They rushed down the corridor away from the Private Quarters and at least one gunman. Only to find that they had rushed directly into some more gunmen. Ginny pushed Mary to the floor while Hind did the same with the Prince. Ginny got the first shot in, dropping a gunman with a bullet to the chest - the bastard got back up again.

"Headshots!" Ginny advised as she ducked the suppressed automatic gunfire which reached out towards them.

Ginny and Hind returned fire, cautious about using up their limited ammunition. A gunman fell to a headshot, then another. Ginny pushed the Prince forwards along with Mary while Hind covered their withdrawal down another passageway which led to the north end of the Palace. Ginny was more than a little annoyed that they were not receiving backup from the dozen or so armed police officers present in the Palace. Her radio calls had all gone unanswered indicating something very bad or maybe it was simply a communications issue such as jamming. The Prince ran through the door into the next passageway with Mary close behind him and Ginny checking the way ahead. Hind backed up, dropping the last gunman and following on. Then Ginny sensed danger but not before she was struck on the side of the head by the butt of a rifle and she fell to the wooden floor of the passageway. The Prince stumbled, and he fell onto Ginny as the PPO was attempting to bring her pistol around despite her head swimming in pain.

Two gunshots rang out in the tight confines of the passageway.