

Friday, October 21st, 2016

Isle of Grain

Thirty-one miles east of London

Kaitlin had been bitching for over an hour.

She was unhappy with her current lot in life. She had not been part of the action – not her fault; she had been injured. She was also not happy with having lost her best friend – that still grated. Finally, Adrien had stopped the vehicle and Kaitlin had been able to get out to stretch her legs. The youngster grinned as she found Naomi waiting for her with Debbie and Jack. The two girls looked out to sea and there, a few miles distant, they could make out the glossy blue hull as it moved slowly across the choppy waters. It was Naomi, whose keen eyes spotted the inbound problem. Her brain was computing speeds and distances and each time, she came up with the same answer as she watched an enormous container ship, many times larger than *CALEDONIA*, edging closer and closer to their temporary home and their friends. Naomi considered reaching for a radio to call *CALEDONIA* as she had not seen anything to show that the incoming container ship had been seen.

She had no time to reach for the radio, nor anything else before the world was torn apart.

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As the two girls watched, aghast, the container ship suddenly appeared to bulge in about four different places before the entire vessel, complete with its cargo of containers appeared to lift out of the ocean.

Naomi's ears had been able to detect four subtle, but enormous, underwater explosions which sent the sea exploding into the air as the huge vessel disintegrated before their very eyes. Containers flew into the air and others toppled over like a stack of building blocks. To the left of the developing disaster, *CALEDONIA* was tossed violently in the ensuing maelstrom of white water.

Kaitlin looked on in horror as she saw the yacht knocked almost onto its beam ends.

CALEDONIA

The explosions were totally unexpected and very violent.

Sarah was knocked off her feet and she felt the deck heaving as the yacht shook and vibrated before pitching over violently to port and then hanging for what seemed to be an age before *CALEDONIA* righted herself. Out of the bridge windows, Sarah could see torrents of spray falling to the boiling, churning sea. The sound of the explosions followed by the tearing of steel and crashing of containers momentarily deafened Sarah but as the sounds receded, alarm bells and buzzers replaced the sounds of destruction. Sarah dived for the console and she scanned the screens as alerts flashed. Sarah was very familiar with the effects of explosive shock on a warship, and the alerts flashing up depicting flooding in the engine room were expected. While she was checking that the automated pumping systems had cut in, Olivia burst onto the bridge.

"Are you okay, Sarah!" Olivia called out.

"Yes – how's it below?"

"A lot broken crockery and glasses, but we're okay," Olivia replied. "What happened?"

"Torpedoes - looks like that ship tried to ram us and our saviour blew it out of the water with three or four Spearfish torpedoes."

"That was close."

"Tell me about it!" Sarah replied.

"Victor Charlie, this is Prowl. Over."

Olivia picked up the microphone to respond.

"Prowl, this is Victor Charlie. Go ahead. Over."

"You been blowing up container ships again, Ajax?"

Olivia stepped out onto the bridge wing closest to the land and she raised her right hand into the air.

"You looking at us, Prowl? Over."

"Yes. Over?"

"Can you see my middle finger? Over."

Two days later

Sunday, October 23rd, 2016

Cowes, Isle of Wight

The delay was killing everybody.

They had been at anchor for thirty-six hours and they just wanted to move on. However, they were all together again. After a 170-nautical mile run at fourteen knots, they had dropped anchor off the small town. Their run had been in tandem with *HMS WESTMINSTER* who had remained within five nautical miles at all times. Her Merlin helicopter would clatter past more than once on the trip. Electra and Mary had come aboard after anchoring at Cowes, along with Ginny. The Prince had gone ashore with his PPO to assist the government. Moral had leapt, and everybody had taken the time to sleep, wash, joke, and laugh. Even Keira joined in - killing some of the enemy was helping keep her emotions at bay. Electra was mobbed as she told her story and then Mary had explained her own.

They had both awoken to find themselves aboard *WESTMINSTER*. For Electra, it was not her first time aboard a Royal Navy vessel, but the second time she had not come aboard under her own steam. For Mary, it was about her eighth visit to a Royal Navy ship. Mary praised the hell out of Electra while the younger girl saw nothing in what she had done. The free time had gone down well with the youngsters as well as with the adults. They all needed time to rest and that was what they were getting as they awaited something, anything, from the Prime Minister.

Some, however, found alternative ways to 'rest'.

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Olivia was feeling decidedly apprehensive as she lay in the cabin with Craig.

"You were very brave, Liv" Craig said.

"No, I wasn't."

"Yes, you were. You had the presence of mind to go for your pistol and you took a man down even while he was attacking you."

"I suppose."

"I mean it - you did really well. Considering that only a few weeks back you had never touched a gun and you had no idea about *Predators* and *Vengeance*. You were amazing."

Olivia blushed wildly.

"Stop it - you're making me blush."

"I know - even the tops of your boobs are red."

Olivia giggled.

"You're really beautiful. . ."

"Not with this massive bruise, I'm not."

"Yes, you are - your body is beautiful and the bruise means nothing to me. But I stand by my comment - you did really well for a pig-headed girl."

"You speak to all your girlfriends like that?"

"Yes - well, you're my first."

It was Craig's turn to blush. The two of them had retreated to his cabin soon after breakfast and then locked the door behind them. Both had taken to the same bunk and then, somehow, all their clothing had ended up on the floor - things just happen, as Kaitlin would say.

"You've looked after me, Craig. Even when I did stupid things, like bringing a mobile phone aboard. I know you were really mad with me, but I learnt something during my time as a prisoner. I learnt that you cannot be lax when you are part of a team where just one slip could get everybody killed. The past few weeks have been a real hell - not to mention that I have killed three men. However, each of those men deserved to die. It was them or me. It was them or my friends. All the suffering while you trained me . . . without out it, I'd be dead right now - maybe at your hands. When this is all over, I need to decide about staying with *Vengeance*. What do you think I should do, Craig?"

"You need to do what you think is right. Only you can make that decision."

"What about you - will you still want to be with me if I leave *Vengeance*?"

"Liv, I will always love you - no matter what. You are now aware of *Vengeance* and that cannot change. I see no reason why you can't still exercise with us - and I hope you do. But the choice is yours - Hit Girl gave us *Predators* the opportunity to dictate our own lives. We choose when we kill, how we kill, why we kill. You also have that choice, Olivia. Nobody will force you to be Ajax, okay?"

"Thank you," Olivia replied as she gave Craig a kiss on the cheek. "You really love me?"

"Why else would I be lying here, butt naked?"

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For young Kaitlin, the downtime allowed her to exercise her shoulder which had been wrenched just a week or so previously.

Typically, for Kaitlin, she had picked somebody much older than herself and somebody considerably taller. Natalie Parent was a *Predator*, just like Kaitlin and the others. The girl was fourteen-years-old and known as Siren. She was a Phase 3 *Predator* and her skills showed it. She did not give Kaitlin any quarter and they both sparred until Kaitlin waved Natalie off.

"You're really good, Kaitlin."

"I am, aren't I?"

"Ignore her ego, Natalie - it's as big as a house!" Naomi quipped.

"That makes Natalie and Kaitlin well suited, then," Jason chuckled.

Natalie scowled at Jason while Kaitlin did the same with Naomi.

"Okay, girls - go get a drink," Cassie directed. "Well done, both of you."

Next, came Timothy 'Tim' McNab, the obnoxious thirteen-year-old step-brother of Natalie, known as Snake Eyes. The boy stared down at nine-year-old Naomi and ten-year-old Yvette. They were being watched intently by Electra and Mary who sat on a sofa together. Electra was still more than a little sore, so she had her feet up and she was laid back on a pillow with Mary to keep her company. The bond between the two girls had grown to an unprecedented level. Electra had saved Mary's life twice - even using her own body the second time. To Mary, it was like have a younger sister and she worried about them having to go their separate ways when it was time to go back to school.

"Ooh!" Electra exclaimed as Tim was slammed to the mat by Yvette and Naomi punched the boy hard in the chest.

The boy sprang up and he gave Naomi a sharp kick which had the girl wincing, but she worked with Yvette to put the boy down twice more before the sparring was halted by Jason before anybody was hurt. Andrew laughed as watched the goings on. He was finally getting a good look at *Vengeance* and what his fiancé did at night. Cassie had been worried that Andrew might not want to marry her any longer once he found out the truth about her and her miscreant adoptive children. Instead, Andrew had found that he loved her more and he had proved that with 'a few hours of disgusting banging and screaming' as Kaitlin had put it. Indeed, Kaitlin loved spending time with Andrew and after she had grabbed a bottle of cold water, the eight-year-old had wormed herself in between Cassie and Andrew, eventually forcing Cassie off the Sofa. Naomi, too, liked to spend time with Andrew and she plonked herself down on the other side of Andrew once she too had grabbed some water.

"You two happy?" Andrew asked.

"Yeah," Kaitlin replied with a cheeky grin.

"We have you and Mum - that's enough," Naomi added as she leaned into Andrew.

Yvette was just as happy to be with her adoptive parents - even though it was not quite so formal. She loved Adrien and Marinette and they both cared for her enormously. Alya was still on the fence about the 'lodger' but she was warming to the fiery youngster.

"Anyone seen Craig and Olivia?" Lynn asked.

Jessica groaned.

"They're in the bow - I don't even want to *think* about what they might be getting up to."

"True," Lynn replied."

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For the thirteen-year-old Olivia Kensington, current events had been varied, but exciting.

Her feelings had been knocked many times over the past four and a half weeks since she had discovered that child assassins known as *Predators* existed and that she was about to go on the run with the shadowy organisation known as *Vengeance*. Then, she had managed to fall for a boy. He was eight months younger than her and she was taller, but he was also different to any of the boys she normally saw at school – he was special, and he preferred to talk, rather than tease. He was the first boy she had seen naked and she had just touched her first penis. She could not honestly believe that she was lying in bed with a boy while they were both naked. She lay on her side, next to Craig. For some reason, the boy was fascinated by her pubic hair and he was casually running his fingers through it which Olivia found that she enjoyed, despite her misgivings at having a boy touching her 'down there'. As for Craig, she decided that he was a man in her eyes. While she was sure that most boys had a bigger dick and more hair, it was okay, and the boy was only just thirteen. She also found that as she prodded and stroked Craig, his already hard dick began to twitch, and then Craig's breathing began to hitch before she jumped as something hot exploded over her tummy.

Olivia giggled as she realised what had just happened. Craig looked worried for a moment, but Olivia just leaned over, and she kissed him full on the lips, ignoring the squelchy feeling as her tummy rubbed against his. His lips made her own tingle in a way which she had never felt before. To the boy, Olivia's natural warmth caused his skin to tingle and he could not believe that he had such a beautiful girl lying on him – naked. Craig was no stranger to the female body – he had seen plenty as a *Predator*, but he had never actually touched one before. Olivia's skin was silky soft, and it was tantalising. Everything about Olivia was beautiful and he loved her long brown hair. As they paused to take a breath, Olivia rolled onto her back while staying close to Craig. His eyes ran down her body and then stopped.

Instead of his eyes, he tried a more tactile method as he ran his fingers over the top of Olivia's pubic hair. Then he found something at the top of her slit which felt interesting to the boy. Olivia twitched a few times as he poked at a certain point very near the top of her pubic hair. She seemed to be enjoying what he was doing, so he continued.

"What is this bit?" Craig asked finally.

"That is my clit."

"Oh!"

Craig knew what that bit was, and he took his hands away but then he saw Olivia's glare of annoyance and he returned to gently massaging said part.

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Lynn almost jumped as there was an enormous scream from forward and she grabbed her pistol before wisely putting it back in place.

"Oh, for the love of God!" she muttered, wondering if she should be buying condoms.

Jasper just chuckled as did David while Cassie decided to head forward to check on things. Cassie knocked on the cabin door.

"Olivia, it's Cassie; are you okay?"

There was a giggle then an exclamation.

"Fuck, yeah!"

Followed by more giggling.

"I think I found Liv's sweet spot," Craig called out causing the giggling to get louder.

"Oh, brother!" a mortified Jessica grimaced as she bolted out of the bow with Jeremy close behind.

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Later that morning, everybody settled down to lunch which was a crowded affair considering the numbers aboard, so it was more of a buffet.

Two teenagers tried to slink onto the deck and then slide into chairs without anybody noticing.

"The dirty cunts are here!" Kaitlin announced loudly.

"Kaitlin!" Cassie remonstrated.

"Tell me one word which was not accurate in my statement," Kaitlin demanded.

Cassie laughed.

"It was accurate, but you could have used some cleaner words," Cassie replied.

Kaitlin was not convinced but then she saw food and she veered off in that direction. David and Jasper looked down at Olivia who scowled.

"We're still virgins," she pointed out.

"Never said anything," Jasper commented.

"Lynn?" Olivia asked with an embarrassed grin.

"Yes, honey."

"How do you get semen out of your pubes?"

Mary, Yvette, and Electra all burst out laughing. Lynn looked a little pink in the cheeks as she faced Olivia.

"Why might I know?"

"Oh, please," Olivia retorted. "You and Jasper are at it whenever you get a chance."

There was giggling from most of the girls present as Lynn found that she had to head for the galley. Olivia looked at Natasha.

"Don't ask her - she shaves her pubes," Cameron commented.

There were hoots of laughter as Natasha's face went bright red. Sarah and Cassie laughed out loud along with Alya and Marinette. Even Ginny was grinning.

"Asshole!" Natasha responded.

"Better to clean it before it dries," Cassie offered knowingly as Andrew blushed. "Or you could always shave it like Nats. . ."

Olivia shook her head pointedly.

"Hey!" Kaitlin called out. "Normal people are trying to eat, here!"

"Normal!" Mary exclaimed. "Name one."

On her return to CALEDONIA, Electra had had to suffer the indignity of everybody checking out her newest scars in the shower.

For the ten-year-old, the scars were getting old - she ignored them, and the girl concentrated on the positives. She was alive and so was her best friend. To Electra, Mary was a wildcard and she needed protecting. The Princess had taken a life - her second apparently. The thanks that Electra had received from the Prince had been more than the girl could take and she had felt really embarrassed at all the praise. Indeed, when Electra had awoken that first day aboard WESTMINSTER, she was surprised to receive a visit from an officer who came to attention beside her bed.

"Ma'am," he said, and the lieutenant handed the youngster a sealed envelope before smartly turning and walking out of the sickbay.

Electra studied the envelope. It was buff-coloured and on the front was a neatly typed address:

*MISS ELECTRA HAIG
HMS WESTMINSTER*

UK OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE [PERSONAL] - EYES ONLY

Electra had never seen a security classification before, so with curiosity etched on her features, Electra unsealed the envelope and she withdrew a single piece of white A4 paper with a few neatly typed lines:

ELECTRA

*I WISH TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK YOU FOR THE LIFE OF MY GRANDDAUGHTER.
MARY HAS ONLY GOOD THINGS TO SAY ABOUT YOU AND I LOOK FORWARD TO OUR MEETING.*

GET WELL SOON.

ELIZABETH R.

Electra was stunned - more than stunned. Her hands shook as she considered from where the message had originated. That envelope, complete with the sheet of paper, was securely stowed as safely as possible. Electra had shown it to no one . . . not even to Mary.

It was immediately the most important item she owned.

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Sarah, Trevor, and David had spent some of the past two days repairing damage which had been incurred when the four torpedoes had exploded barely a mile away from the CALEDONIA. The vessel had been shaken severely and shockwaves had damaged some of the pipework and fittings in the engine room - not to mention smashing a good deal of crockery and glassware. The damage was not major - just time-consuming to repair. Otherwise, CALEDONIA was in perfect condition with a long life ahead of her on the world's oceans.

There was one person who was not joining in very much. Keira was suffering. Nobody mentioned the elephant in the room whenever Keira was around. It was painful for all, but especially for Keira. It had only been a week but Keira was doing her utmost to focus on the tasks ahead. She knew that her skills as a pilot would be needed in the coming days and that had to take precedence over Harper's death. However, Keira was looking forward to dishing out her own form of justice against those who had deprived her of her little sister. Keira was still in two minds as to where her future lay. As she walked around the upper

decks of *CALEDONIA*, she looked out across the water to where *HMS WESTMINSTER* lay at anchor, half a mile distant. Squatting on the flight deck at the stern, the fourteen-tonne Merlin HM.2 helicopter brought back fond memories of her past as a Royal Navy pilot. She enjoyed the camaraderie of shipboard life and she loved the sea. But she had new friends, friends that needed her.

"I know what you're thinking," Sarah said as she joined her friend in the bow and she too stared across at the sleek grey warship. "Should you go back to being Lieutenant Keira Sharp Royal Navy? A difficult question - I know you loved your time at sea and in the air. I also know that you only left because of Harper. Whatever you decide; we will all be with you."

Keira turned to her friend, tears spilling down her face.

"I miss her so much. . ."

Keira began to sob as she hugged her friend. Sarah had been waiting for it. Keira had not really come to terms with losing her sister and Sarah knew that she had to, if she was to get past it. Keira sobbed on Sarah's shoulder for several minutes before Naomi and Kaitlin appeared on the bow.

"Can we sit with you, Keira?" Naomi asked.

Keira smiled down at the two girls - they were both Harper's best friends and they had both made Harper very welcome, even considering their past - and she nodded. Sarah stepped back as the two youngsters sat either side of Keira and then the tears really began to flow as they hugged each other. The two girls also needed to grieve and they both let their sorrow out as they shared that sorrow with the sister of their best friend.

Sarah remained close by should she be needed and to ensure that nobody interfered with the grieving process underway.

The following morning

Monday, October 24th

Keira was actually smiling as she entered the galley.

"Morning, Keira," David said.

"Morning, Chief."

"You seem chipper, this morning," Lynn commented.

"I slept better - any tea?"

"Here," Lynn said, pushing a steaming mug of tea towards Keira.

"Perfect. Where're all the little dears?"

"Still in their pits," David replied. "Olivia and Craig must be very tired."

Keira laughed.

"We heard anything from HMG?" she asked.

"Nothing substantial. They've sent over some intel and we think we know where Radford is hiding," Jasper replied. "As you know, the man is an arms dealer of sorts. He acts as a middleman for British weapons' producers. He has a large facility in Wales. We think he's there - if he is, then we have our work cut out."

"At least we have tabs on him," Lynn commented.

"How come he hasn't bugged out of the country?" Keira asked.

"We don't know," Jasper replied. "My two pence says he sees himself as untouchable. There is no direct evidence against the man and what evidence we do have would be tied up in a court of law for decades. The man is a billionaire with more lawyers than Hit Girl has guns."

Jasper was then interrupted by the next person into the galley.

"Morning, world!"

"Hello, Kaitlin."

"Hi, Keira."

"Sleep well?"

"Yes, thank you."

"Me, too, I think," Naomi offered as she appeared. "Craig up yet?"

"Nah," Kaitlin replied. "He'll be shagging Olivia - they've probably moved on to doggy style by now."

Lynn looked at Keira, who smirked.

"Where the hell does an eight-year-old girl get these graphic sexual terms from, anyway?" Keira demanded.

"Craig has a stash of dirty magazines under the false bottom in his holdall," Kaitlin replied as she poured herself a large glass of milk. "They all seem to be faulty publications as some of the pages are stuck together."

Keira laughed out loud as David cringed.

"Boys will be boys," Lynn chuckled.

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"Kaitlin!"

Cassie's exclamation caught Kaitlin about to slap Craig for a second time.

"He said something nasty," the youngster complained, scowling up at Craig who had a mark suspiciously like an eight-year-old girl's handprint on his left cheek.

Craig was smirking and Olivia, who was beside him, was giggling her head off.

"Their faces match," Naomi pointed out with a grin.

"Why did you slap Craig, Kaitlin?" Cassie asked the frowning Kaitlin sternly.

"He told me why the pages in his magazine were stuck together . . . he's a disgusting twat!"

Olivia was losing control of her giggling and the girl was close to losing control of her bladder while Craig was trying to keep a straight face but failing. Naomi was laughing at her cousin and she shook her head - Kaitlin could be so innocent at times and Naomi loved her for it - mind you, even the nine-year-old found it vert disgusting.

"Get used to it, honey," Cassie suggested. "And, Kaitlin, please do not slap Craig again."

"No promises," Kaitlin grinned.