

Four days later
Saturday, November 26th, 2016

Blairhoyle, Scotland

"You are *fucking* kidding!"

"You are two quid out of pocket," Cassie commented.

Naomi scowled, ignoring the shit-eating grin on Kaitlin's face. They had been dug out of their beds at four o'clock that morning, handed a bacon-roll then a cup of tea. Their demands had covered no ground as they had been pushed outside into the freezing cold, very dark, morning.

"She's going to slot us," Naomi finally decided, unable to come up with any other reason for being hauled out of bed at 4 A.M. and being given a last meal.

"What the *fuck* is going on?" Craig growled as he appeared behind the house.

Behind the tired looking boy came two dishevelled, equally tired girls - Olivia and Jessica. Then came Christopher and Jeremy, neither of whom appeared very happy at the morning's rude awakening.

"Can somebody please tell me what in the bloody hell is going on?" Naomi persisted as Jordan joined the group.

The eight kids were each dressed identically in T-shirt and shorts with trainers on their feet. All were shivering. Then Cassie, Natasha, and Cameron stepped forward - each was grinning.

"We have a little fun you guys, this morning," Cassie explained.

"Seems more like child abuse, to me," Olivia pointed out as she wrapped her arms tightly around her chest. "My nipples are blue and very hard."

Craig grinned at the explicit comment before his grin faded at the next comment.

"Down in the paddock, we have laid out a course - about a mile long - with one or two obstacles along the way," Cassie added with a chuckle.

"Did I do something wrong?" Kaitlin asked. "And where's Sasha?"

"He's still sleeping, and we didn't want him to get cold," Cassie responded with an evil grin.

"The damn dog gets to sleep in a warm house while we freeze our tits off!" Naomi exclaimed.

"You ain't got no tits," Olivia pointed out.

"At least I still have my dignity and I *don't* have Craig's fingers up my snatch every damn day!" Naomi retorted snarkily.

"You want slapped, little assassin?" Olivia growled.

"Bring it on, you fucking. . ."

Both girls were unceremoniously grabbed by their T-shirts and shoved in the direction of the paddock.

"Move!" Natasha growled.

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It was still dark as the eight reluctant kids began to run the flag-marked course around the six-acre paddock and beyond.

Each of them was fit and easily managed a decent pace which covered the ground speedily, but also regained some warmth as they ran. Nobody spoke as they concentrated on running through the mud which very quickly engulfed their trainers and covered their bare legs. The *Predators* were used to the physical exercise - early morning runs were a staple of *Predator* training - but the other kids, not so much. However, Craig was impressed by how well Jordan was able to keep up with them, despite his disability. As they rounded and zig-zagged across the paddock, their shoes and clothing became waterlogged and muddy. Each child's mood became rockier as time passed and they began to feel despondent as the course went on and on.

Kaitlin groaned as she splashed - waded more like - through water which was freezing cold and which also lapped at her crotch, soaking her shorts. She screamed as the water soaked through to her skin, thinking some very nasty things about her adoptive mother, but she pushed forwards, rising out of the water and into the trees surrounding the paddock. More screams were heard as the other kids also ran through the water which then froze their skin. While the water had washed off the mud, the many bare legs suddenly felt very cold, but only for a moment as very quickly, the coating of cold, sticky mud returned. The run through the woods as dawn approached was spirited and full of more obstacles which included giant circular hay bales which they were all encouraged to vault over. Unfortunately, for Jessica and Jeremy, they failed miserably and rolled off their bale and into a puddle of mud, soaking both of them to the skin. Olivia and Craig took pity on the youngsters, yanking them up out of the mud and sending them on their way.

As they rounded the corner a dozen yards from the Wolf Training Centre, they were slow-clapped by a grinning Trevor and David. Jeremy and Craig just grimaced as they ran past in hot pursuit of Naomi and Kaitlin who appeared to be well out in front. Letting two little girls win was not the cards, the boys had decided. It did not take long as the two young girls were quickly overhauled and with some muttered vulgarities, Naomi and Kaitlin fell back into third and fourth places. However, they were quickly overhauled by somebody with much longer legs and they both swore violently as Olivia Kensington strode past, her long legs, covered in mud, but also taking much longer strides than the two younger, shorter girls.

"Not fair!" Kaitlin called out as Olivia sailed past with ease.

"Not my fault, that you butch assassins are so short!" Olivia announced with a short laugh.

"Bitch!" Craig growled as a few moments later, his beautiful girlfriend strode past, her long shapely legs taking her a head past her boyfriend and they both sprinted hard towards the finish line across the grass.

Olivia took the applause as she burst through the white tape which formed the finish line, literally two inches ahead of Craig.

"Oh, yeah - beat the pussy *Predators*!" Olivia proclaimed before she collapsed to the muddy ground, her chest heaving as she struggled to take in air after the hard run.

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Olivia was joined on the ground by Craig who groaned with the pain of the final sprint.

"You two did well," Cameron announced. "Well done, Olivia."

"Thanks. . ." the thirteen-year-old breathed.

The two teenagers were quickly joined by Naomi and Kaitlin who crashed to the muddy ground, their lungs gagging for air. A minute behind, came Jessica, Jordan, Christopher, and Jeremy. They each collapsed and groaned with the pain of their exertions. After several more minutes, all eight were sitting up and sipping from bottles of cold water. Olivia was very pleased to have won, and Naomi was the first to congratulate her. Naomi had never been a big fan of the teen, especially after the fuckups which had resulted in Harper being taken. They tended to bicker as Olivia was not a fan of Naomi, either. Maybe it was just their characters clashing, but for a moment, they maintained a pleasant outlook. None of the kids noticed two more arrivals who were not impressed by what they saw scattered around on the grass.

"They really are pussies!" the younger girl commented.

"Yeah, I agree," responded the older girl.

There were several classic double-takes and many blank looks before the penny finally dropped with a clang.

"Mary! Electra!"

The two girls cringed as a mass of wet, muddy, smelly, sweaty, overexcited youngsters almost bowled them over.

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"You look a little muddy, 'livia - you been rolling in the mud with lover boy?" Mary chuckled as she studied the exhausted teen.

Olivia was muddy from head to toe, her shorts and T-shirt soaking wet, but the youngster was grinning from ear to ear.

"I beat lover boy - he's good in the rack, but shitty on his feet," Olivia grinned.

"She's trying to get back at me for stripping her on the boat," Craig growled.

"I didn't mean to bite your dick - it was an accident," Olivia growled back.

"Too much information, Olivia," Electra groaned, her face contorted in horror.

Mary just laughed, but secretly, she wished that she could have a boyfriend - unfortunately, her Royal duties forbade it until she was older. The group of kids along with the adults headed back up towards the house. Just as they approached the Wolf Training Centre, there came another voice.

"Looks like they *all* need a fucking wash; can't leave them for a fucking minute - the dirty fuckers!"

Again, there were the double-takes, and then there was screaming, and Keira had to step in front of Harper to prevent the youngster from being hurt by the marauding crowd. Naomi was about to throw herself at Harper, but then she saw the scared expression on her friend's face and she stopped dead, extending her arms out to stop everybody else.

"Sorry - no hugs; I'm still in a lot of pain," Harper conceded with a grimace.

"No problem," Naomi said for everybody. "We're just glad to see you out of the hospital."

There were a lot of happy acknowledgements.

"She needs to sit down before she falls down," Mary pointed out as she pushed forwards to help Harper into the Training Centre.

Harper looked very thin and dishevelled, in fact, nothing like her former self. She wore loose clothing – a sweatshirt and joggers – plus a pair of trainers and she held an aluminium walking stick in her left hand to support herself. By the time she was seated inside with Mary's assistance, the nine-year-old girl looked exhausted. Mary had concern etched on her face, as it was in other faces too.

"I'm okay," Harper confirmed. "Healing is just going a little bit slower than I would have liked, making me a little bit fragile."

"Something is distinctly off, here," Kaitlin pointed out. "First, Electra and the Princess appear, then they are followed by Harper – what gives?"

"Bright little spark, isn't she?" Cassie chuckled. "All of you – go get cleaned up and dressed in jeans and T-shirts, please."

"Knickers?" Kaitlin wanted to know.

"Entirely up to you," Cassie chuckled as the kids vanished.

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In hindsight, sending all eight kids to shower at the same time was probably not the best of ideas, but time was not on their side.

The showers were in a perpetual state of chaos and all modesty appeared to have vanished out the window – not that Jordan, Jeremy, and Christopher minded as the girls ran around, completely naked while they cleaned themselves up. Craig, however, had eyes only for Olivia – the pair were sharing a shower – and Jessica scowled as she saw her sister openly 'playing' with Craig's dick which was sticking out for all to see. Not all that long ago, her big sister hated to show even her tummy in public, but suddenly, she was happy for the world to see her sharing a shower with a boy and engaging in dubious behaviour while she was at it.

"Craig – there is no mud in Olivia's fanny," Jessica pointed out. "And I think her nipples are clean enough."

Olivia scowled at her little sister and she went back to Craig's crotch. Jessica was comfortable with being naked around other girls, but she got embarrassed each time a boy walked past her shower, or when she saw a naked boy in his own shower. She also tried to ignore the looks that she was receiving from Jeremy who appeared to like what he saw – not that there was all that much for him to see as she was not even needing a bra at that stage.

As each youngster appeared from the shower, they each found clean clothes neatly folded and awaiting their arrival.

Forty minutes later, they were all on the road, heading east.

Then, within another hour and by 7 A.M., they were all accelerating down the runway at Edinburgh Airport in the Gulfstream 650ER known as Alpha Foxtrot. With eighteen people and three crew, the aircraft was very full and heavily laden as it turned towards the North Atlantic and increased speed to over 500 knots.

"Now, I get it," Kaitlin muttered. "You wanted to wear us all out before the long flight so that we'd sleep."

"Clever girl!" Cassie explained.

"Well, your plan backfired, Mummy – I am not tired!"

Ten minutes later, Cassie and Keira were left as the only people awake on the plane - apart from the pilots and Amy Davenport, the stewardess.

"Would you ladies like a coffee - I appear to have limited others to serve?"

"A glass of white wine, please, Amy," Keira suggested with a nod from Cassie.

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The two women enjoyed their wine and they enjoyed the relevant peace and quiet of the aircraft as it headed west.

They were seated on the starboard side, facing one another across a table. Across the aisle, Trevor dozed in the rearward facing seat, with Ginny dozing across from him, while the eleven kids were randomly scattered throughout the middle and rear of the aircraft. Keira grinned at little Kaitlin who was snuggled up with Naomi on the settee to port a couple of feet aft of them. Even Princess Mary was asleep, her friend, Electra, leaning into her and also asleep. Harper was in the rearmost compartment, stretched out on a settee and fast asleep. Across from her, Olivia dozed.

"She looks good," Cassie commented.

"She's putting on some weight which is good, but her nightmares are still very vivid, and she hates being left alone - if she can't hear anybody; she'll start to scream with fear. Blake and I are hoping that time with her friends will divert her attentions away from her body which is still a mess and almost every time she takes a bath, now, she begins to cry when she sees the wounds. Surprisingly, she's made friends with that Scarlett girl - can't say I approve of them spending time together, but Harper seems to be gaining something from their conversations."

"Can't be easy to have her torturer just a few feet away, I'll admit," Cassie replied. "I would have wanted to put a bullet in her head one night."

"Yeah - the thought has crossed my mind every time that Harper screams out when her bandages are changed. That's why they left the Royals in place, I think. I've seen more tears from my little sister in the past two weeks, than since she came back to me. She's screamed in agony more times than I can remember and the times when she's hugged me for comfort just like she was six-years-old were heart-breaking."

Cassie could see the tears in her friend's eyes and she could not comprehend what Keira was going through. She also hoped that she would never have to go through anything like that with her own girls. Keira was on her second glass of wine as she continued to let everything out.

"I've seen the little girl that I used to know beneath the *Predator*. She's been so frightened by her experience and I know she puts on a brave face at times, but in reality, she's just a frightened little girl and I hope I'm doing everything I can to comfort her. We've talked a lot, Harper and me, about things - it's nice to be the big sister again. Harper's actually listening to me and I feel that we are closer than ever."

"Keira?"

"Yes, Cassie."

"You mentioned Blake . . . is there anything you want to tell me?" Cassie asked, digging for something juicy.

She did not go unrewarded as she saw Cassie blush.

"You and Blake get up to anything . . . err . . . kinky?"

Keira looked around to ensure that everybody was still asleep.

"We might have had the odd fumble - he has . . . he's well endowed. No! He has not been inside me yet."

Cassie giggled.

"Harper keeps asking me if Blake's 'boned' me - she's the last one I'm telling when he does!"

"You want him to?" Cassie pushed with a grin.

Keira grinned back.

"He's nice - very nice."

"I noticed. What about the other elephant in the room?"

"You mean, Diana? She's a lovely little girl who has been through a lot. I had to rescue her from a shitty care home where she almost raped by a boy there. I've asked myself, so many times: am I nuts?"

"No, Keira - you're as sane as I am."

"I've had it then!" Keira teased.

Cassie scowled.

"Jokes aside, Cassie - I love that little girl and if all goes well, I want her to become my daughter."

"And Blake your husband?"

"Let's not get ahead of ourselves," Keira laughed. "Harper thinks I'm totally nuts, but I think she likes the idea, too."

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A while later, Keira awoke with a start - she could hear screaming.

She scrambled out of her seat and ran aft - it was Harper screaming - but then the screaming stopped, and Keira found Olivia hugging Harper. Olivia simply smiled weakly as she held Harper. The youngster had fallen back to sleep and with the help of Keira, Olivia was able to lay the girl back down again.

"Thanks, Olivia."

"She scared me."

"She has nightmares - lots of them."

"I'll stay with her until she wakes up," Olivia volunteered.

"You sure?"

Olivia nodded, and Keira went back to her seat.

"She okay?" Cassie asked.

"I hope so," Keira replied as tears welled up in her eyes and spilled over.

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When Harper awoke properly, four hours later, she found Olivia looking down at her.

"Was it you who helped me earlier?" Harper asked.

"Yes," Olivia replied.

"Thank you."

"I wanted to help - it is kind of my fault. . ."

"No - stop that Olivia. It was not your fault. It could have happened to any one of us. You were thrust into an environment in which you had no training. You made rookie mistakes because you were a rookie. I did my best to train you, but there was no time to cover everything, including EmCon. From what I understand, you suffered badly at the hands of the others - and I am sorry about that. I am sorry that you got caught up in the whole sorry affair. *Urban Predator* is still fucking up kid's lives and I hate it. I hate what I am. I hate what it's doing to people like you - innocent people who get dragged in and hurt. My life is already fucked up - yours is not."

"Thanks to you, I survived, Harper. Without your training, I would not have got through it all. The attacks, the fighting. I killed men - they died at my hands. My hands are soaked in their blood. But, strangely, I sleep well at night - I get nightmares, but I am at ease with who I've killed. I suppose that was because they were bad men who threatened me and my friends - I have no regrets. When they found out about the mobile, they went ballistic. They cuffed me, then stripped me naked, and hooded me. I was scared and humiliated - everybody saw me naked, including the adults and the boys. I thought my life was over. I had never experienced such treatment before. I had never been locked up before or restrained like that. So many people saw me naked. People came to feed me while I was naked. People came to help me use the toilet - watching while I peed. Those who used to be my friends talked down to me and they treated me like shit - even Mary gave me orders with little compassion. I felt so low. I felt like I was just an animal. Then they made me watch the video where you were tortured. I thought they were all going to lynch me, right then and there - but your sister put herself between them and me. She warned them off. I don't think your sister likes me very much, but I can hardly blame her."

"I am sorry for what you endured - maybe you now have a slight idea what us *Predators* went through. Humiliation was the name of the game and it was fairly constant. You survived everything they threw at you - it was designed to disorientate you and make you more malleable for interrogation. It was also a very benign way for you to be made to suffer. Believe me, if they had wanted you to really suffer, then they could have."

"I know. They've been really good to me since they found out it wasn't entirely my fault. I even beat those *Predator* pussies in that steeplechase, this morning."

Harper laughed.

"Just remember that I'm one of those *Predator* pussies, too, and when I am fully healed, I will kick your arse, Olivia Kensington!"

"I'm looking forward to it," Olivia grinned.

"Now, help this invalid to the damn toilet!"

Chicago, USA

Despite the ten-hour flight, they arrived four hours after they had left.

Thanks to the time zone shifting and the duration of the flight, it was just after 11 A.M. when they landed at Chicago O'Hare International Airport. There, they were met by three large SUVs.

"Welcome to the United States of America!"

Chloe, Joshua, and Dave each grinned happily as their guests all piled aboard. Stephanie, Abigail, and the diminutive Becky welcomed each and every one of their friends from the UK. Not surprisingly, the ride back to *Fort Fusion* was decidedly rambunctious. Chloe, of course, decided that she wanted to get back first, so she accelerated past Joshua and Dave with ease, ignoring Joshua's non-verbal response with his middle finger.

The ride was not a long one - at least not for those aboard Chloe's SUV!

Fort Fusion

Mindy was not *all* that surprised to see Chloe's SUV arrive first.

However, Abigail's expression as she scrambled out of the opposite side of the SUV from the front seat showed traces of terror.

"She's bloody nuts!" the youngster growled as she stormed past the grinning Mindy.

"I have to agree," Cassie commented as she gave Mindy a hug. "Hi, Mindy!"

"Hi, Cassie - good flight?"

"Not bad, thanks."

Mindy endured hugs from everybody, including those in the remaining pair of SUVs which arrived a few minutes after Chloe.

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Initially, there was chaos as the freshly arrived youngsters mingled, chatting with Stephanie, Abigail, and Becky.

Mindy was biding her time as she had a big surprise for her eldest daughter. A lot of the attentions were focussed on Harper who was sitting on a steel step chatting with her friends who she had not seen in a long time. Abigail was very pleased to see Harper up and about - the girl had had a very close call. Abigail knew what it was like to be locked up, although, apart from certain things, which thankfully, she could not remember, nothing much had actually happened to her from a purely physical point of view, apart from a few punches which she was used to.

"Let's go find you some accommodation," Chloe proclaimed.

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Stephanie, Abigail, and Becky escorted the newcomers through to Training Facility Echo.

The Brits were all stunned as none of them had even seen the place before. They wound their way down to Level 2 and to their accommodation for the weekend.

"The new facility is awesome, Mindy," Cassie commented.

"Well, there are really too many people now to properly fit into Foxtrot, so we redeveloped a section of Echo to provide a more modern training facility," Mindy explained.

"Right, you little ruffians," Cassie directed. "Time for you all to get changed!"

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Harper was helped into a cabin by Olivia and Stephanie.

"How are you doing, Harper Sharp?" Stephanie asked.

"You know what those damn hospitals are like, Steph - they suck!"

"They do - I hated it."

Stephanie was not all that surprised to find Harper looking very worn as she sagged down onto a bunk. The youngster was struggling emotionally with a lot of baggage, Stephanie figured.

"I'm just glad to be back amongst my friends," Harper said as she smiled at both girls.

Olivia began to unpack Harper's uniform as well as her own. Stephanie saw the smile on Harper's face falter for a moment as she took hold of her dark blue uniform - a uniform which she had neither seen nor touched in a very long time. Stephanie saw the emotions flickering across Harper's face - then came the tears.

"I never thought I would ever see this uniform again, let alone wear it."

Harper sagged into Olivia who held her tightly as she sobbed.

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It was several minutes - more like twenty - before Harper and Olivia were changed.

It had taken a while for Harper to undress and redress. Her left hand was the biggest issue and between Stephanie and Olivia, it had been slowly and painstakingly threaded down the sleeve of her uniform blouse. Stephanie had carefully tied Harper's boots while Olivia had changed into her own uniform.

"You remember how to use this?" Stephanie asked as she handed over Harper's SIG Sauer P238 Combat pistol.

"Fuck you, Stephanie!" Harper grinned. "I only have the one hand."

Olivia took the pistol and she expertly cleared the weapon before inserting a full magazine and safing the weapon.

"Polaris - your weapon," Ajax said, handing the pistol butt first to her friend.

"Very well done, Ajax," Harper replied as she holstered the weapon. "Thanks, both of you. I never thought I would ever be Polaris again. This moment is very special to me - and it's a special moment which I'm spending with my friends."

"I know how you feel, Harper - I went through the same thing with Psyche after I was shot. It was hard. I so wanted to be back in the suit, but it took a while until I was ready. However, I kept pushing it and Mum threatened to break my legs if I didn't let myself heal."

"Don't give my sister any ideas, please, Stephanie," Polaris grimaced.

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Ajax received a somewhat icy look from Scorpion as she emerged from the cabin with Polaris and Psyche.

"Thank you for helping my sister, Ajax, but I can take it from here."

Ajax stepped away from Polaris, but only for a second.

"Scorpion!" Polaris growled.

"Sorry," Scorpion apologised. "I didn't mean anything by that, Ajax, and I truly mean it - thanks for being there for her."

Scorpion reinforced her words by giving the wary Ajax a hug.

"Okay - now the sissy shit is over, let's get back to being hardened vigilantes, shall we?" Polaris growled.

Scorpion and Ajax both laughed.

"I'd hoped her foul mouth might have been permanently lost to us," Scorpion chuckled.

"My goddamn mouth is the bloody best part of yours motherfucking truly!" Scorpion acknowledged to general laughter.

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"Hey, Psyche, you little pussy; this what you call order?"

Psyche spun around, stunned by the voice and she came face to face with a *Fusion* vigilante in her 'duty' uniform. The name tag above her left breast read: FOXTAIL.

"What the fuck are you doing out?" Psyche blurted.

"Hospital is for pussies - right, Polaris!" Foxtail retorted.

"Like Psyche, yeah!" Polaris replied.

"You two cretins are very much alike," Psyche growled. "Both with your fucking crutches!"

Nevertheless, Psyche ran over to Foxtail and gave her best friend a very big hug.

"It's really good to see you, Foxy," Psyche whispered into Foxtail's ear.

"It's really good to be out and with my best friend," Foxtail replied.

*This story continues in **Chapter 359: Night of the Predator** of my other story: **Forsaken**.*