

**Saturday, December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Sandringham, Norfolk**

For the young princess, the day was extra special.

It was the day in which she turned fourteen, and it was to be the first Christmas of being a very different person to who she was on any previous Christmas. Her experiences of just a few months previously had changed her life completely. She was no longer the snobby little princess who drove her protective officer mad with her incessantly obnoxious behaviour. Her obnoxious behaviour had been quite literally kicked out of her by her new friends who did not see her as a Royal Princess. Instead, they saw her as a trusted friend - a difference which Mary loved. Being physically manhandled and thrust into muddy puddles naked had been only a small part of converting Her Royal Highness Princess Mary of Kintyre and Lorne into somebody who was in control of who she was, and who could make sound judgements after careful thought. She also had an alter ego which allowed her to go out into the world and help those who may one day become her subjects. That alter ego was the vigilante known as Belle.

Even her father had noticed a big change in his little girl. She was able to perform her Royal duties without a problem, but she could also be a loving daughter. It was that side of her which her father enjoyed. Mary was more caring, and she put more thought into how she treated people. The much-maligned Ginny was also enjoying more peace and quiet without her charges usual antics which very often got the youngster into trouble. Mary also understood a little more about how she should keep a low profile when out in public so as not to publicly embarrass her family should her very special secret come out.

As was normal for her, not so normal, family, they all sat down to open their presents at tea time - yes, it was Christmas Eve, but that was the tradition of the Royal Family who followed the German practice of opening presents on Christmas Eve. They began in the White Drawing Room where a giant twenty-foot Christmas tree towered overall before heading through into the Red Drawing Room where all the gifts for the family had been laid out on a white linen-covered trestle table. Mary ignored the younger members who all scrambled for their own presents as she opted to demonstrate that she was a maturing teenager who no longer behaved like a child.

There was the usual selection of exquisitely wrapped gifts which contained various items which appeared to elicit much humour from the senior members of the family. Mary had received many items for her jewellery box over the years which, unlike the average teenager, had a resale value in six figures. Mary was unaware of how much other members of her family knew about what she had been getting up to, but some appeared to know much more than she thought was safe. For example, her uncle, Prince Andrew had given her a very nice set of body armour - presumably in reference to the attack at Kensington Palace when she had been shot. The prince had considered it very amusing, however, he had winked at Mary indicating an obviously hidden agenda. In the same vein, her uncle, Prince Charles had provided her with a very expensive, royal blue crash helmet. What use that might be without a motorcycle - which she could not even ride should she possess one - she had no idea? The other gifts had been the usual useless, but expensive, rubbish.

Her Father and her Grandmother appeared to be up to something, but Mary could not figure out what.

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That evening, Mary was decked out in her finest.

Ginny had taken great pride in affixing Mary's award invested by the Queen. The Royal Family Order of Queen Elizabeth II would be very visible on the youngster's gown and it would be the very first time that she had worn the device in view of others. Naturally, her arrival in the formal dining room for a candle-lit dinner at 8 P.M. that night raised a few comments from more senior Royals who were very surprised to see such a young girl wearing the Royal Family Order of Queen Elizabeth II on her left breast. However, a strong glance from Mary's father silenced those comments before they had begun.

"Mary!"

The Queen gave her granddaughter a big, and very public hug.

Mary was very special to her, not to mention that the girl had taken a key role in saving the very country which she had ruled over for sixty-four years and which she would continue to rule over for many more years to come.

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***That same evening***

***Paris, France***

"Ah, yes. . ."

Marinette bit her lip so as not to scream and awaken the sleeping ten-year-old, a few doors down. Adrien's fingers were second only to his tongue when it came to the exciting of her body. He was also very quick to pull the clothes from her body and very soon, she was naked as the day she was born. His hands ran gently over her ample breasts with the pert nipples which even then were standing hard and erect, yet hyper-sensitive to the slightest breath of air.

Adrien blew across both nipples causing Marinette to giggle. He began to kiss her, starting with the left nipple. His kisses moved down, across her supple, yet rigid stomach formed from the softest of skin. He blew into her belly button, eliciting another giggle and a shudder. Marinette was struggling with the suspense as his lips moved closer and closer to her . . . she groaned, and she shuddered as he gently blew across her hair - he was teasing her as he often did, but she loved it. He kissed her directly at the top of her labia and she squealed. She tensed up as his tongue began to work on her most sensitive body part. She was already still partly aroused from her arrival earlier on - very soon, she was panting as her hips moved steadily up and down, pressing into his tongue as it teased its way around her labia, pushing through into her damp, internal warmth.

"You taste good tonight, just the right balance of wetness and heat," Adrien mused.

"Less talk, more . . . zut!"

Marinette gave up trying to talk. Despite her fitness, she was struggling to breathe as Adrien played her like a fiddle - with his tongue. His fingers began to caress her left breast, almost overloading her senses with incredible sensations which coursed throughout her slim body. Her brain was telling her to stop everything before she exploded - but her mind was enjoying the erotic sensations which almost made her delirious with ecstasy. As her labia parted in their natural fashion, Adrien took advantage and he pushed his tongue inside, ever deeper and deeper. Marinette gripped his naked back - somehow, he always managed to shrug off his clothes while he pushed her to ever increasing euphoria - her nails dug in, eliciting a grunt of pain. Adrien loved that part; the pain only made him caress and excite Marinette more. He could feel blood pumping inside him and he knew that he was as hard as he ever got. He heard

Marinette let out a small scream and he knew what was coming. He allowed himself to be flipped over onto his back and he found the most gorgeous pair of eyes gazing down at him.

With an evil grin, Marinette slid down the bed and she began to lick the fully erect, hardened cock that stood before her. She had seen bigger, but she had never tasted one so good. Each lick began at the base and she gradually worked her way, inch by inch, to the tip where each lick would send shivers through her man. Marinette knew that he was hard because of her and the excitement which she elicited within him with her naked body. After a few more licks, Marinette took Adrien into her mouth and she began to suck in earnest, remembering to keep her teeth away from the throbbing shaft. Adrien moaned as Marinette's tongue caressed the sensitive tip, especially the underside. She knew that Adrien enjoyed that part being tickled the most, just as she enjoyed his tongue on her clit. The only difference was that when Adrien came, she had to be careful as more than once she had almost choked on his hot effluent. She had learnt to gauge the sensations under her tongue and she knew when he was about to blow. Instead of backing off, she licked and sucked ever harder, feeling Adrien tensing up and panting hard as, in a blink of eye, her mouth was filled with copious amounts of a sweet, yet salty, substance which almost burnt her tongue as it surged around her mouth in ever decreasing amounts until he was totally spent.

She savoured the taste, the texture, as she swallowed the gloopy substance and then licked him clean of every last strain. He would lie there, like a beached fish, panting. His thighs would shudder as he came down from the orgasm. Marinette enjoyed the looks of deep love and affection that poured from Adrien's pale green eyes. She enjoyed watching his penis shrivel but then she would lie on top of him and kiss him.

"Je t'aime Adrien."

"Je t'aime Marinette."

As she kissed him, she would feel his limp penis harden beneath her as it rubbed against her vulva. She would give him the time required to fully harden and then she would sink his shaft inside her, pushing the tip through her labia and on into her vagina. The fullness she felt with him inside her was something she craved as she rode him. Marinette felt herself tense up with each and every thrust as her hips caused him to move in and out, in and out. Then they would entwine as they rolled over and Adrien would smile down, thrusting his hips deeply into his fiancé. Harder and faster they would work, frantically kissing each other as if they were never going to fuck again as if they might never see one another again after that night.

The crushing orgasms built, and they struck almost simultaneously. They both yelled out in sheer ecstasy causing a ten-year-old girl to snap awake, a few steps down the corridor. Yvette focussed on the sounds of love making and she cringed, pulling the duvet up over her head.

"Sale bâtards!"

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***Sunday, December 25<sup>th</sup>***

***Christmas Day***

***East Mayfield***

***Edinburgh, Scotland***

The incessant bouncing and giggling were seriously getting on her nerves.

"I want to be an only child, again," Harper growled. "Or, at least, I want a sibling that knows how to stay in her own goddamn bed!"

"Merry Christmas, Harps!"

"I so want to kill you," Harper growled.

"Do it, then," Diana challenged the younger girl.

Harper sat up and she allowed her shoulders to slump, then she grinned.

"Merry Christmas, Diana."

Harper then cringed as she was hugged a little too tightly, before being kissed on the cheek. Diana then walked off to go and disturb Keira and Blake. Harper smiled to herself, happy that her first Christmas in years had actually arrived. Harper carefully twisted herself around and she gingerly placed her feet on the floor before pushing herself up with her right arm. After adjusting her overlarge T-shirt, Harper hobbled through to her sister's bedroom.

"Merry Christmas, Keira."

Harper found herself swept into a huge, and slightly painful, hug. Keira gave her little sister a big kiss.

"Merry Christmas, Harper," Keira said.

"A very Merry Christmas, young Harper," Blake offered from the other side of the bed.

"Merry Christmas, Blake. Err . . . did you two actually sleep, last night?"

Keira exchanged a wicked glance with Blake before she responded to the pointed question.

"Plenty."

"You are kidding?" Harper groaned. "I thought sex was once a night - you two went on for hours!"

Keira giggled as her face turned a delicate shade of pink.

"If they used these, then there's four empty packets," Diana offered as she held up four square foil packets, all of which were torn open and empty.

"Those are condoms, Diana," Harper pointed out as she cringed.

"Ewww!" Diana said as she dropped the wrappers.

"I thought that adults were supposed to be more reserved," Harper commented.

"I need a shower," Keira commented as she threw back the duvet, stood up, and then walked out of the bedroom towards the bathroom . . . completely naked.

Harper and Diana just stared after her, their mouths hanging open. Blake stepped out of the bed wearing a pair of boxer shorts, much to the girls' relief, and he followed the naked Keira.

"You two are going to shower *together*?" Diana exploded.

"We're gonna fuck too!" Keira yelled back with a girly giggle.

"I am going to be sick - come on, Diana," Harper grimaced.

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About forty minutes later, Harper and Diana were dressed and sitting in the kitchen waiting for Keira and Blake to appear.

That they did, dressed, and looking very pleased with themselves. Harper gave her big sister a very stern look indeed before she spoke.

"What possessed you to parade around naked?" Harper demanded.

"You do," Keira shot back with a grin.

"I'm a damaged nine-year-old who doesn't know any better," Harper responded.

"As for you . . . you . . ."

"Have breasts and pubes? So, what - you're my little sister and I have no issues with you seeing me naked. Same with you, Diana, but I promise never to do it again; does that help?"

Diana and Harper grinned.

"I have no problem with it - you just surprised the fuck out of me," Harper said.

"You have a beautiful body, Keira," Diana admitted. "I hope my body is as beautiful as yours, one day."

"Your body will probably start changing a long time before Harper's does, and I am sure it will be fine," Keira said.

"I have no complaints with you being naked," Blake commented, and Harper giggled. "Anybody want presents?"

There was a mad dash for the living room, from where both girls had been banned since bedtime the previous night.

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## ***Paris, France***

### ***Christmas Day***

Yvette gave Adrien and Marinette the evil eye when they both entered the kitchen that morning.

Marinette raised an eyebrow and looked down at their young charge who appeared to be decidedly annoyed about something. There was a ten Euro note sitting on the table.

"Do you know what I should be doing with this?" Yvette asked as she picked up the note.

Marinette simply shook her head.

"After you two happily . . . how should I put it . . . fucked the night away, some very bad words went through my mind as I cringed and hid under the duvet. So, being a good girl, I am going to follow the example you have set for me - 'Yvette! Dix Euro - pot!' - and place this where it belongs."

With that, Yvette stood up, and she walked over to where there was a large glass jar. Yvette lifted the lid, and she forced the ten Euro note in amongst enough Euros to pay off the national debt for a small country. She then tried to force the lid back on, but the pressure of the coins and notes were too much. Marinette simply laughed at Yvette's impression of herself as the young girl turned to her and grinned.

"Tu vas avoir besoin d'un plus grand pot!"

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## ***Southfield Letham***

Amber was up first.

It was a strange feeling to be getting up on Christmas Day but not really looking forward too it. Her mind had been filled with the past, and the hell that had been the past few months. She felt left out, to be honest. Scarlett would be taken off for things which were kept secret, including sleepovers. What could be so secret about a sleepover? There had always been an underlying resentfulness which Amber now felt coming to the fore. She was determined to get to the bottom of it.

"Happy Christmas!" came a voice.

"Is it?" Amber responded as she laid eyes on a grinning Scarlett. "I would have expected you to be sad."

"I'm trying to make the best of a situation that is beyond my control, Amber," Scarlett glowered.

For Scarlett, it was a horrible time. Christmas was for families, but she no longer had one, and her father's loss was still very raw. Amber was a real pain the arse, and Scarlett was struggling to put up with the girl when she was around.

"Good morning and a very Happy Christmas to you two girls!" Cameron announced as he entered the kitchen and began grabbing the components for a cooked breakfast. "Hope you are all hungry! Amber, could you find me some bacon, and the square sausage, please."

"Merry Christmas, girls!" Natasha called out.

"Merry Christmas Cameron, Natasha," Scarlett responded.

Amber simply waved a hand as she vanished behind the fridge door.

"Scarlett, get the kettle on for a brew, 'kay?" Natasha asked.

"On the way," Scarlett announced.

Very soon, the kitchen was filled with the sounds of bacon crackling, and the sausages spitting. The kitchen was warm and cosy, despite the dull, gloomy, and very cold weather outside. Amber's Grinch-like mood was generally ignored by all as they pulled together a massive breakfast for all to enjoy. Scarlett enjoyed helping in the kitchen, so she was not put out by requests for this and that.

Amber just sat out of the way which actually helped everyone.

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## ***Lasswade Road***

For Jeremy, it was all partly a dream.

He awoke that Christmas morning and he hesitated. Normally, he would have bolted through to his parents' bedroom, but he was worried that he might find his father alone and his mother only a dream. The twelve-year-old boy crawled out of bed, and he carefully headed for his parents' bedroom. He pushed open the door, very slowly. Then he stopped dead - his father was there, but he was alone. It had all been a dream - or a nightmare.

"Hi, sweetie!"

Jeremy turned to see his mother coming up the stairs. He ran and hugged his mother tightly.

"Mum!"

"Merry Christmas, Jeremy."

"Merry Christmas, Mum."

"What's all the noise about."

Jeremy turned again to see a tired-looking Ewan coming out of his bedroom.

"Happy Xmas, Ewan," Jeremy grinned.

"Happy Christmas, Mrs Lai," Ewan said.

"Call me, Kensi, Ewan - I've already told you that," Kensi scolded.

"Sorry, Kensi."

"Why can't you all lie in," Trevor commented. "Merry Christmas, all."

"Merry Christmas, Dad."

"What he said," Ewan added. "Can I go back to bed now?"

"Breakfast!" Kensi ordered, pointing the boy down the stairs.

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### ***Sandringham, Norfolk***

That morning, Mary enjoyed breakfast with her father before heading downstairs to find her Grandmother.

After tripping over Willow, the corgi, who was nonchalantly dozing in a doorway, Mary found her Grandfather in the drawing room enjoying a cup of tea as he perused the most recent copy of Horse & Hound magazine.

"Morning, sweet pea - Merry Christmas."

"Morning, Grandpa - Merry Christmas."

Mary gave her Grandpa a kiss and a hug just as her Grandmother appeared.

"Merry Christmas, Gran!"

"A very Merry Christmas to you, Mary."

Mary was about to head off to find her father when her Grandmother stopped her.

"Mary, the main part of your Christmas present will be ready for you on Boxing Day."

"Main?"

"We decided that you might like something special, including something for your friends."

Mary grinned enormously.

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### ***Auchenross***

Dakota awoke to find something heavy at the foot of her bed.

It was a small heap of neatly wrapped presents. The fourteen-year-old girl was stunned. She had not seen real Christmas presents in years. She sat staring at them for so long, that Sinead stood at the door for a good two minutes before she spoke.

"Merry Christmas, Dakota."

"Huh? Sorry, Sinead - Merry Christmas. Are these all for me?"

"I don't see anybody else sleeping here, do you?"

"I don't believe in Father Christmas," Dakota pointed out with a grin.

"If you don't want them. . ."

"No!" Dakota almost yelled as she dived out of the bed and grabbed the nearest present.

Sinead chuckled. She knew what the girl was feeling, and she was giving Dakota free rein.

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### ***Moss-Side Hall***

Olivia groaned as she felt two bodies diving onto her bed.

"What?" she demanded into her pillow.

"It's time for grumpy teenagers to get up," Jessica laughed as she pulled the duvet off her sister.

"Come on!" Christopher demanded as she slapped Olivia's left buttock.

"Ow!" Olivia exclaimed as she rolled over and sat up in bed.

"Come on!" Christopher repeated as he pulled Olivia up off the warm bed and out in to a decidedly chilly landing.

Nika barked as soon as the kids came into sight, descending the stairs. Jasper grinned as two wideawake kids and one sleepy teen ventured into the living room. Olivia slumped down onto the sofa and tried to go back to sleep. Jessica ensured that Olivia stayed awake by prodding her big sister. Finally, Olivia sat up.

"Can I hurt her?" she asked of Jasper.

"No."

"Just a small broken bone, maybe?"

"No," Jasper chuckled.

"Presents, anyone?" Lynn asked.

Olivia was suddenly very much awake.

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### ***Beacon Croft***

It had been a very late night, what with watching two major Star Wars movies.

A certain girl had wanted to watch a third, but Amy Montgomery had put her foot down and ordered the three children to bed. They were all very excited and more than a little tired. Kate had been giggling quite a bit as the two boys had told some very crude jokes and Amy had been speechless while her husband had



actually joined in with some equally salty jokes which had had Kate blushing with embarrassment. Finally, the house had descended into calm as everybody fell asleep.

The next morning found Kate waking first, and she took great joy in dragging both boys out of their beds, dumping them both onto the floor. Kate simply laughed at them both as they lay there trying to figure out what had happened.

"Ha, fucking, ha!" Jordan exclaimed. "I'm legless with laughter."

"Not totally," Kate grinned.

Craig had gone in to wake his parents, only for his mother to burst into tears as she had hugged him tightly. The boy looked very confused until his father reminded him that it was the first time in four years that he had awoken his parents on Christmas Morning. Craig had trouble with his own tears, and he felt embarrassed as Kate gave him a hug.

"Don't feel ashamed for being human," she said.

"Thanks," Craig replied as he ran out the door. "Last one to the kitchen lays the table for breakfast!"

"Hey!" Jordan yelled as he struggled with his artificial leg. "No fair!"

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### **Blairhoyle**

The thirteen-year-old girl remained in bed for as long as she could help it.

She was so excited that she felt like she was going to wee herself. Somehow all of her willpower had vanished, and she could not keep still. She lay on her back. She lay on her front. She lay on her right side, and then the left. Nothing was comfortable, and she kept twisting and turning until she had got her legs well and truly caught up in the bottom sheet which she had managed to pull off the mattress. Finally, her struggling and cursing had resulted in her falling out of bed with a large bang.

Charlotte had grinned foolishly as Alexandra and Richard had burst in on her to find the girl in a decidedly humiliating position with her bottom in the air. Richard laughed loudly, and Charlotte felt her cheeks burning. But she giggled as she fought her way out from the twisted sheet and duvet. Finally, she found her feet and she gave Alexandra a hug.

"Merry Christmas, Alexandra."

"Merry Christmas, Charlotte."

"Got yourself in a right pickle there, didn't we," Richard chuckled. "Made a right Charlie of yourself."

Richard laughed at his pun as Charlotte rolled her eyes and gave him a hug.

"A very droll Merry Christmas, sir."

"Merry Christmas, Charlie."

"Strange having such a peaceful house," Alexandra commented. "Bet our daughter is having a lovely lie in."

"Dream on!" Richard guffawed.

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### **Dreadnought House**

It had taken the threat of the dreaded Taser to get the little monsters out of the bedroom.

Andrew and Cassie had been ambushed at 5 A.M. by two little girls and a boy who had been dragged into the girl's scheme. The barking dog had pushed things way beyond what Cassie was willing to tolerate. Nonetheless, the girls and boy had retreated, allowing peace to reign over the. . . Cassie sat up with a jolt.

"You have got to be fucking joking!" Cassie yelled as she saw the little hand on her bedside clock quivering onto the six.

"I'll deal with this," Andrew chuckled.

There was total pandemonium out on the landing as a certain dog was being encouraged to chase Kaitlin from one end to the other. For some reason known only to Kaitlin, the eight-year-old was scampering around on all fours, 'barking' at Sasha and winding him up. Naomi and Jake thought this was up roarily funny and both were laughing at Kaitlin's antics. They never saw Andrew as he threw a pint glass of ice-cold water over Naomi and Jake. Both were soaked to the skin and they screamed at the sudden shock. Andrew grabbed hold of Kaitlin, scooping her off the floor, and he carried the still barking girl into the bathroom where he dumped her into the bath and then turned on the overhead shower to full - on cold.

Kaitlin shrieked as the cold water soaked her completely. Naomi and Jake came running, only to be unceremoniously grabbed and shoved under the very same shower as Kaitlin. Two more shrieks joined the first as Andrew added some hot water to the mix.

"That was so uncool," Kaitlin growled as she pulled off her sodden pyjamas.

"That was awesome!" Naomi laughed as she pulled off her own sodden night clothes.

"All's fair in war," Jake conceded as he too pulled off his equally sodden clothing.

All three naked kids rapidly left the bath as Sasha decided that he wanted a shower too. Cassie came out of the bedroom to catch sight of a naked boy and two naked girls as they ran back to their bedrooms - each dripping wet. Cassie laughed as Andrew appeared with a smug grin on his face.

"Well done," Cassie said as Andrew swept Cassie off her feet, kicking the door shut behind him.

"You are way overdressed, Cass," Andrew said as he kissed Cassie and pulled off her pyjamas.

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## **London**

Electra could not have been happier.

She had her Grandfather, her Father, and her Brother. She was being spoilt rotten, and for once, she was happy to allow it. She had awoken to breakfast in bed and an amazing pile of presents. It seemed that the men in her life had come together and arranged a very special present for the youngster. Each present was a separate component and ultimately made up the most amazing present ever.

The first present was long and thin, as were four identical packages. She pulled off the bright pink wrapping paper with little Father Christmas figures

all over it, and her eyes went very wide as she saw what was inside. It was an empty magazine for an FN P90 Personal Defence Weapon (PDW). She ripped open the other identical presents to find four more identical magazines. The next present was much smaller, but as she ripped off the wrapping, she found a pair of smaller magazines, only she wasn't fooled, and her trained mind identified the twenty-round standard magazines for an FN Five-sevenN pistol. The next, and final present produced a third twenty-round standard magazine and an extended thirty-round magazine for the same pistol.

Electra appeared confused as her Grandfather chuckled.

"I'd go look downstairs if I was you," he said.

Electra was gone in a blur of wrapping paper, her new acquisitions grasped against her chest as she ran down the stairs to the living room.

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### ***Auchenross***

After a massive breakfast, Dakota had joined her adoptive family as a pile of presents was slowly dished out to each person present.

The girl was certain that Sinead was doing it on purpose and keeping Dakota's presents till last. Dakota was not expecting much, but she was shocked by the steadily growing pile beside her as more kept on coming. It took a lot less time to unwrap the gifts than it took to receive them. Twenty minutes later, Dakota was a little lost as she sat on the floor, surrounded by discarded wrapping paper and a large array of gifts. She had a pair of brand new, very expensive walking boots from Sinead which Dakota recognised as being Royal Marines quality. Sinead's parents, Gerome and Beatrice had bought a huge array of outdoor clothing - all expensive and branded. Amongst the pile of the usual Christmas gifts, CDs and DVDs, there was also a laptop - from Hit Girl - and a set of training bokkens - also from Hit Girl. However, her most prized gift was in the kitchen - a brand new mountain bike worth over a thousand pounds.

Sinead grinned at the happy teenager. Dakota had made no secret of her love for cycling. It was something which had been encouraged by her instructors at *Urban Predator* as a key keep-fit tool. Sinead had her own mountain bike and she intended on taking Dakota out into the wilderness of Scotland.

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### ***Moss-Side Hall***

Olivia decided that it was a very different kind of Christmas.

The previous year, Jessica had been playing with My Little Pony themed items while she had been playing with her new phone as any twelve-year-old would. Instead of normal things like that, she, her sister, and her new brother were lying on the floor examining the most awesome Christmas presents ever.

Jasper and Lynn would have been in full agreement with the teenager. All three kids were busy taking apart their gifts and examining them in every minute detail. Each child had received a pistol set for Christmas, except for Olivia who had received a pair. They were SIG Sauer P320 Carry Tacops nine-millimetre pistols with threaded barrel, four twenty-one-round magazines, and Siglite night sites. For Jasper and Lynn, it was bliss as silence reigned while each pistol was stripped, checked, rechecked, checked again, reassembled - and then stripped again. Each youngster remembered each and every safety measure required to safely check their pistols. Each grip and slide were customised for the user. Olivia's pistols had blue and silver stripes. Jessica's pistol had

magenta stripes. Christopher's pistol had deep orange stripes. Each had also been provided with a matching SRD9 pistol suppressor for their pistols and there was a clatter as Jessica figured out how to strip her suppressor and the internal baffles clattered onto the floor in a small heap.

"I just hope she knows how to put it back together again," Jasper quipped to his wife.

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### **Beacon Croft**

Kate had never seen so much good food in one place.

Amy was amazing in the kitchen and she had produced a marvel of a Christmas lunch. There was an enormous turkey which David had expertly carved. Kate's plate was piled high with slices of turkey, several chipolatas, a pile of roast potatoes, some sprouts - she could have gone without those hideous mini cabbages - roast parsnips, lashings of rich gravy, bread sauce, some cranberry sauce, and quite a bit of sage & onion stuffing. Everybody's plate was piled high, just the same, although Jordan appeared to be going way over the top with the roast potatoes. Craig was busy dishing out some Coke for him and Jordan when he reached for Kate's glass.

"Kate, you are almost seventeen," David said. "Would you like some wine with your meal?"

Kate was very surprised by the suggestion.

"Is that legal?"

"In this house, you can drink under supervision," David replied.

"What about me?" Craig asked indignantly.

"You are thirteen-years-old, son, so no," David chuckled.

"I'll try a bit," Kate decided, and she reached out for the offered glass of rosé wine.

She sniffed at it, thinking that it smelt not too bad before she placed the glass down on the table beside her.

"Everybody got a bit of everything?" Amy asked.

"Yes."

"Yep."

"Definitely."

"Dig in!" Amy ordered.

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### **Blairhoyle**

Alexandra was as happy as she ever got.

Her house was teeming with laughter, and her family was all together for the very special day. Alexandra was in the kitchen, the sides covered with food in various states of preparation. The Aga was pumping out enormous amounts of heat as it cooked a massive turkey which had just, barely, squeezed through the oven door, several hours earlier.

"Honey, could you check the stuffing, please?"

Charlotte dutifully pulled open the relevant oven door and she stuck a knife into the sage & onion stuffing, then the sausage meat stuffing, and the awful-smelling prune stuffing.

"Coming along nicely - bit longer on the sage & onion, I think," Charlotte reported.

"Thank you. Have the girls laid the table properly?"

"I'll go check."

Charlotte headed around the corner into the formal dining room. The room was designed to comfortably seat fourteen people around the long wooden table. The fireplace had been laid and lit, warming the large room. The table was laid for thirteen and as Charlotte entered the room, she saw that laying the table was not going all that well.

"Excuse me!" Charlotte exclaimed.

"Hi, Charlie!" Naomi called out.

"Hi, Charlie!" Kaitlin added.

"I had nothing to do with it," Harper admitted.

"I'm just an innocent observer," Diana threw in.

"It wasn't me, either," Jake tried.

Charlotte was not having any of it.

"Kaitlin, put the knives down. Naomi, nobody fights with spoons. Get the table laid, now, before I get angry - and you do *not* want to see me when I am angry."

Kaitlin made to respond, but the look in the older girl's eyes made her think otherwise.

"Sorry," she said as she placed the two dinner knives back on the table and she went back to doing what she was supposed to be doing, laying out cutlery at each place.

"Just having a bit of fun," Naomi commented as she too went back to her assigned job placing mats on the table.

"Jake, you are the eldest; please keep the munchkins under control," Charlotte directed as she turned on her heel and walked out of the room.

Jake grinned. Harper scowled. Diana laughed.

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"An officious young lady," Sarah chuckled as she watched the twelve-year-old breeze back into the kitchen.

All had heard Charlotte ordering the other kids about.

"She does seem to get the job done," Keira agreed before chuckling. "She also enjoys doing it."

"Your Mum is over the moon to have so many people here for Christmas, especially her two daughters," Richard commented.

"We're glad to be here," Cassie agreed.

"Thanks for inviting us," Blake said.

"Saves us from Cassie's cooking," Andrew chuckled.

"Hey!" Cassie exclaimed. "I'm better than Mindy."

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### **London**

Electra had managed to collate the rest of her presents and they were all arrayed before her.

There was a large black ABS case sitting open on the carpet, a foot away from the Christmas Tree. The ten-year-old sat before it, arranging her new acquisitions. Inside the case, there were two foam rubber inserts, one in the top section of the case, and the other in the bottom section. Into the upper section of the case, Electra pushed five, empty, fifty-round P90 magazines. In the lower half, she placed the disassembled body of her P90 PDW into the bottom section and the barrel with the attached grip and sight into a pre-cut slot above the main body. The relevant tools for repairs were also inserted into the case. Once done, she closed up the case and then laid another, similar but smaller, case atop the larger one.

Opening the smaller case, she began to fill the cut-outs inside. First inside went her brand-new FN Five-seven pistol with the empty thirty-round magazine inserted in the butt. Next, there went the pair of empty twenty-round magazines with the final item being the suppressor for the pistol. Electra happily snapped the case closed and then simply sat there staring at the two cases of weapons.

"Do you think Mindy would approve?"

"Yes, Grandpa, she would."

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### **Auchenross**

"How's the food, Dakota?"

"Very good, thank you, sir."

Dakota was enjoying every mouthful; the food was better than anything she had ever tasted. In a way, she was finding it all a little overbearing. That morning, she and Sinead had gone for a walk and they had talked - actually, Dakota had talked, and Sinead had listened. It was not just her identity which Dakota was struggling with, there were other emotions inside her. She had spent a lot of her life defending herself. She had had to defend herself for being a person. She had had to defend herself for being a girl. She had had to defend herself just to survive. Suddenly, all that was gone. Despite having come to terms with no longer being Firebrand, there was still a problem. Her new life was so much different to that which had been all she had known. Somehow, she had to break away from her past and concentrate on her future.

Sinead had listened to the youngster's confusion. Dakota appeared to look up to her - maybe it was the fact that Sinead had never allowed her sex to get in the way of what she wanted to do or what she wanted to be. Sinead figured that Dakota was probably very much the same in that respect. Yes, Sinead was aware of Dakota's sexual orientation, but she had no problem with that, and as Dakota did not flaunt it, there was no reason for it to be publicised. The only other person their side of the Atlantic who knew was Charlotte, who could be trusted with the knowledge. Sinead had told both girls that she operated an open-door policy where either could talk to her at any time they wanted, about anything that they needed to talk about.

Sinead was unsure about the relationship she was to have with the Dakota. Would it be as sisters, or was Sinead interested in becoming a parent? Sinead had never put much time in worrying about a family – she did not even have a man; the dickheads she had dated were just that: dickheads, all of them. She refused to date a Royal Marine which kind of limited what men she happened to come in contact with, and therefore relationships. At the rate she was going, she might have to do the unthinkable and go out with somebody from the R.A.F. – she had shuddered at the mere thought. As she watched Dakota giggling at her father's rather droll jokes, Sinead was very happy that the fourteen-year-old had come to live with her. Her parents had held reservations, but they had warmed to the girl. Sinead's mother had commented that it was nice to have a normal teenager in the house for a change.

Dakota had enjoyed that, much to Sinead's annoyance.

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### ***Moss-Side Hall***

Olivia figured that Jasper had simply drunk too much sherry before lunch or maybe he was just drunk on Christmas spirit, either way, his jokes were almost as bad as the pathetic excuses from the crackers which Jessica thought were so funny.

Everybody spent time laughing and joking, so much that the food was taking forever to be eaten – not that anybody was bothered. Although, Olivia figured that she would need to do a lot of exercise after Christmas to get rid of the extra pounds she was adding onto her body with every mouthful. She missed her own family, but she had a new life and she had suffered a lot to get to where she was at that moment. She had a family who loved her – and she had the most adorable boyfriend ever. They had talked for forty minutes, earlier that morning, and Olivia yearned for his touch on her. . .

"You want more potatoes, Olivia?" Lynn asked.

"Looking at her face, I think she'll take a chipolata and two small potatoes," Jessica quipped before descending into a fit of giggles with Christopher.

Olivia's cheeks went bright red as Jasper laughed out loud.

"That is so not funny," Olivia growled.

"Yes, it is!" Lynn laughed.

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### ***Southfield Letham***

Amber began to warm to the Christmas spirit during lunch.

Everybody, even Scarlett, did their best to involve the girl, but to some extent, she was not having it. However, Amber was very happy with her main Christmas present. Both girls had each received a cutting-edge laptop from Hit Girl. Amber's devious mind was already racing as she planned out what she would use her laptop for. She was not stupid, so she had already figured out that everything she did with the laptop would be monitored, but she was already working out a way around any monitoring.

Scarlett's mind was not operating on a devious wavelength, however. The girl was enjoying herself. She had spent half an hour crying to herself, earlier that day. She had been crying over her father, but then she had told herself to stop as the bastard did not deserve her tears. She had even given Natasha a big hug soon after, surprising the girl immensely. Natasha took it as what it was,

and she had returned the hug. Cameron had gone out of his way to have both girls laughing which was a struggle with Amber, but he managed it. Nobody could resist Cameron's jokes which tended to be varied, politically incorrect, and often crude. Amber appeared to like jokes which were built around humiliation, pain, and cruelty. That fact Natasha had picked up on, very quickly. It was a trait which, while not being especially surprising, was rather worrying.

Natasha was keeping a good eye on the two girls, observing their moods and temperaments in different situations. She was taking nothing for granted, and while Scarlett was doing well, that could all be a masquerade with Amber being the genuine article who could be trusted one hundred per cent. It was difficult, but Natasha was not about to allow *Vengeance* to be betrayed even once more. They had allowed Scarlett into their secret world because they trusted her - to a point. Amber was an unknown and nobody had yet cracked what was going on in the mind of the twelve-year-old.

However, that same mind would receive a bullet from Natasha's pistol, should she dare to betray any of them - a fate which would apply in equal amounts to Scarlett as well.

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### **Blairhoyle**

Kaitlin was getting concerned that her stomach might explode.

The youngster had put away an enormous portion of turkey, with all the trimmings, and maybe a bit too much sage & onion stuffing. Copious amounts of fizzy juice - mainly Irn Bru, but some Coke too - had washed down the delicious lunch which Alexandra and Charlotte had put together. For the youngsters, it was an amazing time to unwind, joke, and eat - eating was by far the favourite pastime for Naomi, Kaitlin, Harper, Diana, Jake, and Charlotte. Considering the junior company, the jokes became very crude, and decidedly salty - with the assistance of Captain and Lieutenant Perrin, not to mention Lieutenant Commanders Blake and Sharp. Alexandra tolerated the crude behaviour, mainly because she was used to it after many years of being a naval wife, but also because her family was together - which was a rarity, to say the least. As for Cassie and Andrew, they loved the light-hearted atmosphere and they spent a lot of time chatting and trying to control their three children who were basically out of control - as was he four-legged Sasha, who was under the table, getting in the way.

It was time for the dessert course. Alexandra and Cassie vanished into the kitchen while Charlotte pressganged Jake and Naomi (under threat of pain) to assist with clearing the table of all traces remaining from the main course. Jake returned with an armful of bowls which were placed before Alexandra's seat, at the kitchen end of the large dining table. Richard rose to place another log on the fire while Andrew went around topping up the adult's wine glasses. Kaitlin and Harper were trying to freak out Diana with cruder and cruder jokes, however, Sarah whispered something into Harper's ear and the girl looked horrified. Sarah repeated a revised version of the joke for Kaitlin who looked equally horrified. Sarah grinned at Diana as she sat back down again. Diana mouthed a 'thank you' to her saviour. While Diana was getting used to Harper's salty language, some of the jokes were just - well - sick. Then the pudding arrived.

"Quiet!" Charlotte bellowed, and everybody sat up sharply.

"Aye, aye, ma'am!" Richard chuckled as he sat at attention.



Charlotte grinned as she flipped off the overhead lights. Alexandra came in, and she placed a massive Christmas pudding down on a large mat. There was a large sprig of real holly in the top and it smelt divine. Cassie and Charlotte placed several items on the table – rum butter and brandy sauce. Then, Charlotte handed Cassie a box of matches, and Alexandra a bottle of expensive cognac. The cognac was poured – liberally – over the pudding with a small amount poured into a spoon which had been nestling in hot water. The cognac warmed up smartly before Cassie struck a match and lit the spoonful of flammable alcohol. The burning liquid was poured over the pudding which spontaneously burst into blue flames.

The children were all speechless as they gazed at the flickering blue flames which caressed the enormous pudding.

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## **London**

Electra lay on a sofa, cradling her sore tummy.

"You always were a big eater, Electra," her father chuckled.

"I haven't eaten so well in a long time, Daddy – that was wonderful."

"You lay there and rest, honey."

"Love you, Daddy."

"You want some chocolate?" her brother, Simon asked.

"I'll explode if I eat another thing."

"A wafer-thin mint, Electra?"

"No."

"It's only wafer-thin?"

"No."

"Just one?"

"You trying to *make* me explode, Simon?"

"Just teasing."

"Want to watch a movie?" Electra asked.

"Not something girly."

"How about something easy on the eyes," Electra commented as she perused her father's DVD collection. "How about this one?"

Fourteen-year-old Simon studied the DVD case which his ten-year-old sister was holding up. He raised an eyebrow – it was barely what *he* might watch, let alone his baby sister. He shook his head, knowing that the Electra standing before him was no longer the innocent little girl he had once known.

"Okay," he conceded, and he sat down as Electra placed the disc into the DVD player.

"What are we watching?" his father asked.

Simon pointed at the DVD case.

"Not exactly Christmassy."

"She picked it."

"Okay."

Patrick came in and he sat down, picking up the DVD case as he did so.

"Really, Edward?"

"She picked it," Edward responded defensively.

"You got a problem, Grandpa?" Electra asked pointedly.

"No, sweetie," Patrick chuckled. "Why shouldn't a *Predator* watch *Predator*."

"Just what I thought," Electra said as she joined the three males on the sofa.

"Let me know if any of you wimps get scared."

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### ***Auchenross***

It was Sinead who was feeling decidedly uncomfortable.

Dakota was feeling very bloated, herself, but not to the same extent as Sinead who had kept eating and eating. Despite her appetite, Sinead was a beanpole and her body was mostly muscle. Dakota was very happy to gloat while her mentor groaned as she stretched out on a couch.

"I did warn you, honey," Sinead's mother chuckled as she settled down for the afternoon movie. "Have you seen this movie before, Dakota?"

"Just bits," Dakota replied.

"Me too," Beatrice said.

"What are we watching?" Sinead asked.

"The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring," Dakota read from the TV guide.

"Cool!"

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### ***Beacon Croft***

Kate had had a little too much wine and she was fast asleep on the couch in the living room.

Jordan was having an animated conversation with David while Amy sat reading her book and enjoying a cup of tea. As for Craig, he was on the phone with his girl.

"Kate's pissed as a fucking newt - Dad gave her some wine . . . then she asked for more."

"How many glasses did she have?" Olivia asked.

"Two," Craig replied.

"*Lightweight!*"

"You get giggly after two cans of Irn Bru," Craig pointed out.

"*Funny!*"

"Do you fancy some err . . . you know?"

"I'm naked right now," Olivia responded seductively.

Craig grinned hugely as he felt movement in his trousers.

"Err, Mum, Dad - I'm off upstairs," Craig said.

"Better take a box of tissues, son," David chuckled as he threw a box at his son."

Jordan roared with laughter as the red-faced Craig bolted out of the living room.

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### **Lasswade Road**

It was the best Christmas ever, for them all.

For Jeremy, he had his mother back and they were a family. For Ewan, he had a family for the first time in years. He had long given up any thought of ever being free and being able to enjoy a normal life. Before leaving the United States, Ewan had spoken with Lucy, Sarah, and Shannon. They had each explained that he, like them, would always be a *Predator*. The memories and the urges would probably be with him until the day he died. However, what happened before then, was up to him. Ewan was getting closer to his fifteenth birthday and he had to decide what he wanted out of life. For the moment, he just wanted to live. He wanted to try and make up for the missing years. For that part, Jeremy had been doing his utmost, along with his father, to provide Ewan with as normal a life as they could give.

Ewan knew that Trevor was a British Army officer, and that was something which appealed to the boy, however, he had no idea if the Army would accept somebody like him. Ewan was certain that they would be aware of what he was and that would probably go against him. Only time would tell. Ewan was just going to have to live for the moment and take each day as it came and try to make the best of it. As the boy lay on his bed, staring at the ceiling, he tried to think of a time when he had been as happy as he was - he could not remember any moment when he had been happier.

Maybe 2017 was going to be a special year for him, and for his new friends.

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### **Blairhoyle**

It was very late by the time everybody went home.

Richard and Alexandra were sitting down on a sofa, watching TV and in Richard's case, dozing for a few minutes. Charlotte was sitting on the floor, her new laptop in her lap. She was unbelievably happy after the most perfect day ever.

"Was today fun, or what?" Sarah asked as she flopped down in a vacant chair.

Her father grunted something and went back to his dozing while Alexandra nodded tiredly.

"Thank you for giving me such a fabulous day," Charlotte said to everybody.

"You are very welcome, young lady," Richard said as he awoke from his doze.

"You get real words!" Sarah grumped.

"Thank you for all your help in the kitchen, today, Charlotte," Alexandra said. "It was very much appreciated, and you kept those little varmints of Cassie's in line."

"That was fun," Charlotte admitted.

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### ***Dreadnought House***

To say that Cassie was shocked would have been a major understatement.

"I'm tired. Can I go to bed, please?"

Cassie thought that she had misheard. Kaitlin was *admitting* that she was tired? Was Kaitlin *asking* to go to bed? Kaitlin actually said 'please'!

"Of course, honey."

Kaitlin gave Cassie a big hug and a kiss before repeating the exercise with Andrew.

"Night!" the little girl called out as she scampered off up the stairs with Sasha close behind.

"What about you two?" Cassie asked.

"Knackered," Naomi admitted as she gave Cassie then Andrew hugs and kisses. "Night."

"Thanks for everything," Jake said. "Night, guys."

The boy gave Cassie a hug before he followed the girls up the stairs.

"A successful day," Cassie said.

"Peace and quiet," Andrew grinned.

"You up for some?" Cassie asked leadingly.

"I thought you'd never ask."

Once everything was locked up, Cassie followed Andrew upstairs to their bedroom. Cassie stripped off her clothing and she lay on the bed, grinning up at Andrew as he pulled off his own clothes.

"Night!" Kaitlin bellowed, just as Andrew lay down atop his fiancé.

"Night!" Naomi responded, just as loudly.

"Night!" Jake shouted back,

"Woof!" Sasha threw in.

"Night!" Andrew called out.

"Night!" Cassie called before she began to giggle uncontrollably.

"Please fuck quietly, Cassie!" Kaitlin shouted out and Naomi could be heard giggling hard.

"I'll just go lock the door," Andrew suggested.