

Background

Organised crime is one of the greatest threats to the United Kingdom's national security. Organised crime groups are often involved in multiple profit-making criminal activities, from drug trafficking to modern slavery and from the sexual exploitation of children to the smuggling of illegal firearms, cybercrime, and human trafficking – serious and organised crime is everywhere. The National Crime Agency (NCA) tackles serious and organised crime, strengthens the UK's borders, fights fraud and cybercrime, and protects children and young people from sexual abuse and exploitation.

Gang-related organised crime in the United Kingdom is concentrated around the cities of London, Manchester and Liverpool and regionally across the West Midlands region, south coast and northern England, according to the Serious Organised Crime Agency which was superseded by the NCA in 2013. Scotland developed its own form of organised crime outside that of England and Wales.

The National Crime Agency (NCA) is a national law enforcement and police agency in the United Kingdom. It is the UK's lead agency against organised crime, be it human, weapon, or drug trafficking; cybercrime or economic crime that goes across regional and international borders, but it can be tasked to investigate any crime. The NCA has a strategic role in which it looks at the bigger picture across the UK, analysing how criminals are operating and how they can be disrupted. To do this it works closely with regional organised crime units (ROCs), the Serious Fraud Office, as well as individual police forces. It is also the United Kingdom point of contact for foreign agencies around the world such as Interpol, Europol, and the FBI.

Within the United Kingdom, the NCA has full operational capacity in England and Wales and Northern Ireland. The NCA's operations and powers in Scotland are limited to those inherited from its predecessor, the Serious Organised Crime Agency.

Scotland had a vulnerability in its fight against serious and organised crime. That vulnerability was intended to be filled by *Vengeance*.

Monday, 27th June, 2016

Northern Edinburgh

Jack McNafferty was forty-four and he led the McNafferty crime syndicate that was formed from four, formerly independent, crime families. Requirements for security and mutual-protection had drawn the once-feuding families together and for a little over ten years, they had profited immensely from their close relationship. He had no idea that his previously unchallenged lifestyle was about to come crashing down.

One member of his own family and another from the Campbell family were tax lawyers and they specialised in ensuring that all of the families' tax affairs were beyond reproach; they could account for just about every penny the families spent – legal or otherwise. Money laundering had been taken to a whole new level to ensure that every penny came out whiter than white. Other family members provided intelligence to give the families a heads up if a raid was on its way at some facility or other.

Despite Special Branch and other organisations knowing full well what the families were up to, there was zero evidence to mount even the most innocent of dawn raid or even to pull a family member over for a traffic inspection.

Jack McNafferty was well known enough that nobody ever dared to interfere with him, his family, or anybody linked with him or his family. People had vanished – it was rumoured that the syndicate had made over thirty people ‘disappear’ since its inception. Therefore, when McNafferty saw his route blocked by two vehicles he was decidedly unhappy. He slammed on the brakes of his burgundy BMW 7-series saloon and pushed open his door. Ahead of him, in a section of road without streetlights, he could make out two large, dark shapes parked in the road. His headlights illuminated the reinforced bumpers of two large 4x4s.

“If you value your lives, you will leave . . . NOW!” he growled.

“Cheeky jobby!” a weirdly electronic voice growled from the darkness.

“I was gonna say the fuckin’ same thing,” another added. “Fuckin’ diddy!”

“What the fuck is going on? Who the fuck are you numpties?” McNafferty roared.

With that two lights came to life, both of which appeared to McNafferty like a pair of collapsed suns as the pair of 24,000 lumen lights turned night into day. Three shapes stepped forwards into the light. The first wore crimson armour, the second blue, and the third grey with yellow. They were armed and all three wore masks.

“You fucking piece of shit, McNafferty,” the crimson one growled. “You have caused nowt but fuckin’ misery all over the fuckin’ country. Now it is time to pay the piper, you fuckin’ knobdobber.”

“You can’t hurt me – I control everything and there is fuck all a trio of fucking roasters can do about it!” McNafferty retorted angrily. “Now get the fuck outta my way before I kill you all.”

“You have forty-eight hours, McNafferty. Forty-eight hours to make restitution.”

“Fuck you!”

“In forty-eight hours,” the yellow one said. “We come for you.”

“Fucking jessies, wasting my time!” McNafferty muttered as he climbed back into his car and made a quick U-turn in the road.

McNafferty was shaken as he found a different route home that night.

Later that night. . .

Blairhoyle

Cassie and Keira were enjoying a few minutes of peace and quiet.

“He made my blood boil. Seeing the bastard after having read his file made me want to slot the fucker.”

Cassie had not long returned from her trip out with Cameron and Natasha. She and Keira were discussing McNafferty while the girls were getting ready for bed. Alexandra Perrin was lounging in another chair reading her book. The day had been long and very busy. The three girls still had two more days of school before the summer holidays. For Harper, it was also a little emotional as she would be starting at a new school in Edinburgh in August.

“Hold on, Keira, – it’s gone *very* quiet – I’m going to go check on the little darlings,” Cassie grinned.

“Need backup?” Keira teased.

“I think I can handle three little girls – trained killers or not!”

“Good luck,” Alexandra chuckled from her chair as her daughter rolled her eyes.

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As Cassie pushed open the bedroom door, the three girls froze.

Harper had hold of Kaitlin under her arms while Naomi had hold of her cousin’s ankles. Kaitlin, in turn, was suspended two feet in the air. The instant Harper and Naomi saw Cassie, they both jumped back and Kaitlin fell to the floor with a little scream.

“Goddamn bitches!” she moaned as she got to her feet.

“Do I even want to know?” Cassie asked.

“Not really,” Naomi replied with a sheepish grin as she handed her knicker-clad cousin some pyjamas.

“Kaitlin – pound in the jar,” Cassie ordered as Kaitlin dumped her knickers on the floor and pulled on her pyjama bottoms and top.

“You are *both* going to pay!” Kaitlin breathed as she glared at Naomi and Harper before the eight-year-old left the bedroom.

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At the bottom of the stairs, Kaitlin headed for the living room where she found a disapproving Keira who just pointed at the swear jar while Alexandra ignored the young girl.

“How do you know that’s what I’m down here for?”

“Am I wrong?”

“No . . . but. . .”

“It’s you, Kaitlin. . .”

“Am I that bad?”

Keira just glanced at the pink swear jar labelled ‘Kaitlin’ which was crammed full of dozens of pound coins, several five-pound notes, and at least two ten-pound notes were visible.

“The Commander thinks he might be able to afford his own destroyer from your jar alone.”

“Ha, ha!” Kaitlin sneered as she dropped a pound coin into the jar before she bolted for the stairs.

The following evening

Tuesday, 28th June

Vengeance Command Centre

The girls were assisting the more senior *Vengeance* members with their preparations.

Harper was in charge of the weapons and she had triple-checked every firearm . . . twice! Each blade had been finely polished and every magazine inspected and loaded. Naomi and Kaitlin provided assistance with the combat suits.

"I could get used to this!" Cameron chuckled as Naomi brought him over his boots. "Thank you, Naomi."

"You're welcome, Cam," the nine-year-old grinned.

"Here, Nats," Kaitlin offered, holding out a pair of armoured gauntlets.

"What about me?" Cassie demanded.

"Only got two hands!" Kaitlin huffed as she ignored Cassie.

"I think she's still annoyed about the jar, last night," Keira reasoned with a smirk in the direction of the youngest girl.

Kaitlin scowled at Keira and continued with assisting Natasha. A few mouthed obscenities were visible which had Cassie chuckling as she pulled on her own armoured gauntlets.

"Thanks, girls," Crimson said as she stepped up into the driving seat of *Sabre*.

"You're doing good – now, go and train and we'll see you all later," Drift added as he joined his sister in the vehicle.

The two vehicles left the base, with the dark grey KTM 1290 Super Duke GT motorcycle ahead of the hulking armoured Range Rover Sentinel 4x4.

The night was intended as a partial dry-run for what was to come the next night when they went after that conniving bastard – assuming he did *not* follow their instructions to leave town which was highly likely. Mind you, they were all looking forward to kicking the bastard's arse should he stay. McNafferty had more than one home, and his family, not to mention the rest of the syndicate, had several more. Q was doing his best to keep an eye on as many as possible properties and syndicate members as he could with his state-of-the-art equipment.

Nemesis coasted in and out of the light traffic as she kept her eyes peeled for any action to liven up the otherwise dull evening.

Vengeance Command Centre

"Not bad for a pussy!"

"Harper – we really need to talk about your language," Keira said pointedly.

"In here, it's Polaris, Scorpion," Polaris replied with a grin.

"Cocky little bitch, aren't we?"

"She's proud of it, too!" Glide threw in with a cheeky smirk.

"Tell me about it!" Scorpion laughed as she kicked her sister's legs out from under her.

"Not bad, I suppose. . ." Polaris growled as she moved to attack her big sister.

“Stop picking on the new girl!” Prowl suggested as she intercepted Polaris and threw her down to the ground.

“So, you want to make it personal. . .” Polaris began.

“Too damn right!” Prowl responded as she attacked the other girl.

Scorpion and Glide just stood back and watched the scrap erupt.

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“Tsk, tsk – why do you girls always have to fight?” Q commented as he peered into the room, a mug of coffee in one hand.

“Ignore those bitches – I’m way better behaved,” Glide commented as she followed Q through to the *Vengeance* Control Room.

Q raised one eyebrow and he gazed back at the diminutive eight-year-old who just smiled sweetly and walked past him. He looked at Scorpion who just shrugged and followed Glide into the Control Room.

“Don’t touch anything, okay?” Q warned the young vigilante.

“I know!” Glide commented as she promptly pressed a key on the keyboard and an image appeared on each of the large screens.

“Glide!” Q growled as he pressed another button and the image faded.

“What was that?” Scorpion asked. “It looked like the inside of an aircraft hangar. . .”

“No idea. . .” Q muttered as he sat himself down in his large, and very comfortable, leather command chair.

“Why did that picture of Abby look like she was naked?” Prowl asked with a smirk.

“It was a low-cut top!” Q said quickly.

“Riiight!” Polaris replied sarcastically.

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A phone rang and Q answered it with a click of his mouse.

“Good evening, welcome to *Vengeance*!”

“Hi, Q – it’s. . .”

“I know it’s you, Flare!” Q chuckled.

“Oh,” the girl pouted over the connection.

“How’s it going in Chicago?”

“Not bad – things are quiet for a change.”

“What have you got for me?”

“We can see no unusual activities on those accounts you sent us. Nobody is preparing to go on any trips as far as we can tell.”

“Well, done! Let me know when you get anymore . . . oh, give my love to Hal when you next speak.”

“I will, Q.”

“Thank you, Synthesis!” Q said as he cut the connection.

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“He’s in luv!” Glide quipped as she rolled her eyes.

“Am not, you little. . .”

“I may only be eight but I know that you’ve been shafting Hal.”

Scorpion almost spat out a mouthful of coffee at Glide’s deadpan expression.

“Would you like me to wire your bed to the mains, dear girl?” Q growled with added menace.

“I’m good, thanks.”

Later that night

Ratho Station

Jasper and Lynn were out that night, with all three kids.

“Stop touching me!” Jessica moaned.

“I’m not!” Christopher replied.

“Oh, God – just grow up!” Olivia groaned as she was pressed against the rear door of the Jaguar by her sister.

“Shut up!” Jasper ordered and Lynn chuckled. “Yes, very funny!”

“Dad. . . Oh wow – Jess look!”

Chris pointed out the window as a dark grey motorcycle overtook their car. He stared at the women astride the motorcycle and he took in the dull yellow and very dark grey combat suit. The eleven-year-old boy followed the long legs, taking in the Tanto, past the holstered pistol, and over the Katana sword on the vigilante’s back. Then she was gone.

“*Vengeance*. . .” he breathed.

“What was that, Chris?” Lynn asked her son as she exchanged a glance with her husband.

“*That* was a vigilante – they are the coolest!” he replied.

“Hot-headed,” Jasper commented. “Lacking in discipline. . .”

“They help people, Dad.”

“They kill people, son – the jury’s still out on how much they actually *help*, in my opinion.”

Vengeance Team Alpha

As they drove down the A89 about two-thirds of a mile east of Dechmont, it happened.

They were approaching a roundabout when an enormous, forty-tonne articulated lorry came onto the roundabout from the left, at speed and drove *over* the grass roundabout, flattening a road sign as it turned hard to the right and made directly for the *Vengeance* 4x4, on the *wrong* side of the road. Crimson made to veer over the central meridian but a Mitsubishi Shogun came up parallel to the truck before the 4x4 stopped and the large heavy goods vehicle jack-knifed.

Crimson stomped on the brake pedal and several tonnes of armoured 4x4 came to a very rapid halt several feet from the stopped lorry. Drift released himself from his brace position and immediately scanned around them for any threats other than the errant truck. Nemesis had to make use of all her skills as she had to avoid both the errant HGV *and* the massive 4x4 driven by her fellow vigilante.

For a brief moment, Drift considered it just an out of control lorry, but almost immediately, the armoured 4x4 came under sustained fire from two men in the cab of the lorry and several more men who came around the back end of the truck.

Nemesis quickly moved behind the 4x4 for cover and pulled out an H&K G36C from the pannier of her motorcycle.

Vengeance Command Centre

"Taking fire from all directions – Team Alpha is under fire!"

Q, Scorpion, and Glide were all stunned into silence by Nemesis' announcement. Q brought up live video of the scene. A mosaic was quickly built up from the eight cameras mounted on *Sabre*, as well as the two cameras mounted on Nemesis' motorcycle. The motorcycle cameras showed a slanted view as the machine lay on its right side on the ground.

"You have fire coming from *Sabre's* nine o'clock, seven o'clock, and four o'clock," Q advised his team members.

"Copy that!" Nemesis responded.

"I have men on the lorry – engaging!" Drift advised.

Sabre

As bullets impacted *Sabre's* armoured body and armoured windscreen, Drift activated the countermeasures system and selected the button labelled '**M7**' and that labelled '**M99**'.

At the rear of the capacious bonnet, a small hatch slid to one side. Just below the hatch were the 66-millimetre muzzles belonging to a pair of fixed, slightly angled, vertically mounted grenade launchers. Drift flipped up a red lever and a warning tone sounded in their earpieces. Nemesis shifted herself closer to the armoured vehicle, knowing what was to come.

"Firing!" Drift called out and he pressed a pair of buttons simultaneously.

There were a pair of loud bangs and the two M99 blunt trauma grenades flew into the air before detonating thirty feet above *Sabre* and cutting down three men who stood on the roof of the articulated trailer.

“Nemesis, standby for M98 and M82,” Drift ordered as he selected the advised grenades from the control panel.

Nemesis readied her motorcycle – the engine was still running – and she strapped the G36C across her chest ready for use.

“Firing!”

Four more grenades were fired from two pairs of 66-millimetre launchers fitted into the rear of the armoured vehicle and aimed out to the sides. Two of the grenades passed close to Nemesis before they exploded a few seconds later along with the other pair. Crimson immediately reversed under cover of the copious amount of smoke (from the M82 grenade) which blocked all vision – except for the infra-red filters on *Sabre*’s cameras. Nemesis had hauled her motorcycle upright and shot two of the attackers before she joined *Sabre* as the vehicle performed a perfect J-turn. The attackers, stunned by the detonating pyrotechnic M98 grenades, each of which had contained three sub-munitions, staggered amid the chaos.

“*Sabre* is clear!” Crimson reported, much to everybody’s relief.

“Nemesis is clear!”

Vengeance Command Centre

“Hey, dickheads!”

Polaris and Prowl turned to face Glide.

“They were just attacked – out of the fucking blue!” Glide advised her older counterparts.

“Crap!” Polaris pointed out as the three girls ran to the Control Room.

Sabre

“You two ready to go back in?” Nemesis asked as she jumped in the back having parked up her motorcycle.

“Time for some payback!” Drift replied as Crimson stomped her right foot, flat to the floor.

Sabre wound around several stopped vehicles before coming to a stop on the opposite side of the central meridian, a few yards from the cab of the dark blue, Tesco HGV. All three vigilantes burst out of their transport and ran forwards, each brandishing a G36C at their shoulder. It was difficult to see much beyond the seemingly abandoned truck, thanks to the swirling smoke from the M82 grenades.

Crimson ran to the rear of the jack-knifed trailer and almost received a bullet for her trouble as two men ran towards the Mitsubishi Shogun. There was a lot of shouting as the team of men attempted to regain some semblance of control. Crimson sent a short burst in the direction of the Shogun which had the two men diving for cover. Sirens could be heard coming from various directions which was spurring the attackers on with their escape.

While Crimson was at the opposite end of the lorry, Drift and Nemesis had run towards the cab where at least one man was visible with a gun in his hand.

“We need to go slow, Drift,” Nemesis warned. “There could be an innocent in there.”

“Yeah,” Drift replied. “You take the passenger side, I’ll take the driver’s side.”

The two vigilantes separated, one to each side of the cab.

The cab of the lorry was full of smoke – it’s glazing had been penetrated by shrapnel from the M99 blunt trauma grenade allowing the smoke to enter. One gunman was escaping out the passenger side but he was just about to swing himself down to the ground when he sensed movement and turned to see an armoured form and then nothing as Nemesis rammed the breech of her G36 into the man’s face. As he dropped to the road, like a sack of potatoes, Nemesis jumped over the body and up in the cab.

The smoke billowed out past her and she could make out two forms inside the cab, and a third hauling open the driver’s door, beyond.

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Nemesis dropped the G36C and drew her sidearm. The FN Five-seveN Mk2 pistol was much more suited for the tight confines of the lorry’s cab. She moved across the passenger seat and brought her pistol up towards a lone gunman who crouched over another man who was lying in a supine position across the driver’s seat and the central section of the cab.

The gunman knew he was trapped – he had a pair of armoured individuals blocking his escape. He momentarily considered the windscreen, but he knew that would take too long. Neither was he suicidal – his wage was not *that* good! He dropped his pistol and held his hands up and then he found himself seized by the male vigilante and thrown bodily out of the cab onto the road below.

Nemesis turned her attentions to the supine form below her who wore a hi-vis jacket with ‘TESCO’ printed on it.

“I must be dreaming?” the man quipped as he passed out.

The first on the scene was a Police Scotland BMW with two officers.

They stopped their car a couple dozen yards away from what appeared to be a jack-knifed Tesco delivery lorry which sat amongst clouds of smoke. Several prone bodies were visible and to the left side of the lorry there was a Mitsubishi Shogun 4x4 with what appeared to be an armoured, heavily armed, vigilante guarding a pair of men who knelt beside the 4x4.

“*Vengeance*,” one of the police officers muttered to his partner.

They were both very aware of *Vengeance* and what they were. They also knew not to get involved – those were direct orders from the Home Secretary at the Home Office in London. The slowly approached the female vigilante.

“Two for you,” Crimson said as the police officers approached. “Their weapons are down there. Have fun!”

With that, the vigilante ran around the trailer of the lorry and vanished. After handing both men over to another pair of police officers who had just arrived, the two officers headed after the

vanished vigilante. As they passed around the rear of the jack-knifed trailer, more of the scene unfolded before their disbelieving eyes. All around them, they could see discarded weapons, prone bodies, discarded bullet shells, and then they laid eyes on two more vigilantes.

“You have the driver, up in the cab – he’s unconscious at the moment. You’ll also find two gunmen unconscious in front of the cab,” the male vigilante advised the two officers before both vigilantes joined the third at their armoured Range Rover.

Forty-five minutes later. . .

Sabre stopped amid the other vehicles and Q gazed over the damaged paintwork and glazing.

The vehicle would probably need to go away for repairs – a pain in the neck, if so. Either way, the vehicle would not be available for a number of weeks. The important thing, though, was that *Crimson* and *Drift* were both uninjured, as was *Nemesis* who had just pulled up a few feet away.

“That sucked!” *Cassie* growled as she removed her helmet and mask.

“Are you okay?” *Naomi* asked.

“A little sore from some stray bullets, but otherwise, I’m fine,” *Cassie* replied as *Naomi* took her helmet and mask from her.

“I’ll do that!” *Kaitlin* said as she barged in before she took the helmet and mask from her cousin.

Naomi grinned as *Kaitlin* helped *Cassie* with her gauntlets and boots.

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“That bastard has ignited a firestorm,” *Natasha* commented angrily as she sat down with a coffee, after having taken a long shower.

“He has *no* idea what he has unleashed on his organisation,” *Cameron* said with equal venom.

“Is *Vengeance* going to war?” *Keira* asked.

“Too damn right!” *Cassie* replied.

**Introduction compiled from NCA website and Wikipedia*