

## Twin Blades Dancing

Location: Deepwater Horizon

Time: 9:48 p.m., local time

Date: April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010

They stand weaponless. Half-crouched. Arms raised. Trembling. Lungs grasping for oxygen. *Alone for the first time in years and still we're fighting*, Victor realizes. *What's new?*

"Come dance more," she says between aching gasps. "Or is your footwork as poor as ever?"

*Oh, very funny*, Victor thinks, licking his teeth. He swallows lungfuls of air. "Last time my mind was on bomb defusal." Another lungful. "So you can kiss that sarcasm goodbye, thank you."

"I'd rather kiss you," came her reply, stroking the curves of her cracked lips.

Even from across the room, her breath slides down his chest like fireworks. *Focus*. Leaking drill mud swallows their boots as the wellbore moans beneath the oil rig platform. *We're surrounded by processing pipes. One spark could ignite the oil. One spark could mean ecological disaster*.

She launches herself at him.

*Left hand leading, right hand drawn back. Looks like a haymaker*. He'd played her games enough to know better. The muscles in her left shoulder tense for a millisecond. *She'll shift leading hands mid-attack. Try to land a hit while I'm defending the wrong side*. His arms shoot outward in anticipation of the shift. Her arm glides across his open grip. *Gotcha*. He leans into her torso, oxytocin mixing with adrenaline as he presses into her familiar skin. *Focus. Get lower, trip her*. He slides a leg across hers. *Pull*. Momentum throws her figure over his body, across the room. She slaps against the mud, then sinks.

He flings words after her. "What was that about footwork, Vivienne?"

Wet soot flutters creakily with the subtle motions of Vivienne's submerged body. After a moment, she pushes herself out from under the mud, wiping clinging brown muck from her face. She turns, drenched, hunched, wheezing. Then she flashes that devious smile of hers, eyes gesturing towards the wall beside her. A wall covered in processing pipes.

*One spark ... Was this part of her plan? Did I just play right into it?*

Barely standing atop tremoring muscles, she pats a nearby pipe like the back of an old friend. Her grin widens. "Lucky me."

He notices the skinning knife in her other hand. *She must've grabbed it when she was submerged. That's. Just. Perfect*. It was far from perfect. *I need to stop her*. He starts forward but collapses onto his extended foot, too exhausted to walk properly. *Grab the knife before she can—*

"Oops," she says intentionally before swinging the blade. Metal screeches against metal, hammering angry sparks into the pipe's release valve.

The oil rig shudders downwards against rippling torrents of fire.

*One spark. It's going to consume us.*

She crumples into the mud.

His body caves, too.

“What have you done?” he whispers.

Their eyes embrace, glinting within their audience of flames.

“Does it matter? We’ll both die here.”

“Dammit.”

Tears cool their cheeks against the heat.

*Temperature rising.*

He continues, “Why’d you do it?”

“Hold me.”

“Vivienne.”

“Shut up and hold me.”

*Flames drawing closer.*

Victor drags his limbs through the drill mud to cradle her.

She nestles her head beneath his chin.

Screams cascade from the deck above while dancing embers trace constellations through muddy waves.