

Predator or Prey

A
Drake Maxwell story

By
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Chapter 1

Panting, out of breath and sweating profusely, Drake Maxwell raised his pistol. The weapon was his favorite pistol. A heavily customized fifty caliber Desert Eagle, that he'd used to save his backside more times than he cared to count or remember. He assumed a defensive stance he had taken many times before in front of a boarded up business that was on the corner he had just turned. Drake braced himself for the call to action. His pursuers didn't make him wait long at all. The mob chasing him barreled recklessly around the corner. Their brash headlong pursuit of Drake worked both for them and against them at the same time. It allowed them to get a good bead on his location, but it caused them to turn the corner too quickly thus preventing them from recognizing the change in their target's tactics. It left them defensive; open to be the recipient of his weapon's venom.

Tactically speaking, moments in which your opponent has surrendered the ball to you, laid down in front of you, and encouraged you in the strongest of terms to kick them hard don't come often and they don't last. So Drake didn't disappoint them by making them wait. His instincts took over and his pistol became the extension of those instincts by making the most of the moment. In short order, with a multitude of deafening blasts from his hand cannon masquerading as a pistol, he had taken out most of the mob's front rank with rounds from his pistol.

The change in tactics had the effect Drake was hoping for. It killed the group's momentum and forced them to be defensive for once in this rolling engagement. They scrambled for cover and for whatever firing positions the ruined urban landscape afforded. Has this mob been educated or had the heart for immediate vengeance, things would have gone much differently. They would have used their numbers against him secure in the knowledge that determined mobs always get what they want eventually. The strength of a seething mass of people forming a mob is two-fold; momentum and numbers. The group would have surged into him taking whatever damage he could dish out and still taken him. It would have been bloody and costly, but it would have worked.

Drake's long experience had taught him the cardinal rule of modern combat especially the urban variety; mobility is life. If he allowed this situation to become a fixed gun battle their edge in sheer numbers would finish him off eventually, most likely in short order. He had to keep moving in order to keep this fight very fluid. It was his only chance to survive, and not a good one at that. So while his enemies were taking cover and preparing to return fire, he moved quickly in a running low crawl into the ruined tenement behind him while reloading his pistol. He opened the building's front door with a single swift kick to the knob. The door must have been rotten, because his kick knocked it off its hinges sending it crashing loudly in the building's gloomy interior.

Returning to his low crawl stance, he quickly worked his way into the building. Drake knew almost immediately that this had been the right decision and that his opponents didn't like it as they began firing into the building with a passionate and reckless abandon. He could hear and almost feel the bullets whizzing past him as he ran at a dead sprint to the rear of the building praying for an unlocked rear door. The mob registered their extreme displeasure with his choice by turning the building around Drake into something of a carnival shooting gallery.

The mob was tearing the building apart with constant gunfire. This forced Drake back to his low crawl stance and forced him to increase his speed as he urgently sought an exit. He turned the corner inside the building and saw it. He made a break for the door as quickly as he could with bullets still whizzing past him only to have his hopes dashed as Drake saw a chain securing the door in place. It was going to take way too much time to get that open.

The mob trailing him would be in this building in a matter of seconds. This door could take upwards of half a minute to open, unless Drake took a chance or two. So he reached into his bag of goodies and retrieved two items. The first was his last flash bang grenade. He switched the detonation method of the unit to proximity mode and gave it a hefty toss for the front door. In a couple of seconds, Drake was able to breath a sigh of relief as he heard the high pitched beep of the grenade confirming that it was armed and ready for use. It also served as a reminder that he couldn't go back the way he came.

The second item was a concussion kit. He placed it on the back door near the access bar and placed the shaping plate on it to direct the blast into the hinges. Drake took cover and waited. After a tense few seconds inched by, the flash bang went off. When he felt the detonation of the grenade, he keyed the concussion kit's detonator, and heard the deafening roar of the kit exploding. Drake stood to find a gaping hole where the door had been. He then sprinted out the door and into the alley to freedom.

Chapter 2

Tactical mistakes can be very costly, especially when facing an opponent with an advantage in skill or raw numbers. Drake was forced to make one. He had pursuers hot on his heels entering the tenement. The flash bang had slowed them down a bit, but they would recover their momentum shortly, so he had to make the most of this pause. The tactical problem Drake faced was simple; he had no detail on the alley behind the blown rear exit of the building. He didn't know where it led, what were the best points of egress, the choke points best suited for ambush, etc.

The immediate concern was exiting the building. It looked clear, but looks can be deceiving. A small tactical team could be positioned in concealment somewhere not to mention the very real danger of a sniper. The answer would have been a smoke grenade, but he didn't have one and even if he did it would blind him as well as he tried to grope

his was down the alley. With some cautious trepidation Drake took a deep breath and launched himself out into the alley behind the building.

He moved quickly at a cautious sprint moving from position of cover to position of cover. In short order, he reached the mouth of the alley where it dumped out into Mount Vernon Avenue. The risk with this transition increased exponentially as Mount Vernon Avenue was a very wide street with a plethora of firing positions. His tactical pondering of the situation was cut short by noise behind him in the alley. His pursuers had cleared the tenement and were in the alley.

Drake was forced to act. He pulled the last flash band from his satchel, set it for an impact detonation, and tossed it at his pursuers. Drake crouched behind a garbage can after throwing it, and the roar of the flash bang erupted a few seconds later. Drake looked from behind the can to find his pursuers all down. Drake then turned left down the avenue and sprinted away from the scene hoping that he broke free this time.

Drake reached the corner of Mount Vernon Avenue and Long Street without incident. He was considering holstering his pistol when he noticed some movement on one of the rooftops in front of him. He saw a flash and almost managed to duck in time, but not quite. He was struck in the left shoulder by a bullet of some type. The impact drove him to the ground and the pain was excruciating. Drake crawled behind a car to gain some small measure of cover and check the impact point.

His worst fears were confirmed. The bullet had sliced through his body armor like it was gauze. He knew two things almost instantly. He was facing a skillful opponent with armor piercing ammo, and unless he could stop the bleeding he had about ninety seconds of life left to him. Facing a well armed sniper under good conditions is bad enough, but to face one at night with poor lighting and wounded was suicidal.

The sniper was his primary concern to be sure. He couldn't move at all without taking more fire and given his current condition it would be totally insane. So he did the only thing he could. He reached into his harness and pulled out the red magazine, and swapped it out with the one in his gun, (including the chambered round). The magazine contained high velocity armor piercing rounds that were designed to penetrate light armored vehicles and concrete walls.

He then crawled forward to the front edge of the car and activated the night scope of top of his pistol. Just as he was preparing to take aim, a round sliced through the car above him, barely missing him. He edged up and took aim. The scope identified the target almost immediately. The sniper was about thirty yards away from him on a roof behind a low cinderblock wall.

Drake noticed some odd behavior from this sniper. He appeared to be having a hard time acquiring him. He was sweeping the barrel of his rifle left to right quickly back and forth hoping to spot him. As this realization began to sink in, Drake was thankful for the IR dampening of his body armor. It had been obscenely expensive at the time when he

purchased it, but he was exceedingly thankful for it right now. Drake raised his pistol, took careful aim, and squeezed the trigger. His weapon convulsed much more violently than usual as it expelled the bullet from the barrel. In a fraction of a second, it traversed the distance and impacted the cinderblock wall that was providing cover to the erstwhile sniper. The bullet then proceeded to tear through it like a hot knife through butter striking the sniper in the chest.

The impact upon the target was exceedingly violent. The sniper tried to control his movements, but was unable to do so as the kinetic energy of the bullet was too great. And he fell from the roof crashing to the ground with a loud, wet, pulpy, thud.

Hoping the immediate threat had abated enough to allow Drake to move, Drake briefly pondered his options. He was about half a mile from the nearest hospital, which put that option totally out of reach for him. The rate at which he was bleeding meant he couldn't make it that far. He didn't have the gear necessary to staunch the bleeding from a wound of this type. Barring a miracle, it was beginning to look like game over.

Just as Drake was preparing to abandon hope he noticed something. It was a hand painted medical services sign on a house almost a block away. The sort of sign usually meant that an unlicensed street doc lived there. Typically this sort was notoriously unreliable and exceptionally costly, but he was running out of time and options. So he stood and moved gingerly down to the house. The pain from his wound was severe and the amount of blood he had lost left him feeling light headed.

It took him a few precious seconds to arrive at the house. It seemed quite well cared for and had a chain link fence around it. He opened the gate, staggered to the entrance, and rang the doorbell. The last thing he saw was a light come on inside the house, and then he blacked out.