

# KERRY'S FIRST MISSION



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James Adams was lucky, he got straight onto the top rung of the ladder with his Anti-Terrorist mission. Kerry's first mission wasn't nearly as exciting...

James and Kyle were playing Tekken. James was on his bed, Kyle on the floor.

‘Come on Nina...’ James screamed, tipping his body with the joypad.

The Playstation yelled out, ‘NINA WILLIAMS WINS.’

Kyle threw down his controller, James punched the air.

Kyle shrugged, ‘Like to see you do that to me in real life.’

‘Got my Karate blue belt yesterday,’ James said.

Kyle laughed, ‘Good, now you can mash up the eight-year-olds.’

Kerry banged on the door.

‘It’s open,’ James said.

Kerry walked in, ‘Hey Kyle, didn’t know you were here.’

Kerry had a big grin. She went down her pocket and pulled out a plastic card.

‘Look what I’ve got,’ Kerry said.

‘What is it?’ James asked.

‘Card for the eighth floor,’ Kyle explained. ‘Mission Preparation. It means Kerry’s got a mission.’

James smiled, ‘Cool. When you going?’

Kerry shrugged, ‘Dunno. I see the Mission Controller for my briefing tomorrow morning.’

‘Who you got?’ Kyle asked.

‘Dennis King,’ Kerry said.

‘DK, he’s good,’ Kyle said. ‘Best one to get. Nice old guy, handles all the routine stuff.’

‘Anyway,’ Kerry said. ‘I better go to bed. It’s gone eleven. I just had to tell someone. I’m really nervous.’

‘Before you go Kerry,’ Kyle said. ‘I bought a big bag of fake stuff back from Manila. There’s Lacoste shirts for four quid. Nike shorts, fiver. It’s all in my room. You want a look?’

Kerry shook her head, ‘Nah. I bought some of that fake stuff off someone before. Put it through the wash once and it shrunk down to about half the size.’

‘It’s good stuff,’ Kyle said. ‘Most of it comes out the same factories that make the real ones.’

‘I’ll pass,’ Kerry said. ‘I’m going to bed now anyway. See you at breakfast I expect.’

‘Night Kerry,’ James said. ‘Good luck tomorrow.’

Kerry went out.

‘All that stuff you sold me better not bloody shrink Kyle,’ James said.

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First impressions count. Doing well on your first mission is important: If you get a couple of easy missions in without problems, you soon get moved up to the interesting stuff.

Kerry never slept. She was awake at 6AM and went for breakfast. She couldn’t get her head straight. Her guts were in her mouth. She flicked through a morning paper, but her mind wasn’t on it. There were three hours to kill before the briefing.

Kerry went back up to her room. She brushed her teeth for the second time and combed what there was of her hair. Kerry never realized how long it would take to grow back when she shaved her head for Basic Training. There was a rule that you were supposed to tuck your t-shirt in. Nobody ever enforced it, but Kerry thought she ought to tuck it in for her first mission briefing. Best to look extra

smart. She was sure there was something important she'd forgotten. But there wasn't. She'd thought of everything 500 times.

Kerry looked at her watch. Still over an hour and a half to wait. She hated the way time lasts forever when you're anxious.

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Kerry got out of the lift on the eighth floor. Every door had a notice warning of dire punishments for anyone found in the wrong room. All except Dennis King's door, which was at the end of the corridor, wide open.

Dennis King was at his desk. Dyed hair, combed back and greased down. Thick glasses with black frames. He was on the phone, sounding pretty frantic about a missing fax. Three boys sat opposite King. One of them was Josh Clarke. He was fifteen. He used to be Kerry's Spanish tutor when she first got to CHERUB.

Josh whispered so he didn't blot out Dennis King's phone call.

'Hey Kerry. Congratulations on passing basic. First mission?'

Kerry nodded.

'Nervous?'

Kerry shook her head, 'Not really.'

Dennis King slammed the phone down, 'The Swiss. They're all idiots.' He looked at Kerry, 'You must be Chung,'

'Chang,' Kerry said. 'Kerry Chang.'

Dennis King reached between the kids sitting at his desk and shook Kerry's hand.

‘Nice to meet you Kerry. Call me DK, everybody does. Everything you need is in the box in drawer sixteen. Read the briefing, talk to Josh if you have any questions. Nice easy first mission for you.’

Kerry found drawer sixteen and lifted out a plastic box. It contained the mission briefing, Kerry’s passport, a set of airline tickets, a mobile phone and a metal tube about sixty centimetres long. The tube had a yellow warning triangle with *DANGER: HIGH EXPLOSIVE* written beneath it.

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*MISSION BRIEFING FOR KERRY CHANG*

*STANDARD FAA COMPLIANCE MISSION*

*NUMBER 1037 (March 2004)*

*Mission Notes:*

*FAA compliance missions are part of an ongoing agreement between the Federal Aviation Authority in the United States and the Civil Aviation Authority in the United Kingdom.*

*Every year the British Government makes 120 official attempts to breach American airport security, in an ongoing program to detect security lapses. The Americans make the same number of attempts to breach British airport security.*

*Each attempt is slightly different. In this instance, an unaccompanied child, provided by CHERUB, will try to breach security at Chicago O’Hare airport. The child will be carrying an M72 Light Anti Tank rocket. This is a large item and the probability of detection is high.*

*The child will be waved through British airport security before boarding his/her flight. In the event the weapon is detected in the United States, the child must produce the diplomatic documentation provided and ask to speak to the Airport Security Manager. If the weapon is not detected, the child must proceed through security to meet an FBI liaison officer who will be waiting in the airport lobby.*

*The child will be allowed to stay in Chicago overnight, and have a days accompanied sightseeing in the city before flying back to London in the evening.*

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Kerry was a bit disappointed. The mission didn't give her much opportunity to prove herself. All she had to do was sit on a plane and walk through security. Still, it was better than no mission at all, and Kerry had always wanted to go to America even if it was only for a day and a bit.

She felt important arriving at Heathrow airport and getting waved through security. Her seat was in the front row of economy class. There were two snotty little brothers sitting beside her, about six or seven years old. Both kids had huge yellow badges pinned on their t-shirts. The badges had a cartoon picture of an airplane and *Unaccompanied Child Please Look After Me!!!* written underneath.

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'Drinks?' The stewardess asked.

'Coke please,' Kerry said.

'You're not wearing your badge,' the stewardess said.

'I don't need one,' Kerry said. 'I'm nearly twelve.'

The stewardess took no notice and pinned a giant badge on Kerry's tracksuit. It was the most embarrassing thing she'd ever worn.

‘Don’t pull it off again young lady. There are rules.’

Kerry couldn’t be bothered telling the stewardess she never had a badge in the first place. With some people you just know you’ll never win an argument. Then the meals came round. Kerry got chicken nuggets shaped like teddys and Dairy Lea slices.

‘Can’t I have an adult meal?’

‘I’m sorry, we only have one meal per passenger. Did you want the play pack? It’s got crayons and join the dot pictures.’

Kerry realized that if she snapped her plastic fork in two and drove the sharp edge into the stewardesses neck, blood would spurt four metres across the 777 cabin and she’d bleed to death in under two minutes. The thought made Kerry smile.

‘Not to worry,’ the stewardess said. ‘You’ll probably want a little nap soon anyway.’

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A couple of hours into the flight a good looking kid walked past Kerry on the way to the toilet. He was twelve or thirteen, he must have lived somewhere hot because he was all tanned. Kerry could imagine him on a beach somewhere, running around with a surfboard under his arm. The kid gave Kerry a smile as he walked past. Kerry thought he was flirting. She decided to get behind him in the queue for the toilet. Maybe they’d have a conversation. At least it would be a break from the two brats sitting next to her. They’d been screaming over a Gameboy since before takeoff.

Kerry looked at her watch and spoke to the tanned kid. His younger brother was in front of him in the queue.

‘Boring flight,’ Kerry said. ‘Still six hours to go.’

The kid seemed surprised Kerry had spoken to him.



‘Yeah,’ the kid said. ‘I just love that badge.’

The kid and his brother burst out laughing. A couple of adults in the queue started laughing as well. Kerry turned bright red and stormed back to her seat.

It was the worst flight ever.

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Kerry’s backpack set off a metal detector in the immigration hall. She stopped walking. The security guard smiled and waved Kerry on.

‘Don’t worry Miss. Just your belt buckle or something, does it all the time.’

She walked out into arrivals. A uniformed FBI agent was holding up a sign with Kerry’s name on.

‘Welcome to the United States. Name’s Sue O’Banyon. Better take you up to my office.’

Sue took Kerry to a small office behind the check in desks. Kerry unzipped her backpack and handed Sue the M72 rocket launcher.

Sue laughed, ‘What a beauty. You could take out half the airport with one of those. Didn’t you set off the metal detector?’

‘Yeah, but I got waved through. Guy said it was probably my belt buckle.’

‘He’s gonna be looking for a new job real soon. This never should have got in. There’s a scale on the metal detector, this amount of metal should send it into red. And there’s sniffers that can detect explosives, and there’s an x-ray of every checked bag as it comes off the plane. It’s very disappointing that you made it through.’

‘Can I get a shower or something?’ Kerry asked.

‘Sure, you’re staying with me tonight. We can get pizza or something, and tomorrow I’ll take you to see the sites. Go on the river, see all the skyscrapers. You got any spending money Kerry?’

‘They gave me a hundred and fifty dollars. But I have to give back whatever I don’t spend, so I figured I’ll try and buy some new trainers. These ones I’m wearing are past it.’

‘Chicago is *the* place to shop Kerry. I’ll take you to Michigan Avenue. Biggest shopping street in America.’

‘My friend James says you get almond M&Ms over here. You don’t get them in Britain. They’re his favorite kind. He wants me to get him some.’