

**Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2016**

**San Diego, California  
United States of America**

It had finally happened!

Hell, had descended on San Diego.

A thirteen-year-old girl was bouncing on Guinevere's bed . . . and if she did not stop, Guinevere swore that she would never grow a day older!

"I swear to God, Juno. . ."

"Guess what day it is?" Juno teased.

"The day you die?"

"Funny!"

"The day I knock you senseless so I can get some more sleep?"

"For the love of all that is holy!" Guinevere groaned. "Happy fucking Birthday! Can I go back to sleep now?"

"Yeah – what was stopping you?" Juno giggled as she ran out of the bedroom."

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"What in hell am I doing?" Guinevere muttered to herself as she swung her legs out of the bed and onto the floor of her bedroom.

As her cousin's birthday had approached, Guinevere had begun to have second thoughts about the whole thing. How could a fifteen-year-old look after a now thirteen-year-old? Juno was high-spirited and constantly disobeying Guinevere. Maybe she just wasn't cut out for looking after a child – not for the moment at least. What was she doing, training the young girl to kill – she had tried to assuage her conscience by pretending that she was training Juno to protect herself. But that was a lie. Guinevere knew how to fight and how to kill – she knew nothing else. She could only teach her cousin to fight . . . and to kill.

What if it all went wrong and something happened to Juno. Then her Aunt's dying wish would never be fulfilled. But if she did not train Juno to protect herself, then she might still die. . . Fuck! Life was so bloody complicated. Having had the past seven or so years of her life being regimented and controlled had left a fatal flaw in her 'programming' – she had no idea how to cope in the real world doing real things. Things like bringing up a young person only a couple of years younger than herself.

She could kill, she could destroy, she could steal – but bring up a child to adulthood in the real world?

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For a change, it was Guinevere that slunk into the kitchen and sank down into the chair and glared into the smiling face of the smug teenager.

"Sucks when the shoe is on the other foot, don't it, cousin?"

"I so want to smash your smug little face in . . ."

“Nah – you’d never do that to me . . . anyways – where’s my present?”

Guinevere smirked.

“Present?”

“Yeah – it’s customary to give somebody a present on their *birth – day.*”

“Oh, for the love of all that is holy – go check out the fucking patio!”

Juno was gone in a millisecond, leaving a puff of smoke as she ran (sprinted) the fourteen feet to the patio. Guinevere inserted her fingers in her ears and she closed her eyes.

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On a scale of one to ten, the scream was at least a twelve. Guinevere mentally apologised to all of her neighbours, stretching for at least a mile in all directions, for the rude awakening.

Juno reappeared from the patio – she looked stunned and there were tears running down her cheeks. For a moment, Guinevere worried that she had made some terrible mistake – but then she was hugged (very tightly) by the marauding teenager and she struggled to breathe.

“Thank you. . .”

“I thought it might be good for you to get out a bit – learn the highway code and get some exercise. You like it?”

“I . . .”

Guinevere had never known Juno to be lost for words – but she liked it! The idea had crept into her mind one afternoon as she had ridden her motorcycle past a shop window. She stood up and allowed herself to be pulled (dragged mercilessly) towards the small patio.

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Guinevere had purchased her young cousin a mountain bike. It was a state-of-the-art machine from the UK and among the best in the world. The frame was orange while the rest was black and the bike had cost £2,300 to purchase and ship over. It had taken a couple of hours to assemble the Whyte T-130 S and adjust the seat and handle bars to what Guinevere hoped was the correct height for Juno, who was a little over five feet in height.

“I assume you can ride a bike?”

“Yeah – but I wrecked my last bike; I was being a dick.”

“Somehow, I can believe that,” Guinevere chuckled.

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Not surprisingly, the extraordinarily happy girl wanted to get straight out there.

So, after a lot of pushing, nagging, and yelling – plus some very aggressive language, Juno had Guinevere dressed and out the door. Juno was further surprised to find that Guinevere had purchased an identical bike and it was down with the Honda. Both had slimline helmets on as protection from accidents and soon, they were headed down the street. Guinevere was laughing at the enormous grin which seemed permanently etched on Juno’s face as she propelled the bike forwards.

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An hour later, they pulled over after a busy eight-mile ride to Midway Drive and a McDonalds.

“What’s it like for you, as a Predator? Now, I mean.”

Guinevere smiled and looked over at her cousin.

“My mind works overtime, every waking minute. I come in here and the first thing I’m doing, is catching the sight lines and finding an exit. I can tell you the licence plates of every car parked up outside. You see that pick-up, out there?”

“Yeah?”

“That pick-up has a high chance of having a big-bore weapon inside, maybe a shotgun. That Chevy, twenty yards down the street – the brown one? Unmarked police car. I look at people and I figure out the possibilities of them bettering me. I look around for weapons to even the odds – I can’t help it.”

“What do you see when you look at me?”

“I see a girl who needs her arse kicked.”

“Seriously.”

“I see a girl out of her depth. A girl in pain. A girl that is inhibiting me. *Predators* work alone, or if they do have a partner, it is another *Predator*. We only have ourselves to think about – anybody else is a liability unless they can look after themselves.”

“I am your liability.”

“Yes, you are a liability, but one I willingly took on and now I’m trying to adapt my skills and training to suit the new world that I am living in.”

“Would you be better off without me?”

Guinevere’s expression changed and Juno figured that she had gone too far. Juno flinched as her cousin’s face moved to within an inch of her own.

“We are staying together, no matter what, Juno – I swear by everything that is holy.”

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### ***The next morning***

***Sunday, July 10<sup>th</sup>***

Over breakfast, we were watching the news and it seemed that in Chicago, there had been an explosion.

“That looks bad,” Juno commented on the news as she watched her cousin spread some marmalade on her toast. “I can’t see how you can eat that stuff.”

“Not as good as they have back home, but it’s edible.”

“Still say it’s disgusting, Guinny.”

“Okay, Juno, considering that this is your last day of freedom – before we knuckle down and start to train and school you – I thought we could go spend some time down at the beach.”

Juno looked very dejected at that proclamation., but she brightened up when the beach was mentioned. She finished off her cereal and bolted for the bedroom before reappearing moments later in her two-piece swimsuit.

Guinevere laughed as she finished her toast.

“Go get two large towels – that suntan lotion stuff – plus you’re going to need something on top of that swimsuit so we can head out on the Honda.”

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An hour later, Juno finished plastering Guinevere’s back in oily suntan lotion.

She adjusted her sunglasses and lay back on her towel, absorbing the hot rays of the morning sun. Juno was way too giddy to lie down and sunbathe – she had run off down the beach and into the sea leaving Guinevere in peace. The ex-*Predator* took the time to relax and allow her body to rest. She knew that there might be plenty of action ahead of her. She was entering the unknown – both with Juno, and with the next stage of her own life.

Guinevere drifted off to sleep as the warmth of the sun worked itself into her body.

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**August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014**

***An unknown location in the USA***

“Move it, Murdoch – you gotta move faster than that!”

The two thirteen-year-old girls whirled around the mat as they struck out at each other. They had been sparring for almost ten minutes without a break. As such, they had attracted a small crowd of blood-thirsty *Predators*. The instructor was pushing both girls to see how far they could go before they gave up . . . or one of them folded.

The two girls were of similar heights while Murdoch had a slimmer body form than her opponent, giving her a slight advantage in mobility. Both girls had long hair which was tied up in a ponytail and both were Phase 3 *Predators*. Many of the boys followed Murdoch as she was very beautiful and her fiery red hair and fair skin stood out a mile. They boys also knew that Murdoch was a ball-buster, so most did their best not to piss her off.

Murdoch was a skilled fighter as her opponent was finding out to her cost as she was kneed viciously in the left side. The girl screamed out in pain and fell to the mat, rolling into the crowd.

“You are a fucking waster of space, Doherty!” a voice spat as another, much younger girl, kicked out at the fallen girl.

“Walker!” the instructor bellowed. “This is *not* your fight.”

The Walker girl glared insolently at the instructor for a moment before she stepped back away from the fallen Doherty. Murdoch advanced on her fallen opponent.

“The cocky bitch has a point, Doherty – get the fuck up and fight me!” Murdoch growled as Doherty struggled to her feet.

“Time!” the instructor called out. “Good show, girls – hit the showers.”

Murdoch grinned as she grabbed up a small hand towel to wipe the sweat from her face, neck and chest. She ignored Doherty who was doing the same and headed for the changing rooms and the showers. The hot water helped to sooth her aching limbs and the bruises.

“Good fight, Murdoch,” Doherty called from another shower. “You were lucky.”

“Luck had nothing to do with it, you Irish twat!” Murdoch yelled back.

“We shall see about that, you bloody English slut.”

The sniping continued for the duration of the shower and while they both dried off and dressed. Then they both went their separate ways and the two girls generally avoided each other until the end of the evening meal. They both came together again in the communal area outside the girls’ dormitory.

“Get out of my sight, Doherty,” Murdoch breathed. “Your presence is contaminating this air.”

“Fuck you!” came the terse response.

“Ready for round two, are you?”

Doherty subconsciously rubbed her, still very sore, side.

“Does it hurt?” Murdoch asked in a tone dripping insincerity.

Doherty was raging inside but she knew that to start a fight in the communal area was a single ticket to The Cage, so she did not rise to the bait. Murdoch gave up and went to study for the following day.

“Mark my words, Murdoch, I will fucking squash you,” Doherty breathed a little too loudly and Murdoch turned back to her.

“Bring it on, you slut – any time, any time. . .”

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***Sunday, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016***

***Ocean Beach, San Diego***

Guinevere awoke with a start and then she screamed as something cold struck her.

Her eyes came open and she focussed on her tormentor who held an inverted, and very empty, bottle of freezing water.

“Juno – you have three seconds to make your escape. . .” Guinevere growled as she glared at the thirteen-year-old.

“Catch me if you can, Guinny!” Juno squealed as she ran for the safety of the Pacific Ocean with Guinevere sprinting after her.

Juno giggled and squealed her way to the water, dodging this way and that to put off her angry pursuer. She splashed into the ocean but then turned to see a very angry girl grinning as she dived at her. Juno fell backwards and came up spluttering from under the water. Beside her, a grinning Guinevere looked down at her.

“I think hell week should start a little earlier, don’t you, Juno?”

“No . . .”

Juno flinched as Guinevere grabbed a hold of her around the waist and then grabbed hold of her swimsuit bottoms.

“NO!” Juno yelled out in horror.

But thirty seconds later, Juno just glared up at Guinevere who smiled and waved a pair of swimsuit bottoms in the air.

“Give them back!” Juno growled.

“Hey!” Guinevere called out.

Juno looked towards where Guinevere had called and her eyes went wide.

“No . . .” she hissed to Guinevere as three boys around her own age made their way over.

“What do you think of cousin here, boys – she nice?” Guinevere enquired.

The three boys ran their eyes over the scowling Juno, unaware of her current predicament.

“She’s cute,” one replied.

“Yeah,” another agreed.

“I’d go with hot,” the third one added.

“You know something else?” Guinevere teased waving the swimsuit in the air. “She’s wearing nothing down below. . .”

Juno screamed as Guinevere briefly lifted her cousin out of the water as proof. Three broad grins greeted the brief flash of bare skin and dark pubic hair.

“Who wants to help a maiden in distress?” Guinevere challenged as she let go of Juno and threw the swimsuit a dozen yards away.

Three boys and one half-naked girl bolted for the discarded item of clothing. Juno did her best but she was too slow and she was trying to maintain some form of dignity as she swam. Guinevere just laughed as one of the boys found the swimsuit and he held it high in the air.

“Give it to me, or I break your fucking balls!” Juno said loudly.

The boy grinned but then he nodded and handed the swimsuit back. Guinevere scowled at that but she smiled at Juno’s response to the boys.

“Sorry if we embarrassed you. My name’s Logan – and this is Jack and Sasha.”

“Thanks for returning them, Logan,” Juno replied as she pulled her swimsuit back on around her butt. “It was *embarrassing* but I can take it. My name’s Juno.”

“You live on our apartment complex – I’ve seen you, once or twice,” Logan commented. “Sasha lives a block away, while Jack lives on the floor below me.”

“Good to meet you all. Maybe I’ll see you again,” Juno offered as she saw Guinevere heading back to the beach.

“I’d like to see you again,” Logan replied with a cheeky grin.

“Hope you got a good look ‘cause it ain’t coming out again,” Juno laughed as she headed after her cousin.

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“That was pure evil,” Juno said as she lay down on her towel beside Guinevere.

“Yes, it was, wasn’t it?” Guinevere replied without a hint of remorse.

“How did you know they’d give my bottoms back?”

“I didn’t – I hoped they wouldn’t.”

“You’d have left me standing in the Pacific Ocean with only my boobs covered up?”

“Yeah – a good challenge for you.”

“A good challenge? You bitch.”

“Easy solution – you could have taken shorts off one of the boys,” Guinevere pointed out.

“Bet they’d have loved that – being attacked by a half-naked thirteen-year-old.”

“Logan liked you.”

“I’m not into boys.”

“A lesbian, then?”

Guinevere felt and heard the slap on her right arm.

“Okay – not a lesbian,” Guinevere chuckled then changed the subject. “You never asked me the other day if I had any more tattoos.”

“I saw you butt naked, cousin – you had no other tats.”

“Not very observant – look behind my right ear.”

Juno did.

“What is that – a dagger?”

“It is the mark of the *Predator*.”

“Nasty.”

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### ***That evening***

#### ***Mission Road***

I hated it when she went out alone.

That last time, when she returned barely able to stand and covered in bruises, I was so scared. I knew that she was out there trying to earn money to keep me safe and that made me feel responsible for everything that happened to her. She was my cousin and all that I had left. To try and ease my anxiety, I walked around the apartment.

I began in my bedroom. It wasn't large but it was comfortable. I had a single bed off to the right – I had taken to sleeping in it over the past few weeks. It had been lonely after sleeping with my cousin for so many nights. I was scared that something might happen to me; I felt safe whenever Guinny was close by. Anyway, back to the bedroom. I had a set of drawers off to the left, on which sat my CD player. The drawers beneath held my clothes – or were supposed to; most of my clothes were scattered around the floor. I had lost track of what was clean and what was dirty. Guinny refused to come into my room anymore – she said it was a cesspit.

Across the passageway, was my bathroom – to be honest, it was a cesspit too. I tried to keep it clean; I just forgot about things a little. Guinny hated it when I pinched the toilet roll from *her* bathroom instead of getting a new roll from the cupboard in the kitchen – I was lazy, so sue me. Was that something growing in the corner? Ewww! I left the bathroom and double-checked that the main door was firmly locked – it was.

The living room was next. It was large and airy, thanks to the large patio doors and the small patio beyond. We had a decent forty-inch TV and a couch that we could both cuddle up on. I hoped Guinny liked cuddles as I was regularly cuddling up to her – she never complained though. Did she ever feel lonely? I had never thought to ask.

The dining room was open-plan to the kitchen and the living room. My plate from dinner was still on the table – Guinny refused to clear up after me. She said I was a lazy bitch when it came to my tidying up after myself. I quickly moved the plate into the kitchen and dumped it in the sink – something else Guinny hated. I was not a fun person to live with in hindsight.

Guinny's bedroom was out of bounds when she was out – but I didn't think that she would mind; I was her cousin after all. The door was always closed. I eased it open and looked around. The bathroom to the left was pristine compared to my cesspit. Her toothbrush and toothpaste was laid out tidily on the shelf over the sink. In the cabinet below, I found a packet of Tampax – three missing. I was glad I didn't need them; they freaked me out – actually the thought of sticking something up inside me, freaked me out. Behind the Tampax was a cardboard box containing blocks of soap – only after I had lifted out four bars of soap, I found a pistol with a loaded clip thingy lying at the bottom of the box.

I had never really touched a gun before – it was heavy and not all that comfortable to hold. Even the bullets were heavy – that surprised me. I replaced the weapon and bullets back as I had found them and then replaced the bars of soap. What else did Guinny have hidden around the apartment? I went into the bedroom and looked under the bed – a holdall and a backpack. Strangely, the backpack was packed as if somebody was about to go away – even more strangely, the rucksack contained some of my own clothes, not mention another pistol – a small one – and a couple dozen bullets. There was a brand new, unopened cell phone at the bottom of the back pack.

After shoving the backpack back under the bed, I looked under pillow – nothing; had I expected to find a weapon there? Found one! A knife – about eight-inches long – slid under the mattress on the side of the bed where Guinny slept. I was interrupted from anymore searching as I heard the main door close. I dashed out of Guinny's bedroom closing the door behind me.

"What are you up to?" Guinny asked as she placed her motorcycle helmet into the cupboard in the hall beside my own.

"Not doing nothing," I replied, rather unconvincingly I thought, and I tried to change the subject. "Did everything go well? You're not in pain this time."



“It went very well,” Guinny said with a smile and my eyes bulged out as she emptied a large pile of cash onto the dining room table.

“There must be thousands. . .”

“Fifteen grand, honey.”

“How?”

“I started over on Commercial Street, near the harbour. There I found a piece of shit – an obvious druggie. With a little persuasion – he pointed me to his dealer, somewhere off East Harbour Drive. Well, I followed his directions to the letter and I found myself outside a set of steel gates. All was dark so I parked up a distance away and then pulled on my gear.”

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### ***Earlier that evening . . .***

Being a commercial area there was plenty of noise to cover my approach. The security guards appeared scarce – payed off, Guinevere decided. The facility was enormous – but something dodgy was most definitely going on.

Guinevere hopped a fence and ran through the shadows towards the main building over to the left of a maze of piping and steel superstructure. As she crouched behind a pile of wooden crates, she saw two men emerge from a steel side door. They were both smoking and both were armed with MP5K submachine guns slung over their shoulders. The two men were not expecting trouble – the smoking fucked up their night vision and their weapons were slung; too bad.

Whatever was going on was big – too big for Guinevere to handle alone – so she was only intending to reconnoitre and then maybe return with backup sometime in the future. Once the men had vanished around the corner, Guinevere headed inside the building. The place was in partial darkness, however, there was light off to the right so the girl moved slowly through the partial darkness and she made for the light.

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As the light came nearer, voices could be heard – mainly male voices denigrating somebody, but there was also the sound of activity. As Guinevere approached what turned out to be bright overhead lighting, she stopped and ducked in behind some heavy machinery. She pulled out a small monocular and examined the lay of the land.

She was momentarily startled to find her view filled by skin. As she moved the monocular, she found herself staring at a bunch of naked females – maybe thirty or more of them. The naked females varied in age from girls not much older than Guinevere to women in their late twenties. All wore paper masks over their faces and their hair was covered by paper hats. Their only other covering were rubber gloves on their hands. Why were they naked?

It was the druggies’ product protection scheme. While the naked girls and women packed the white powder, they were free of the temptation to steal as there was nowhere to hide even the smallest sample of powder. Guinevere needed to get closer – she wanted to gather more intel on what was going on. Just before where the light started, there was movement and she saw a young girl of maybe fifteen walk out of a doorway – the girl was naked and masked. A lightbulb went off in Guinevere’s mind.

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Several minutes later, another naked girl stepped out of the changing room; a paper mask over her mouth, a paper cap on her head. She had rubber gloves on her hands – she also felt a little exposed by the impromptu naked walkabout. Guinevere moved slowly, with a dejected step which matched that of the previous girl. She consciously took a deep breath as she stepped into the light and she felt even more exposed as a chill in the air from the air conditioning had her nipples standing on end.

The other naked females all stood around an array of long tables, laid out in a 'T'. They were scooping product out of large steel tubs and pouring it into small plastic bags which were then weighed. A man stood at the far end of the table, observing the naked females. His eyes tended to rest on the younger girls and his eyes made Guinevere's skin crawl as he checked out her small but well-proportioned pale-skinned breasts with the pert nipples and the thick triangle of dark red pubic hair between her legs.

Beyond the man, she could see another room. In that room were more men, all armed, all smoking, and all playing cards. There were about eight of them. So, about thirty workers, and about nine guards. Then . . . jackpot! In the same room as the armed men playing cards, was a man counting wads of cash. As he counted the cash, he placed the wads into a large leather case. Guinevere also noticed another man – a courier waiting to take the cash somewhere safe.

"Okay – times up ladies, get your Jacksons, get your clothes – and fuck off!" the man at the end of the table called out.

Guinevere was quick off the mark and she grabbed the first handful of 'Jacksons' and ran back to the changing room.

"Somebody's in a hurry!" the man laughed as the younger girls did the same thing.

Guinevere had grabbed her clothes and slunk into the darkness well before the first naked teen entered the changing room. As she dressed in the darkness, she checked out the cash she had been given – \$160 – not a bad haul and designed to buy silence. By the time the courier was ready to leave, Guinevere was also ready – on her motorcycle.

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"Let me get this straight," Juno said with a hint of incredulity in her tone. "You actually stripped completely naked, and walked around in front of God only know how many people?"

"So fucking what – I'm comfortable with my body and it was a means to an end. I was able to wander around for a few minutes without notice. Besides, you flashed your fanny at those boys . . ."

"Not by choice!"

"Here, watch this," Guinevere offered as she connected the monocular to the TV.

An image appeared. Juno saw the naked women around the table. She saw the drugs being packaged.

"That is what we are going to take down – together – once you are trained. I cannot take them myself, although I would love to try."

"Why don't you?"

"Because I made your mother a promise."

Juno said nothing but she felt a little weird inside.

“You know, Juno, we were down to our last few dollars and then we’d be out of food.”

Juno grimaced.

“That’s why I have you with me – I can always eat you when things get bad.”

“Very funny, Guinny!”

Juno’s expression showed that she was a little concerned.

“Don’t worry,” Guinevere chuckled, putting her cousin’s mind at rest. “We *Predators* aren’t into cannibalism – although I did witness two *Predator* girls eating each other. . .”

“Oh . . . ewww – that’s gross!”

“Sorry – just a joke.”

“How did you get the cash?”

“Simple – I swiped it off the courier as he headed to his car.”