

Two days later
Friday, October 21st, 2016

THE APARTMENT

The kissing.

The fucking.

The lack of anything else: Juno had had enough.

She pushed open the door to the bathroom and she pulled open the shower curtain to find her mentor showering.

"We need to talk," Juno stated without preamble as she closed the bathroom door and locked it.

Juno pulled off her T-shirt and panties before joining her mentor in the shower. Guinevere raised an eyebrow wondering what her cousin had in mind and she smirked.

"You're fucking up, Guinevere!"

"Huh?"

"He's fucked you stupid, hasn't he?"

"Huh?"

"We only came across him a fucking week ago, but suddenly the killer *Predator* has gone all girly and she swoons over the muscular Nick and his tasty dick!"

Juno now had Guinevere's full and undivided attention and the smirk was gone.

"I have no problem with him living with us - I'm pleased that you have somebody of your own age to talk to and to fuck. . ."

"But. . ." Guinevere prompted.

"I can't believe you're taking him down to the Haven!"

Guinevere breathed in deeply and she realised that, yes, she had been an ass. She barely knew the boy - even when they had been fellow *Predators*. She really liked him - she wasn't sure about the love side. Where had he come from? Could he be trusted? He could fuck up everything that they had just created. She had been blinded by his masculinity which turned out to be her Achilles heel. It had been a throwaway comment to Juno just that morning. She had suggested to Juno that they take Nicholas down to see what they had built.

"Whose suggestion was it - yours or his?" Juno demanded.

"I don't know," Guinevere replied, her face scrunched up in thought.

"Maybe there's more to Nicholas Hyde than he is letting on," Juno suggested.

"What would you say or do if I suggested bringing Logan to Haven? What if I just took him down there without telling you?"

"Fuck! I'm sorry, Juno - you are absolutely right; what was I thinking?"

"You were thinking about his cock in your cunt!" Juno exclaimed and Guinevere frowned.

Juno had to be *really* very angry to use words like 'cock' and 'cunt'.

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Guinevere spent the rest of the morning in a bad mood.

She was very angry with herself, but she was also extremely proud of Juno for seeing what was happening and for having the guts to stand up to her. Still, she was pissed off at herself for having allowed herself to be distracted and steered. Nicholas *had* manipulated her - he had used his training to turn her to him and she had fallen for it; hook, line and sinker.

Nicholas had gone out, mid-morning, so for that moment, it was just the two girls.

"Well done, Juno. You are thinking like a *Predator* now . . . even when I wasn't. Constant vigilance is what we need to survive and I fucked up, badly. It was Nicholas who asked me about my 'secret hideout' in the middle of sex. I didn't even stop to think before I responded. I told him, 'no problem'."

"It wasn't your fault, Guinny. Sex does funny things to your mind, obviously."

"We're going to have to watch him closely," Guinevere decided. "If he's here for no good, then he's history - cock or no cock."

"I can live with that."

A few days later

Monday, October 24th

ABC7 Eyewitness News

Los Angeles appears to have gained its own true vigilantes. Two armour-clad females were spotted on the streets of Santa Monica, late last night. Eagle-eyed vigilante spotters noticed that the women were equipped in a very similar and professional manner to those vigilantes known to exist in the City of Chicago. A select few observers obtained a much closer look at the two vigilantes. Those observers identified the symbol which was visible on the left chest of each woman. The symbol was identical to that worn by those very same Chicago vigilantes that make up the organisation known as Fusion. Fusion, of course, is the organisation whose leaders are the viciously violent, purple vigilante known as Hit Girl and her partner, Kick-Ass.

THE APARTMENT

"Awesome!"

"I'm not so sure."

"Guinny - for God's sake!"

"Look, honey, I know they're the real deal but they may not be *Fusion*."

"But . . . what if they are?" the teenager persisted.

"If they are, then maybe Hit Girl wants to spy on us," Guinevere conceded.

"We do kind of owe Hit Girl our lives," Juno pointed out.

"On that subject, we get back to our lessons. My best friend prevented me from making a grave error and she focussed me on the task ahead - thank you."

Juno blushed furiously at the compliment.

"Nicholas is a highly skilled tracker. If you had not stopped me when you did, we might have led him directly to the Haven. We've both stayed away from the place, but we cannot stay away forever, therefore, we started these lessons in counter-surveillance. What have you learned so far, honey?"

"I've learnt to alter my routes when I am out. I've learnt to use my surroundings to monitor other people and my surroundings - using store windows,

car windshields, to see all around me without turning my head and making it look obvious."

"Very good, honey!"

The following afternoon

Tuesday, October 25th

APARTMENT 213

For Juno, a welcome distraction from her mentor's sexual antics was Logan's apartment.

The boy was technically the same age as Juno - but Juno was older due to the age manipulation which was part of her new identity. They loved to just spend time talking and laughing. Most of the time, they were alone, as his aunt was often at work in the store down the road. As for Logan himself, Juno was a welcome distraction. The boy was troubled. The past five months had been traumatic and his sleeping hours had been filled with hellish nightmares. His waking hours were not much better as he would receive flashbacks, especially when his mind was not focussed. Juno focussed his mind and the flashbacks were less frequent.

None of the flashbacks were clear. The most recent batch had begun when Juno and her cousin, Guinevere, had moved into the upper apartment, a few blocks away. The teenager was somehow familiar and Logan was certain that Guinevere was part of his life, only, he had no idea where from. Certain aspects had come back to him: he had a murky past, full of horror and pain. Something told him to remain close to Juno and to trust Guinevere - but another part of him opposed that judgement. The boy had no idea what to believe. Then everything changed.

Everything became much clearer. Only, it also became so very much darker.

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After some animated chatter, they went for a walk in the sun, much as they usually did.

They followed the rules laid down by Guinevere - at least Juno did, considering Logan did not know of the rules' existence - by remaining around the apartment complex. Logan never tried to lure Juno away, so all was good. However, they had both found a location, just off the street which led under the I-15 Interstate, the dozen-lane concrete edifice which ran beside the apartment complex. Juno knew that she was pushing her luck by vanishing under the expressway, only, they never went too far under - that was where the drunks slept out their day in the cool, dark shade of the huge structure.

Juno began to poke Logan. The boy tentatively tickled Juno who began to giggle. She fought back, roughly, which Logan enjoyed. Both rolled around for several minutes until Juno saw something which she had never seen before. The girl frowned as she stopped giggling and she sat up, staring at the back of Logan's head - more specifically, at the area behind his right ear.

"What's up?" Logan asked as he rolled onto his back with Juno sitting back on her left thigh.

"You're one of them," she stated cautiously without thinking.

"One of what?" Logan replied.

"You're a *Predator*."

Logan's expression changed to one that Juno had never seen before. It was, however, reminiscent of expressions that she had seen on her mentor's face when she was suddenly professional and focussed . . . and often before she killed.

"How could you even know? I knew it would happen someday - but not you, Juno."

The tone was anything but friendly.

"You're scaring me, Logan."

"I'm sorry, Juno. But you should never have found out," Logan said before he repeated his earlier question. "How could you even know?"

"I can't say."

Logan's mind exploded.

Yes, the boy knew that he was a *Predator*; that bit of information had become clear in mid-August. But he suddenly braced up as he suddenly saw his past in vivid colour. It was like his previous flashbacks had been on an old-fashioned black and white TV and that he was now seeing the flashbacks in full 4K-definition. He saw a girl, about fourteen: Guinevere Murdoch, a Phase 3 girl - her codename was Lilith. How could he not have recognised the girl from the Second Intake with the stunning red hair and breasts to die for.

Logan stood up and his expression was just as unfriendly as his tone, although Juno could see worry there too. Juno was feeling a little scared now as her friend looked down at her for a moment.

"I think we need to go inside and talk," Logan suggested as he helped Juno back to her feet.

Juno was a little unnerved by the episode, but she followed Logan out from under the Interstate. She was surprised to see a car parked beside the curb - that was very rare. She peered inside, nobody was visible. The five-door, metallic silver VW Golf was dated - it looked to be almost as old as Juno was - and it might have been abandoned if the windscreen was not as clean as it was.

"You two like the car," a voice said from behind them. "How about a ride?"

Juno tried to react, but before she could do anything, she heard the distinctive sound of a head striking concrete, followed by Logan's body falling to the ground - his eyes were closed, and there was a nasty bruise on his forehead. A face came into view - just before she was punched in the face. But, just before everything went black, she heard a voice - a cultured, British voice.

"Sweet dreams."

Four hours later

THE APARTMENT

Guinevere was madder than she had been in months.

"I am going to fucking skin the little bitch alive!"

Everything that she had taught the girl appeared to have been for nought. The most simple rule - be back in the apartment for six each evening. A simple rule which Juno had always obeyed . . . until that evening. It was well after eight that night when there was a knock on the door and when Guinevere went to check

on the visitor via the peephole, she was surprised to recognise Sasha and he bore a very worried expression on his face. Guinevere quickly opened the door and she pulled the boy inside.

"Hi, Guinevere."

"What are you doing here, Sasha?"

"It's about Juno . . . I . . . is she okay?"

"I don't know - she's not here at the moment."

"I saw her with Logan, earlier this afternoon, then I'm sure that I saw her in the back of a small car . . . something didn't look right - I should have said something earlier but I didn't think much of it at the time . . . sorry."

"Thank you for telling me, Sasha. I thought she was at Logan's place."

"She usually is. I went there first, but Logan's not there, and neither was Juno."

"Thank you, Sasha."

Once the boy had left, Guinevere began to get very worried. What was going on? Where was Juno? It was time to go hunting, she decided. The next twenty minutes were spent gearing up ready to go out. However, as Guinevere reached for the door handle, there came another knock on the door. A quick peep through the peep hole and Guinevere's temper exploded. The visitor never knew what happened as he was yanked inside and thrown to the floor while the door closed behind him with an ominous click. For the boy, each punch was like nothing that he had ever experienced. The first pair struck his left cheek, then the next pair took him in his abdomen. The knee to his thigh made him scream out, but the hand over his mouth muffled the sound as a large knife glinted in the light before he felt the impossibly sharp edge close to his jugular.

Nicholas Hyde froze.

"Where is she?"

The voice was like nothing he had ever heard before and it scared him more than he thought possible. For some reason or other, Guinevere was really, really pissed.

"Who?" he mumbled through Guinevere's hands.

"Where . . . is . . . Juno . . . you little bastard?"

"I have no idea - she not here?"

"I would not be asking if she was here, you lying cunt!"

That exclamation was joined by a double punch to his right abdomen. The boy doubled over and he was allowed to lie there unmolested as he struggled with the intense pain.

"What the fuck is going on, Guinevere? You on your fucking period?"

In Nicholas' extensive experience there was nothing worse than a female *Predator* on her period as they tended to enjoy hitting things, apparently for no good reason - usually boys.

Guinevere groaned and she sat down on the couch, fuming, the large knife still in her hand.

"I may do some fucked up things, but I ain't stupid, Guinevere. You know that I would never touch Juno - besides, if I did, she would kill me, not to mention whatever you might do to me . . . I'm not that brave."

"Dammit, Nick - I've got to find her."

Across San Diego

Juno's head hurt and she struggled to open her eyes.

When she did, she found herself almost blinded by bright lights. She could hear voices. Considering she could not see, she focussed her hearing instead.

"What do you want, you fucking psycho."

"I don't recognise you," it was the same cultured British voice. "Your age puts you around the Third Intake - maybe the Fourth Intake - only, I remember each and every one of them and you were not there. However, you carry the tattoo. Now, Logan - if that is your real name - where did you come from?"

"Fuck you!"

"You are a *Predator* - and I can see that you know who I am."

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Juno's vision was clearing and she could see bright strip lighting above her. She was on the floor, her ankles were tied, as were her wrists which were bound behind her. She lay on her side, looking up at Logan who was tied to a wooden chair, a few feet away from her.

"Logan?"

The boy turned to look at Juno who winced - Logan had taken a beating.

"Well, hello, sweetheart," the cultured British voice said.

Juno saw the face again. The face belonged to a tall youth, thin, handsome-looking. He smiled and Juno, but the smile freaked her out. She glared at the boy, digging deep for her inner-Lilim to cover the fear which she felt. Her mind was racing. If Logan was a *Predator*, just like Guinevere, then he had training . . . which had been for nought at the hands of the much older boy who stood before her.

"She has fire. Those eyes are full of it. If only you could kill with a single stare, sweetheart - but you're beautiful; no Medusa. You lack the mark, so you are not one of us - but, you have the same fire inside of you."

Juno saw the boy's eyes waver for a moment like he was remembering something.

"I knew a girl like you, once upon a time - she had a fire inside of her, too. Got her into a lot of trouble that fire did."

"What do you want?" Juno demanded.

"I want to know what your friend here is doing, looking like he does. My life got turned upside down, just five months back, and I lost somebody very close to me. Somebody is responsible for that, and somebody like your little friend is just the sort I could see as somebody who does not belong. Somebody infiltrated the organisation and they fucked it up."

"It wasn't fuckin' me," Logan growled. "I was cut off, too."

The youth pulled a knife from his pocket and he extended a sharp blade from the shaft.

"I'd like to believe you, Logan - only, I don't believe you."

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Juno focussed her mind on her situation.

That was not easy considering that Logan was being tortured only a few feet away. With a start, Juno realised that the boy currently slicing Logan's left thigh had made a mistake. Juno had learnt a lot from her mentor. Some skills had been taught while others had simply been observed. One thing which Juno had observed was that Guinevere had a habit of concealing weapons about her person. Juno had considered that a smart habit to emulate, therefore, she worked her hands up her back and she dug her fingers into the waistband of her jeans. She snagged the hilt of her 2.5-inch Neck Knife from the hidden sheath and, very carefully, she worked the knife around so she could apply the razor-sharp blade to the rope which bound her wrists.

Okay, the first part of her barely forming plan was underway.

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It had not been easy, but her hands came free after several minutes of cutting. Her hands were slick with her own blood as the knife had slipped a few times and the blade was very sharp. Juno and knives did not get on very well together and she was always cutting herself - her hands were a mess. Nevertheless, her hands were free. Her ankles were still bound but how quickly could she move and would she be quick enough before that boy attacked her. She had no idea where to go and what to do when she got there.

"Okay, Logan - let's give you a break," the voice chuckled. "Now, let's see about hot stuff over here."

The youth came over and he gazed down at Juno for a moment. Juno simply glared back.

"That fire is still there, I see. Your boyfriend needs a little more work, but I think we'll find out what you know."

A hand reached down and seized Juno by her T-shirt, yanking her to her feet. She was careful to keep her hands where they were tied, the knife held tightly in her right fist. He wrapped a large hand around Juno's left bicep and he pulled her towards Logan. Juno was horrified by all the blood which covered Logan's face. His jeans were also sodden with blood on his right thigh. Then the youth noticed something and Juno realised that she had screwed up - the rope which had bound her wrists remained where she had been lying. The youth had noticed and his face turned very angry as he brought up a large fist.

Juno took her chance and she slashed out with the knife.

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Juno was nowhere near fast enough as the knife was deflected before it even came close.

The girl realised her hopeless situation as the knife was knocked from her grip so she did the next best thing - she reached out and she grasped hold of something; actually, a pair of somethings and she squeezed. The bellow was immense as she felt herself slapped around the face. The force of the punch knocked her sideways and she fell to the floor. She lunged for the knife but

the youth came at her, only he faltered as something hit him from behind and he fell to the ground. Juno looked up to see the battered Logan grinning down at her. The chair had obviously not been fixed to the floor and Logan had been able to stand and then lunge at the youth, knocking him down. Juno kicked the youth in the face, repeatedly, putting him out cold. With a speed which surprised Juno, she quickly severed the rope binding her ankles within seconds of retrieving the knife. Logan's ropes quickly followed and they both stood up wondering what to do next.

"That way," Logan suggested as he pointed out the only doorway into the room.

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Guinevere had no idea how far to trust Nicholas, but she really did not have much of a choice.

Nicholas had mentioned that he had checked out a large portion of the area before he had gathered up the courage to approach Guinevere. He was aware of various abandoned properties which had ticked all the boxes for a trained *Predator*. Those were the same basic boxes as would be ticked by kidnappers or other unsavoury people. They had no idea who might have taken Juno, nor what sort of trouble she was in. It had also become very obvious that Logan had somehow become involved and he was missing too. Guinevere could not remember seeing anybody suspicious about - if she had, then Juno would never have been allowed out of the apartment.

Nicholas, apparently, *had* noticed a youth skulking around the area, only he had not been able to get close enough to identify the youth, or to find out what he was up to. Chances were he was just looking for a score, rather than underage sex. That had cheered Guinevere up, no end. She had also found out a little more about the boy - he rode a Honda motorcycle; nothing special, just a couple hundred horsepower. The boy had also followed that youth a couple of times - apparently, just to keep up his skills, Nicholas had admitted Guinevere had not believed a word of it, but she had no choice as she needed the extra help. Despite what she felt towards Nicholas from a sexual point of view, or any other point of view, he was a very capable young *Predator* with a special set of skills which Guinevere would make use of.

They headed away from the apartment on their motorcycles, Nicholas leading.

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The door was not locked and Juno pulled it open.

"Where the fuck are we?" she asked as she and Logan found themselves in a large warehouse, empty but for lots of rubbish and plenty of dirt and dust.

"Judging by the noise, we're close to a major road - not that that helps us any," Logan commented.

"Maybe we should have killed that bastard," Juno voiced out loud.

"Too late," Logan said as he looked back at the fallen youth.

"Huh?" Juno queried as she too looked at the youth.

Or rather where the youth had been - he was gone.

"Oh, shit!" Logan growled as he grabbed Juno's hand and he ran towards the farthest wall where there was a door.

"We were having so much fun," a familiar voice sneered.

Then Juno jumped as she heard the crack of a pistol - it was loud inside the building and she missed where the bullet struck as she ran.

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Nicholas just happened to have been looking in that particular direction, or he would have missed it completely.

He recognised the result of a bullet striking a glass window and he slammed on his brakes. Guinevere swore at the boy as she swerved around him and slammed on her own brakes.

"Where'd you fucking learn to ride?" Guinevere growled.

"Same place you did, partner."

"What did you see?"

"A bullet coming out of a window - that derelict warehouse," Nicholas said as he pointed out the building.

"Well, move that fucking ass!" Guinevere ordered as she accelerated in the direction of the warehouse.

"Fuck!" Nicholas growled as he followed on after his girl.

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Logan and Juno wrestled with the door to no avail.

Bullets flew around them - it was obvious, to a point, that they would be dead, if that was what the shooter wanted. They used that to their advantage as they desperately sought to find a way out. Then the gunfire stopped - thirteen rounds; maybe his magazine was depleted, Juno hoped. Then, out of nowhere, Logan was kicked to the floor. Juno went on the offensive and she struck out, kicking the youth in the side before she herself was flipped over and she crashed down on her back. Juno screamed out in pain but she jumped back to her feet and gamely continued fighting. Juno was not stupid; she had figured out that the youth was something special and that he was a *Predator* - a super Predator? She was also very aware that she stood no chance of taking the fucker down - none what so ever.

Logan was hurt, so whatever skills he had - and Juno figured they were similar to Guinevere's own - were limited to what his damaged body could accomplish. He was holding up well, but the blood was getting all over the place as he spun to avoid the long arms of the youth. Then, just as Juno was kicked down to the ground, for about the fifth time, there was a sharp crack from the direction of the door, followed by a crash and then running feet. Juno was yanked to her feet and she looked up to find herself looking into the very concerned face of.

. .

"Nicholas?"

"Come on, it's past curfew, little lady."

"Little. . .!"

"Move!"

"Where's the fucker?" Logan growled as Guinevere helped him to his feet.

Guinevere looked around the warehouse and she saw nobody.

"Gone."

"Fuck!"

"Do you know who it was?" Guinevere asked.

"I do," Logan admitted. "His name is Leo Shepherd. . ."

Guinevere and Nicholas exchanged a dark look.