

**November 2006** - Operation Treadstone and Operation Blackbriar come apart. Dr Albert Hirsch and CIA Deputy Director Noah Vossen continue their research into the ultimate assassin.

**September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009** - Big Daddy is murdered, live on the internet. Hit Girl is, very briefly, shown to the world, live on the internet.

**November 31<sup>st</sup>, 2009** - Dr Albert Hirsch and CIA Deputy Director Noah Vossen instigate the Urban Predator program.

**January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010** - The first Urban Predator student is recruited and trained in Hit Girl's image.

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They were the first - the very first.

They were the first victims of the experiment which would ultimately result in the deaths of hundreds and lead to the loss and the destruction of hundreds of childhoods.

At the tender age of ten, neither of them had any idea of what it was that they were beginning. For the first eight months of the program, the two youngsters; one boy and one girl, were very much alone - other than having their adult instructors for company. As time wore on, they both forgot about their early lives; they were both street rats - nobody would miss them, nobody would file a police report.

The girl quickly forgot about the night when she was seized from the Hawaiian beach. The boy quickly forgot about the night when he was seized from the frozen streets of London. They both quickly forgot about being normal children.

Instead, they focussed only on what was ahead of them as their Instructors turned them into finely tuned killers; a tool to be used and quite literally, abused.

By the time they were both eleven-years-old, nine months after they had been taken, any recollection of life beyond the concrete walls where they were to exist for the next five years of their lives, had faded completely.

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**Wednesday, January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

The first twenty-four hours of her incarceration were a very rude awakening for the girl.

She was seized off that beach in Hawaii, in the dead of night, thrown into the back of a car, and then pushed aboard a large cargo aircraft. The flight appeared to take hours, somewhere close to seven, and it was very noisy and uncomfortable. The girl was dazed by her swift abduction and she was being moved around so fast that she never even considered resisting.

After landing, again at night, she was hauled off the aircraft into a cold habitat that was very different to the tropical islands of Hawaii. Before she could see very much, she was bundled into an SUV and driven a few miles to a large concrete building that seemed to appear out of nowhere.

Then had begun her induction into the world of the *Predator*.

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Within minutes of entering the building, the ten-year-old found herself summarily stripped and shoved into a shower.

Her clothing vanished from sight during that shower and when she was finished, she was handed a white towel and dragged off to see a thoroughly unpleasant female doctor. After a host of very invasive and incredibly thorough examinations, and despite her forceful objections, her long dirty blond hair was cut short and the remainder shaved to a number 4 cut. Finally, a plastic bracelet was attached to her right wrist and another to her left ankle.

She was sent back for another shower and as the remains of her lovely hair was washed off her body, the girl began to shake as the reality of her situation hit her like a block of concrete. After the shower, she was led down several concrete corridors, barefoot on the concrete floor, to a room. The door was opened, she was pushed inside, and the door was pulled closed behind her - then locked. She was alone for the first time in many hours. She had no idea where she was. Her only possession was a white towel wrapped around her body.

The room was about three metres long by four metres wide and finished off with concrete on the walls, floor, and ceiling. Four light fittings were sunk into the walls and they provided illumination for the room. The girl reached for the light switch by the door and flicked it - the lights went off . . . and back on again as she flicked the switch back. Other than the lights and the light switch, there was a bed, a desk with a chair, and a three-drawer unit beside the bed. All, were made of steel and bolted to the floor. On the wall, adjacent to the door was a full-length steel mirror - the girl frowned at her new reflection; she hated it.

There was another door, off to the left. It led to a very small bathroom that consisted of a shower stall, a sink, and a toilet - again all were steel, even the mirror over the sink. The girl returned to the bedroom and she pulled open the drawers . . . they were full of clothing - all sorts of clothing. She pulled out a pair of white boy-shorts and a white T-shirt. These, she pulled on after shedding the towel. Then she sat on the bed which was made up with a pink duvet and two white pillows over a white sheet.

She pulled her knees up under her chin and as she sat there, she began to cry.

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**Thursday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

The boy awoke in his concrete cell.

He had slept surprisingly well. The bed was comfortable; the best that he had slept in . . . probably ever. But it was not that; he had been exhausted when he had been pushed into his cell the previous day, wearing nothing but a white towel. He had been stripped, showered, probed by a very unpleasant female doctor, and then his head was shaved leaving barely half-an-inch of hair on his scalp. Another enforced shower had been followed by the fitting of a pair of permanent plastic bracelets on his left ankle and right wrist.

His 'cell', maybe bedroom would be a better description, was well equipped and he had found a pair of boxer shorts in a set of drawers full of clothing - surprisingly, all the clothing was in *his* sizes.

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He thought back over the past few days. That night in London when two people, a man and a woman, had grabbed him off the very cold streets and then thrown him into the back of a white Ford Transit van. His questions and demands and gone unanswered as he was driven through the night and he soon found himself at an airfield where a large passenger aircraft, with jet engines mounted at the base of a large T-shaped tail, sat with the engines screaming. A man pulled him out of the van and he was taken aboard the jet which took off minutes later.

After landing, many hours later, it was still night, and he was hauled off the aircraft into a cool habit that was very different to the frozen streets of London. Before he could see very much, he was bundled into an SUV and driven a few miles to a large concrete building that seemed to appear out of nowhere.

Then had begun his induction into the world of the *Predator*.

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**One week later. . .**

It was time for the two recruits to become aware of one another.

They had been kept separate until their instructors were happy that the mind-bending drugs which the youngsters had been fed had started to take proper effect on their young minds. Both ten-year-olds were very strong-willed, especially the girl. It had not been easy keeping them apart - both were naturally curious children and they had spent many hours investigating their new home - another reason to bring them together.

Naturally, the instructors had a cruel streak, so they had devised a smart plan for putting the two kids together.

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Both kids had been undergoing intensive physical training that morning and it was coming up to lunchtime. Therefore, both headed for the showers - up until then, they had used their own changing rooms. But that morning, the boy, just after he had stripped and stepped under the hot water, was ordered into the next door changing room. He thought nothing of the steam already belching out from the showers, assuming that somebody had turned on the hot water for him - as if! It was only when a slim, pale-skinned arm appeared out of the steam followed by a . . .

"Who are you?" the boy demanded.

The girl was momentarily startled to hear another voice in the showers, but then stunned to see a naked boy standing before her.

"L - Lucy. . . Who. . .?"

The boy's eyes drifted lower as the steam drifted and his face went pink. Lucy quickly covered herself.

"My name . . . err, Leo. . ."

Lucy laughed, shook her head, and then shouted into the steam.

"Funny bastards!"

Leo's eyes snapped back to Lucy's face.

"Devious would be my comment," he offered as he began to soap himself.

"You been here long?" the embarrassed Lucy asked as she retreated deeper into the showers and was soon hidden by the steam.

"About a week, you?"

"Same."

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Lunch that day was a funny affair. The two kids sat opposite one another, eating their hotdogs in silence.

Leo felt very awkward - he had always felt that way around girls, but meeting one for the very first time when both were naked, was just weird. Yes, he had enjoyed what he had seen; not that there had really been anything to see, as far as he could remember. Mind you, his own body had not been much better. The girl was pretty, about his own age, but she scowled a lot.

As far as Lucy was concerned, the boy was just an annoyance. She had been annoyed to find a boy running his eyes over her naked body in the shower, but considering that she had nothing much to show, it was not all that bad. He was a skinny boy with thin arms and thin legs. She had about an inch on him as far as height was concerned and she assumed that he was about the same age as her. She left her thoughts as Instructor Millar came over to the table and he sat down beside Lucy.

"So, you two have met?" he asked politely.

"Well, considering we met in the shower, it's not like we have any secrets from each other!" Lucy pointed out sardonically and the instructor laughed.

"Not my idea, but at least you now know about each other's existence. You are both *Predators* and you will train together from this point on. There is no need for you both to become friends; but you must be able to work together as partners."

"With him?"

"With her?"

"Let me get serious: you both work as a team, or you don't work at all. . ."

"You mean, we can leave?" Leo asked hopefully.

"With a bullet in the head, yes," Instructor Millar replied darkly.

Lucy smiled at Leo.

"Hi, I'm Lucy; we're going to be working together," Lucy said as she offered her hand.

Leo sighed and held out his own hand.

"Hi, I'm Leo. I look forward to working with you, Lucy."

Both shook hands, somewhat earnestly - they both knew that their lives depended on it; they both knew that their lives depended on one another.

Thus, the world's first team of *Predators* came into being.

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The *Urban Predator* rulebook was written during their first year, or to be more exact, the rulebook was written *for* them.

Each and every time either one of them fucked up, which was often, another rule was added to make the lives of both present and future *Predators* just that *little* bit harder. Between the two of them, the ten-year-olds were determined to push the bounds of their captivity and enforced training. They also took perverse enjoyment in pushing the limits of their instructors' sanity as far as they deemed safe.

By the time the boy and girl both turned eleven, other *Predators* had joined the program; Lucy and Leo had gained companions - other children, who just like them, had been seized from their comfortable lives to be trained at the whim of their instructors. The presence of the other children changed Lucy and Leo - they began to rebel against the instructors and their authority. Neither child was much liked by the new waves of *Predators* which followed, mainly due to their harsh tempers and training methods.

The two rebels began to terrorise the other *Predators* and sabotage the facility behind the backs of their instructors. That added complication soon gave the instructors the requirement to monitor both the girl and the boy, twenty-four-hours a day. Not surprisingly, the instructors were already fed up with watching the rebellious children, so they had created a new way to monitor the *Predators*; thus, the 'Yellows' came into existence.

Yellows were drawn from the younger kids who were normally 'disposed of' as they were deemed surplus to requirements. Instead those youngsters, both boys and girls, were retained as nothing more than servants at best, slave labour at worst. They were given menial tasks normally deemed beneath the average *Predator* and they were looked down upon by the other kids as being just that. For example, a team of eight Yellows was designated to watch the girl and the boy, all day and all night. They would report back to the instructors and detail *anything* that either did wrong.

Naturally, the eleven-year-old girl hated being monitored by kids of seven and eight. The cruel instructors even ensured that it was a *male* Yellow who was posted to watch her shower and make use of the facilities, each morning and night. After two yellows died at Lucy's hands, she was punished severely, and after a very public strapping - yes, the strap was brought in *because* of the girl's behaviour - the almost twelve-year-old girl was forced to spend an entire week without clothes. That, in itself, did not go well either - a Phase 1 *Predator* died after pushing his luck teasing the girl and after he actually dared to lay his hands on her naked body; the rebellious Leo killed him. Thus, a new punishment regime was instigated - The Cage.

Considering that the girl was barely twelve, but already had two murders under her belt, you would have thought that her time as a *Predator* was all but over. But no, she was deemed perfect; at least the instructors thought so: what were a few dead kids along the way when you were creating perfection - the deaths were a worthwhile price to pay for the ultimate in assassins.

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Thus, by the time that Lucy and Leo both turned twelve, they were a truly fearsome team - as well as becoming the very first Phase 2 *Predators*. The girl and the boy were skilled in various forms of the martial arts and physical weapons of every description. Many instructors had gained not insignificant injuries at their hands, during sparring. The bodies of Lucy and Leo were almost permanently marred by bruises due to their remarkably high tolerances when it came to pain; Lucy especially could absorb blows way beyond many of her peers.

When they became the very first teenaged *Predators*, they became the very first Phase 3 *Predators* and as such they gained their coveted, and long promised, codenames. For Lucy: *Piranha*. For Leo: *Wolf*. To mark the momentous event, both teens were allowed to acquire a

tattoo each. Lucy, a tattoo of the omnivorous fish which featured on her right thigh and was highly visible when she wore shorts. Leo, a tattoo of a howling wolf on his own right thigh. The instructors were a little unsure of the results - the idea had been to give graduating Phase 2 *Predators* a tattoo which would act as their identification - 'too large' was the main comment, among others.

The pair, therefore, became the first to gain a much smaller tattoo behind their right ear - the ubiquitous command dagger, which signified the skilled capability of each and every *Predator*. The tattoo was summarily issued during the Phase 1 stage for *Predators* deemed suitable to continue their training: if you did not receive a tattoo, you generally received a bullet in its place.

Despite the pride felt by the instructors for what they had created, they were also very wary of their most advanced creations. The powers-that-be were also not above punishing and humiliating either the boy or the girl, constantly reminding both of *who* was actually in charge. Care was taken to keep the youngsters balanced psychologically so that they would not turn on their creators and kill them - a constant and very real fear for the instructors. Lucy and Leo spent many hours with The Doctor undergoing 'shrinking' sessions to reinforce the intensive drug program and other, more disturbing, brain management sessions.

A few weeks short of their fourteenth birthdays, Lucy and Leo graduated from the *Urban Predator Academy* and they were allowed to decompress in preparation for their very first official missions.

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***Approximately eight months later***

***Sunday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010***

***The Urban Predator Academy***

***Colorado, United States of America***

"What's going on?"

Lucy was a little over two weeks short of her eleventh birthday. The skinny, unhealthy girl from eight months earlier was long gone. Lucy now had a tight physique with barely an ounce of fat on her slim frame. Her muscles and abs were as tight as they could be and her fitness was second to none. Her dirty blonde hair had been allowed to grow back and was currently tied up in her customary ponytail, high on the back of her head. She wore a tight black sports bra which highlighted the limited growth in her chest and black jogging pants with black running shoes.

"You, our little snapping viper, are about to gain some little friends to play with."

"Fuck, you, *Instructor* tight-ass!"

"One of these days, Lucy. . ."

"Yeah, bite me!"

Lucy sat down in the otherwise empty cafeteria. It had always been empty, usually just her, Leo, and a half dozen instructors. A few moments passed before Leo, dressed in a black T-shirt and black joggers entered and sat down beside her.

"Something happening?" he asked.

"I think we have visitors," Lucy commented.

Before Leo could respond, there came the sounds of shouting and yelling coming towards the cafeteria. The doors to the cafeteria opened and eighteen kids were pushed through the door and guided to three tables a short distance away from Lucy and Leo. Each three-sided table could seat six and once each was full, the two *Predators* studied the occupants. It was an even mix: nine boys and nine girls. All were about ten years old. Two girls in particular stood out from the crowd. As well as them both being an inch or so taller than the other girls, they were also absolutely identical. Several of the kids were struggling as they were forced to sit.

Both of those girls and three of the boys each sported a wicked bruise on a cheek - they had obviously resisted their forced appropriation. Lucy noticed one of the instructors holding a three-foot baton in his hands. Lucy was very familiar with the device having experienced its gentle touch on more than one occasion - Leo was grimacing too; he could remember the same gentle touch.

"Welcome!" Senior Instructor Hanley called out. "You are now *Predators* - at least you will be if you survive. . ."

The instructor broke off as one of the kids - a girl with short blond hair made to run. She made it twenty feet before Lucy kicked her to the ground and pinned her. Senior Instructor Hanley smiled.

"Lucy - release her! Leo!"

Lucy rose to her feet after leaving her customary two seconds before following the command. Hanley growled and he shook his head at the girl. Leo was already standing up, frowning at Lucy's continued display of insolence, knowing that one day, the girl would push things way too far.

"These two here, are Lucy Ford and Leo Shepherd. They are senior to you little bastards. They are Phase 2 *Predators*, while you worthless pieces of shit are Apprentice *Predators*. If any of you survive the next four weeks of hell; you will each become Phase 1 *Predators*. Lucy is a cocky little bitch, but you will listen to her when she gives you orders. You will listen to Lucy and Leo when they train you. I would also advise you *not* to piss Lucy off. . ."

The remaining seventeen kids all looked down at the sobbing girl lying on the floor of the cafeteria - a good demonstration of what the girl called Lucy was capable of. The bastard laughed as he



walked out of the cafeteria leaving eighteen very scared kids behind.

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Senior Instructor Hanley's deputy stepped forward and he faced the unfortunate Apprentice *Predators*.

"That was Senior Instructor Hanley. I am Instructor Millar, his deputy. Stand up!" Instructor Millar called out. "You will each strip out of your clothes - just dump them on the floor in front of you; you won't be needing them again."

As they stood up, none of the kids looked very happy at that order; especially the girls who had no desire to strip in front of any boys, let alone the adults present.

"Move - or we will strip you. Forget about your modesty, girls; there is no need for any of that nonsense from this moment on," Instructor Morris growled.

Instructor Morris was one of the two onsite female instructors and she was a total bitch - at least as far as Lucy was concerned, and from her own personal experience, Morris was beyond cruel. Nobody moved, but several of the kids began to shake with fear. Instructor Morris stepped towards the girl who still lay on the floor sobbing. Without a pause, Instructor Morris yanked off the unfortunate girl's clothing until she was completely naked. The young girl struggled and fought throughout the enforced stripping and it was obvious that the girl was frightened beyond belief as a pool of yellow liquid spread beneath her body.

Another instructor, this one a male, Instructor Knight, came forward holding a large black rubbish bag and he held it open. There was general hesitation amongst the remaining seventeen ten-year-olds but with a single fearsome glance from Instructor Morris, plus a look at the girl on the floor, every kid jumped up and clothes began to land on the same floor. Five minutes later, just like the girl on the floor, all nine boys and the remaining eight girls were as naked as the day they were born. All, made efforts to cover themselves from the prying eyes of their new colleagues. Two of the girls and one of the boys had urine running down their legs; they were so scared by the events unfolding around them.

"Clean it up with your clothes, you dirty little shits," Instructor Morris barked. "Ford, Shepherd - take these rejects down to the changing rooms. Little shits - pick up your own clothing and dump it in that black bag."

"Yes, Instructor," Leo replied.

"Yes, Instructor," Lucy replied smartly; Lucy did not fuck about where Instructor Morris was concerned.

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Instructor Knight stood beside the open doors and each kid reluctantly dumped their clothing into the gaping black bag knowing that they would never see their clothes again. The thoroughly humiliated and scared kids were led naked down several cold concrete corridors before they entered the changing rooms and stopped beside the other onsite female instructor. Instructor Turner was nicer than Instructor Morris, but not by much.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine - over that side," she ordered, randomly selecting the first nine kids, irrespective of gender. "The rest of you this side."

The two groups of kids were waved towards two groups of showers where they found Instructor Matthews waiting.

"Collect some shower gel as you go. No playing grab-ass: boys, hands off the girls - girls, hands off the boys. Concentrate on your own body and once you are done, step out here," he ordered.

The kids, expecting to be able to wrap themselves in one of the many white towels piled by the door, moved fast, washing themselves speedily and trying to ignore the fact that the opposite sex was watching their every move. Only, the first kid out - one of the twins - found herself grabbed and her long hair quickly cut off, then the rest of her hair was reduced to a grade 4 cut. The same task was repeated on every child without exception, both boy and girl. After the impromptu haircut, they were ordered back into the showers.

Only then were they each allowed to wrap themselves in one of the white towels.

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Lucy and Leo were then ordered to escort the eighteen towel-wrapped kids down to see the nurse.

The *Urban Predator* facility had a very well equipped medical wing, with a permanent medical staff consisting of a doctor and six nurses. Each of the *Apprentice Predators* was lined up under the watchful eye of Lucy, Leo, and Instructor Morris. They were then called into the Nurse's Office, wrapped in their white towel. There they endured a full and very invasive medical before reappearing, fifteen minutes later, dressed in light grey joggers and a white T-shirt. They were still bare-foot and none of them wore underwear, but at least they were covered up, they all thought.

Lucy was given a clipboard and the instructors vanished. If the kids thought that they were going to get an easy time, they were very, very wrong. As far as Lucy was concerned, she could see no reason why her own suffering should not be endured by those eighteen kids. Leo was the same - if it could happen to him, it should happen to them.

The first task on her list was showing the kids their accommodation and their home for the next few years.

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The dormitory was in the next corridor from the more private rooms occupied by Lucy and Leo. There were twenty-four beds, arranged in four groups of six, each group was separated by six large lockers, arranged in threes back to back.

"Take a bed," Lucy announced. "That bed will be your bed for the rest of your time here. . ."

"I'm *not* sleeping in the same room as boys," one of the girls announced in a voice tinted with a British accent.

"You'll do what you're fucking told, bitch!" Lucy growled.

"Fuck you!" came the instant retort.

"Name!" Lucy growled as she strode over to the girl and she glared down at her, despite their barely being an inch difference between them in height.

"Willow."

"Well, Willow - you're gonna do what the fuck you are told. . .," Lucy began but then she paused and turned to face the whole group. "I have no love for this fucking place, nor for any of you. But I am going to be nice, just this once - you want this to be as easy as possible, then you follow instructions. Life is gonna be hell for you all - we know; we've been here for eight months."

"What is this place?"

"Hell, on earth! Now, you will all follow Leo and draw the remainder of your clothing from the stores."

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**Sunday, September 26<sup>th</sup>**

**Colorado Springs**

"Hi, honey!"

"Shannon got into trouble at school today. Iain bit Annabelle, so she bit him back," Taylor Millar advised her husband as she vanished back into the kitchen.

"Hi, Daddy," seven-year-old Shannon offered sweetly.

"What did you do?" Patrick Millar asked his daughter resignedly.

"Well . . . a boy said something nasty . . . so I hit him. . ."

"Tell your father *where* you hit him," her mother prompted.

The girl looked miserable but she looked up at her father as she continued.

"I hit him in the . . . you know . . . between the legs. . ."

"Shannon, what have you been told about hitting, period?"

"Don't hit people unless you want them to hit you back - I apologised to the boy."

"Did you get punished?"

"I got detention. . ."

"Good."

"Patrick, honey - Annabelle and Iain are squabbling!"

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### ***The Urban Predator Academy***

#### ***Colorado***

The seventeen Apprentice *Predators* were halfway through their hell month - yes, *seventeen*.

One, a girl called Teresa Palmore, had been summoned to see the Senior Instructor that very morning and she had not returned. However, a single pistol shot from the direction of the Senior Instructor's office had shaken up the remaining *Predators* who had figured out what the gunshot probably was almost immediately. The girl had been struggling to keep up with her other Apprentice *Predators*, she had been warned, but to no avail - the girl had just given up.

Her death had given the remaining kids extra resolve to stay alive. It had also driven home their very precarious situation: train or die. Their lives were quite literally hell - the girl, Lucy, had been very accurate in her description of Hell Month. Lucy and Leo would take turns getting up to wake the Apprentices at five. Lucy took immense pleasure in storming into the dormitory, flicking on the strip lights, and then ripping off the duvets covering the tired youngsters.

"Move it!" she would yell as they all fell out of bed and staggered for the bathroom.

By the end of the second day, boys and girls intermingled in the bathroom, making use of the facilities and showers without complaint or concern at being in the presence of the opposite sex. To speed things along, Lucy would shut off the hot water and then laugh as eight kids screamed as they received a dousing in freezing cold water.

Once they were dressed, Lucy and Leo would escort them on a two-mile run. Whomsoever came last, at the end of the run, had the job of clearing up the dirty clothing from the previous day and carrying it all down to the laundry. After the run, everybody showered before heading for breakfast. That occasion, each morning, was one of the few times that any of the kids actually smiled. The food was good and plentiful. The kids were encouraged to eat big meals, which were high in protein and all the other things that growing kids required.

After the 7am breakfast, which lasted about an hour, lessons began at 8:30am, lasting an hour for each lesson period. There was a short break of twenty minutes at 10:35am before another hour's lesson lasting until noon. The Apprentice Predators were allowed five minutes to get between lessons - lateness was not tolerated. An hour was allowed for lunch, with the afternoon lesson starting at 1:30pm and lasting two hours. At 3:30pm, the trainee recruits were allowed two hours of self-study where they were monitored by the instructors. The much awaited 6pm would allow the kids to eat again, and they would be famished after having endured a thirteen-hour day to that point.

After the meal, for which an hour was allowed, the kids had two hours of free time before they were to be in bed for 9pm. There were no complaints about the bedtime; indeed, many of the thoroughly exhausted kids were often in bed before eight and fast asleep within seconds. The majority of their training for the first month, was physical and very strenuous. The training was intended to weed out those deemed unable to succeed as a *Predator*. It was tough, but they had all made it through almost three weeks of hell.

Almost. . .