

Four months previously

June 2016

City of Joliet, Illinois

It was the basic rule of survival in an organisation with little rules.

If you wanted to stop yourself getting picked on and abused, you made damn sure that you were the 'top dog', and that meant taking down the existing 'top dog' on your first day, if you could.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we have a newbie, another bitch - meet Raider!"

Raider followed the current leader, Rapine, into what appeared to be a recreational area. There were over forty youngsters in the room, varying in age from twelve up to about sixteen, boys and girls. From their stances, they all appeared to be seasoned fighters; indeed, many bore signs of obvious fighting - cuts, bruises, and the like. They all had one thing in common, however: their heads had been shaved, boys and girls alike. There were a few derogatory comments from those nearby, but otherwise, Raider was ignored.

"Raider - you are now the lowest of the low. You will need to prove yourself to succeed here and work your way up the pecking order - understand?"

Raider smirked at the boy who was about thirteen - Raider knew him, and he knew her; they were old compatriots from a time long past.

"Where do you fit in, Rapine?" Raider asked.

"I'm the leader, right now . . . so don't you forgot that. Maybe we can get some sack time. . ."

Raider moved like lightning.

Rapine was struck repeatedly in the face, chest, and stomach. He had no time to react as he was mercilessly beaten to the floor. Even when he was on the floor, Raider continued to kick and punch the boy as he screamed out in pain. Those close by could hear ribs snapping as the beating continued.

"STOP!"

Raider stopped, and she turned to see two men in body armour and masks standing in the doorway. Raider kicked the boy one more time in the side - he screamed out in agony. One of the men stared down at the bruised and bloody former-leader.

"So much for Rapine," the man chuckled. "Looks like the new girl is in charge."

"You and you," Raider ordered as she pointed at two of the larger boys. "Take this sack of shit to the medical wing."

There was no argument as the two boys grinned and nodded. Rapine was hauled up from the floor by the two boys and dragged out of sight.

"Anybody unhappy with the change in leadership?" Raider growled.

"Welcome, Raider - good to have you aboard, I'm Bandit."

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For the first time in several weeks, Raider felt relatively safe.

The organisation she had joined was both worse than the one she had hated since she had been forced into its ranks, and better from a certain point of view. Either way, she had a comfortable bed, hot food, and some exciting distractions

to keep her mind occupied. Over the next few weeks, Raider learned much about her new adoptive organisation. She learnt about Corsairs, and she learnt about FEAR and what she represented. She forgot about her previous life - her real name, her codename, they all vanished from her mind and replaced with her current title: Raider. She ruled the forty-odd youths with an iron fist, sending many to the hospital wing. It was not her - she hated the violence; she always had. Only, it was the only way to survive in a dog-eat-dog world where anything went. She knew that at any time, she could be deposed herself. Surprisingly, her biggest ally was the former leader, Rapine.

Rapine was her lieutenant - at least he took up the position when he emerged from almost two weeks in the hospital wing.

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Urban Predator had had a much more defined hierarchy whereas, FEAR's army had a decidedly fluid pecking order.

The kids looked after themselves while the adults tended to ignore the kids completely, apart from some good-natured verbal abuse and the odd crack around the back of the head. The 'kids' were referred to as *Marauders*, despite the undeniable fact that they were all *Predators*. Raider had discussed this with Rapine and he had explained that the kids had wanted a distinction between what they were and what they were becoming - it had been FEAR's idea to call them *Marauders* in line with her adult *Corsairs*. The 'kids' had jumped at the idea, so FEAR had declared them all to be *Marauders* from that point on.

For Raider, it felt strange - she knew a few of the *Marauders*; Rapine was from her own *Predator* Intake despite him being about seven months her junior. To cement her ascension to leadership, she had taken Rapine to be her own - she had openly seduced the boy and then allowed him to go to town on her body in full public view of the other *Marauders*. Raider was also curious as to why the older *Marauders*, such as Bandit who was sixteen, were not in charge.

"Bandit!" Rapine had scoffed. "She's a lazy bitch - why give orders when you can just follow 'em!"

However, Raider also discovered another very good reason why nobody really wanted to be in charge of anything.

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The girl had been around twelve-years-old when she was hauled onto the stage before one of FEAR's rallies.

The girl was shaking and trembling with fear and while there was silence from the masked *Corsairs*, the *Marauders* were baying for blood - and they got it. Without a word, FEAR drew a pistol and in unison with the girl peeing herself, FEAR put a bullet into the pre-teen's skull.

"Team Seven needs a new leader," FEAR growled as she stalked off the stage without another look at the dead girl.

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Raider slept with a pistol and a knife beneath her pillow.

She was usually joined most evenings by Rapine who would spend several minutes massaging Raider's breasts and gently tickling her nipples with his tongue. Raider could also feel his dick, hard up against her and while she had a rule about how many times a week he was allowed to go 'all the way', he would often explode spontaneously all over her leg or stomach as he preferred to sleep

naked, just as she herself often did. For protection, Raider had gathered a small posse who enjoyed her protection in return for their support . . . and their protection.

As for the days, they were spent training and training. If you weren't eating or sleeping, you were training. Training was something which a *Predator* knew all about and to a certain extent. Something which they enjoyed. Training focussed the mind and it detracted that same mind from the oppressive atmosphere in which they were forced to live. Despite being relatively free, the *Marauders* still preferred some form of regimen and training was a key part of that. Raider focussed her mind on keeping herself in top condition. While she did not believe in what FEAR was doing, it was a means to an end - a means to staying alive.

Being a Phase 3 graduate, Raider was highly skilled, and she would spend hours punching bags, kicking practice dummies, and beating the living crap out of random *Marauders*. As leader of the *Marauders*, it was Raider's responsibility to ensure that all of FEAR's minions were trained. Often, Raider would fight the adult *Corsairs* and during those sparring sessions, she would gain many a *Corsair's* respect from the application of her skills.

Out on the streets and doing FEAR's bidding, was something else again.

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Initially, it was just petty thefts around the city of Joliet, about 40 miles southwest of Chicago.

That escalated after a few weeks to muggings, then armed assaults on stores, and finally onto attacks on armoured trucks for their cash. Naturally, FEAR found that her *Marauders* came 'pre-loaded' with all the required skills. As far as possible, the attacks were spread out and each used a different MO, as the police referred to it. Raider figure that it would probably be months before the police began to figure out a pattern of attack. Being a leader also made Raider privy to some of FEAR's plans for 'global domination' - well, maybe just 'Chicago domination'. That was another of Raiders' reasons for being in the top tier - she would be aware of what she was being used for and, if necessary, jump ship before it sank, or she was slaughtered like cannon-fodder.

It was in August when Raider began to get a bad feeling about her new home. It was the same feeling she had felt during May when *Urban Predator* had begun to tear itself apart. FEAR was talking about some deadline or such in Chicago. Raider had been part of FEAR's protective detail whilst she had been off meeting with some men whom she thought to be Italian - so wrong! They turned out to be Sicilians - like Raider could tell the difference. . . Soon after, FEAR had met with some Russians - Raider hated Russians; it was a personal thing. Naturally, Raider was fully familiar with *Fusion* - you had to be blind and deaf not to know about Hit Girl and her little gang of vigilantes. Raider had personal reasons for hating Hit Girl with a vengeance, however, while Hit Girl had indirectly ruined many kids' lives, Raider could see that Hit Girl was not the person portrayed by the *Urban Predator* teachings.

As she saw FEAR's plans unfolding, Raider decided that she wanted none of it. Hurting criminals and ripping them off - that was just sport - but hurting innocent people who were actually working hard for their earnings. . . The final straw was during September when certain younger *Marauders* began to shoot people out of hand: 'he was too slow with the money' or 'I had a bad night' and her personal favourite: 'I was on my period, bitch!'. Rachel had reluctantly accepted *Urban Predator* because she was being trained to help her fellow citizens and her country - something noble . . . but FEAR while providing

Raider with somewhere to live, was perverting that training and using her *Marauders* for whatever nefarious scheme she and her sidekick, *Sunset Phoenix*, had in mind at the current moment.

Kids were dying indiscriminately - FEAR did not care. Then that stupid halfwit in her pink outfit had caused unbelievable tension in Chicago by causing SWAT to kill their own. Things were hotting up in that city and FEAR had chosen to deploy *Marauders* to that city and some were not coming back. *Fusion* had a fearsome reputation - there was even rumour that *Hit Girl* had had a part in *Urban Predator's* downfall. Either way, Raider had recognised some of the newer masked-faces in Chicago: *Psyche* and *Foxtail* - they were both *Predator* codenames. Then, towards the end of September, two more names which had stunned her: *Fury* and *Rage* - could they both be alive?

September was a worrying month for Raider and she decided to get out - anyway she could.

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FEAR had a new playmate on display by October.

Ostensibly, FEAR was portraying the new masked individual as her sister - that kind of made her untouchable. Raider had met the young woman, who was known as *Dread*, and they had talked briefly. There was something about the girl that separated her from her elder sister - assuming they were actually sisters. Despite *Dread's* outwardly brisk behaviour, her body language dictated that she had no desire to be working alongside her 'sister'. Maybe she was coerced - FEAR did not exactly have a retirement plan for her minions, so leaving her organisation was not very practical - if indeed, it was actually possible to leave without a bullet to the skull.

Along with her 'sister', FEAR also began to reveal her 'master plan' for destroying *Fusion* and the sheer scale of the plan gave Raider pause for thought. Destroying *Fusion* meant destroying her friends and that was *not* acceptable.

She had to warn them . . . but how?

Sunday, October 9th, 2016

Central Chicago

It was a fairly normal Sunday morning, just like any other Sunday morning.

Raider had decided to tag along with *Bandit* and three other *Marauders* - the fresh air would do her good and she fancied a trip to Chicago for something other than killing. Raider had no liking for *Bandit*, but with *Bandit* as a supporter, it ensured that Raider's leadership would continue - many were apprehensive when around the skilled sixteen-year-old. It wasn't that she was violent - all the *Marauders* were - it was more that she had a vicious streak. *Bandit* took great personal joy in making people's lives miserable, be it with simple humiliation, or a crafty punch out of nowhere. More than one *Marauder* had suffered varying levels of injury at her hands 'just for a bit of fun'.

As far as Raider was concerned, the girl was wired wrong, but to be honest, that may not have been entirely *Bandit's* fault. As Raider understood it, the girl had taken too well to her *Predator* training and it had taken some severe motivation in the instructors' part to get her back on track, narrowly avoiding a bullet to the head instead of completing the end of Phase 1 training. Somewhere around the end of Phase 2 training, the girl had changed

psychologically and become somebody very different. From that point, she had enjoyed anything that involved inflicting pain on others, including killing. It was rumoured that she was a lesbian - only, nobody dared ask - as she apparently took more interest in naked females than naked males. Needless to say, the girl had never been seen with a boy during a sexual encounter which did not necessarily mean that the rumours were true.

Bandit may have been a bully, in the worst possible way, but she was beautiful, and, at times, she was fun to talk to.

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True to form, Bandit could not let bygones be bygones - she always had to escalate a situation.

"Holy, crap!" Bandit breathed. "Is that who I think it is?"

"Who?" Rustler asked as they walked down the street.

"Stephanie fucking Walker!"

"Psyche?" Wrecker asked dubiously.

"Fuck me! Yes, Stephanie, I'm a fucked-up bitch, Psyche Walker!"

"So?" Fence wanted to know.

"Give me strength. . ." Bandit breathed. "The bitch killed my friend - I cannot let that go unrewarded."

"Leave it alone, Bandit," Raider ordered.

"Fuck you, Raider!"

"Attacking that girl in broad daylight is *not* one of your better plans, Bandit - now stand down!"

"You're such a weak leader - maybe it's time you stepped aside," Bandit growled back.

"Have it your way - just don't come crawling me to me for sympathy when it all goes to hell," Raider told the older girl.

"Clever, Raider - what could go wrong?"