

Author's Note: *This chapter follows on from events in Chapter 12: Hunted Creatures of my other story: Creatures of the Night and Chapter 8: Escape from San Diego of my other story: Fusion: Los Angeles.*

Sunday, December 4th, 2016

**Training Facility Echo
Chicago**

All four youngsters were very tired, and they had each slept for most of the flight.

After they had landed, they had been whisked to Echo and there they had each received a full medical from Doctor Staite before being allowed to rest once again. For each of them, it was the very first time that they had felt *really* safe in months. All four slept in the same cabin, having fallen asleep almost instantly. The four youngsters slept for a good number of hours before stirring early afternoon. They each found clean clothing waiting for them: T-shirts, shorts, and jogging pants. All four made use of the showers before dressing.

On their return from the showers, they found Mindy and Megan waiting for them outside their accommodation.

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**Training Facility Echo
Level 1**

Food was available along with plenty of drink.

All four kids were very pleased to see the food as they were very hungry and still exhausted from their narrow escape, their injuries, the flights, and the differing time zones. They wolfed down a burger each - two in Nicholas' case - and washed it down with plenty of soft drinks.

"That feels so much better!" Logan exclaimed.

"I ate like a pig!" Nicholas added.

"You are a pig," Guinevere groaned as she patted her own stomach.

"I feel whole again," Juno added.

Around them, Mindy, Megan, Lucy, Hailee, and Lauren sat to keep the San Diego Team company as they ate. Megan had studied Logan's bruises and she chose to comment on them.

"I'm fine," Logan replied. "I had much worse after Leo went to town on me."

"Leo!" Lucy exclaimed in surprise as she jumped to her feet. "Where? When?"

"San Diego," Logan explained. "He got the better of me and Juno."

Lucy turned on Guinevere.

"You knew about Leo?"

"Yes."

Lucy then turned to Mindy.

"What about you?"

"Yes, I knew Leo had surfaced."

"Why did you not tell me?" Lucy demanded as she advanced on Mindy, her face contorting with anger.

"Because I knew that you'd go racing off to the west coast looking for him," Mindy replied calmly.

"Now his trail is cold, dammit!" Lucy declared as she shoved Mindy in the chest.

A collective 'Oooh!' arose from everybody watching. They all expected Mindy to rip Lucy apart. But Mindy did not retaliate, despite the blazing eyes which indicated that Mindy was a hair away from Armageddon.

"You think Leo would leave a trail?" Mindy asked with anger creeping into her tone. "Is he as good as you?"

"After you, there's me, then there's Leo," Lucy growled back. "He is top-notch."

"So, tracking him would be a waste of time, huh?"

"Yes," Lucy admitted somewhat reluctantly.

"I think we need to talk," Mindy decided as she glared at those around her. "I want the room!"

Twenty seconds later, after a mad scramble from those who desired a long and healthy life, the two girls were very much alone.

"Have you ever loved somebody more than anything, Mindy?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever lost somebody like that?"

"Yes, I have."

"Have you felt the utter misery of being alone and just wanting that person back in your life?"

"Yes, I have."

"Would you have done anything to get that person back into your life?"

"Yes, Lucy, I would."

"I miss him. We were taken at the same time, more or less. He was all I had for the first year before the First Intake arrived. He kept me sane - and me him, I suppose. Do you know what it is like to need somebody close to keep you sane?"

"Unfortunately, I do."

"You are so damn infuriating, Mindy!" Lucy exploded.

"So, they tell me," Mindy responded with an evil smirk.

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Training Facility Echo Level 0

There was feverish activity on the mat and a lot of shouting.

Mindy chuckled as she caught sight of what was happening, and she simply shook her head as she watched the ferocious behaviour. Megan, Joshua, Marc, Curtis, Tommy, and Hunter were arranged in a line on the mat and they were engaged in a push-ups race. Megan's face was beet-red from the exertion. Joshua simply

appeared to be enjoying himself. Marc and Curtis were red-faced, but not excessively. Tommy and Hunter both seemed fairly content. All six were sweating profusely as their arms pumped. Mindy noticed that the girls appeared to be enjoying the rippling muscles while Jamie and Iain Miller appeared to be checking out Megan's chest as she tried to keep up with the boys. Chloe pulled Megan out of the competition before she killed herself, leaving just the boys. It was several minutes more before Marc and Curtis rolled out of the game, leaving just Joshua, Tommy, and Hunter. Two more minutes saw Hunter give up. The cheering and chanting threatened to lift the roof of the safehouse as everybody shouted support for the two boys.

It was Tommy who folded first, leaving Joshua as the clear winner. Mindy sat down next to a sweating Megan who was still breathing heavily. She grinned up at Mindy, too puffed to speak.

"You are a sorry excuse for a human being, Megan!" Mindy laughed. "What were you trying to prove?"

"She thinks she has bigger balls than us boys," Tommy responded with a grin.

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Safehouse E

Level 7

Stephanie was examining her latest acquisition - an AT4 anti-tank rocket launcher.

"You're a little thief," Abigail advised her friend. "Mindy will only tolerate it so far," she pointed out.

"I like to call it 'appropriation'," Stephanie retorted with a smirk.

"I call it 'mis-appropriation'."

"Whatever; it was shiny, and it looked cool."

"Why do you need this stash, anyway? Didn't Mindy give you full access to the main armoury?"

"Yes, she did; I just like to keep a few useful weapons close at hand - you never know when they might be needed."

Abigail laughed out loud.

"Mindy's going to lock you out, one of these days."

Stephanie placed the rocket launcher into her 'armoury' and she sat down facing Abigail. It was the first time that Abigail had laughed in days.

"I'm her daughter - I'll be fine. What about you?"

Abigail looked very uncomfortable.

"Can we go back to talking about your light-fingered approach to Hit Girl's armoury?"

Stephanie laughed. "No."

"It's difficult - I feel ashamed."

"So, do I. So, does Lauren. Abigail - please."

"I can't really remember much of the actual act. I felt something inside me, but that was it - nothing really registered, and I don't remember an orgasm or anything like that."

"Lucky you."

"Huh?"

"I felt it all. I know it was not a cock, but it still hurt, and it made me feel so horrible," Stephanie responded.

Abigail was surprised to see tears running down her friend's cheeks. Stephanie had never spoken about her ordeal, although Abigail knew about what had occurred - most in *Fusion* knew about it, but nobody dared say anything.

"You've never spoken about it," Abigail tried as she moved over to sit beside her friend.

"I can remember everything. I can remember how they stripped me. I can remember the cold of my backside on the concrete. I can remember them pulling my legs open. I can remember the shock of something cold being rammed up where nothing had ever been before. . ."

Stephanie did not say any more as she began sobbing and Abigail hugged her friend, her own tears mixing with Stephanie's. It was what Abigail had needed - a shoulder to cry on. She had been avoiding everybody who could help, and that had included Brad and Lauren. She had felt weak - always crying about what had happened. But that had stopped when she had seen Stephanie breakdown over her own rape - she had thought that Stephanie was hard-as-nails, almost superhuman. It took almost fifteen minutes for the two of them to calm down.

"I think about what I set you up for, back in the forest. I am so sorry, Abigail."

"It never happened, so let's not go back there, okay?"

"I feel so much guilt for every bad thing I did to people. I feel nothing for those bastards that deserved to die, but I killed people who just wound me up. I killed to improve my standing within *Urban Predator*. I tried to kill you - and you would have just been another statistic in my file."

"I tried to kill you, too, remember - and I failed," Abigail pointed out.

"Yeah - you sucked!" Stephanie grinned as she wiped away her tears.

"You failed, too, remember?"

"I got to tan your bare arse."

"That hurt," Abigail scowled.

"I can relate," Stephanie commented

Safehouse Q

"I miss them," Xiāngxìn Lau said as Sarah swapped over her ankle monitor to one which was decidedly more compact.

"I know. We've been through a lot together, but we all have to go our separate ways eventually," her sister, Lin, commented as she examined her new fashion accessory.

"Will we stay together?"

"Yes, sister, we will."

"I hope we get a home with parents who want us," Xiāngxìn said.

"You will," Sarah commented. "I am certain that you will find a home very soon."

"Are we getting replacements for Charlotte and Dakota?" Lin asked.

"Yes. They are being notified at the moment."

Training Facility Echo

Level 1

"Yes!"

Hit Girl actually grinned as the young boy jumped up and down in excitement. Fourteen-year-old Ewan Campbell and sixteen-year-old Kate Fincham exchanged a look as the excited twelve-year-old finally sat back down again.

"I think he's happy," Kate deadpanned as Jake Wistrum grinned facetiously.

"I get that impression, yes," Hit Girl chuckled.

"When do we leave?" Jake demanded.

"Monday," Hit Girl replied.

"Thank you," Jake said.

"You're welcome, Jake."

The next morning

Monday, December 5th

Safehouse Q

Jake Wistrum could not have been happier.

He had endured Sarah's lecture and threats of death, but he was happy just to have freedom, no matter how small the change. He lay on the bed in his allocated bedroom, just staring up at the ceiling. Daylight streamed in from the window - that was a major improvement after a month in a subterranean hellhole. He may have only been twelve-years-old, but he had witnessed a lot in his four years as a *Predator*. There were so many things that he wished he could unsee. So many things which he wished that he could just forget. His brain was overloaded with how to kill, how to maim. He wanted none of it, but it was there and would be there until the day he died. He had killed - several times - and that was something which he hated and bitterly regretted. He had been deluded to think that FEAR might provide him with a route to a life of money and privilege. She had promised training and support in return for his services. He had become enamoured with the idea of becoming a highly paid assassin, roaming the world as an anonymous killer, killing for the highest bidder.

He had visualised himself as a millionaire by the time he was twenty-one - only that bubble had burst in a most spectacular fashion once FEAR's operation had become to come apart. She had held up one part of her bargain - each of them had been paid a large sum of money. His pile of cash was stashed away in a secret place which only he knew about, but it was blood money, and he wanted nothing to do with it, so it would remain hidden for all time. He was determined to lead as normal a life as was possible for his kind. He wanted to leave a life of violence and murder behind him. He wanted to enjoy his life. He

might have only been twelve-years-old, but the boy was highly intelligent, and he was able to figure out for himself what he wanted - to a point.

As part of gauging his new status, he had asked Hit Girl questions while she was removing his explosive ankle monitor and replacing it with one that was not so lethal.

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Training Facility Echo
Level 4

Jake and Hit Girl were off to one side of the giant subterranean running track which was occupied by the remaining *Marauders*.

"Do you think I can put all this behind me . . . you know, and move on?"

Hit Girl had looked up at him and smiled - that had creeped him out, just a bit.

"You can do anything that you put your mind to, Jake. You are strong, intelligent, and you have already made great strides to prepare yourself for a new and positive life. You have a long road ahead of you, and some of that road will be hard, but I am certain that you will succeed."

"Thanks. Err, Hit Girl?"

"Yes."

"Those monitors weren't really fitted with explosives, where they?" Jake asked tentatively, and he did not like the smirk he received in response to his question.

Without saying a word, Hit Girl dropped his foot and she walked off, leaving him seated. She returned a few minutes later with a six-foot piece of circular timber which looked very much like a fence pole and was about four inches in diameter. Hit Girl secured Jake's old ankle monitor to the stake and she beckoned Jackal over to hold it in a vertical position.

"Battle Guy - trigger Jake Wistrum's explosive charge," Hit Girl ordered over her earpiece.

Everybody - except for Hit Girl - jumped as a loud double crack echoed through the chamber. The first crack was the doubled-up det-cord which had detonated violently, closely followed by the wooden stake which had split at the point of detonation and fallen to the floor. Jackal glared at Hit Girl who just chuckled insanely. Jake looked appalled, as did all of the *Marauders* who were still wearing the explosive-laced ankle monitors.

"You are evil!" Jake exclaimed.

"You get used to it," Jackal growled as he stalked off.

Hit Girl ignored them both as she waved over Kate Fincham who almost ran to get her own ankle monitor removed.

"Anything else, Jake?" Hit Girl asked as Kate sat down.

"A signed picture of Psyche?" Jake ventured. "Naked would be good."

Hit Girl growled as Kate rolled her eyes.

"Clothes would be good, too."

"I'll see what I can do, Jake, but don't blame me if she hits you," Hit Girl chuckled.

Monday evening

Safehouse Q

Jake was rubbing his shoulder like mad but otherwise, he was smiling happily.

"You got the photo, then?" Kate asked rhetorically.

"A dead arm, too," Jake responded. "It was worth it, though."

The boy held up a signed, framed photo of Psyche in her combat suit. Kate just laughed as the happy boy ran up the stairs to put his most prized possession away.

"You're just encouraging him, Stephanie," Sarah pointed out as she watched the exchange.

"He's a good kid," Stephanie replied with a grin. "Anyway - he'll be three thousand miles away from me . . . thank God!"

"I heard that!" Jake's shrill voice called down the stairs.

Stephanie and Sarah just laughed.

A little later that same evening

"Okay, settle down!" Hit Girl bellowed.

Everything went quiet and they all looked up, expectantly, at their leader.

"The brighter amongst you will have noticed four new faces in our midst. They are Team San Diego and they will be staying with us for a while. Please make them feel welcome. Some of you may recognise two of them. The leader is Guinevere Murdoch AKA Lilith and she is a *Predator*. Her boyfriend is also a *Predator* - Nicholas Hyde AKA Trauma."

"Watch out if you're in the shower with Nicky, girls," Stormtide commented, "he likes to see how far he can pee or ejaculate."

"Is that a *Predator* thing?" Wildcat asked Tempest with a sly grin.

"No!" Tempest responded as his cheeks went slightly pink.

"Logan Dark AKA Riptide is also a *Predator*," Hit Girl continued, ignoring the interruption. "However, he has a new face and to some of you, he used to be known as Kai Wynter. Finally, we have Juno Saunders. Juno is an enigma, and while she is not exactly a normal girl, she is not a *Predator* either. Despite that, she has been trained by one, and as far as I am concerned, she is not a pushover and she has proved that she can hold her own in a fight, earning her codename: Lilim."

Juno blushed at the accolade from Hit Girl which was totally unexpected but otherwise very welcome.

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The four youngsters were actually very surprised by their welcome.

The three *Predators* were also a little surprised to see how many of their kin were still alive and that they were thriving. Although, after a while, thoughts turned to their futures and, more importantly, where they were going to be living.

"I'm sure that you guys must still be very tired," Mindy said. "How about we get you to your new home?" she suggested.

Twenty minutes later, they were bundled into Mindy's SUV and they were soon heading east on the I-55 before heading north up the coast on the famous Lake Shore Drive.

Safehouse L Rogers Park

Despite it being winter, and the outside temperature being only a degree above zero, the view out onto Lake Michigan was stunning and the four visitors from San Diego enjoyed the view.

The drive took barely twenty minutes and Juno was very pleased when they finally stopped as it had probably been the fastest car ride of her entire life. They had left the coast a few hundred yards ago and as they got out of the car, Juno could smell the lake. They had pulled into the driveway of a very unassuming property and they were very surprised to see who was holding open the front door for them as they walked around to the front of the house.

"Welcome!" Lucy Ford grinned.

"How did you get here so damned fast?" Guinevere asked as she was fairly certain that Lucy had vanished from sight very soon before they themselves had left the safehouse.

"Mindy isn't the only one with a love of speed," Lucy smirked as Mindy just growled.

Once the front door was closed behind them, Mindy turned to the new arrivals from San Diego.

"Welcome to Safehouse L," she proclaimed. "You have the place to yourselves. Lucy has made sure that the place is fully stocked. Anything you need - ask Lucy and she will get you sorted out. The lake is a couple hundred yards that way - a beach, too."

"It's fucking December!" Nicholas pointed out.

"Your loss," Mindy chuckled. "Now, I need to head home. Lucy has new phones for each of you, so call if you get into trouble. This place is nothing special, but you should be comfortable - and safe. Shannon and Marc live closest, so they can help should you need any."

"Thank you, Mindy," Guinevere said, genuinely lost for words.

It would be their home for the foreseeable future.

"Get a good night's sleep, guys - see ya!" Mindy said as she nodded at Lucy and headed out the door.

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"I'll let you guys wander around - kitchen is through there. Upstairs, you will find a room with your names on the doors - I figured that you'd want two rooms, rather than four," Lucy grinned, and she could see four faces turning slightly

pink. "We can go shopping in the morning for any clothing you might need, or other stuff - tampons, condoms . . . you know."

"Thanks, Lucy," Nicholas laughed.

All four kids ran upstairs to find their bedrooms. Juno pushed open the door to the bedroom at the top of the stairs with her name and Logan's name on it. The bedroom was nicely decorated and there was a double bed. Logan peeked into the ensuite bathroom.

"We could get us both in there, no problem," he grinned, and Juno giggled.

For Nicholas and Guinevere, they had the room past the master bedroom which had a 'No Entry' sign on it. Again, there was a double bed and it was tastefully decorated. There was also a large sitting room with windows all around beyond the ensuite bathroom. After a brief look around the first floor, Lucy explained all the various security features for the safehouse to Guinevere and Nicholas.

They were all very tired, so they decided to head to bed.

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"You tired?"

Guinevere looked over at Nicholas who was gazing intently at her exposed chest as she lay partially covered by the duvet. She grinned as she felt her nipples hardening while he watched. It was an event which was not under her control, but she loved it when Nicholas watched it happening.

"A little," she replied with a smirk as she reached down to check something lower down - she grinned. "You seem wide awake," she commented.

Nicholas grinned back - what else could a male teen do when he was in bed with a beautiful and very naked girl? His body tended to react on its own and it had done. Not that Guinevere could talk, she was just as blood-engorged in certain places.

"You're not too sore?" he asked with genuine concern, seeing some of the bruising which still covered most of his partner's body.

"I think full-on is out . . . maybe some activity which doesn't involve much movement," she suggested.

Nicholas grinned as he worked out what she was suggesting. He threw back the duvet, revealing their naked bodies and he moved so he lay diagonally across the bed. Guinevere cringed as she moved, the bruises still hurting, but she relaxed as she lay down into Nicholas. She could feel his warm skin against her own, the touch intensifying her feelings of arousal. Before her face, she saw the effects of Nicholas' own arousal and she grinned before she took an involuntary intake of breath as she felt herself being violated by an eager tongue.

In response, she took Nicholas into her mouth.

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On the other side of the house, sex was a long way from Juno's mind.

She was being hugged by Logan very tightly. She was naked, as was he, but intimate relations were miles from Logan's mind too. Juno was struggling with that fine line between life and death which had so violently pervaded her new life. She knew that people died - she had seen it through her own eyes. She had even caused people to die. Her young mind had been able to process the deaths in her life as well as those which she had induced. However, there had been one

death which her mind was still struggling with - although, it had not actually ended in death; Logan had survived. Every night, the nightmare had been there, the horror of watching Haven burn. The horror of somebody dying. When awake, she knew that Logan was alive, but every time she closed her eyes, he died again . . . and again.

She enjoyed his touch - but not in *that* way - as it gave her solace and she felt so safe when he was nearby. His touch on her skin, even if it was simply a hand on her cheek, felt so caring and like nothing which she had ever experience before. She had almost lost that because of that bastard. She had sworn never to allow her mind to be controlled by anger - she saw that as how the *Predators* were formed - but that man had almost succeeded in taking Logan away from her and that was something which she could never get past until that bastard was dead.

In her mind, Dieter Mannheim's days were numbered.

The following morning
Tuesday, December 6th

Sheridan Road

"Daddy! Daddy!"

"Yes, sweetie."

"Can I borrow twenty bucks?"

Patrick Millar peered over at his wayward daughter.

"Sweetie, you get one hundred and fifty dollars a week from your *Predator* fund - what have you been spending it on?"

"Condoms, I'll bet," Annabelle grinned.

"Not helping!" Patrick replied, and his youngest daughter ran out of the room laughing.

"I'm sure she just needs a good fucking," Shannon pointed out.

"She's twelve-years-old, Shannon, so as I said: not helping. My original question stands."

"A few movies and stuff."

"You need to learn to control what you're spending, Shannon - I'll give you ten dollars."

"Daddy!" Shannon exclaimed.

"Nine dollars."

Shannon opened her mouth to respond, but she quickly decided better of it and she closed her mouth, smiling sweetly. Her father chuckled as he handed over ten dollars.

"Love you, Daddy!" Shannon called out as she bolted out the door.

Just a few months back, Patrick never thought he'd ever have his little girl back, now he was arguing with her over her allowance like nothing had ever happened. His eldest daughter could kill without a second thought, but she had absolutely no idea how to manage money - just like most fourteen-year-olds.

How the hell had she ever survived her time in England while on the run with Jamie Lizewski, he could not fathom.

Safehouse I

Guinevere awoke feeling sore, but otherwise, she was reasonably well rested.

After weeing and pulling on a pair of shorts and a loose T-shirt, she made her way down the stairs and into the kitchen which was empty. However, on closer inspection, there was an empty bowl with small milk on the side, plus an open packet of cereal and various flakes scattered along the counter as well as some split milk. It was obvious that Juno was awake - the remnants of her breakfast proved that and were normal for the teen. Guinevere looked around, but there was no sign of the youngster - maybe she had gone back to bed.

But then, she heard sounds coming from the basement, and she followed those sounds to find her mentee pounding a punch bag which hung from the ceiling.

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Guinevere could tell that something was wrong.

Juno was focussed on the punchbag and she was laying into the device with all the strength that the young teen could muster. Juno wore a sports bra and tight shorts, but nothing else. She was barefoot, but she wore a set of padded sparring gloves to protect her hands. Guinevere could see some of the various bruises scattered across the teens slim body, and the sight appalled her. Her mind drifted back almost seven months - actually six months and 21 days, but who was counting - and she thought of the first time she had laid eyes on Juno.

And the promise she had made to her Aunt.

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Sunday, May 15th

San Diego

"Aunt Rachel?"

"Guinevere? My God, you look so much like your mother."

Rachel Saunders was just able to look around her devastated living room which was now filled with death. Her face was filled with sorrow as she took in her husband's dead body a short distance away. Then her eyes fell on the huddled, naked form of her daughter. Rachel quickly turned her focus back to Guinevere.

"Guinevere . . . please take care of Juno. I place her into your care . . . Juno?"

"Mom. . ."

"You will go with Guinevere and she will take care of you - do everything that she tells you."

"No, Mom, I can't leave you. . ."

"Guinevere, promise me . . . promise me that you . . . that you will take care of my daughter. . ."

"I will, Aunt Rachel; I promise."

With one last look at her daughter, the eyes glazed over, and Juno's mother died.

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Thursday, December 6th, 2016

Chicago

Had she failed her Aunt?

Had she failed Juno?

It was obvious that Juno had been at it a while as sweat poured from her brow and the sweat running down her back was equally obvious.

"Juno?"

The teen ceased pounding the bag and she turned to look at her mentor. She forced a smile, but it faded quickly.

"Hi, honey," Guinevere offered.

"Hi, Guinny. Sorry, I had some things to work out of my system."

"Has it worked?"

"No, it hasn't. That bastard has to be made to pay for what he did to us - for what he almost did to Logan."

Guinevere could recognise the fire in the girl's eyes, reminiscent of her own. Juno felt the same way she did, but she knew that.

"When are we going back home?" Juno asked.

"I don't know, Juno. We need to find somewhere new to live and we need to setup a new safehouse."

"When is *that* going to be ready?" Juno demanded with anger in her tone.

"Mindy says she's taking care of it."

"Fuck Mindy! We need to do something or that bastard will think that he's won!"

"Juno, please - we have to do this properly, yes?"

Juno calmed down slightly as she thought about it.

"I want to get back there, but we can't just turn up without defences in place. We are going to have to up our game. When things are ready, I promise we shall get back out there."

"Promise?"

"Have I ever lied to you, Juno?"

"No."

"Have I always had your best interests at heart?"

"Yes," Juno admitted.

"When everything is in place, we shall return to San Diego, and we shall really kick some ass!"

"Fuck, yeah!"