

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

***London, United Kingdom  
Lambeth***

Shannon fired at the men below until her pistol fell silent.

The last she had seen of her fellow Predator was his prone body being pushed into the back of a Range Rover – then he was gone . . . As she sank down behind a building at the raised track level, she began to sob.

Jamie was gone; she'd lost him – forever?

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***The following morning***

***Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> July***

***An unknown location***

Pain rushed through his body as he came awake.

It took all his willpower not to call out. He knew that he was in danger. He knew that he had to take control of the situation. He struggled to make sense of his surroundings without opening his eyes.

He was lying on something relatively soft – a mattress? He tentatively moved his hands – they were free! His ankles too – that was a surprise; did they not know what he was capable of? He listened. There was the very faint sound of vehicles. Were they close by, or far away? Then he froze as he heard a bolt being withdrawn very close to him. He heard a door being opened and . . . he screamed.

Jamie shivered with the cold as the water splashed over him. His eyes flew open and he completed a rapid scan of his surroundings. He was in a small room, maybe eight-foot square. A single strip light illuminated the room from the ceiling. The door was at his feet, there was a window over to his right – it was boarded over with rough-cut planks of wood. He had no way to tell if it was night and day. Finally, he looked at himself; he was wearing nothing more than his underwear.

“Get up, you little bastard!” the man holding an empty glass jug shouted.

Jamie swung his legs off the bed and stood up, but before he could do anything, the man shoved him roughly and the boy fell to the floor in a heap.

“Get dressed, boy – and no funny business.”

Jamie's trousers and top were on the floor in a corner along with his trainers and his jacket. Once he was dressed, he checked his pockets as the man smirked. Everything was gone; knife, cash, pistol – everything.

“Move!”

Jamie was shoved out of the door and down a corridor.

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***Mayfair***

Shannon had been crying most of the night.

She was berating herself at every opportunity. She had been in charge. She had been the eldest. She had been the Phase 3 *Predator*. How could she have fucked up so badly? Was he even alive? As she looked across the bedroom and saw his bed – she felt pangs of guilt push her to tears again. She had to find him – somehow.

She suddenly remembered the bag – the bag which she had seized during the previous night’s altercation.

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### **Dartford**

Two hours later, she was standing outside a small block of flats in north Dartford about fifteen miles to the east of London. Shannon matched the address with the driving licence she held in her hand. The photo was rubbish but there was enough detail to recognise one Tricia Dewey who lived in Flat 0/3 on the ground floor. The day was warm, so as expected, Shannon found an open window for the correct flat and after a brief check, she slipped inside.

Shannon found herself in the living room of a small two-bedroom flat. Immediately, she heard a voice. The voice was coming from the kitchen. Slowly, with her suppressed pistol in hand, she set foot into the kitchen and she found a young woman, a few years older than herself. The woman was making a cup of tea while she chatted animatedly into her mobile.

“Look, Marie, I need to go sit down with my cuppa and watch Saturday’s X-Factor – see ya t’morrow . . . love ya.”

As the woman slid the mobile onto the kitchen side, she froze as she felt something cold touching her left temple.

“Move a fucking muscle and you gain a new earhole, missy!” came a none-too-friendly growl as Shannon forced the girl to her knees. “Name?”

“Ra . . . Rachel . . . Rachel Dewey.”

“Tricia is your sister?”

“Yes,” Rachel confirmed.

“Where is she?”

“In the shower. . .”

Shannon secured Rachel’s mouth with Duct Tape and secured her hands with plastic tie wraps. Shannon then hauled her into the living room and secured her to a wooden-framed chair by the wrists, arms, lower legs, and ankles.

Shannon closed the open window and then she went to retrieve her target.

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Tricia was just finishing her shower and as she turned off the water, she pulled back the shower curtain and reached for her towel . . . then her world turned upside down as something went around her neck and she was hauled out of the shower and onto the floor.

“Move your fucking ass, bitch!”

Tricia had no idea what was happening to her as she found herself being dragged by a rope which was wrapped tightly around her neck. She was still dripping wet from the shower and she was stark bollock naked. Her mind was racing – but not as fast as it might normally; the previous night’s events had knocked back her confidence somewhat. Being attacked in her own home was something that she had never considered – she was protected, thanks to her employer. Then she had a thought – Rachel; where was Rachel?

Shannon took advantage of the dazed girl and secured her in much the same way as she had her sister. Only then did Shannon close all the curtains and flex her muscles.

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“I think you remember me, Tricia – I kicked your stinking ass, last night.”

Recognition swept across the girl’s face which still showed the bruises from the previous night. The girl’s eyes blazed fire at Shannon.

“We can do this the hard way, or the easy way . . . but first, I think I had better show you both what the hard way consists of. . .”

Without warning, Shannon produced a short-bladed knife and she sunk the three-inch blade into Rachel’s right thigh, well away from any artery. Rachel attempted to scream but what emerged was muted by the tape across her mouth. Tricia looked appalled but then her expression shifted to a seething glare as she focussed on Shannon. Shannon ignored the look and she just smiled at the two young women.

“Now I have your attention, I want to know where he is. *Where is the boy?*”

Shannon yanked the tape off of Tricia’s mouth, placing the muzzle of her suppressed pistol against her forehead.

“What boy?” Tricia hissed.

Shannon seized hold of the woman’s jaw and she squeezed. A small scream was heard and then another as Shannon tapped the girl hard on the head with the suppressor.

“Don’t act stupid!”

“I’m not. . .” Tricia hissed.

Shannon pistol-whipped Rachel across the face sending blood spraying across the room.

“Stop it – don’t hurt her, please . . . they’ll kill me if I say anything.”

“I’ll kill you if you don’t, you fucking bitch.”

Shannon fired off a single round into Rachel’s left foot. The woman’s eyes bulged out with the pain and she shook as tears flooded down her face and she screamed – albeit mutedly. Another bullet went into Tricia’s left foot just as Rachel slammed a cushion in her face to mute the scream. Shannon eased the cushion slightly so as not to suffocate the young woman who attempted to breathe through the pain – Rachel had passed out.

“Look, I’ll cut you a deal – you tell me where the boy is and I’ll call an ambulance for you both.”

Tricia knew there was no way out.

“He’s with them – he’s with Scorpio. That bastard, Turner, will have the boy – he’s the head of security; you need to go see Trevor Turner.”

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Twenty minutes later, Shannon had everything she needed. The two young women were in a bad way as they lay on the floor of the living room, hugging each other.

Tricia appeared relieved as Shannon picked up Tricia’s mobile and dialled.

*“999: what’s your emergency?”*

Shannon grinned as she saw the hope in Tricia’s eyes.

*“Police . . . I’d like to report a double murder. . .”*

Before Tricia could do anything, Shannon shot both women in the head – one bullet each. She dropped the mobile to the floor and left the flat.

*“Hello – is anybody there?”* came the voice of the 999 Operator. *“Is anybody there?”*

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***The following morning***

***Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> July***

***Dartford***

There were murmurings amongst the attending Metropolitan Police officers as a silver Jaguar XJL pulled up in the centre of the road, just a stone’s throw from the grisly crime scene.

Out of the Jaguar stepped a tall man in a dark suit with a dark blue tie. The balding man was in his late fifties and he wore glasses. His beard was white and his face bore a worn expression. As he approached the crime scene, he was intercepted by a uniformed constable with a clipboard.

*“May I see some identification, please, sir?”*

The dark-suited man smiled and produced his warrant card.

*“Commander Haig, SO15 – I would like to speak with whomsoever is in charge, if you please, constable.”*

*“Yes, sir – that would be DI Baxter, sir – he’s just over there by the begonias.”*

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The grizzled Detective Inspector frowned as he saw the dark-suited man head in his direction. The Jaguar dictated that the man was important. The fact that the uniformed constable had passed him through quickly, showed that the man held rank which was evident by the way he strode confidently across the lawn outside the flats.

*“DI Baxter?”*

*“Yes . . . sir.”*

*“Commander Haig, SO15 – may I have a look at the crime scene? We believe that it may be of interest to us.”*

“Why might a double murder be of interest to Counter Terrorism Command?” DI Baxter asked as he smelt a rat.

“Sorry – need to know, old boy.”

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### ***Mayfair***

Shannon had slept well after her activities on the previous afternoon.

There was something about taking a person’s life that invigorated the girl. Her worries about losing Jamie had dimmed slightly as she had basked in the afterglow of the double killings. She had not forgotten Jamie – not by any stretch of the imagination – he was just pushed into the background while she planned his rescue.

Jamie was a *Predator* and therefore he was perfectly capable of looking after himself – to an extent. Worrying about the boy would only hinder her planning and ultimately, his rescue.

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### ***Oakland Quay, Canary Wharf***

Pain surged through Jamie as he was struck again.

It had been going on since the previous morning. Only, the men were getting rather annoyed with the young boy who did not seem to be cowering before them as they had expected a boy of his age should. Little did they know that Jamie had been through such rigorous episodes of conditioning and to be honest he was getting bored with it all.

“The bloody kid isn’t human,” Kevin growled as he shoved the boy to the floor. “He should be a fucking snivelling mess, for fuck’s sake!”

“Bunch of fucking pussies!” Jamie hissed as he wiped the blood from his nose and mouth. “I’m eight and I just survived your little – what exactly was it?”

Kevin and his partner, Jack, were grown men who were used to beating up other grown men and maybe the occasional woman. However, beating up a small boy – even one who toted and automatic pistol – was not their kind of thing, so they had just roughed him up a bit in an attempt to scare the boy into revealing something.

The boy was an enigma and their boss demanded answers.

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William Fraser sat up in his chair as the door opened and three people entered the room. Two were his enforcers, Kevin and Jack, while the third was a rather dishevelled young boy. Fraser studied the boy for a few moments as the door was closed. The boy stared insolently up at the powerful man in return.

“Is this the boy who has been fucking up my organisation?”

“Yes, boss.”

“Is this the boy who shot down my men in cold blood?”

“They shot first – self-defence. . .” Jamie began insolently before Kevin slapped him around the head.

“Is this the boy who stabbed Sandra leaving her to bleed out?”

“She had it coming. . . Ow! Stop fucking hitting me, you fucking cunt!”

“What are you, boy?” Fraser asked sagely.

“I’ll show you. . .”

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### ***Canary Wharf***

The teenage girl stared through binoculars at the premises owned by Scorpio Enterprises.

Scorpio Enterprises had its fingers in many pies. Private security, banking, shipping, and retail being a sample of their more legal activities. The fact that the organisation employed gun-toting thugs was a sure indication that the organisation had a darker side. Shannon knew that she would have to tread carefully or she would die very quickly – Scorpio Enterprises had also proven that they were not scared of killing at the drop of the proverbial hat.

Security for their head office was, as would be expected, impressive. Shannon had already identified three plain-clothed guards who were all covertly armed which contravened the Firearms Act. The visible electronic surveillance was also top notch. Shannon needed to investigate the inside of the building . . . but that would require great skill, she thought to herself.

No big deal – she was a *Predator*; she *had* ‘great skill’.

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### ***Oakland Quay, Canary Wharf***

Jamie rammed his left elbow into Kevin’s knackers and his right fist into Jack’s nose as he bounded forwards and dived onto Fraser’s capacious wooden desk, sweeping up a letter opener as he went.

Fraser was momentarily stunned as the pint-sized boy temporarily incapacitated his enforcers and then came for him with a look of extreme hate and intense anger on his face. Fraser saw something in those brown eyes – a darkness that he usually only saw in those eyes belonging to his paid killers.

The boy was another one, he thought as he reached for his top drawer. . .

“No you don’t, grandpa!” Jamie growled as he kicked Fraser in the face and then yanked the drawer open, guessing correctly what Fraser had been reaching for.

Jamie pulled out a nine-millimetre Browning Hi-Power and he racked back on the slide, seeing a shiny brass cartridge being stripped off the top of the magazine and then swept on into the breech of the pistol. He raised the heavy pistol unerringly towards William Fraser and he squeezed the trigger.

“Game over, pal!”

There was a tremendous crash – just not the expected crash of the Hi-Power – as Jamie fell off the desk and onto the floor, his body twitching from the two dart-like electrodes which had pierced the skin of his back and sent crippling electroshocks through his body.

Whilst all eyes had been on the pistol, nobody had watched the letter opener which had been held in Jamie's left hand and nobody thought anything of it until Kevin lowered the discharged Taser and he saw the spreading redness in his boss's right side. In the centre of the redness was the silver hilt of the letter opener.

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### ***A few hours later. . .***

Jamie had no idea how long he had been out, but as he opened his eyes he felt pain in his extremities and with a start, he realised that he was lying on a very hard and a very cold concrete floor wearing nothing but his underwear. He was in a cell – the steel door told him that. So did the resounding clang of the bolt as it was shifted and the door was pushed open. As he tried to stand, he found that his wrists were bound behind his back.

“Right, you little fuck – we've found a buyer for you and the Boss got a lot more for you than he had originally anticipated; your skills helped with that,” Kevin chuckled as he hauled the boy to his feet.

“What?”

“The Boss wanted to keep you – just like the girl, but not anymore – you're going to wish that you were never fucking born, you little bastard.”

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Jamie was dragged out of the cell.

His mind was racing – the muscle had mentioned a girl; did they have Shannon? What was going on? Where were they taking him? His mind drifted and he had a vague recollection of a familiar voice talking to him while he had been unconscious.

*“How do we get ourselves into these messes, Jamie? Stay strong, please. I know you'll get through this; you're a survivor – we both are.”*

No matter how he tried, his confused mind could not quite place the voice.

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### ***July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014***

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

“What have you done, *this* time?”

Jamie, a trainer in one hand as he hobbled through the door, smiled broadly as he saw his best friend for the first time since her accident.

“I twisted my ankle – landed badly while I was running the assault course. Enough about me; how are you?”

Abigail raised up her right hand which was heavily wrapped in white gauze.

“It hurts like hell but the doctor says it'll heal completely in a couple of weeks.

“It scared the hell out of all of us when your pistol exploded.”

“It scared me too. . .” Abigail Wilde replied darkly.

“When are they going to let you out?”

“Couple of days – they need to do some more X-rays to make sure no further damage was done.”

As Jamie was hustled off by a nurse for treatment, he waved at his friend who grinned stupidly. Whatever the bond was between the two kids, it appeared unbreakable. Abigail had hated the previous two days, and not just because of the pain that, at times, had had her in tears. She had missed Jamie. She had missed the jokes and the teasing which somehow made their lives as *Predators* that little bit more bearable.

Their lives and probably their fates were intertwined in ways that Abigail could not even consider.

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***The next day***

***Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> July***

***Oakland Quay, Canary Wharf***

“Commander Patrick Haig, SO15 – I would like to speak with your boss, William Fraser.”

The receptionist looked up at the well-dressed man who smiled amiably down at her. He was accompanied by a young woman who stood a few feet away from her boss, her eyes taking in everything and everybody.

“Who is she?” the receptionist demanded.

“That would be Sergeant Stefanie Woodward, my colleague – now, your boss, if you please.”

“May I tell him what this is about?” the receptionist persisted.

“Murder.”

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***A short distance away. . .***

Shannon was concerned.

The same, very senior, policeman had been seen at the scene of her double-murder, just the previous morning. Now, he was visiting her target. Something very serious was going on. There was also a danger that she herself could come face to face with SO15 which would *not* end well, for anybody.

Shannon faded back into the mass of suits moving through the area.