

**A week later**  
**Tuesday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016**

**Mayfair**  
**United Kingdom**

Jamie's happiness had exploded like a balloon that had just been impaled on a sewing needle.

Nothing that Shannon could say or do could make up for the loss which he felt. Even Shannon missed her, despite only having known her for a few days. The happiness she had seen in Jamie's eyes had been worth having the temperamental *Predator* around. Her presence had also made them a team of three - a team which would have been stronger when facing a determined enemy.

Jamie was lying on a couch, sulking, just as he had been for several days.

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**June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

**An unknown location in the USA**

Jamie was much relieved to see his friend return from wherever she had gone.

"Hey, Abigail!"

"Hi, Jamie."

The welcome was not exactly warm, but Jamie could see that his friend looked pale.

"What's wrong?" Jamie asked as he correctly read his friend's expression.

"I want to kill her. . ." Abigail breathed, her face contorting into one of intense rage.

"Who?"

"Psyche. I swear to God - I *will* kill her."

"You hurt?"

"Just my pride. . ."

Jamie pulled his friend into a classroom as she burst into tears. After a few minutes, she calmed down and lifted her top. Jamie saw a fresh medical dressing on her left side.

"A fucking Yellow did that; cut me with my own fucking knife."

Abigail then pushed down her joggers and underwear. Jamie gasped at the state of her backside.

"Who did *that*?"

"Psyche!"

"Why?"

"The instructors let her - I came second; the bitch beat me. She even tried to get a boy to rape me."

Jamie's face went very dark and he silently filed away the girl, Psyche, onto his list of people that had to die.

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A half hour later, they both filed through to the dining room for their evening meal.

"Who's the new girl?" Jamie enquired as he and Abigail joined their elder friend.

"Oh, hi, Abigail - you okay?" Rachel asked.

"Long story," Abigail growled as she viciously stabbed her sausages.

"Fucked if I know," Abigail replied.

"The new girl is Saoirse Doherty; we became *Predators* together - *Second Predator Intake*. I'd stay clear of her, if I were you; she likes to bully the younger kids and she only worries about herself."

"Good to know," Jamie commented as he chomped away on his third sausage of the meal.

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**Two days later**

**Thursday, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Westminster Bridge, London**

**United Kingdom**

Jamie was angry.

He and Shannon had been out almost eight hours a day, every day, ever since Abigail had failed to return, back to the house. He knew it was a long-shot; two young kids searching for one ten-year-old girl in the twenty-second largest city in the world. Abigail Wilde was but one of 8.6-million other people in the giant city. They had searched the places where the homeless lived. They had searched drug dens and sex dens.

After a few days, it had dawned on them both that maybe Abigail either did not want to be found, or she had been taken against her will. Shannon had noticed that Abigail was a troubled young girl, and maybe the girl had flipped - it wasn't totally unknown for a *Predator* to lose their mind and go insane. Both Jamie and Shannon had witnessed *Predators* going insane and having to be shot down like a rabid dog to protect the other *Predators*.

Jamie leaned on the parapet and he stared down at the muddy-brown waters of the River Thames. His mind was anywhere but where it

should be. Shannon was close by and she was worried about the boy - the usual jovial Jamie had vanished just as Abigail had. Shannon missed the teasing and snide comments but Jamie was not in a joking mood and he had not been for a while.

As she watched, she noticed Jamie seemingly oblivious as a young teen moved close by him. Shannon, being a professional pick-pocket herself, she recognised the deft movements which relieved Jamie of the money from the right-hand pocket of his jacket. The pick-pocket paused when his other hand touched the butt of a small automatic pistol. The pause was his undoing as Jamie span around, slamming the fourteen-year-old boy to the pavement and punching him in the face.

"Take something that isn't yours! Steal my money! I'll fucking kill you, you bastard!"

Shannon looked around nervously. Jamie's exchange with the pickpocket was attracting attention and down the far end of the bridge, Shannon could see a pair of Bobbies on their way towards the ruckus. She ran forwards and grabbed Jamie by the scruff of his neck and quickly ran towards St Thomas' Hospital.

"Geroff me, Stormy!"

"Calm down, Jamie - you almost killed that kid," Shannon protested as they stopped behind some trees.

"I was angry and he dared to try and take *my* money!"

"You should have been concentrating on your surroundings, Jamie. Look, Abigail is gone - snap the fuck out of your morose mood and let's get on with our lives."

"Thanks, Shannon."

"I know what might cheer you up. . ."

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***Two hours later***

***Soho, London***

"Where are we going?"

"I think we're being followed."

"How'd you know?"

"I am a fully trained *Predator*, shithead!"

"'I am a fully trained *Predator*!'," Jamie mimicked but then he swore as Shannon smacked him around the back of the head.

"Show me respect or I I'll damn well make you!"

"Fucking lesbian!" Jamie muttered.

Before Shannon could come back with a suitably witty retort, she grabbed Jamie and threw him behind some dustbins.

"What are you doing, you fucking stupid woman!"

"Quiet!"

Jamie followed instructions and he waited, not all that patiently until Shannon was ready to brief him on the situation.

"You just trying to get me down here for a snog?"

Shannon laughed.

"You do think too much of yourself, Jamie! No - a man; I've seen him four times - three times, today. Look over by the pub, just to the left of the fat slag."

Jamie looked and he studied the man. He was tall, wearing dark clothing with a black leather jacket and he was clean shaven, with short brown hair.

"Never seen him - you sure he's following us?"

"Not one hundred percent, but we can't take any chances - we have Scorpio after us; they'll be pissed about what we did to their people. I killed two women, a couple weeks ago. Not to mention we have the CIA after us - he could be anybody or nobody, but can we take the chance?"

"No - definitely not. You just keep that smart brain of yours working, Shan."

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The man who bore the codename, Astute, was searching central London for his targets.

He had trailed them from Whitby, to York, south to Nottingham, and then to London. Almost without fail, his targets had left a bloody trail of destruction behind them. Gunfights out in the open. Night time fires. Bloody fights. Then came the more serious stuff - a well-executed double murder and an attack on a major, but corrupt, corporation in the centre of the financial district of London.

He was worried that his targets may get themselves killed before he could catch up with them. Now, it seemed that they knew they were being tracked. Their training was good - as good as he had expected. He knew that he would eventually be spotted but he had expected it a lot earlier. That was a concern, maybe they were not as well-trained as he had expected.

He watched as the boy and the girl vanished down an alleyway.

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"What are we doing in here?" Jamie demanded as he looked around.

"Killing time until that guy moves away. I never got around to getting one of these - it was a rite of passage for Phase 3 *Predators*."

"A tattoo?"

"Yeah."

The shop walls were covered in tattoo designs from the most basic to some pretty intricate designs.

"You lookin' for somethin', honey?" a woman asked from behind the counter.

"Err, maybe . . . what about that one?"

"Hundred quid, honey."

"Why the hell not!"

A few minutes later, Jamie smirked as Shannon pulled off her bra.

"I don't know what you're smirking at; you've seen them before."

"I know - just forgot that they were so small," Jamie laughed and Shannon scowled at the boy.

"For that, you little fuck, I think you need to suffer too," Shannon grinned as she passed the tattoo artist two twenties and a ten.

Jamie looked a little worried as he watched the lady begin to stencil a pattern onto the soft skin beneath Shannon's right breast. Then came the moment of truth as Shannon lay back and she reached for Jamie's hand. She knew it was going to hurt - a lot!

"Fuck getting that!" Jamie exclaimed forty minutes later as he tried to regain the use of his left hand which Shannon had almost squeezed into nothing.

"Please, Jamie - I'll hold *your* hand."

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"Why do I let myself get tortured by you?" Jamie growled half an hour later as he cringed with the pain each time the tiny needles punched into his left shoulder.

"Because you're a sweet boy who listens to his betters," Shannon replied.

"Sweet? Do know me at all?"

"Sorry - you just look sweet while in reality, you're a bloody menace!"

Jamie laughed until he could take no more and he gripped Shannon's hand as tightly as he could.

"Fuck!" Shannon growled as she grimaced with the pain in her hand.

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They left the shop, a little over two hours later.

As far as Shannon could tell, there was no sign of the man, but they had left via a back door anyway. Jamie was not happy - he moaned about his painful shoulder, the missing Abigail, his painful shoulder, his rumbling tummy, his painful shoulder, his sore legs from all the walking . . . and his painful shoulder. Shannon just gritted her teeth against the pain of her fresh body art. She had not managed to put her bra back on, so she had just stuffed it into her jacket pocket.

"Thanks," Jamie said as they walked.

"No problem."

"Does this tattoo mean I'm a Phase 3 Predator?"

"I think it does - as long as you don't go all pussy on me!"

Shannon yelled out as Jamie kicked her in the left shin.

"Would you like me to punch you in the shoulder?" Shannon teased.

"You do, Stormy, and I will. . ."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah - I know, tough guy."

"We make a good team, you and me, Stormy."

"Yes, we do, Rage. I hope we're never separated."

Jamie reached his arm around Shannon and he gave her a hug. Shannon did the same and they stayed like that as they walked the remaining distance to the house.

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### **A little under two weeks later**

**Wednesday, August 17<sup>th</sup>**

Stormtide studied herself topless in the mirror.

She now possessed a black and grey rain cloud with an eye in the centre. The tattoo nestled neatly between and just beneath her breasts. It was no longer sore and she could wear a bra again - and as an aside, she would no longer be tormented for going braless by the little fuck she lived with - it was like she had a little brother!

Taking of the annoying little eight-year-old, Rage's tattoo was different - it represented the depictions of Rage and Despair in black, imprinted on his left shoulder. He enjoyed flaunting it and spent most of his time, roaming the house topless. Neither of them had left the house much, over the preceding days. They relied on takeaways and the occasional trip to the local shop.

Training had continued, although any contact had been limited due to their new tattoos. Jamie was very much advanced from when Shannon had first met the boy and she was very proud of him with everything that he had achieved. He still had some rough edges, but he could look after himself in a tight spot without too much difficulty. She liked the boy, despite her attitude towards him.

They were true partners, looking after each other as they struggled to survive as youngsters in a very cruel world.

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***Later that evening***

***Oakland Quay, Canary Wharf***

"Can I go on record by saying that this idea of yours is fucking nuts?"

"Yes - I agree with your one hundred percent, but we need to get intel and find out if they have Abigail."

"Thank you - I miss her."

"Well, yeah! When she was around, you always had you hand down your trousers playing with that little dick of yours - surprised it hasn't dropped off. . ."

Jamie growled as his cheeks went a dark shade of pink.

"She looks nice. . ." Jamie offered rather weakly.

"Yeah - she's cute. Now, Jamie, let's find out if you have the guts for advanced interrogation."

"Torture?"

"Yes."

"Is that how you found me? You never did explain that."

"Yes - there was a nasty double murder."

"You do like to play with your food, don't you?"

"Oh, I do."

Being so close to their main adversary was not clever, nor wise, but it was essential if they were to identify a suitable candidate to answer some important questions.

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***Three days later***

***Saturday, August 20<sup>th</sup>***

***North of Marylebone Road***

Their mark was probably a *little* ambitious for them, but Shannon was certain that the bastard would know if Scorpio were still holding any kids in their London HQ.

The man lived alone, in a small but luxurious duplex apartment. They had trailed him home twice and in between, they had checked out his apartment during the day while he was at work. Everything that they would need for their little operation was already in the apartment, so, that evening, when the man returned home, they allowed him to have his dinner and then settle down in front of the television.

They only had a short wait before the man began to feel very tired.

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"Damn - I can't believe that actually worked," Jamie exclaimed as they entered the apartment.

Jamie helped Shannon to drag the groggy man off the sofa and over towards the open spiral staircase which led to the upper level of the apartment. Shannon then used a rope to pull the man into a vertical position, his bound wrists high over his head. By the time she had finished tying the rope off, the man had just his toes on the floor beneath him. His ankles were secured with a two-foot piece of rope between them and then another piece of rope securing that piece of rope to the spiral staircase.

The man would be able to wriggle and flex, but he could not escape. Over his mouth, Shannon had placed a piece of Duct Tape. Whilst Shannon was preparing the man, Jamie had been running up and down between the apartment and the car garage beneath, bringing up various items that Shannon said they would require for the evening's activities.

"You ready for this?" Shannon asked Jamie, very seriously.

"I can do this . . . I hope."

"You just say the word and you do not have to take part, okay?"

"Yes, Shannon - I understand."

"Your first task - strip the bastard."

Jamie cringed at the thought. It would be a first for the both of them: a naked adult male.

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Twenty minutes later, the man was hanging as naked as the day he was born.

"He's not badly hung, really," Shannon mused as she checked over the man's body, pausing at his crotch.

"Do you have to? It's gross."



"You're not always going to have a little dick, you know," Shannon pointed out.

"You going to play with it?"

"Ewww!"

Jamie laughed at Shannon's expression.

"He should be coming around any minute - it was only a light dosage of sedative on his pasta."

"Remind me never to prepare food ahead of time when you're around!"

"Why would I feed *you* a date-rape drug?"

"Thanks for making me feel desirable!" Jamie growled.

There was a groaning sound as the man began to regain consciousness. To speed things along, Shannon threw a jug of cold water at his face. The man coughed and spluttered as his eyes came open.

The man was very disoriented.