

**BWL Development***Epically Awesome in Every Way*

|---[Chapter 2]---

Primal Instinct

by The Wildcat

Smoke created a black haze in the vacant hallway. The scent of blood was but a ghost in the thick air. Abandoned offices lined the corridor. Emergency lamps cast yellow light into the darkness.

At twelve feet in height, the creature could only traverse the tiny human structures in a burdened crouch. His thick chitin exoskeleton scraped the ceiling tiles and exposed the electrical conduits above. He occasionally swatted his broad claws against an office door, more for amusement than any true purpose.

His canine head shifted only slightly with each step. Green twinkles flickered from his pupils as they adjusted for the power-drained darkness. His feral snout whiffed the air in search of new prey.

The remains that lay deeper in the facility were bitter. It was as if decay had soured the meat. But the “scientists” had seemed rotten from the moment of the kill. Perhaps they were some subspecies that possessed particularly sickly, stringy meat.

Then again, the creature may have merely imagined the dislike of the scientist’s flesh due to the ease with which he had dispatched them. Even the lowliest prey could offer a challenge when faced with certain death. Yet, these humans had been terribly frail.

It was as though they did not wish to live. Some of them had practically waited for the end. One female had been stripped

naked and shoved toward him as if sacrificially. The security teams had been armed with automatic weapons and explosives, but they rarely used them until their death was imminent.

The creature grunted with disgust. He hoped to find suitable prey outside. Nevertheless, the humans had been a pleasure to kill. After all, they had kept the beast in a pen and...

Actually, the creature could not remember what the humans had done to him. He blamed them for pains he could not hope to remember. At the first chance to escape, he had gladly torn his victims to shreds.

He ransacked their laboratories and pillaged anything of interest. It was a minimal restitution for his forgotten torments.

He had taken something called a “cloaking field generator”. Somehow, he knew that the device had value, but also needed charging. A second lab had yielded two small green balls. The soft, moist orbs seemed useless. If not for the level of security, he would have shown no interest.

The creature growled with frustration. Each floor was a maze of tunnels, hallways, and monitoring rooms. Of six explosive charges he had taken from a nearly empty weapon locker, he had used five for “short cuts”.

A muffled sound caught the creature’s ears. He sniffed the smoke and snorted. He had almost missed the bitter human scent amid the smoke. They were close, but not in his corridor.

He hammered an office door and pushed through the frame. After tossing a desk aside, he kicked the opposite wall. The concrete cracked and crumbling pieces trickled to the floor.

Both claws pierced the damaged surface. He pried his claws free and placed a final thunderous kick. The wall fractured, allowing the beast to bash through the new opening.

Minus the scorch marks and battle damage of his rampage, the hall seemed sterile. Florescent lights hummed incessantly. Their sickly white glow covered everything. Everything, that is, except the darkened elevator at the end of the corridor.

As twin metal doors sealed the opening, the creature detected the faint scent of fresh air. Instinctively, he knew that night had fallen.

He lurched down the corridor and covered the distance in a few quick strides. With two sharp jabs, he crumpled the metal doors. Their inner workings groaned and snapped under the pressure.

The creature buried his claws in the weakened seal. Twisted steel tore out of its track. He tossed the crumpled hulk aside and kicked the remaining components into the lightless shaft.

Below, dozens of floor entrances counted the depth of the pit. Above, the elevator car chimed its arrival at the first floor.

After he considered his options, the creature groped his bandoleer for the final explosive charge. The blast ripped the lift apart and fragments cascaded down the shaft. Through the thinning soot and concrete dust, the gaping hole in the first-floor wall became visible.

Without hesitation, the creature hurtled himself into the void. His claws snagged the opposite wall. In seconds, he scaled the shaft and hefted himself into the opening.

The first floor was different from the other levels. It stood twice the width of the other hallways. Furniture such as waiting room chairs and coffee tables decorated the

corridor. Ornamental wallpaper with matching molding ran the length.

An open lobby lay at the end of the hall. Office entrances were infrequent and randomly spaced. The back of a large reception desk guarded the lobby. Of all the adornment, the windowed wall on the other side of the lobby most interested the creature.

Several stray bullets scratched his bony armor. His prey then quickly fled. Two of the humans sought shelter in an open office. The third sprinted for the lobby. Soured odors filled the creature's nostrils. He would not devour them, but he would enjoy the taste of retribution.

Crunching glass and crumbling acoustic tiles dirtied the floor behind him. Thundering feet crushed the delicate furniture.

The first prey dove over the reception desk only to reappear to fire an assault shotgun. The weapon discharged as it spiraled over the desktop.

Shock and terror passed over the pale man's face as he felt of the spurting stump that had been his shoulder. The claws were a blur. Impact threw the body into the plate glass wall. The creature wiped his claws on the reception desk with a wince at the soured odor.

Cowering in their office, the two remaining men checked their automatic rifles. One human hid behind an oak desk. The other dared to peer out of the doorframe.

"Okay... he's out," the leader said into a shoulder-mounted radio. "We'll give him some convincing shakes with our grenades and then point him away from CRI."

As soon as the leader was in the hall, the second man stood and readied his weapon. The wall fractured behind him. A

smattering of gore erupted beneath the creature's foot. The remains jerked only slightly and then stilled.

"HE CAME BACK FOR US!"

The man raced through the lobby and leapt over his other mutilated accomplice. He crossed the courtyard before stealing a glimpse back and lobbing a contact grenade.

Uncertain of the blast's success, the man ran around the nearest building and began to follow a concrete perimeter wall. A jeep pulled into his path and two men exited. A third readied the mounted 50-caliber machine gun.

"Where is he?"

"Headed this way. Grenades ready."

In silence, the small security team waited. Every whistle of the wind warranted scrutiny. Any groan or squeak from the neighboring buildings required cautious observation.

Pained cries fell beneath the crushing blow. The mounted gun fired a single powerful stream before its action shattered over the gnarled body.

A volley of contact grenades struck the vehicle and filled the night sky with fire. Beyond the flames, the creature watched his remaining prey.

Two quick rebounds from the sides of buildings brought him down atop a hapless victim. He pummeled the snapping body into several chunks and then dived away from twin grenade explosions.

The fireball ruptured the perimeter wall. Chunks of concrete mixed with a cloud of sand veiled the predator. Realizing their weakness, the humans escaped in opposite directions.

One of the men ran between buildings and hid behind a storage crate. The creature leapt to the nearest rooftop in

a single effortless bound. His eyes appeared to glow green in the miniscule light of the night. His prey had become too easy. He was sickened by their vulnerability.

Angry with his victims and their pitiful actions, the beast hopped down beside the crate and dragged the human out by his leg. The man tried to fire his puny automatic rifle, but the bullets bounced harmlessly off the heavy exoskeleton.

The creature gripped the man by his chest and crushed his ribcage. He then ripped the corpse in two. With a few strong sniffs, he detected the last prey. It was an easy, though unpleasant scent to follow.

He crawled back to the rooftop and searched for his victim.

The grenade struck with a delayed thump. Fire and shrapnel collapsed the ceiling.

The man turned to run only to have the creature pound to the ground in front of him. In a panic, the man fired another grenade. His shot missed wide and obliterated the wall of a darkened warehouse.

The beast's jaws clamped shut on the man's head. A burst of blood and tissue spewed from the dead man as he fell.

Spitting and gagging, the predator groaned with disgust. He stomped on the corpse once for pleasure and then returned to the parameter wall.

In the twinkling light of several small fires, the elongated snout slipped through the opening and sniffed the desert breeze.

"I smell... fresh meat."

The creature darted into the open wilderness. After a few bounding steps, he summoned his great strength and launched

into a high arc over the dessert. He sailed above the white sand dunes in silence.

His legs burned as he thumped into the sand. He hesitated long enough to survey the environment. Before him arose a city skyline.

The creature faced the nearest building and leapt into the sky a second time. He thought odd of the city as he approached. It was calm and quiet. Perhaps his prey had conquered the city as he had conquered the laboratories.

Bricks cracked and fell into the street below when the creature slammed onto the side of the building. His weight would have easily carried him through the wall were it not for his own animal prowess.

With a few strong sniffs, he found the scents of many humans. They were pungent, more so than the scientists. But most of the meat smelled fresh, not bitter as his other encounters.

He crawled to the building's rooftop. He moved silently among the buildings. With short jumps, he crossed alleys and streets.

An occasional pause to observe the neighborhood presented only more of the human buildings and their fragile occupants. Had the creature not stalled to double check his own findings, he would have missed the black figure nearly three blocks away.

The silhouette appeared for but a moment above the rooftops before he dropped out of view. He was human, but not a scientist or guard. No flesh was visible. His odor was muted, almost non-existent.

At last, the creature had found his quarry. He dropped into the nearest alley and attempted to scent the man. He followed the dingy pathway with increased stealth.

Near the base of a six-story building, the fading smell mingled with that of a normal human. The creature pulled his weight onto the building's face and scaled the wall with barely a sound.

He stepped onto the rooftop with caution. A human clad in a business suit leaned over the farthest ledge of the roof. The man was watching something down the street. Though he clutched a handgun in his fist, the human seemed unaware of the beast.

"Do not be afraid human. You are too weak to be my prey. But did a human in some sort of body suit pass near here. His scent was obscured, not as rank as yours."

In a panic, the man began to fire wildly at the creature. His bullets harmlessly struck a taller building next-door. Barely two spare shots ricocheted off the creature's chitin.

"That was a mistake."

Into a massive fist, the gun disappeared. An unfired round exploded within the collapsing magazine. The useless chunk of metal cracked to the gravel of the roof.

His fear transparent, the man scurried through an access hatch and slammed the cover. Mildly amused, the creature hurtled across the street in pursuit of his prey.

A strange wind crossed the beast's nostrils. 'Something is... not right.'

It was not his prey. He had sensed something more distant, across the city. The creature dismissed the matter, as he sensed no danger to himself. His prey was close.

High-pitched human screams directed his attention. He sped his pace, careful to retain his stealth.

A double blast broke the night air. He was close. The conflict ahead assured him that his prey was waiting.

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