

Curse of The Raven

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Summary: Morgan is fifteen-years-old and she moved to New York City at the age of thirteen after her parents were murdered. Her family is gone and she is all but alone in the world. However, what she does have, is a sense of duty and a set of skills. A story that exists in my Forsaken Universe.

Chapter 1: The Curse

Author's Note: This will be my Eighteenth (published) story. As I have mentioned before, I was inspired to write these stories by the many amazing Authors on Fan Fiction who write Kick-Ass Stories.

This story exists in the same universe as my **Forsaken** storyline. Hit Girl, Kick-Ass and Fusion, all operate in Chicago. Characters from **Forsaken** may appear, or be mentioned during this story. I am attempting to create a spin-off story, but we shall see what happens.

As far as the **Forsaken** storyline is concerned, the events in this story occur a few months earlier than the current **Forsaken** storyline, but will eventually join up.

As usual, I look forward, with some trepidation, to any reviews. I promise to accept any, and all, criticism. In addition, I am still British so my spelling and grammar may look and seem strange to some.

16th March 2013

Miami, USA

Southwest 9th Street and 3rd Avenue

The girl awoke with a start and sat up in her bed.

It was dark and she had no idea what had awoken her; so she looked over at the backlit clock on the table beside the bed. It was just after one in the morning so the girl groaned and lay back down again.

"It's too damn early!" She moaned.

Then she heard a crashing sound coming from across the hall. The girl sat back up again and started to get worried.

"Mom?" She called hesitantly. "Dad?"

There was no response, so she slowly climbed out of her bed and went over to the door of the bedroom, pulling it open slowly. She could see movement in her parent's bedroom, just across the hall and the light was on. She tentatively put one bare foot outside of her bedroom and into the partial darkness of the hallway. Before she could take another step, she felt her nightie being grabbed and with a scream, she was thrown across the hall and into her parent's bedroom. She landed on the floor in a heap, with another scream.

A hand grabbed the shoulder length ponytail of the girl's black hair, yanking it backwards and eliciting another scream of pain. The girl was panicking as she blinked in the bright light and looked up towards her parents. They were both lying on the bed, face down, with their hands bound behind them. The girl was unable to see her parent's faces.

"Right, you little bitch, you saved us the effort of coming to get you..." A man said coldly before shouting. "Stand up!"

The girl hesitated to her cost, as she was roughly seized by her nightie. The nightie tore and was almost ripped from her as she was hauled to her feet. The girl was just able to protect her dignity, holding the ripped garment over the front of her otherwise naked body.

Once standing, she had a better view of the bed and she could see her mom's face; there were tears streaming down her face and a strip of tape was stuck over her mouth. Her father's face was not visible, but she could see blood on the back of his head. Tears poured down her own face; she was confused and had no idea what was going. She had been rudely awakened and then found her parents bound and gagged, not to mention four strange men in the house.

The man who had shouted at her then turned to glare at the girl. His face was covered with a mask, protecting his identity but the girl could see part of a tattoo on his lower right arm. It was difficult to make out and most of it was covered. The man was obviously the leader.

Thoughts started to fly through her mind. Was it a robbery? Would they just take what they wanted, and then leave? On the other hand, would worse happen? The girl was starting to wake up properly. Normally she was much more 'on the ball'. Her father, currently unconscious on the bed, was a Major in the United States Marine Corps and he was just back on leave, after four months on deployment. She assumed that her father had put up a struggle, and as a result had been knocked out by the men.

There were four of them, all large and all wearing masks to protect their identity which, the girl thought, probably meant that they were not there to kill anybody – she fervently hoped so. Being only twelve, there was a limit to what the girl could do, but she was *not* defenceless – her father had made sure of that, nor was she incapable of hurting men like those in her parent's bedroom.

The main problem was picking the right moment; right then, she was scared and she was all but naked.

The crime scene was a nightmare right out of CSI.

The Cop was in a state of shock having never seen so much blood spread about just one room. Blood from the man and the woman was soaked into the bedding. There had to be almost a gallon of blood spread across the wooden floor of the bedroom.

Three people were dead; one was a decorated United States Marine Corps Officer, another his wife. The Cop was no stranger to death, however he had never seen anything like he was experiencing at that moment.

The Cop turned to look at the third body, which lay on the floor at the end of the bed. The body was twisted in a grotesque fashion and it was obvious that death had been long, drawn out and agonising.

However, the Cop felt no pity for the dead, as he gazed downwards.

The girl was still shaking as the Paramedic tended to her cuts and bruises in the ambulance.

The Paramedic took her time. The girl was in shock, which was not exactly a surprise, considering what she had gone through. As far as the Paramedic knew, the girl that she was treating had killed a man and chased off three others, while naked. All after having watched her own parents violently murdered in front of her.

The girl had not spoken since the Police had brought her out to the ambulance, except just to mention her name: Morgan.

Chapter 2: Everything Changes

Six Months later
September 2013

New York City

It had been six months since my parents were murdered and I had killed for the first time in my life.

The whole time had gone by in a haze of activity; I remembered only certain events, the rest were forgotten.

I had spent the first three days with a foster family. I was in a state of shock and for some reason I had not been able to tell anybody that I had an Aunt and Uncle living in New York City. It was only when the Miami-Dade Police Department had contacted them as next of kin for my Mom, did they find out.

As soon as my Aunt and Uncle had found out what had happened, they both appeared in Miami within hours. I had never been so happy to see anybody in my life. Other than my parents, they were the only family that I had left and I loved them both very much. Aunt Emily was my Mom's sister. My Uncle John was her husband and both were NYPD Cops.

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My Uncle had arranged for the entire house to be packed up and for everything to be shipped to New York City. I was never intending to live there again; I never even wanted to set foot inside the place ever again. I was moving to a large house in Brooklyn and I already had a room there from my frequent visits to see them. Yes, I was traumatised by my experience, who would not be! Only, I never realised *how* traumatised I was, until six months after the attack.

Two months after moving to New York, I received a visit from some lawyer guy who told me that my parents had a life insurance policy each and that the company had just paid out into a trust fund for me – apparently the pay-out was large; several million dollars in fact. I was a very rich thirteen-year-old!

Yes, my thirteenth birthday had been less than a month after my parent's death. What should have been one of many happy days in my life, in this case becoming a teenager; instead, it was full of sorrow without my parents being there.

Aunt Emily and Uncle John did everything that they could, to help me put the attack behind me. I had seen several psychologists, but I kept having recurring nightmares and I would wake up screaming almost every night for the first four months. I had also had to endure the NCIS investigation into the attack and relive it several times.

I had killed a man; but it had been self-defence, so no further action was being taken against me by the local Police. I had punched and crushed the man's larynx and he had spent many minutes suffocating to death. Strangely, I had enjoyed every minute of watching him die, especially after having watched what the man had done to my Mom. The man's struggle for life had given me a chance to hit a hidden panic button, which had sent the remaining three men running. The Cops had arrived within minutes and found me on the floor beside my parents' bed, naked and partially covered in their blood.

I could still see the knife standing vertically from my father's back. I remembered every second of the attack that I had been forced to witness and after reliving the attack for three months, I needed revenge. By the end of the sixth month, I suddenly awoke one night. I had remembered something critical, the tattoo. The man's sleeve had slipped up his arm and I could vividly recall the entire tattoo.

It was a bird, a black bird. I dived out of bed, ignoring the clock that said it was only a few minutes after five in the morning. My laptop was still on from the night before, so I started searching through pictures of black birds.

Finally, after almost an hour searching, I found a match to what I had seen.

It was a Raven. From that moment on, I was obsessed by that Raven.

I would find that Raven and I would kill it.

New York City was a strange place.

It had taken me a while to get used to living there, permanently. I was used to the tropical warmth of Miami, not the cold of fall in New York. Even so, I was entranced by the happenings over the previous month or so.

There had been some weird happenings involving people dressed up in strange costumes and calling themselves superheroes! People had also been killed – ten Cops on one street, alone! Then there was the mass hysteria for arresting costumed vigilantes. When I was eleven, I had been shown a video of the famous vigilante, Hit Girl. She had killed a dozen men and then shot out the camera with those immortal words: 'Shows over motherfuckers!'

Daddy had caught me watching it and I had found myself in a lot of trouble – he did not approve of vigilante justice. I was also a big fan of the other vigilante, Kick-Ass – while his first outing seemed to have sucked, his heart was in the right place. I actually started wearing purple for a while, as did some others, but eventually gave up on the idea of trying to become another Hit Girl. Then, with the most recent events starting up again, well...

I decided that I would have to get fit, if I was going to hit the streets and not get myself badly hurt, or worse!

Daddy had taught me how to defend myself, using Taekwondo and other Martial Arts. He had also touched on some of the more offensive elements, too. I was very good at gymnastics and could flex and move as fluidly as required. I had been taught to shoot when I was eight, so that was not a problem and I always hit my target. However, I had not practiced any of my Martial Arts in several months, so I would need to get started again.

The other problem would be my Aunt and Uncle; they were Cops, so hiding something so big from them would be difficult, but they would never agree to what I wanted to do.

I had met their direct Supervisor, soon after moving to New York. His name was Sergeant Marcus Williams; a very nice man, who I understood had a daughter of his own who was a few years older than me. It turned out that we actually went to the same school; not that we had ever met. Although, I did witness an incident in the hallways that I think involved his daughter, Mindy. Apparently, she was getting up to something with some boy, a couple of grades above her. Saw some guy getting slapped by another girl, though, which was cool!

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Then things changed when Uncle John came home one afternoon a little banged up. Apparently there had been an attack at a cemetery, an explosion of sorts. Interestingly, that seemed to fit in with something, which I had witnessed earlier that afternoon, not far from the same cemetery.

Aunt Emily and I were on the way home when we saw a van driving fast, overtaking us. Perfectly normal you might think, only there was a young girl hanging on one side! As I watched, the girl swung herself up onto the roof of the van and started shooting down through the roof, with a pistol.

'Awesome!' I thought.

The van began to swerve from side to side, presumably in an effort to shake off the girl; they almost succeeded too. Then the rear doors opened and a man tried to grab the girl's legs. Aman looked onto the roof, checking for the girl when he was ambushed.

I actually yelled out then, rooting for the girl. Aman fell off the van and was crushed by an SUV – hamburger! Damn, that girl could move – I watched her flip along the roof of the van and down into the passenger side window.

I missed a bit as Aunt Emily swerved to the left, but then I saw a body fly through the air and crash to the black top, just feet from us – there was a big bump too, so I think we may have put him out of his misery.

The van then pulled off the road and vanished.

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That evening I found out that the girl I had seen was in fact the daughter of Sergeant Williams, Mindy Macready. There was a warrant out for her arrest. I could not see why, as all she had done was kill some men that obviously deserved it...

It highlighted the fact that vigilantes operated outside the law and without the protection of the law.

Something to be thought about!

Chapter 3: Suiting Up

September 2013

I studied myself in the mirror.

I was not especially glamorous, but my body had some decent curves and the boys definitely were not complaining! I was tall, an inch or two over five feet. Overall, I was very pleased with my thirteen-year-old body and I regularly wore revealing clothing to tease the boys at school. Before anybody has any ideas, I was still a virgin and I intended to stay that way for a few years yet! However, if I were going to be going out at night, I would need to cover my body up.

I started digging through my clothes, throwing various items onto the bed. Some of my clothes were still in boxes; I dug through them and added more stuff to the pile on the bed. Finally, I had a decent selection and I stripped to my underwear before I fished through the clothes, selecting a tight black t-shirt and some light grey leggings that came down to just above my knees. Over the leggings, I wore some very short, black shorts. For footwear, I wore black leather boots that came up my calves. On the outside of the right boot was a Marine Ka-Bar fighting knife in a sheath.

I pulled out a black webbing belt that held my Daddy's M9 Beretta in a black holster. I wrapped the belt around my waist and pulled it tight – I might need to add some extra holes! The holster had straps that pulled tight around my right thigh.

Next came a bulletproof vest. I did not have much to choose from, only an old design that I thought might have been used by my Aunt when she was younger. It fit, but I had no idea how functional it was. I pulled on a pair of black gloves that came up to my wrists. The gloves were weighted to give me a better punch – kind of like built in knuckle-dusters.

I looked in the mirror – I was missing something.

A mask!

I found a black commando watch cap and pulled this down over my hair, stuffing it all into the cap. I also found some folding motorcycle goggles that covered my eyes. I studied the mirror; was my identity protected? I considered using some camo face cream; I had plenty left over from Daddy.

It would have to do, to start with at least, and I could alter the outfit as time went on.

First off, I needed to get my body into shape!

Aunt Emily wanted to know why I was training so hard.

"I'm putting everything behind me and getting my life back together." Had been my response.

"Good girl!" Aunt Emily had replied.

I hated lying to her, but then again, maybe I had not lied – I was getting my life back together. Only I was going to be starting a life with two identities – one public and one secret. I liked the idea of having a secret identity.

March 1st, 2014

Daylight found me sitting in a McDonald's, eating breakfast.

My reconnaissance had sucked, big time! At a table away, I saw a boy; he looked tired and he was alone.

"Hi!" I said, moving over with my tray.

"Hello."

"ABrit!"

"Afraid so!" The boy grinned.

"Morgan."

"Josh."

"You alone?" I asked.

"Unfortunately, I am..."

"Mind if I eat with you?"

"I would never say no to a beautiful girl sitting down at my table!"

I felt myself blushing, which was more than a little embarrassing, as the boy noticed and smirked in my direction.

The plan had been to learn the city after dark, only I had been almost mugged, but a few well-placed kicks and punches had allowed me to escape. That had been two hours before and I was still sore. I checked the time and realised that I needed to get home before I was missed.

"Will I see you again?" I asked, surprising myself.

"I suppose," Josh, mused. "Meet you here next Saturday?"

"Nine o'clock?"

"Perfect, Morgan."

April 11th, 2014

I was fourteen-years-old and tonight was to be the first outing for my alter ego.

After my Aunt had gone to bed – my Uncle was on a night shift, I pulled on my black clothes and bullet-proof-vest, plus the Beretta in the webbing holster and slipped out of the window of my bedroom.

My route away from the house in Weehawken, New Jersey, was over the back fence into an alleyway that then led down towards Old Glory Park. The plan was to keep an eye open for assholes causing trouble. I knew I would find some business as the place had regular 'issues' after dark. My biggest problem would be avoiding the Cops.

After leaving my home on 50th Street, I had to make my way across Broadway and Park Avenue, which laid me open to being seen. I kept to the shadows as much as possible and used the darkness of my costume to hide me. There were not all that many people about, which helped – a lot! I was nervous, very nervous. I had worked everything out in my mind over the past week or two, but now I was worried that I had not covered everything.

The route I was taking that night; I had walked it several times during daylight, figuring out the best routes to avoid obstacles and especially security cameras.

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There was activity in the park, a lot of it.

Couples feeling each other up – yuck! People on their way home from a night out in the City. A few people walking their dogs, too. After an hour in the park, moving from tree to tree and shadow to shadow, I heard a piercing scream – a woman's scream.

I ran towards the sound, running scenarios through my head and trying to figure out what to do. I never had time to complete my thoughts as I came flying out from some bushes and found myself staring at a goddamn rape...

I was shocked – I had never seen anything like it. What they showed on TV was *nothing* like what I was witnessing. There were four people there; three men laughing and joking, one with his pants down by his ankles and a woman lying on the ground, her dress up by her chest and her knickers down by her ankles. Her legs were wide open and it was obvious that 'it' had already occurred.

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All four pairs of eyes turned to face me as I blundered out of the undergrowth.

"What the fuck is that?" One man called out.

"Leave her alone and – and walk away..." I tried.

"Agirl!" Another man announced in surprise. "You gonna spread 'em for us, too?"

My mouth just hung open in shock at the man's suggestion. Nobody had ever suggested doing anything like that to me before!

"She looks young – nice and tight!" The man with his pants on the ground commented.

It was not supposed to be like that; they were supposed to be scared of me! I pulled out the Beretta and pointed it at them, doing my best not to shake. I failed and the men laughed.

"Fuck off, or come over here and get fucked!"

I felt tears in my eyes – tears of shame. The men laughed even more. I looked at the woman on the ground. There was nothing, I could do.

I lowered my eyes to my feet. I had failed.

I turned and ran.

Chapter 4: Take Two

April 12th

New York City

I had cried myself to sleep that night.

When I awoke in the morning, I looked back over the night's disaster. In retrospect, it *had* only been my first night, so it was kinda expected to go badly. Maybe if I had taken a shot at the men, they might have run – only I froze and almost pissed myself! I could have done so many things; only I did none of them and a woman was left to fend for herself.

'What a great fucking vigilante, you are, Morgan!' I thought angrily.

I had not frozen when my parents had been murdered right before my eyes; I had been able to fight and kill that man. Why had I frozen in the park when I could have helped that woman? Maybe I was not ready...

I *was* ready!

Was I?

I could do it... I was going to do it... I would wait until next weekend and then on Friday night I would try again... I would keep trying until – until – until I succeeded!

As usual, I met up with Josh for breakfast.

We had met up at least once every week over the preceding month. I liked Josh, he had a good sense of humour and I loved his British Accent; it was to die for, he was cute, too! However, if I was uncomfortable that morning due to the previous night's events, it was absolutely nothing, compared to how uncomfortable I was when Josh suddenly started to cry in McDonalds. Talk about embarrassing, for so many reasons!

The kid was suffering, but about what, he would not say at first.

Eventually it came out that both his parents were dead – his father the previous year; murdered by some New York Mobster. He was alone, living in an apartment, he said, in Brooklyn. I explained about my parents. Thanks to the murders happening in Miami, nobody in New York knew that the murders had involved young Morgan Hella; all my schoolmates knew was that my parent's had died and I had moved to New York. I was pleased to have anonymity; I hated being somebody of public interest. I was also ashamed that I had killed.

Josh was very shocked to hear about the deaths and the circumstances; however, I left out the bit about me killing one of the men. He said he was able to relate and he apologised profusely for going to pieces in front of me, but I assured him that it was *not* a problem.

I kissed him on the cheek before he left.

April 18th

Friday

I was going to try again – and I was *going* to succeed!

As before, I pulled on my dark clothes and equipment, checking that the Beretta was correctly prepared. I was prepared for verbal abuse and could expect it and I was not about to let it shock me again, even if it *was* very personal and embarrassing.

I steeled myself, climbed out of my bedroom window, and climbed down the balcony to the ground. A quick check to see that there was nobody watching; all the windows of nearby properties were dark. Vaulting the fence was easy and I made my way towards Old Glory Park, as before.

I kept telling myself that everything would be different. I would make a difference.

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There was less activity than the previous weekend.

The usual people exploring their sexuality against a tree, but not much more. Then I witnessed what had to be a mugging. The man was large, his target a young woman who was instantly intimidated and did not need much coaxing to hand over her purse.

I was furious, so I ran forwards and stopped a few yards away, before she could hand over the purse.

"Leave her alone!" I yelled out.

The man did not laugh at me; he just lunged in my direction, catching me off guard. The woman very smartly vanished, leaving me facing the large man on my own.

"You are mine, bitch – I'm gonna rip you apart for losing me my score!"

"Just try me – you're not the first I've killed..."

The man hesitated a bit at that, but then shook his head and smirked.

"Yeah, right!"

His first punch was easily deflected, though, as he came for me not expecting me to dodge. I followed through with a kick to his gut, which only seemed to enrage him. Then I received the first punch, which *hurt!* I almost fell; the punch had been very hard. I struck out with my gloves, the extra weight helped and I caught the man on the chin. He stepped back a little shocked.

"Full of surprises, aren't you!"

"Plenty, asshole!"

I spun around, executing a high kick, aiming for the man's head. I made contact, sending the man off to one side. I smiled – I was succeeding; but there was still a long way to go... I advanced on the man as he tried to get up again, kicking him hard in his side. He yelled out and regained his feet rather quickly, reaching out and flipping me to the ground. The ground was a bad place to be; you could not fight effectively on the ground.

I struggled to get back to my feet, but the man started to kick me in the side, then he reached down and punched me in the stomach. I doubled over in agony and screamed out. Then I heard a yell.

"Police, stop!"

The man ran.

Shit! I scrambled to my feet and ran too.

I ran through the darkness, oblivious to everything.

I had to get away.

I was hurting.

My stomach and side burned where the man had punched and kicked me and the bruising made it painful to breathe. I struggled and almost failed to climb the fence into my backyard. I barely managed to climb up to and then through my bedroom window, but I landed with a thump on the floor.

I froze for a moment, hoping that I had not woken anybody up. There was no sign of activity in the dark house. I pulled off the belt with the heavy Beretta and rapidly stripped out of my clothes and staggered into my bathroom, turning on the shower. I was exhausted and I must have fallen as I found suddenly myself in the base of the shower, half drowned. I looked down my naked body and saw that both my stomach and left side was developing into one large purple bruise.

Every movement hurt, every touch was agony.

Then I got the shock of my life... A voice called out...

"My God, Morgan!"

Chapter 5: Discovered

Friday night

It was Aunt Emily and she was standing in the open door to the bathroom. There was no way that I could hide the bruises – I was naked – nor the clothes on the bedroom floor. It was over; I just sat there and cried.

Then Aunt Emily shocked me again.

"If you are going to run around New York pretending to be a vigilante, you really must wear some better equipment. Hurry up with that shower and I'll sort out your injuries."

I was stunned as Aunt Emily just turned and left the bathroom, closing the door behind her. I quickly finished in the shower, wincing each time I touched the bruised part of my body. I wrapped a towel around myself and opened the bathroom door. Aunt Emily was examining the Beretta.

"This was my brother's. I'm glad you still have it, but it is not very suitable for your activities, is it, young lady?"

I said nothing as I stood there, water dripping from my hair onto the floor.

"I knew you were up to something, but never this..."

Then I saw my Aunt begin to cry – she was obviously disappointed in me, but no...

"It was my brother who was killed, but my niece who goes out for revenge... I'm proud of you, Morgan, but there is no way you're gonna survive out there..."

"But..." I interrupted.

"We need to get you properly equipped – and trained before you go out again..."

I could not believe what I was hearing.

"What will Uncle John say..."

"Don't worry about him – he'll be fine!"

"I..."

I was speechless.

"Now, get something on, so I can see to those bruises."

The following morning

Saturday

I was in way too much pain to get out of bed in the morning, so I missed Josh that week.

It was not easy, but I crawled out of bed and pulled on some loose shorts and a t-shirt. Awaiting me at the kitchen table were my Aunt and Uncle. The expressions told me one thing; my Uncle knew everything.

"Morgan," he began. "We have a lot of work ahead of us..."

No major explosion? No grounding?

"You're grounded for the next two weeks – so don't make any plans – nor are you going out as a vigilante till you are good and ready," Uncle John continued. I groaned. "From what your Aunt says, I think your injuries should count as the rest of your punishment."

"I understand and I'm sorry."

"We know you are. Now there's a list of chores on the noticeboard for you..."

Well, it could have been worse!

May

I spent the rest of April and the first week of May grounded.

However, I was allowed to train and Uncle John was including two hours of Marital Arts as part of my punishment. I would crawl into bed exhausted each night. The pain was tolerable, but it did not help much with my sleeping. Did I say that Uncle John was skilled at Martial Arts? Well he is and he had promised to teach me some other skills too – what, I had no idea!

Aunt Emily took me to work one Saturday in May and taught me to shoot properly. I learnt to handle several weapons safely, not to mention learning how to strip and clean them once fired.

By the end of May, I was a skilled shooter, but I still had a lot of work to do...

June

The first day of June, a Sunday, was a surprise!

Uncle John drove me out to 'a friend's farm' who was away for a few months. He pulled open the door of a barn and pointed inside.

"The next stage of your training..."

I gaped and then I almost burst into tears as I grasped my Uncle in a hug. After a few minutes, I let him go and headed into the barn to cover my embarrassment. I understood now why I had been bought motorcycle clothing and a helmet, besides riding up on the back of my Uncle's Harley. There, resting on a stand was a motorcycle, a Yamaha in black.

"The Yamaha WR125X – you will learn to ride it on and off the blacktop..."

The next hour was spent learning the machine, intimately...

I learnt how to check the coolant level, where the shift pedal for the six-speed gearbox was, how to use the side stand. Then came, checking the oil, the battery, and where the brake pedal was. I learnt what a clutch was and how the lever worked. I found the front brake lever, the throttle grip and the horn.

Finally, I was given the key and with my hand shaking, I inserted the key into the lock and mounted the machine. I was shown how to select neutral and then I turned the key to the 'ON' position; the headlight came on along with some of the instrumentation. I set the engine stop switch and with only a moment's hesitation, I pressed the start switch.

The engine rumbled to life instantly and I felt the vibrations through the seat. My hands were still shaking as I gripped the handlebars.

"Ready?" Uncle John asked, smiling encouragingly.

"Yes....," I replied, sounding anything but positive!

"Let in the clutch *gently*. Remember, when you stop you must pull the clutch lever or you *will* stall. Ignore the front brake for now. Use the rear brake, down here. Twist the throttle backward to go faster, twist it forwards to go slower."

"Okay..."

"Don't look at the front tyre, try to look ahead and don't worry if you fall, okay?"

I nodded, still very apprehensive.

"Apply a little gas, and then let in the clutch *gently*! Try and follow the course around the field, keeping it *slow*!" Uncle John said, encouragingly.

I pushed down on the shift pedal once, into first gear, twisted the throttle gently, and let in the clutch... I moved, jerkily, but I moved and kept moving.

I managed a full, but shaky, circuit, before coming to a halt beside my Uncle, pulling in the clutch.

I could not stop grinning I was so happy.

July

It was the last day of July.

I was seething with anger. Why? That British dick had just told me that his old girlfriend was back on the scene and we had to stop seeing each other.

I was so mad, that when I was walking past his apartment and a man asked if I had seen a young lad matching Josh's description, I had just pointed at his apartment and carried on walking. That had been a little before three that afternoon. I had headed back towards Josh's apartment about an hour or so later; I wanted to talk, nothing more.

However, when I got back to the apartment, I could see something was very wrong. I looked up and saw two people on the roof – fuck me; it was Hit Girl and Shadow! They both wore harnesses and were abseiling down the side of the building. As I watched, Hit Girl attached something to the window and both her and Shadow hung to the left and right of the window.

At 4:21 P.M., there was an almighty bang and glass cascaded to the ground a few stories below the apartment. Then I heard gunfire as first Hit Girl and then Shadow fired into the apartment, which was followed by more explosions as they threw in hand grenades; was that Joshua's apartment?

Within minutes, thick black smoke was billowing out from the window. Hit Girl and Shadow vanished back to the roof and then I left the scene before the Cops arrived.

I never saw Josh again after that day.

I was very ashamed by what I had done and I ran home in a daze.

I never noticed the car as I crossed the street and it almost knocked me over. I glared at the driver – it was Sergeant Williams; he waved me over to the sidewalk.

"Sorry, my mind was elsewhere."

"You okay, Morgan?"

"Yeah, just fell out with a boy – nothing serious."

"Take it easy and pay attention; this City is dangerous."

"Thanks."

Chapter 6: Raven

2015

April 11th

New York City

I studied myself in the mirror.

I wore black, from head to toe. Black, tight pants and a tight t-shirt. I was annoyed – my tits were not showing – that was thanks to the covert vest that I wore under the t-shirt. The vest provided NIJ Level II protection against knives and bullets; including nine-millimetre, .357-magnum and shot gun pellets. Where Aunt Emily had obtained it, I did not ask; I was just very thankful for it!

Around my waist, I wore a black webbing belt that supported twin holsters, which were then strapped to either thigh. I checked, loaded, and then made safe the twin Heckler & Koch USP Compact nine-millimetre pistols before placing them securely in the holsters. Each pistol was equipped with a combined laser/flash light beneath the barrel as well as to use a suppressor, of which I also carried two. I carried two spare magazines for each pistol. Along with the holsters, I had some pouches that held other equipment and a selection of throwing knives.

As it was cold out, I wore a black, waist-length, motorcycle jacket. My mask was a simple domino mask that covered the upper portion of my face. My black hair was tied back and up, and a red wig was in place; it was longhaired and currently in a single plait that hung midway down my back. The wig had been Aunt Emily's idea. She had suggested that I change my name to Red Raven; I was still considering that.

My hands were enclosed in black leather gloves with crimson red palms. On my feet I wore boots that came up almost to my knees; they were black, very comfortable and light.

"You'll do!" Aunt Emily said as I turned around.

"Thanks, Aunt Em..."

Aunt Emily hugged me tightly.

"Go to it, girl – I know you can do it!"

I hit the ground running.

I was Raven and I was going to make a difference out there – even if it killed me! I found my way back to Old Glory Park, just as I had on the two previous occasions, only this time things were going to be different – I was properly equipped and I had support.

I wandered through the darkened park and it was not long before my skills were called upon. It was the same asshole as before, in the middle of another mugging, only this time I was in charge.

"Let her go, cunt!" I growled indicating the woman he was standing over.

"What the fuck are you, bitch?"

"Me? I am the person who is going to put you the fuck down..."

"In your fucking dreams, bitch."

I did not give the man a chance to react; I dived forwards kicking out with my left boot, which connected with the man's right shoulder. My strike caused him to fall to his left as I continued my attack, kicking him in the head. The man reached for a knife, which gave me the excuse that I needed to escalate the situation.

I seized the Asp, extending baton from my belt, extending it with a flick of my wrist. I brought the baton down hard on to the man's right wrist, shattering it. The man screamed in agony and dropped the knife. He fell to the ground cradling his smashed wrist.

The woman just stared at me for a moment before she spoke.

"Who – who are you?"

I paused for effect...

"I'm Raven!"

However, before I could say anything else...

"Police!"

"Gotta go!" I called to the woman before I turned and ran.

..._...

Once I was a good distance away from the scene, I slowed down and started to walk more casually through the trees. I felt good; I had put the fucker down and saved that woman. I was pulled from my thoughts by another shout...

"Police, stop!"

I had been seen!

I ran towards the road through the park; towards a certain place amidst some bushes. Two Police Officers were chasing me, so I ran harder. I dived through some bushes while the Police ran straight past me.

"Get going, girl!" My Uncle said as he passed over my crash helmet.

The motocross helmet was black and my eyes were protected by goggles with crimson tinted lenses. As I pulled the chinstrap tight under my chin, I jumped onto my pride and joy, pressing the starter. The engine of the Yamaha WR125X motorcycle caught immediately, already being warm. I kicked down into first gear and accelerated out of the bushes and away from the searching Police Officers.

The motorcycle was black, with a crimson red frame and had been a gift from my Uncle. I had trained for weeks, learning how to ride the motorcycle proficiently. I loved riding the machine and I enjoyed the surge of speed, which sent adrenalin surging through my body.

I twisted the throttle increasing speed and zipping between the trees – a Police cruiser appeared in front of me, lights flashing. I skidded on the grass, altering my course towards the rear of the car ignoring the Police Officers as I concentrated on keeping on two wheels.

Minutes later, I was in the clear.

Then I hit pay dirt!

..._...

As I rode through the adjoining Donnelly Memorial Park, I saw the three men from my first night and they were busy harassing two women near to the kids play area. As I got closer, one of the women was punched to the ground. I skidded to a halt, killed the engine and kicked down the stand leaning the motorcycle onto it and removing my helmet.

"A man should never hit a woman..." I began as I approached.

"What?" One dick replied annoyed at the interruption.

"I take exception to dicks like you three – you need to be stopped..."

"You are gonna stop us?" Another laughed.

I caught the third man moving slowly but steadily to my right, I saw him in my peripheral vision and I pretended that I had not seen the douche. However, I reached over to the front of my belt with my right hand and as the man pulled out a knife, I flicked a blade in his direction.

The man's raised arm was pinned to the tree that he was standing in front of, by his sleeve. The knife was gripped in his hand – all eight inches of it!

"The next one hits flesh..." I warned. "Drop it!"

The knife hit the ground and I moved to cover all three men, pulling out a pistol.

"Now, we don't want the cops coming too soon, do we?" I continued conversationally, attaching a suppressor to the end of one of my Heckler & Koch USP automatic pistols.

"You wouldn't..."

I turned my response to the two women, one of whom was sobbing on the ground.

"Well?"

"Shoot the bastards – they deserve a bullet each!" The woman still standing spat.

"On your fucking knees!" I growled, the temper inside me rising to boiling point.

The men hesitated... Two rounds into the ground and both men were quickly on their knees.

"Hands behind your heads..."

I walked behind them both.

"How does it feel being forced to do somebody else's will?" I continued.

Neither men responded, so the nearest man was pistol whipped to the side of his head. Blood flew.

"Answer me!"

"Humiliating..."

I prodded one man in the neck with the suppressor. Then man was shaking – then he pissed himself and both women laughed.

"Get down on your fucking faces, arms stretched out to your sides," I ordered. "You move; you die!"

Flashing lights attracted my attention as a Police cruiser stopped and two men climbed out, heading in my direction.

I looked at the women, putting a finger to my lips and moved off into the darkness towards my motorcycle.

"What the hell happened here?"

The Police Officer looked at the three men, the two women and then over at his partner. They immediately cuffed the two men on the ground, and then one called for an ambulance while the other released the third man from the tree.

"She saved our lives..." One woman stated as a motorcycle engine was heard starting up.

"What the..."

A motorcycle roared out of the trees heading for the nearby intersection. The machine was lightweight and was ridden by a black-clad person. It shot across the intersection, turning up 60th Street heading west. The motorcycle was black and crimson, but most strikingly, there was a shape on the side of the machine, just in front of the rider's right knee – it was a diving raven.

"Hey, didn't that guy with the smashed wrist say he was attacked by a vigilante called 'Raven'?"

"He did..."

"Good luck, Raven!" The Police officer muttered with a smile.

Chapter 7: Gaining Trust

Two months later
June 2015

There was some new legislation, in Chicago, that really sucked!

The new Mayor was creating a shit load of anti-vigilante legislation. Now, why should that bother a fifteen year-old girl in New York? Well, considering that the same fifteen year-old-girl was also a vigilante called Raven, it was definitely important news. Worse though, was the fact that New York City was considering the same legislation!

As if my life could not, get any harder.

The previous two months had been awesome and I was out at least twice a week. My life was hectic, juggling school, training, keeping lone women safe at night and homework. The nights when I was not out on the streets I was exhausted and my Aunt and Uncle were getting concerned that I was pushing myself too hard.

Maybe I was, but that was a side effect of my life.

As far as Raven was concerned, I was popular on the streets and I noticed that I was being chased by the cops a lot less. I had also started to venture across the water into the City. A week ago, we had moved my motorcycle from the Safehouse in Weehawken to a new Safehouse in the City – I say 'Safehouse'; however, my Uncle John had had a 'funny idea' one morning to call them 'Nests'! I had to admit that it did fit in with my 'Raven' persona, so I grudgingly allowed it.

The Safehouse – sorry, *Nest*, was a shithole, but that was kind of the point; we did not want to advertise! It was on Kent Avenue, near to the east end of the Williamsburg Bridge, which gave easy access into the City. I also had easy access via the Manhattan and Brooklyn Bridges.

..._...

I said that the Cops were chasing me less – well they still chased me, although I got the impression that they were not exactly trying! To me that meant I was being unofficially endorsed by the Weehawken PD – *and* the NYPD.

New York City was scary – it was enormous and there were loads of places for the 'bad guys' to hide. Mind you, I was a 'bad guy' technically, so there were plenty of places for me to hide, too. My successes had grown, but so had the dangers.

I was well known by the innocent population of New York City, but I was also now well known by the criminals of New York City. That was good in one way, but bad in another... Often, once I showed up, minor criminals beat a hasty retreat. The more serious criminals though just pulled a weapon and open fire as soon as I showed up. I had many bruises from bullets striking my vest as a result. I had also received more than a few painful gashes from one or two close shaves.

You have *got* to be kidding!

"What do ya think?"

"Err, Amy – what are you wearing?"

Amy was my best friend at school. Despite that, she knew next to nothing about my history. She was kind of weird, but I liked her and she liked me too which was good; I did not have many friends thanks to my hectic life outside of school!

"I think it's awesome!"

I had to admit that I was a little unsure how to react, especially as my best friend was wearing a t-shirt with myself on the front! Yeah, the red t-shirt had an image of me with a pistol raised and a scowl on my face – all trussed up as Raven. The photo had been taken a week previously by some lucky idiot who then put the photo all over the internet. Secretly, it was a good photo and Uncle John had a large version in his den at home!

"It's cool, I suppose."

'Raven' had come up in many conversations, especially when she had accomplished something big. I was a little freaked out by the fact that there was actually a '*Raven Fan Club*' – and no, I was *not* a member, but my Aunt was!

"Did you hear that she got hurt the other night?" Amy went on.

I subconsciously touched my left side, doing my best not to grimace on pain. I had a large gash there, which hurt like son of a bitch.

Three nights earlier

I peeled off the Brooklyn Bridge beside One Police Plaza – yeah, I liked to court danger!

After a cruise along the FDR, I exited at East Houston Street. In the darkness I was relatively inconspicuous which allowed me to creep up on the lowlife of New York who needed my help to be put down. Something caught my eye at what used to be Lewis Street and was now part of a school. It was the sight of a young girl being dragged over some wire mesh gates; my blood boiled and I rode onto the sidewalk skidding to a halt and pulling off my helmet.

I vaulted the same gates and pursued the still screaming girl.

...—...

I found them in a dark part of the playground.

The girl was younger than I was by maybe a year. She had stopped screaming, there was a large hand across her mouth. She was wearing a skirt and her knickers were being roughly pulled down her legs. I did not hesitate as I took in the scene. I flew at the first of the three men, kicking him to the ground and pounding my fist into his face. I broke his nose, blood flying.

Another man turned to see what was happening and I kicked out, but the man was fast and I was flipped backwards. I caught myself and landed hard, but without injury. I sprang back up and blocked the man's punches as he attacked. He was good and strong, but I was agile.

Then I was distracted by a scream and then the man hit me hard, sending me backwards into a wooden shed. I cracked the wood with the force of the impact and I felt the pain, too. However, my Uncle had taught me to take pain and turn it into anger. I flew forwards, punching and kicking out at the man. I landed several hard blows before I heard a gunshot and felt myself thrown to one side as the bullet hit my vest.

A bad move on their part! I pulled a pistol, shooting first one man and then the other. Both went down with wounds to their sides. The third man was still nursing his broken nose. I could hear sirens approaching, so my time was short. I ran over to the girl.

"Are you okay?"

"Yes – you stopped them just in time – thank you, err Raven..."

I spun around, kicked both wounded men hard in the head, putting them out until the cops arrived. I ran for the fence, vaulted it and pulled on my helmet. As I pressed the starter, I could see blue and red flashing lights coming closer and the sirens were getting louder. I gunned the engine, accelerated off down the street, and took the first left onto Columbia Street and then another left onto Grand Street, working up and down the gears as I made my way back to the FDR and safety.

***Chapter 8*: Murder**

*Three months later
September 2015*

Washington D.C.

The large, white over black van with the blue flashing lights pulled up to the curb and stopped.

Another van, this one blue and white pulled up close behind. Both vans shared the same initials of the same Federal agency; however, the first van was marked up as '**MAJOR CASE RESPONSE TEAM**' while the second bore the legend: '**MEDICAL EXAMINER**', in red lettering.

"I never thought anybody could drive worse than Ziva, Bishop!"

"I'm having an off day, DiNozzo, give me a break!"

"I think she drove okay, Tony..."

"Nobody asked you, Timmy!"

"Err; he doesn't look happy does he?" NCIS Special Agent Ellie Bishop announced as she looked towards their Boss.

The three of them scrambled into action, grabbing equipment from the van.

Behind them, an older man and his assistant were hauling a gurney from the back of the other van.

New York City

I was taking a week off.

From being a vigilante at least – I still had to go to school! Aunt Em and I had talked about a holiday. None of us had enjoyed a holiday in quite a while and even my Aunt and Uncle were stressed out. Being an NYPD cop was not always easy. Being an NYPD vigilante, though, was even worse – at least I thought so.

I just wanted to be a teenaged girl for a while – a normal teenaged girl. Could I actually do that? I went to the movies, I chatted with my friends and we talked about boys. I was one of the few girls in my grade who did not have a boyfriend, nor was I really interested in hanging out with boys. That was partly because of my hectic night life, but also because I was a little shy about boys in general.

Maybe it had been my run in with that boy, Joshua.

Washington D.C.

"So, what do we have, Jethro?"

"Adead Marine, Ducky!"

Dr Donald 'Ducky' Mallard knelt down beside the slain Marine and inserted a liver probe into the relevant organ.

"Well?" NCIS Special Agent Leroy Jethro Gibbs asked impatiently.

"Twenty-nine, Palmer..."

"Alittle under six hours ago, Doctor Mallard," James 'Jimmy' Palmer announced after a brief mental calculation.

"Very good, Autopsy Gremlin!" NCIS Special Agent Anthony 'Tony' DiNozzo teased.

"DiNozzo! There's a dead woman in the next room – get processing..."

NCIS Special Agent Timothy 'Tim' McGee studied the handheld computer that he had just used to scan the dead Marine's fingerprint. It beeped with a result.

"Major Hank Waters, USMC, Boss – based at Quantico, home on leave," he reported.

"Relatives?"

"Wife, Barbara Waters and a daughter – both were away for the evening, they returned home and found the bodies..."

"Trauma to the head, nasal bleeding, defensive wounds to the hands and lower arms – he fought with his attacker, Jethro," Ducky advised.

"I would expect it – he was a Marine."

Washington Navy Yard

"What have you got Ducky?"

Dr Mallard looked up as Gibbs entered Autopsy and made his way over to the steel table that held the body of Major Hank Waters.

"Jethro! He died from the blow to his head – at the back, down here. Otherwise the Major was one hundred percent healthy and in peak condition. Abby has his fluids and she will confirm my findings."

"Looks like a home invasion gone wrong, Ducky – he leaves a wife and a young daughter, not good."

"I know you'll find who did it, Jethro, you always do..."

Saturday morning

I was out with Amy Millar, my best friend, and we were down at the Bowling Alley.

We had played a game – she won... Okay, I was not all that good at bowling – so sue me! We sat down afterwards and I ordered a pair of cheeseburgers and two Cokes. While we waited for the order to arrive, something else arrived.

Jed Niles was a dick, quite literally – he thought with it and he thought that every girl wanted some of it. Any girl that refused his advances was usually labelled a dyke. His logic? If a girl did not fancy the pants off him, then they had to be a dyke, right? Wrong! He made my skin crawl and I hated being in the same hemisphere as him, let alone the same state and school.

"Well look who we have here?" He drawled, strolling over to me and Amy.

I fanaticised about kicking him in the balls, but refrained from actually doing it. I also completely ignored him, as did Amy and the other kids at nearby tables. Now, Jed, being the supreme male specimen had to have other boys with him – personally I thought his pals were almost as bad as he was – there were five of them and they also made my skin crawl. One of them, Mike Revel, never washed and I hated walking within six feet of him; I could smell him the moment he entered the building.

"Hello, Hella, got a seat for me there?"

I ignored him and noticed Amy looking a little uncomfortable.

"Hey – don't ignore me, Hella!"

I turned to face the idiot and just glared at him.

"Sorry – did you say something?"

Jed just stared for a moment before his expression went cold.

"You show me some respect, slut..."

"Why the hell should I?" I responded coolly.

"Otherwise..."

"You'll what – beat up on a girl?"

"No," he replied quickly.

"Didn't think you had the balls for that, Niles."

There were a few intakes of breath from the other tables. Nobody spoke to Jed like that...

"Fuck you, you fucking dyke!"

"You are not fucking me – ever!"

Just then, our food and drinks arrived. Jed knew better than to cause trouble while an adult was there, so he waited until the server vanished back into the kitchen. He then turned on Amy.

"That looks good, mind if I have a taste?"

Jed scooped up a handful of fries and crammed them into his mouth. There was laughter from his cohorts, but I could see tears in Amy's eyes; she was scared.

"Leave – now!" I growled, glaring at the bully.

Jed smirked and grabbed hold of Amy's cheeseburger, dropping onto the floor where it landed with a splat. That was it, I snapped. Jed did not know what hit him as I jumped up, seized his right arm and twisted it behind his back. He then found his face flying downwards towards my own cheeseburger, where I ground his nose into the fresh and very hot chunk of prime meat.

The fucker screamed and cheers arose from the other tables as I let the struggling bully go and muttering under his breath, he ran out of the Bowling Alley. His cohorts followed close behind.

I was very pleased with my actions.

Unfortunately, I seemed to be the only one who thought that I had done good!

"You burnt the boy's nose! You almost broke his arm! You're damn lucky the boy's parents aren't suing us!"

I was twenty minutes into a major shit storm; Uncle John was *not* impressed! Finally, he ran out of steam and sat down fuming, but then he smiled.

"Well done – I'm proud of you for standing up for those who can't stand up for themselves, Morgan."

"Thanks, Uncle John, I'm sorry for causing you and Aunt Em trouble."

"You will be – you're grounded for two weeks!"

Chapter 9: Who Are You?

Four months later
February 17th, 2016

Wednesday

It was late afternoon when there came a knock on the front door.

I was home alone, so I grudgingly dragged myself off the couch to see who was calling. I saw two men standing on the porch as I opened the door.

"Can I help you?" I asked politely.

The older of the two men smiled and he flipped open a wallet that showed an ID and a badge.

"Special Agent Gibbs and this is Special Agent McGee, NCIS. Are you Miss Morgan Hella?"

I knew who NCIS was, but what could they want now – it was five weeks short of being three years since NCIS had investigated the deaths of my parents?

"I am."

"May we come in, ma'am," the other man asked politely.

I had no choice...

..._...

I brought the two Federal Agents into the living room and offered them the couch while I sat in my uncle's chair.

"I'm sorry to drag all this up after all this time..." Special Agent Gibbs began and he seemed very genuine.

"You're here about the murder of my parents, almost three years ago."

"Yes, I am."

"I assume that something has happened?"

"You assume right," The other Agent replied; he seemed very nice. "Since the attack when you were twelve, there have been three more attacks on Marine families – three more dead Marine Officers... and one wife..."

"We wanted to see if there was anything else that might help us," Special Agent Gibbs added.

..._...

We talked for over an hour, going over everything *again*.

Including the raven tattoo...

"The raven has been witnessed by one other survivor – so that is definitely something of note," Special Agent McGee explained. "There has also been a similar sighting in Chicago... We have somebody heading over there to look into things."

"Chicago?"

"Yes, ma'am, Chicago."

I didn't mention the visit to my Aunt and Uncle – not right away.

"You decided where you want to take a holiday, yet?" Uncle John asked as we prepared dinner.

It was my chance...

"Yeah – Chicago."

"Chicago?" Aunt Em asked.

"The Windy City?" Uncle John cut in.

"Yeah – something wrong with that?"

"No! You want Chicago – you got Chicago."

Over dinner that night, I was rumbled.

"What happened this afternoon to make you select Chicago?" Aunt Em asked conversationally.

Her tone said it all. It would come out eventually and there really was no point in hiding it – I just hated bringing it up; it hurt.

"NCIS turned up this afternoon and they asked me a host of questions about *that* night... Apparently, there have been some other murders with the same, you know. At least one person saw the raven and they said that the raven tattoo has also been spotted in Chicago."

"Anything else?" Uncle John asked.

"NCIS already have somebody in Chicago."

Uncle John thought for a moment, eating another mouthful of meatloaf.

"I assume you want to take the *Raven Nest* with you?"

"It *is* almost ready – I just need to gather some final items..."

Uncle John looked over at Aunt Em, who nodded.

"Okay – road trip!"

***Three days later
Saturday morning***

We were ready! The Raven Nest was a mobile Safehouse based on a ninety-foot RV. The beast was black all over and it was able to support all Raven operations when out in the field. Inside, there was a double bedroom – for my aunt and uncle – I would sleep on the couch! It was fully air-conditioned, though, and heated.

All the important equipment was strategically hidden away. This included advanced communications equipment for when I was out on a mission as well as hidden weapons caches and places to hide my outfits. Raven had gone upmarket and I had an updated armoured suit, as well as a new set of wheels.

The back end of the RV was where my motorcycle and the majority of my 'special equipment' lived in a purpose designed 'garage'.

..._...

Chicago was two days' travel away and that would give me plenty of time to prepare for what awaited me in that city. I had many problems to solve too: I would be in a strange city and I would have NCIS snooping about. I would also be in the heart of *Fusion* territory. I had no illusions about *Fusion* – they would *not* be happy to have a rogue vigilante in their city.

If all went well, I could get in, find the man with the Raven tattoo, and get the hell out of Chicago.

***Two days later
Monday evening***

***Southern Chicago
Raven Nest***

I studied myself in the mirror.

As before, I was black, from head to toe. I wore tight black pants and a tight t-shirt as before, but over the pants, on each thigh, I wore a custom-formed NIJ Level II A panel. My pistol holsters were secured to those panels which in turn were secured to my thighs. Instead of the covert vest that I had worn previously under the t-shirt, I wore a light jacket that had a pair of NIJ Level II panels to protect my chest and abdomen. There was an additional, but flexible panel to protect my back and it extended around my hips. Additional sections of armour protected my shoulders, upper, and lower arms. Over all that was worn my black leather jacket as before. Outwardly, I looked much the same as I had before, except for some extra bulk on my upper body and thighs.

We had decided on the additional armour as I would be going into harm's way and Chicago was a dangerous city for many reasons.

I was so glad to be able to get out of the damn RV.

I had never been a good long distance traveller! I had slept a lot, but also spent time on my plans. The first plan was to build up my knowledge of the city. I had examined paper maps, Google Earth and Bing Maps on the ride up, so I at least had an idea of where I was going – I also had a GPS so that I could find my way back to the RV.

The RV was parked in a small warehouse, in the southern part of Chicago. I wheeled my motorcycle down the ramp and then climbed on.

"You take it gently, out there."

"Yes, Aunt Em – I promise to take care and not get into a fight..."

"You are out there for reconnaissance – not necessarily to help people, but use your common sense."

I nodded as I pulled on my helmet before pressing the 'Start' button on my machine.

...—...

The 2015 Yamaha Super Ténéré rumbled to life, the 1199cc, liquid-cooled, 4-stroke 2-cylinder DOHC engine catching immediately. The black and crimson machine that bore my symbol, the diving raven, accelerated smartly as I twisted the throttle and let out the clutch, changing up the gears smoothly.

The warehouse was soon left behind me as I cruised south along I-90, sticking to the speed limit. I had no desire to attract *any* attention!

That evening

I-90 Southbound

"That motorcycle look like it belongs?"

"Mindy has an interloper!"

Murphy picked up his cell while his partner continued to drive down the freeway. **RAVEN** – that had been on the licence plate. Did Mindy have competition – like Petra had been, or was it something more sinister?

In Chicago, *anything* was possible!

I took the turn off onto the westbound I-55

A few miles later I turned off at South Kedzie Avenue and then southbound towards the railyards. At the time I had no idea that I was in the most dangerous part of Chicago – dangerous for criminals and foreign vigilantes alike.

If I had known that I was, right at that moment, passing within two-hundred and fifty yards of the country's most feared vigilante and her headquarters...

Kedzie Street Rail Yard

Why did I do it?

I had no idea, but it went against the express instructions of Aunt Em and Uncle John. Maybe I needed a release from all the frustration of the long drive, or maybe I just wanted to see some action. Whatever reasons I had, I headed towards the railyard where I expected to find trouble.

The railyard was enormous and covered acres and acres. A third was given over to the storage of tractor trailers – hundreds of the things. I parked my motorcycle down an alleyway across from the yard and used the combination of a light pole and a tree to get over the fence and razor wire – a shocking security lapse!

..._...

Just as I jumped to the ground, I heard a motorcycle and looked up and was sure that I had seen something purple flashing past, but at the time, I thought nothing of it.

I ran a hundred yards to the closest row of parked trailers and adjusted the NVGs on my head; they were heavy and cumbersome, but essential in the darker parts of the yard. There was floodlighting, but it did not cover everything. I struck pay dirt in the fourth row of trailers.

I heard voices, male voices and a lot of arguing. As I advanced, I mentally prepared myself for action and the unknown. First, I had to find out what was going on, so I climbed up the end of a container and moved slowly and cautiously nearer to the voices.

Then it all went to shit as bullets flew in my direction, two striking my chest. They came from the direction of a light pole and it was obvious that the floodlights had masked a watcher from me – there had been nobody there when I had approached! More bullets came at me from below and then I felt two strong hands on my ankles and I was yanked bodily backwards off the container.

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I fell, bracing myself for the hard impact onto the concrete – only I was caught by two strong arms which then placed me gently back onto my feet. I heard the sound of heavy weapons and then after a minute's heavy firefight the shooting ceased and I turned to face my rescuer.

"Who are you?"

Chapter 10: I'm Kick-Ass!

Monday night

**Kedzie Street Rail Yard
Chicago**

"Who are you?" I asked again.

"I'm Kick-Ass!" Came the reply.

Wow; I had not recognised him in the darkness. His costume was different; he looked awesome though! I turned as somebody else spoke.

"What do you think you are doing in our city, err..."

"Raven, Red Raven," I offered as my mouth dropped open at the sight of Hit Girl – she wore purple, so it had to be Hit Girl.

"Did you take a wrong turn, Raven? You are no longer in New York; you are in Chicago. Chicago is *our* City..." Hit Girl continued.

"I meant no harm; I'm looking for somebody..."

"Tell us what you need and we'll see what we can do to help you," Kick-Ass finished.

I was stumped. I had no idea what to say; I was not expecting to meet *Fusion* so soon and definitely not Kick-Ass and Hit Girl!

"Can I get back to you on that?" I asked.

"Of course," Hit Girl said, passing me a card.

The card was purple; it had 'HG' on one side and on the other side was a number. When I looked up, I was alone. I pocketed the card and ran back to the fence where I found the tree and the light pole. As I dropped to the ground, there parked a few yards from the alleyway where I had parked my Yamaha, I saw a large Suzuki motorcycle that I recognised as a V-Strom 1000.

The rider stared at me – it was obviously a member of Fusion and I suspected that it was Shadow. I entered the alleyway, pulled on my helmet, and then mounted and started the motorcycle. As I pulled out, I noticed that the V-Strom was gone, however, I noticed another machine forming up on me – it was a tan coloured Triumph Tiger 800 XCA.

The rider was instantly recognisable as the vigilante known by Jackal.

..._...

As I headed back to I-55, I noticed several other Fusion vehicles along my route. They were obviously ensuring that I left the area and were letting me know that I could not escape them and that Chicago was *their* city. Would they follow me all the way back to the warehouse? Should I try to ditch them? Assuming that I even could!

What harm would there be in trusting them – I could trust them?

Couldn't I?

**The following morning
Tuesday**

After the shock of the previous night – not to mention the worst telling off I had received that side of puberty, I decided to explore Chicago during daylight hours, and as myself.

Uncle John and Aunt Em were doing the same – they said they wanted to meet an old friend who was a cop in the city. I headed into the city and took the 'L' to north Chicago. I began a pleasant walk down West North Avenue, heading east. I was just passing a large building with something called D-JAK and Victoria's Secret when I had the shock of my life.

"Holy fuck! Morgan?"

..._...

I spun around at the sound of the *very* familiar, British accent.

"Joshua?"

I was stunned; it was he – older, taller and *much* more handsome, but still Joshua.

"I thought you were dead!" I stated simply.

"Why would you think that?" Josh asked, confused and obviously taken aback by my comment.

"I saw Hit Girl and Shadow assaulting your apartment in New York..."

"Oh! You saw that?" Josh asked, relaxing a bit. "They were rescuing me..."

I looked over at the girl who stood beside Josh; she looked very nice; no wonder Josh had wanted her instead of me...

..._...

"You, must be the girl Josh dumped me for..."

"I'm Chloe – Josh never mentioned a Morgan!"

"I don't blame him..."

Then I saw a burst of recognition on the girl's face.

"You're the person who he talked to, when he was all alone in New York – he never said it was a *girl* that he talked to," Chloe said quietly. "Thanks, Morgan."

"What?" I replied a little stunned.

"Josh told me that somebody in New York helped him talk about what had happened – he even told me that he burst into tears over breakfast in McDonalds!"

"Yeah, that was kind of embarrassing!" I admitted, remembering.

"Not just for *you*..." Josh added, looking a little embarrassed and deciding to change the subject. "What are you doing in Chicago?"

For a moment I froze. I had no idea what to say. Finding Joshua alive had been – well, it had thrown me completely.

"Here on a holiday with my Aunt and Uncle," I stammered.

"Fancy going somewhere for a bite to eat?" Josh asked, then he grinned. "I promise not to burst into tears!"

I looked over at Chloe who smiled.

"Have no fear, Morgan – if Josh trusts you, then so do I."

That evening

South Harbour Avenue

As instructed, I rode down the street alone and openly.

I knew that I was being observed; that was obvious. After lunch that afternoon, I had called the number on the card and spoken directly with Hit Girl. She had advised me of a place, the junction of South Ewing Avenue and South Harbor Avenue, plus a time. As I approached the junction that evening, I was riding parallel to the Calumet River and some large brick buildings, there I found my way blocked by a large armoured SUV. From beside the hood, a short vigilante in a red and blue outfit pointed left down South Ewing Avenue, over to my left. The only sign of outward hostility was a hand resting loosely on the butt of a pistol on the vigilante's right hip.

I followed the directions and soon found my way blocked by a monstrous truck that again blocked the road. The armoured SUV followed me as I was directed to turn left into an empty parking lot of a closed business. Another vigilante – this time Shadow, waved me to park beside her own motorcycle. There was no escape, so I followed instructions and once parked, I shutdown my engine and dismounted.

Shadow waved me into the centre of the parking lot.

"Don't move!"

The voice was that of Hit Girl and she walked towards me, a device in her left hand, her right holding a pistol. She walked around me, a full three-sixty before holstering her pistol.

"You can remove your helmet, Raven..."

If their show of force was meant to be intimidating – then it was working!

..._...

Behind me, from the direction of the river, I heard the roar of marine diesels coming to life.

"This way..." Hit Girl said as we walked towards the water.

I had been allowed to keep my pistol, which was a surprise. I was even more surprised when I saw what those throbbing diesel engines were powering... She was beautiful and very purple! I climbed aboard the powerful looking watercraft and Hit Girl joined me, along with another female vigilante.

"We're going for a ride... Your motorcycle will be perfectly safe," Hit Girl grinned. "The Fusion valet service has yet to lose a vehicle to theft!"

Funny bitch!

..._...

Once we were all aboard, the engines cut in and we moved towards Lake Michigan. We rapidly increased speed as we went, and were soon bouncing over the water at a high rate of knots. I was shown into the main cabin and the doors were closed behind me. I received a wave from Kick-Ass, who was driving from the control station up front. Hit Girl waved me to sit down on the large couch. The other vigilante did the same, while Hit Girl lounged on the counter opposite.

"Raven, this is Petra – we want to hear your story..."

"Why the boat?"

"Oh – sorry – this is *The Vigilante*! I would normally use Safehouse K, only the CIAblew it up – long story!" Hit Girl replied offhandedly.

I began to talk.

Later that night

Safehouse F

"Guess what, Mindy?"

"What Josh," I asked, in no mood to play guessing games; I had just spent two hours on a boat listening to a long story about ravens and murder...

"I just met the girl – the one I knew in New York, just after I got out of hospital."

"Yeah, she's quite hot, too!" Chloe added with a smirk at her boyfriend.

Joshua ignored Chloe and continued.

"We supported each other; she had lost both of her parents to a home invasion when she was about twelve..."

Josh paused as he saw my expression change.

"What?" Chloe asked guardedly, correctly interpreting my expression.

"Interesting... She originally from Miami?"

"Why?" Joshua asked cautiously, his eyes narrowing.

"Dave and I just spoke with a young female vigilante who used much the same story..."

"Not possible...", Joshua stated quickly.

"Why?" Chloe asked.

"I don't know..."

This story is continued in Forsaken, Chapter 255...