

Four days later
Saturday, May 17th, 2014

The following takes place between 8:00 A.M. and 10:00 A.M.

Channel Runne Park

Everything started normally, just like any other weekend.

They got up.

They had breakfast.

Dave headed off to work for a few hours in the gun shop and Mindy took Sophia out for a walk.

All perfectly normal, normal for two secret vigilantes at least

Sophia and Mindy were walking through Channel Runne Park. The weather was good, but cool. Sophia loved being outside and she always enjoyed her walks. All was peaceful, that was until a man a few feet behind Mindy, made a strange noise before collapsing onto the grass. Mindy spun around, instantly on guard, and Sophia started to growl.

You did not need a medical degree to see that the man was dead; what looked very much like the bolt from a crossbow was embedded in the man's skull. Mindy looked around quickly and she pulled Sophia behind a tree. She started to hear screams, and then she called 9-1-1 and reported the dead man. It occurred to her to take some photos with her cell, before leaving the area, very fast.

That event had honestly scared the fucking shit out of Mindy; that could have been her, for fuck's sake, she thought.

Okay, calm down and start thinking.

Was this a contract killing? Was this just a random murder? Was this the start of something bigger?

She put a lot of thought into these questions, on the walk back home.

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As soon as she was home, she started up the Toughbook and sent a text message to Murphy. They had an unwritten agreement to exchange intelligence. He would keep *Fusion* informed of drug dealing activity, for example, and they would pass on anything that was gathered while out and about. For the moment, Mindy advised Murphy of what had just happened in the park.

Ten minutes later, she received a response.

Morning HG!
How the hell, did you know so fast?
I will pass on what I can. M

Dave had taken *Speedy*, so Mindy jumped into the SUV with Sophia, and she drove to the Safehouse. They, meaning Marty, had setup a special, untraceable, and secure email address for Murphy to use.

In that way, they could send pictures and other information that could not be passed by text or voice.

The following takes place between 10:00 A.M. and 12:00 P.M.

The Safehouse

An email appeared in the inbox, while Mindy was servicing her weapons.

It was from Murphy, and provided in depth details of the attack that morning. Apparently, two other people had been shot with crossbow bolts, within the same hour. The man that I had seen, he had been the second to be shot. So far, the three dead people had absolutely nothing in common.

Okay, that reduced the options from three, down to two. Was this just a random murder? Was this the start of something bigger? Unfortunately, she had a nasty feeling it was a part of the latter. Next question: would their armour deflect the bolt from a crossbow? Her combat suit and Chloe's combat suit? Probably not. Dave's combat suit? Possibly - he had heavier armour. Mindy sent a secure email to The Armourer, requesting details for a shield or similar that could deflect a crossbow bolt.

Mindy was familiar with crossbows and had a couple in the armoury; although she had not used them in years. She inspected the bolts; they were about nine inches long and very lethal. The tips varied, depending on how lethal you wanted the bolt to be. Mindy's were barbed, which meant you could not just pull them out, you had either to push them all the way through or dig them out.

Neither being a very nice option.

[Archer Kill Count: 3]

The following takes place between 12:00 P.M. and 2:00 P.M.

The Safehouse

Mindy received a call from Dave, asking where she was.

She explained about what had happened in the park. Dave then ranted on about her not telling him about it earlier and she had to apologise, to get him to calm down; at least he cared. Mindy headed back home with Sophia and joined Dave for lunch. They discussed what had happened and she showed Dave the photos which she had taken at the park. She also explained about what Murphy had sent over via email. They both agreed to talk to Chloe and Marty, so that they would both know about the attacks. For the moment, they decided to call the perpetrator, 'The Archer'. It was the best that they could come up with, at least for the moment.

Dave and Mindy had not actually seen Chloe, since they had come back from their brief holiday. She appeared to be avoiding them, which was probably because of the run in with Chris, two weeks previously. Kyle had come over on the Thursday evening for his training and he was coming along very well. With a few more months of training, the kid would be quite skilled. Dave and Mindy discussed how they might defeat an attacker, such as The Archer. The Archer could strike anywhere, without warning, as he had already demonstrated only a few hours previously. Already, the city was starting to get concerned about the new problem.

Dave also brought up another point: Could The Archer be part of another mad plan, from Chris D'Amico?

The idiot must have worked out, by now, that his ninja plan was not quite going according to plan.

The following takes place between 2:00 P.M. and 4:00 P.M.

West Ridge

After lunch, they started training.

Mindy was still worried, but she decided to focus on the here and now. Dave did not seem too put out by the change of events, but Mindy could tell that he was concerned.

Marty came back from looking at apartment blocks and they updated him on what was going on. Understandably, Marty was not very happy, not at all. He suggested barricading themselves into the Safehouse, at least until The Archer was caught.

It was an interesting idea, though very sensible, but not overly practical.

3:15 P.M.

They received another text from Murphy.

Two more people were dead with crossbow bolt wounds! This time it was in Edgebrook Woods, which were a few miles away from the morning's attack. I sent a text back to Murphy, telling him that Fusion were on it!

Marty headed off to the Safehouse, saying he wanted to check on security! Now with The Archer around, Marcus' quip about buying an armoured personnel carrier, may not have been so far-fetched; at least a crossbow bolt wouldn't pierce that!

[Archer Kill Count: 5]

The following takes place between 4:00 P.M. and 6:00 P.M.

The Safehouse

The two of them had had an early dinner and then headed down to the Safehouse while Sophia stayed at home.

One of the good things about the Safehouse was that they could drive straight inside and park. Marty and Chloe were already there. Marty was in the briefing room and Chloe was coming down the stairs from the bedroom, she had her combat suit on, except for the mask and comms. Something about her expression did not seem right, but I put it to one side for the moment. Mindy and Dave got changed into their combat suits, but left off their masks and comms. Mindy went off to get her weapons and Dave went into the briefing room, where he found Chloe sitting on the couch, staring at the floor. I went over and sat down on the couch next to her.

"What's up Shadow?" Dave asked.

"I'm not sure I want to go out tonight," Chloe admitted, not looking at Dave.

"I see. Get your mask on!" he ordered, getting up.

"Why?" Chloe asked, confused.

"Mask . . . now!" Dave ordered again, and he walked out of the briefing room.

Marty was giving his friend a strange look, but that was normal for Marty.

4:50 P.M.

Dave pulled on his mask and comms while Chloe was doing the same.

Mindy and Marty were over by the armoury and looking a little confused. Dave went over, and he whispered into Mindy's ear, telling her what Chloe had said and Mindy nodded, looking a little unhappy.

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Shadow and Kick-Ass squared off against each other.

"I don't wanna do this," Shadow said, turning away and walking towards Mindy.

"Shadow, face me!" Kick-Ass snarled.

Shadow stopped, but she did not turn.

"Are you scared, little girl?" Kick-Ass snarled. "Are you scared?"

Kick-Ass watched as Shadow braced up and he saw her hands flex within her gauntlets. Mindy threw Shadow's Jō onto the mat at her feet. Kick-Ass smiled; Mindy had the right idea.

"Answer me, Shadow!" Kick-Ass ordered. "You lost your touch? Maybe Curtis could replace you."

Kick-Ass almost missed Shadow's legs bracing up and her ankles flexing, she was about to act.

Good.

Kick-Ass drew his batons.

5:02 P.M.

Suddenly, Shadow dived forward, seized her Jō and spun around, driving the Jō hard towards Kick-Ass' head.

Kick-Ass had made her mad. He smiled, blocked the Jō easily, and forced it down. He could see the usual fire, burning in Shadow's eyes. That fire, was what was missing earlier, when he had first seen her that evening. Shadow kept pushing forward, hard. She was really mad. It kind of reminded Kick-Ass of Mindy, when she was trying to make a point; like the previous year, when he had first asked to be trained. They fought off each attack, but Shadow was learning each time and adjusting her attacks accordingly, each time Kick-Ass fought her off. Good girl! Kick-Ass eventually managed to catch her with a baton, behind her left thigh, then he flipped her backwards, onto her back.

"You fucking green asshole!" Shadow bellowed, immediately jumping back to her feet.

Kick-Ass could not help smiling. He looked over towards Mindy and she was grinning, too. Shadow dived forward; her Jō was blurring in the air as she drove her attacks forward. Kick-Ass lost one baton and he was forced to deflect blows with his other baton and his armoured gauntlet. He decided that it was time for Shadow to come down to earth, with a bump. He fought off her next attack, jumping up, as she swung her Jō horizontally to try and trip him up. Kick-Ass drove forward, and he caught the Jō, ripping it from her grip and he threw it towards Mindy, who caught it. Shadow was not to be stopped, she swept up Kick-Ass' dropped baton and attacked again, before I stepped toward her and grabbed her arms, pinning them to her sides. Kick-Ass flipped her over and onto the mat face down, holding her right arm vertically, behind her.

Shadow screamed in pain and Kick-Ass immediately let her go, before he stepped back.

5:15 P.M.

Shadow stood up and she removed her scarf and mask.

She was grinning enormously, and that fire was still in her eyes.

"Shadow has her fire back," Dave commented as he removed his mask.

"You okay, Chloe?" Mindy asked, sounding a little concerned.

"If that fucking green asshole wants to put me down, he's gonna have to fight first," Chloe exclaimed.

"Good on you, Shadow!" Marty said, laughing.

Chloe came up to Dave and she actually gave him a hug.

"Thanks, Dave; I needed that. Killing those two men had me thinking; I was starting to judge and second guess myself," Chloe explained.

5:55 P.M.

"Dave, you got a minute?" Chloe asked, looking a little nervous.

"What is it?" he asked. "You look nervous."

"I am. A couple of weeks ago, in the warehouse . . . that man we shot at . . . Chris . . . I noticed Mindy's reaction to him and yours," Chloe said, before trailing off.

"Come on!" Dave ordered, taking Chloe over to a far corner of the mat and sitting down.

The following takes place between 6:00 P.M. and 8:00 P.M.

The Safehouse

"Chris. . . Where do I start?"

Dave hesitated.

"Chris D'Amico exists, as he is today, because of me. I became Kick-Ass and met Hit Girl, who was waging a war of vengeance, against Chris's Dad, Frank D'Amico. Chris became Red Mist and he tricked his way into my trust. Thanks to me, Mindy was shot three times and blasted out of a window, before dropping over a dozen feet. Mindy's Dad, Big Daddy and I, were seized. Search YouTube and you'll find the video of D'Amico's men torturing Big Daddy and Kick-Ass. Mindy came and rescued us, but not before my mistake had caused the death of Mindy's Dad," he explained.

"What the fuck have I told you, cunt?" Mindy growled, coming over and sitting down. "It was *not*, I repeat, *not* your fault, Ass-Kick! Dave was taken in by Red Mist and Dave was very mild mannered, back then; an easy target. I almost blew Dave away, too, later that same night. But I stopped, letting go of the trigger just before it broke. Best decision of my life."

"I thought that the psycho bitch was gonna kill me, too. She was mad, in more ways than one. She asked, in her own way of course, for help. For some reason, I decided to help and I'm glad that I did. Mindy assaulted the D'Amico penthouse, fucked it all up and she had to be rescued by yours truly," Dave said, smirking at Mindy.

"Fucker! It all went really well; four dead in the lobby, fifteen in the penthouse and then I ran out of weapons and ammunition. What a fucking stupid bitch. I was stuck cowering in the fucking kitchen. Killed a guy with a couple

of kitchen knives, then I hid in a kitchen cupboard. Then this big bastard brought in a fucking bazooka, just as Kick-Ass made his entrance and what a fucking entrance. I'd given him my Daddy's jet pack which had a pair of Gatling guns installed," Mindy explained.

"Gatling guns; that must have been cool!" Chloe exclaimed.

"It was," Dave confirmed.

"Kick-Ass killed the three men, who had the bazooka, and he gave me the opportunity to fight Frank D'Amico, while Kick-Ass fought Chris D'Amico. Unfortunately, I was a little bit exhausted by then and the fight did not go well. Frank D'Amico managed to throw me down onto his desk, nearly paralyzing me. I couldn't move, then Frank D'Amico started punching me, in the face, and I kept losing consciousness. Then my knight in a green wetsuit, arrived with a fucking bazooka under his arm. He blew Frank D'Amico out the fucking window; I was so fucking relieved," Mindy explained, giving Dave a hug and a kiss.

"I had to literally scoop Hit Girl off of the desk and we made our escape, in the jet pack. I just wish that I had killed Chris back then, but if I had delayed, then Mindy would be dead. Crap choices we have to make in life," I said, feeling sad.

"Anyway, Chris resurfaced just last year, as The Motherfucker and after he killed my Dad and Mindy was forced to save my life, as Mindy Macready, killing several men, in public, we had a huge fight in his lair. I dropped him into a big tank that had a shark in it. It ate Chris, or so we thought. Mindy then left New York," Dave continued.

"We found out that Chris D'Amico was still alive, a few months back. Two weeks ago, was the first time we've spoken to him, since the fight last year. He hates Dave's guts, as Dave killed his father. But Frank D'Amico killed my Daddy and Chris D'Amico killed Dave's Dad. There are just two D'Amicos left, Chris and his Uncle Ralph. They must both die and fucking soon," Mindy said, vehemently.

Nobody said anything for a few minutes.

"Thank you, both of you, for letting me know about him. I know how much it must have hurt, dredging up all that shit," Chloe said.

"You needed to know Chloe. I'm glad we could tell you, finally; better late than never," Mindy replied.

"Okay. Now that's over, whose bike are you riding tonight?" Dave asked, wanting to change the subject.

"I'm riding 'KICK'," Chloe replied, instantly.

That proclamation generated a nasty glare from Mindy.

"Traitorous bitch," Mindy said, pulling on her mask and comms.

Chloe just returned a smug look, at Mindy's back.

Marty laughed, returning to the briefing room.

The following takes place between 8:00 P.M. and 10:00 P.M.

The Safehouse

Hit Girl climbed onto the Ducati, feeling a little annoyed with Shadow.

It had not exactly been a big surprise that the youngster had wanted to ride with Kick-Ass - but Hit Girl felt annoyed nonetheless. Kick-Ass had given Chloe specific instructions for getting on the Fat Boy, as doing it wrong could overbalance the motorcycle and that beast was heavy. Hit Girl watched as Shadow placed her left boot, on the left foot peg and swung her long right leg over the motorcycle and wrapped her arms around Kick-Ass. Kick-Ass had braced the motorcycle, using his feet, with the brakes on, while Shadow had climbed on behind him. Hit Girl started up her bike and reversed out of the parking bay. Kick-Ass did the same.

"Battle Guy, *Fusion* is rolling!" Kick-Ass reported over the comms and Battle Guy pressed the button to activate the exit sequence.

The lights went out and the door opened, followed by the compound gate. They both accelerated away heading west, up West 79th Street.

8:12 P.M.

Their first stop was checking up on their tame Police, neither of whom had met Shadow.

Battle Guy kept a GPS fix on Murphy's and Fellowes' cells, at all times. Currently, the two Sergeants were stopped, near a cross-section: South Pulaski Road and West 71st Street.

8:35 P.M.

As the three vigilantes approached the cross-section, they saw a Ford Explorer Police Interceptor '8760', parked off to the west of the cross-section, on an empty car park. They pulled up on either side, Kick-Ass to the left, and they pounded, gently, on the windows.

"Evening, officers," Kick-Ass snarled, good-naturedly.

"Hey, *Fusion*! Not seen you in a while. Who's this?" Murphy asked looking back, towards Shadow.

"This, is Shadow," Shadow growled in reply.

"Hello, Shadow. I'm Murphy and that's Fellowes," Murphy said, indicating his partner.

"Hello," Shadow growled.

"Shadow doesn't come out much," Kick-Ass stated, simply.

"We just thought we'd check and see how you two were doing," Hit Girl growled, from the other side of the car.

"Thanks, Hit Girl," Fellowes replied, dubiously. "It's good to be loved."

"Well, we won't keep you two from your doughnuts," Kick-Ass stated, as he started the Fat Boy and Hit Girl started her Ducati.

9:02 P.M.

Shadow was enjoying herself that night.

She knew she had had a rocky start earlier and that she had needed Kick-Ass to explain that to her and kick her ass. She was feeling scared, in case she had to kill again. But, if she wanted to be like Hit Girl, she was going to have to put up with the bad shit, to get the good shit; the good shit being saving innocent lives. She was also enjoying riding with Kick-Ass. Hit Girl would kill her for saying it, but the Fat Boy was way cooler than the Panigale.

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Suddenly, Kick-Ass slammed on the brakes, with Hit Girl stopping just ahead. He turned to look down an alley, across the street. Shadow followed his gaze and she saw five men surrounding a woman. Kick-Ass kicked down the Fat Boy's stand and she climbed off onto the sidewalk, followed by Kick-Ass.

"Hit Girl, look after the motorcycles," Kick-Ass ordered.

"What?" Hit Girl replied, sounding annoyed. "I'm not the fucking valet!"

"Please?" Kick-Ass asked.

"Okay, asshole!"

"Shadow, they're all yours," Kick-Ass proclaimed.

"What?" Shadow said, turning to look up at Kick-Ass in surprise.

"For fucks sake," Kick-Ass snarled, impatiently. "Go! I'll be there if you fuck up."

Shadow had a feeling that he was trying to make another point. She could handle it, she thought, as an idea jumped into her mind. She advanced across the street and entered the alley.

9:08 P.M.

"Welcome to hell!" Shadow growled.

All five men turned to face the voice. None of them looked particularly put out by Shadow's presence.

"Need our help, little girl?" one man asked.

"This is your last chance to walk away," Shadow growled, trying not to sound nervous.

The men looked around, at each other, laughing. One man stepped forward.

"Are you kidding? It's five against one," The leader said, smirking.

"It's three against one," Shadow replied, correcting him.

"How do ya figure that, bitch?" The leader sneered, looking around at his pals.

"Once I take out the leader; which is you, I'll have to contend with one or two enthusiastic wing men," she growled back. "Last two guys always run,"

"You err, done this before, kid?" the leader asked, a little concern in his tone.

Shadow nodded, and the leader moved forwards.

"Remember . . . you wanted this," she growled.

The leader ran forward, drawing a large knife, which Shadow easily battered away with her Jō and followed through with a fist to his jaw. The man staggered back before coming at Shadow again, only Shadow caught him in the groin with the end of the Jō. The man sagged to the ground before she felled him with a crack to the head. Shadow looked around at the other men . . . two moved slowly away.

"Okay, now we know who's who," she growled confidently. "Let's get this done."

Shadow flew forward and brought the Jō down, smashing the lower arm of the next man, before ramming her armoured elbow into his face before she followed up

with a back kick to the stomach. Another man landed a punch in her side, but she was able to catch him with a boot to the side of his knee which caused the man to scream, before a fist to the jaw dropped him. Shadow started towards the last two men, who hesitated, before they turned and ran. They ran directly towards Kick-Ass, who felled each of them with a fist to the jaw.

The woman they were hassling had gone, so Shadow re-joined Kick-Ass.

9:12 P.M.

"'Jack Reacher', really?" Kick-Ass asked, dubiously.

"First thing that came into my head," Shadow offered, weakly.

"Okay, let's get back before the valet starts getting too ratty," Kick-Ass laughed.

They returned to the Fat Boy and found a slightly ratty Hit Girl.

"Enjoyed yourselves? 'Jack Reacher', I ask you!" Hit Girl complained.

"Let's go Shadow," Kick-Ass said, mounting and starting the Fat Boy.

Shadow slung her Jō and climbed on behind Kick-Ass. They roared away, leaving a disgruntled Hit Girl to follow in their wake.

The following takes place between 10:00 P.M. and Midnight

The next hour or so of the patrol was uneventful, until they received another text from Murphy.

Two more were dead. Worse, though, one was a kid. Seven kills, all on his first day; The Archer was trying to make a point. That could not be allowed to continue. They were all a bit subdued and they were not chatting or winding each other up as they usually did. Battle Guy had received more emails from Murphy which included details about all seven murders.

Apparently, the guy was working to the sniper's creed: 'one shot, one kill'.

10:55 P.M.

They decided to call it a night and headed back to the Safehouse. The Archer was playing on their minds and they were not concentrating on the patrol.

The thought that a crossbow bolt could fly out of the darkness, at any time was, quite frankly, frightening.

[Archer Kill Count: 7]

Updated: January 2018