

Thursday, April 21st 2016

That morning

Calais, France

We left the ferry and picked up the A26 Autoroute where we headed southeast.

Our little three-car convoy maintained a fairly constant 120kph (about 75mph). A little under an hour into the trip, when we were northeast of Arras, we turned south and picked up the A1 before we stopped for a short break – Anne-Marie needed the bathroom while Joshua and Stephanie were hungry; the girl because she had chucked up all her breakfast a couple of hours previously and Joshua because he was *always* hungry!

An hour and a half later, we joined the Paris ring road, to the east of the French capital. We wrapped around the north of the city before turning east towards our temporary home.

I was *not* overly happy with the location of our new accommodations though!

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We had a large house on Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, which was fine – there was plenty of space and it was more than secure. The downside was the fact that we were a literal stone's throw away from the *three* places that I most wanted to be miles away from...

Firstly, we had the British Embassy, Paris, which was neutral at best, but it was still risky being so close, due to the extra armed attention it attracted. The British Ambassador's residence was next door, too.

Secondly, we had the Élysée Palace – the official residence of the President of the French Republic. Thankfully, he was not in residence and was not expected back for a while. At least not before we had left his city anyway.

Thirdly – and the worst in my view, we had as another neighbour, just around the corner, the Embassy of the United States, Paris – the enemy! Well – the US was *not* the enemy, but the CIA would be there and I did not want them to know that we were there, only a few hundred yards away, for obvious reasons.

We had no choice, really, I just had to hope that the Safehouse was safe and trust the British who had provided the Safehouse. We had also obtained a small Warehouse to use for storing our equipment, vehicles and for any 'messy' activities. It had an awesome address; it was located on Avenue du Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny in the 12^{ème} district of Paris, about three-hundred-yards north of the River Seine, on the east side of the city.

On the plus side, Abby was bitching about modern technology, which she never did...

"Yes, Mom . . . yes, Mom . . . *yes, Mom.*"

Abby was not amused by the smirks on our faces as we listened in on the conversation.

"Yes, they do sell Tampons in Europe . . . I brought plenty with me . . . I'll be fine, Mom . . . no, I can't tell you where I am . . . OPSEC . . . Operations Security, Mom!"

Chloe was way beyond just giggling and Abby's best friend was now in full blown laughter.

“Okay, Mom . . . *yes, Mom* . . . love you, Mom . . . bye.”

Abby visibly breathed out in relief as she dropped the call.

“Fuck mobile phones... Things were so much easier when she knew nothing about what I did!”

“C’est la vie!” Joshua commented and he received a slap on his arm from an embarrassed Abby.

“You can stop laughing too, fucker!” Abby said to the nearly incoherent Chloe who was wiping tears of laughter from her eyes.

That afternoon

Paris, France

The Warehouse

We began to prepare our equipment.

We had everything with us which we might require for our nocturnal activities. Most of it – at least the dangerous and illegal stuff – had been hidden away within the vehicles. After about an hour, there was a beep from a car horn and I sent Megan to open the main door. Once the door was open, six cars drove in, two towing a trailer with another car strapped in place.

“Awesome!” Megan exclaimed as she closed the main door.

Dave, Jason, Cameron, Eric, Mathilda and Nicky climbed out of the cars. I ran to give Jason and Nicky a hug; it was really great to see them.

“I see you got the cars,” I commented unnecessarily.

“Easy – all clean and completely untraceable,” Jason advised.

“Nice choices!” Stephanie added as she ran her eyes over each vehicle in turn.

“I have to agree with her, Jason – well done!” I agreed.

“So – what next, Mindy?”

“I need to prepare for tonight’s operation – I need to meet somebody...”

“Mysterious...” Josh quipped.

That evening

Hailee was somewhere in the City – I knew it!

The DGSi had not come back with any useful information, so we were on our own, but I had an idea to tap some local resources. Ever since Kick-Ass had gotten his ass kicked on You Tube, vigilantes began appearing on the streets, around the USA and then world. Most were wannabes who gave up within a week, but some were serious about what they did. Hit Girl and Big Daddy did not count as we were the *very* first, way, way before Kick-Ass first spotted a green and yellow wetsuit online.

However, there were a select few vigilantes in the world that were both serious about what they did and were properly quipped for what they did. As of 2016, those real vigilantes existed in Chicago,

New York City, Gotham and Star City. As for Europe, there was a vigilante organisation growing in Scotland, while on the main continent, there was one known real vigilante.

She was in Paris...

High above the Avenue des Champs-Élysées

“Bonne soirée, Hit Girl!”

I turned slowly to see a slim figure crouched on the rooftop, not twenty feet away. I smiled on recognising one of the very few other, serious, vigilantes that operated in the world. She was my target for the night.

“Bonne soirée, La Coccinelle!”

“Que faites-vous à Paris?”

“Nous recherchons pour notre ami – elle a été prise et nous l'avons suivi à votre belle ville, La Coccinelle.”

“Est le fameux Hit Girl demandait mon aide?”

“Oui.”

“For those who *do not* speak French,” Battle Guy chuckled via satellite from Safehouse F. “Hit Girl just met Paris’ very own vigilante – La Coccinelle. Hit Girl then explained that we are looking for our friend, who has been taken. I *think* we might be getting a French connection.”

“I understood just fine, thanks!” Psyche commented dryly.

“Snobby cow!” Jackal chuckled.

“Va te faire foutre toi, Jackal!” Psyche replied sharply.

“Foul-mouthed, little bitch!” Battle Guy commented. “Hit Girl you have a rival for the dirtiest mouth!”

I ignored the comedians and looked over at our potential new ally.

She crouched on the rooftop and gazed back at me. She was slim and she was clad from her neck to the tips of her fingers and toes in a formfitting bodysuit with thin armoured panels that blended in well with the red and black pattern of her combat suit. On her right hip she carried a SIG Sauer P320 subcompact pistol and on her left lower leg was a knife. Around her waist were several items which seemed to include comms and certain other devices.

Her identity was protected by a blue wig with pig-tails and a domino mask, which matched her suit and surrounded her eyes.

“Eh bien, je peux répondre à votre équipe?”

“You wanna meet the team?” I replied. “Let’s go...”

After twenty minutes of quite energetic roof jumping, we found ourselves on the roof of a large warehouse.

There *Fusion* awaited us.

“La Coccinelle, please meet *Fusion*: Jackal, Shadow, Wildcat, Psyche and Kick-Ass!” I said proudly.

“Salut! Il est bon de vous rencontrer – j’aime votre travail.” La Coccinelle replied. “Sorry – for those who don’t speak French: It is good to meet you and I like your work.”

“You speak very good English,” I commented.

“And you speak very good French, Hit Girl.”

“Thank you.”

“Wow – Jackal, you are very handsome,” La Coccinelle commented as she walked around the *Fusion* members.

“Ooh, that French accent is adorable and I *love* the way you pronounce *Jackal!*” Jackal commented coyly as Shadow began to growl.

“Shadow!” I ordered with a chuckle. “Control yourself and stop that growling.”

“Ah, the beautiful Shadow, hello – you are the main reason that I go out at night; I think you are very beautiful,” La Coccinelle offered.

Shadow stopped her growling and then she seemed to go all shy!

“The mighty Kick-Ass – very awesome... Wildcat and Psyche – cute little girls!”

Both ‘little girls’ bristled and growled at that comment.

“Sorry,” La Coccinelle said quickly. “I meant nothing by that – you have both earned your positions as vigilantes and I respect you both for that.”

“Thank you,” Wildcat replied.

“Merci beaucoup,” Psyche added.

“Show off!” Shadow chuckled.

“Chienne...” Psyche muttered, just loud enough for all to hear.

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Then it was time for business.

“I would like to help you, *Fusion* – but in return...” La Coccinelle mused.

“What do you need?” Kick-Ass offered.

La Coccinelle then launched into a fast-paced explanation of what help she needed. Basically, there were some ‘hoods’, as she called them, who had been causing trouble in the south-east of Paris. Up until now, she had struggled to contain them on her own. They could fight and they used modern weapons and body armour.

Once her explanation was complete, I looked over at Kick-Ass – he nodded.

There was a lot of preparation required, but we were ready within an hour.

Abby and Eric had arranged a radio link between La Coccinelle and *Fusion*. We would all speak English for the night, too. At around nine, that night, we congregated in Parc Montsouris, in the 14th District of Paris, to the southeast of the city.

La Coccinelle led us towards the centre of the park and that was where we found the night's targets.

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“Le bug est de retour...”

The man was barely in his twenties and I was just itching to smack him – he just had that expression.

“Oh, c'est parfait; êtes-vous vraiment stupide – il est l'un d'entre vous... Vous êtes de retour pour obtenir votre botter le cul à nouveau!” (*‘Oh, this is perfect; are you really that stupid – there is one of you... You're back to get your ass kicked again!’*)

“No – that's why I brought my friends...”

With that pronouncement, we all stepped forwards from the darkness. There were twelve of us in total and that included La Coccinelle. The men numbered about a dozen, but I noticed one of them on his phone and I suspected that he would be calling for reinforcements. I could also hear murmurings from the assembled ‘hoods’ and it was obvious that they had ideas on who we all might be.

Pistols appeared in most of the hands before us and we mirrored the actions.

La Coccinelle opened the fighting as she reached behind her back and she pulled some items from a pouch at the back of her utility belt.

She flung the three ninja stars downrange and three men dropped to the ground, almost without any sound.

“Très bon!” I commented and I received a smile in return as the bullets began to fly.

I ducked as a man came at me, his pistol raised. I knocked the pistol to one side and kicked him hard in the chest, which put him down and I followed through with a kick to his head. There was no time to pause as the fight developed into a major action. I turned to assist my husband as he dove headlong into the French attackers.

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I pulled my pistol and put a bullet into a man's chest, but he got back up again; I put the next bullet into his face; that wasn't armoured... Kick-Ass was fighting a pair of large men, not usually a problem for the massive Kick-Ass, but I decided to assist him anyway; we did seem to be short on targets. Psyche appeared and she drove a Sai into the kidney of one man and he went down screaming. She then vanished off for another target.

It was minutes later that I turned to see no more French men standing . . . then I heard the sound of cars as they skidded to a halt on the nearby road. I ran towards them, with Psyche, Wildcat and Drift, hot on my heels. Men and women jumped out of the vehicles. One idiot threw what looked suspiciously like a hand grenade, but quick as a flash, Psyche scooped it up as it landed and she threw it straight back; the grenade entered through an open window on a Renault before it exploded.

The Renault bulged for a moment before it exploded into flames – the screams of at least two people could be heard within the flames.

“Wahoo – French fries!” Psyche yelled.

I looked at her quizzically.

“Get it? Those people in that Renault are French and they’re frying...”

“Oh, you are really . . . freaking strange – and that’s something coming from *me!*” I growled at my daughter.

Psyche just shrugged and she ran off into the melee.

To be brutally honest, I was enjoying myself.

The French were hardened fighters and they used firearms, knives and batons with skill. My armour was not as heavy as I was used to, but my reduced nerve endings made a big difference. I brought a baton down hard against the nearest skull and a cloud of blood exploded out.

“Cool!” Wildcat called out as she dodged away from the crimson cloud and then leapt over the body as it fell to the ground.

I ran after the younger vigilante and punched out at an angry French bitch as she swung a baton at Wildcat’s head. I received a burst of French abuse as her node exploded, but she was cut off in mid-insult as Shadow rammed her bō-staff through her chest.

“She was getting on my nerves!” Shadow quipped as she dived back into the melee.

Part of me said that I was invincible – probably that which was fuelled by pure adrenalin.

The rest of me fought that stupid insinuation and kept my feet firmly on the ground. I was fighting some French tart who seemed to think that just because I was of limited stature that I was an easy mark – well she would pay for that!

I could move faster than she could and I kept well away from the very sharp looking machete that was grasped in one of her slimy mits. I got in a couple of very good punches before she managed to kick me to the ground – damn my thigh was on fire! No matter; I was Psyche and I could fight through anything . . . well, almost.

The pain spurred me on and I flew for the bitch. I used my Sais to deflect her machete strikes – which was hard as the woman was stronger than I was. I dodged inside her strikes and then plunged one Sai into her left breast and the other into her right kidney. She screamed – maybe it was painful...

I seized the machete that she had dropped and thrust it vertically into her stomach and up into her chest cavity where the blade shredded her lungs.

There was a lot going on below us, which made identifying targets difficult.

We made a good team, Wraith and I. Nicky, AKA Wraith, was my spotter; while I sent death at 825 metres-per-second from my Accuracy International AX50 .50-calibre sniper rifle. It was like shooting melons at a country fair – only much more satisfying!

“Nice one, Leon!” Wraith commented as the most recent head exploded as the full-metal-jacket bullet pierced the skull. “Three degrees right; six down...”

“On target...”

I squeezed the trigger and another French doofus dropped dead.

“Target – forty degrees left; eight up – car...”

The first round pierced the front of the car; another close behind and then another – the three bullets destroyed the engine block and the car came to a very rapid and very smoky halt as its occupants quickly bailed out. I saw Shadow and Crimson raise their pistols and then they both proceeded to drop each of them until five more bodies joined the recently deceased collection of corpses in the park.

“Tallyho!” Wraith called out. “Police inbound...”

“Time to wrap things up, guys!” Hit Girl responded.

“Yes – we must avoid the Police,” La Coccinelle agreed as she drove the heel of her boot into some cunts neck.

“Any cunts left?” A rabid looking Psyche demanded as she skidded to a halt and seemingly glared in all directions at once.

“All gone...” I told her.

Psyche bounded forward and kicked the head of a man who was attempting to move.

“Got the fucker!”

La Coccinelle grimaced . . . I just shrugged.

An hour later

The Safehouse

“You still alive?”

“That was hell on earth!”

“You volunteered...” I pointed out.

"I figured it would be easy . . . considering everything else I've done. Taking down Treadstone was a piece of piss compared to those two..."

Nicky gave Jason a condescending look.

"What?" He demanded.

"Wimp!" Nicky growled.

"Where are my little angels?"

"Right here, Mommy..."

"Don't let the sweet looks and smiles fool you..." Jason warned. "They are *pure evil!*"

I was inclined to believe him, too.

That night

There was shouting in the kids' bedroom.

I wondered upstairs and the shouting gradually became louder as I came closer to the bedroom. The loudest voice, not surprisingly, was that of Anne-Marie . . . close behind which was Megan's voice. The argument was getting quite heated too. I paused a few feet away from the partly open door and I listened.

"You need to tell, Mom..." Anne-Marie insisted.

"It's nothing, so just quit your bitching!" Stephanie retorted angrily.

"I've warned you before, Steph; no good can come from this," Megan advised calmly.

"No – she'll take me off operations and that's not fucking happening..."

"Grow the fuck up!" Megan retorted, her anger obviously building.

"You don't talk to me like that, Megan..."

There was the unmistakable sound of skin against skin and I grinned as Megan spoke again.

"Somebody has to... Act like a bitch; get slapped like a bitch!"

"Yeah!" Anne-Marie laughed. "That's what I'm talkin' about..."

"How dare you!" Stephanie growled and I recognised the tone – it was time to intervene.

Stephanie seethed with anger and I figured that I had gone too far.

I had just braced myself for an attack when the door opened and Mindy strode in. She made directly for her elder daughter and she grabbed Stephanie by the upper arm.

"What's going on . . . Megan?"

"Little bitch received some nasty bruises on her left thigh, but she tried to hide them, only bright eyes over there saw the bruises..."

Mindy studied her daughter's thigh and then gave her a very severe look. Stephanie actually flinched slightly at the expression.

"On a scale of one to ten, how painful is it?" Mindy asked.

"Three," Stephanie replied.

"For her, that means at least a seven!" Anne-Marie chipped in.

"You two – out!"

Both girls grumbled as they shuffled out the door.

"Close the door..."

Once the door was closed, I turned to Stephanie.

"I was scared that you would take me off operations and I would miss out on taking down *Urban Predator*..."

"I would only side-line you if necessary, Steph, but I would *not* keep you from the endgame... I know what all this means to you . . . and what it means to Saoirse. Your thigh is bruised to fuck – get downstairs and see Cassie..."

I saw the hesitation and I recognised the refusal to admit to failure that I knew from my own reflection over the years. It was a common sight amongst all members of *Fusion*, especially on a mission – nobody backed down; even when they were hurting...

"Go..."