

The following morning
Saturday, June 11, 2016

Position: 41.96° N 86.7941° W

Course: 025°, Speed: 10 knots

Hurricane

“Do *you* think I should get one?” Morgan mused.

“What?” Saoirse replied.

“A tattoo, like your fox.”

“It’s painful,” Saoirse warned her big sister.

“If you can take it, then so can I.”

“What’ll your Aunt say?”

“I’m old enough to make my own decisions about my own body. I need a change. The old Morgan Hella went with the black hair. I want to reinvent myself – I’ve begun that; only I want more.”

“Fair enough – but I am *not* going behind your Aunt’s back.”

Sea Hunter

The morning was hot, just like the previous one.

The past year and a half had been a learning experience – to put it mildly! We had gone from having lost almost everything to cruising around Lake Michigan on a luxury yacht. I had been introduced to a fabulous young woman who was instrumental in giving myself and my daughter a new start in life. Months later, I had discovered that Mindy Macready was not your average young woman. I discovered that my boss was in fact, the notorious vigilante known as Hit Girl.

My daughter had taken to Mindy in no time and she could care less about her hero being a murderous vigilante. Megan worshipped the very ground that Hit Girl walked upon. Hit Girl was invincible as far as Megan was concerned. Somehow, the bullet wounds that Mindy had received never seemed to count! Our entry into the world of the Chicago Vigilante had been amazing and we had met some really wonderful people.

On the negative side, my daughter was involved with a boy – at ten-years-old! My daughter had also been wounded, more than once, so the boy issue was relatively minor in comparison. On the positive side, I had found a husband. Marcus Williams was a ruggedly handsome man who carried handcuffs and a pistol for his day job. The handcuffs also came in handy for the nighttime shift... *That* thought brought me back to Megan and that boy.

I had nothing against Curtis – he was a well-behaved and well-mannered child. I had no problem with him spending time with my daughter – they had hit it off right from the get go. Ever since their trip to Gotham, they had become closer and by closer, I meant that the boy had both seen my daughter naked *and* he had explored my daughter’s naked body. Just as she had his, I believed.

So, what did I think about having my boss as my step-daughter? No problem, Mindy was a fabulous young woman and I loved her as a daughter. I was often concerned about what my two daughters

got up to at night but I knew that I could trust Mindy – although trusting Megan was a stretch. She had always been a headstrong girl and always a struggle to control once she got some idea in her head. Somehow, Megan had gone from being a normal, but fiery, little girl to a nearly twelve-year-old vigilante that adult hardened criminals would run from for fear of being impaled on her super-sharp claws.

Megan loved to be Wildcat just as Mindy loved to be Hit Girl. Marcus and I had spoken at length about our wayward daughters. We both supported them one-hundred percent and I knew that Marcus loved Mindy more than anything else on the planet and I was happy with that. Marcus also loved Megan too. Now, I had another child – he was called Damon and he was a handful! Megan could kill a man with about as much compunction as any other person might swat a fly. But, you ask her to change a diaper and she runs a mile!

Mindy was not a lot better and it didn't help that Marcus would remind his eldest daughter that he had changed *her* diapers, some years before. As I lay on the foredeck of our yacht, my young son snoozing beneath a sunshade, I was the happiest woman on the planet. Apparently, so was my daughter! Megan was prancing about in a bikini so small that she might as well have been naked – not that Curtis was complaining.

Not one bit.

It hurt, seeing my daughter as she lay in the sun.

Her body still showed the signs of her beating. She still awoke at night, screaming. Hailee was now a very different eighteen-year-old girl to that which had left for Europe a few short weeks previously. I only knew a little of what had happened to her in France. Mindy had given me an idea of what they had seen on discovering my daughter. She had been hanging by her wrists . . . naked. She had been beaten, she had been tortured, she had been electrocuted.

I had seen the resultant cuts and bruises on her return to Chicago. At first, I had been horrified; every inch of her previously perfect body had been targeted and abused. As far as I knew, my daughter had not been raped. Hailee insisted that she was still a virgin – I doubted that (as far as France was concerned, at least), but I let it lie – at least for the moment.

I knew that Hailee was seeing another boy – some kid at the university. Hailee refused to say much and she avoided the subject as much as possible. As far as safe sex was concerned, I had always ensured that condoms were available and with the help of Cathy, I had given her the options for other forms of contraception.

Hailee was a very strong-willed young woman and I had always known that her life as a vigilante would be dangerous but alone, she could have been killed. At least she had friends and a team to rely on which I hoped would keep her alive for many decades to come. There were times that I felt our mother-daughter relationship to be strained but I knew that Hailee loved me as much as I loved her.

“Mom!”

“Yes, sweetie.”

“I know what’s going through your mind,” Hailee said pointedly. “I’m okay – I am not facing this alone, and neither are you.”

“Come on, Vicky,” Marcus ordered. “The young lady is right – neither of you are alone.”

I smiled and conceded defeat – it was a holiday after all!

Early afternoon

Position: 42.1234° N 86.5003° W

Three miles off Benton Harbor

For lunch, the three yachts were rafted together with *Salty Swallow* in the centre and *Hurricane* to starboard. While everybody dug into sandwiches and iced drinks, the conversation got very salty indeed!

“Nothing embarrasses or shocks me anymore,” Chloe commented to Hailee as both munched their sandwiches.

Joshua grinned impishly, from a few yards away.

“Hey, Chloe!” he called.

“Yeah?”

“Fancy a fuck?”

Chloe’s eyes almost popped out onto the deck and her face went pink and then moved steadily towards red before stopping at a pinky-red tinge. Everybody laughed at Chloe’s discomfort.

“Would love one of those blow-jobs like the one last night,” Josh called over and Chloe’s mouth dropped open. “Not now, Chloe – later on!”

Chloe’s mouth clamped tight shut.

“She must get that from you, dear,” Ryan muttered to Cathy who almost choked on her iced tea as her face went crimson.

“That shut Chloe’s big mouth!” Megan laughed not realising the trap she had set for herself.

“Megan?”

“Huh?” Megan replied as she turned to Curtis.

“You fancy a finger tonight?”

“Shit!” Megan growled in embarrassment.

“No, not there – a finger between those lips of yours,” Curtis called back and the laughter increased while Megan fanned her very warm face.

“You wild kitty, you!” Paige laughed as her daughter wished for the deck to open up and swallow her.

“They’re being disgusting again,” Anne-Marie commented.

“Yeah – too salty for my ears, too,” Stephanie growled as she glared at the older kids.

“I love it!” Danny grinned.

As I watched and listened to the crude banter, I realised how lucky I was to have found myself in such good company.

Maybe being kidnapped and held in a basement with the other kids was fate bringing Lauren Edwards into contact with *Fusion*. Maybe I had been destined to get caught taking photos – not that I would have ever hoped to be raped. I owed *Fusion* for my life on more than one occasion. Yes, they were coarse. Yes, they were extreme in the way they protected Chicago. Yes, they were killers. But then so was I.

I had embraced the life and I had killed without conscious thought. I never realised it, that night at the silos, but I just followed my training and I survived the night without injury – a few bruises, but that was part of the game. Only it was not a game, or was it? Was there anything wrong with seeing the killing as a game?

Everybody else seemed to enjoy what they did and they relished killing. I knew that Stephanie and Mindy were different to the others, Saoirse too, but Megan was ruthless when she was Wildcat and operated without quarter. Now I had tasted life as Nightmare, I wanted more, much more. I never wanted it to end. I wanted to learn everything that I could so that I could to emulate Shadow.

Or ultimately, Hit Girl.

Just about everybody was in the water, swimming.

The ‘adults’ were relaxing in the Main Salon with a cool drink in the blissfully cool air-conditioning while the ‘kids’ splashed around in the equally cool water near to the rafted yachts.

“I think they have all matured a lot in the past few months and they carry themselves with an air of well-earned dignity,” Ryan commented to mutual agreement.

“Chloe has grown up a lot. She keeps herself out of trouble and away from behaviour beneath her age and status,” Paige added.

Just then, there was some loud giggling and the doors flew open at the after end of the Main Salon and two girls ran into the space. They rapidly skidded to a halt with a joint, “Eeep!” as they saw the assembled adults. Both girls were already pink in the face but they both went very red and then they ran the length of the Main Salon to the gangway which led below deck.

“I withdraw my recent statement,” Ryan grinned.

“Me too,” Paige added with a laugh.

“Don’t know about you three, but I had no idea who those two naked girls were – I feel very sorry for their parents, though!” Cathy chuckled.

“Fucking, fucked up, super hero club!” Marcus growled good-naturedly.

“Well, that was fucked up!” Megan grinned as she slammed the cabin door.

“That really got the blood flowing!” Chloe giggled as she lay on her bed.

“Just because we’re both naked, Chloe, does not mean that I want to . . . you know . . .”

Megan lapsed into silence and Chloe laughed. Megan felt a little uncomfortable as Chloe sat up without making any effort to cover herself.

“I love you, Megan, but not like that and you are way too young!” Chloe commented with a grin.

Megan looked very relieved.

“You have a wonderful body, Megan, and one which I would have killed for at your age; I bet Curtis loves *that* playground!”

Megan blushed at the compliment and was about to reply when there was a knocking from the overhead skylight. Curtis and Danny were grinning down at the two girls.

“You two gonna make out, or what?” Curtis demanded.

..._...

Megan would never know what possessed her to do it, but she jumped forwards and landed on top of Chloe before giving her a kiss on the lips. The shocked fifteen-year-old was too stunned to resist and she just lay there as Megan kissed her.

“What the fuck was that?” Chloe demanded as Megan pulled her lips away.

“Dunno – thought I’d tease the boys,” Megan responded with a worried expression.

“Spur of the moment – those lips were good; Curtis is very lucky.”

Megan grinned as she grabbed a towel and wrapped it around her body. Chloe did the same and reached up to close the blind over the skylight.

“That was so *hot!*” Curtis yelled.

“Chloe, Megan – that was awesome!” Curtis blurted out as he and Joshua entered the Main Salon.

Both girls were clad in towels as they both returned to the open space and both were distinctly embarrassed by their impromptu naked dash and ‘romp’. The girls ignored their parents’ presence and instead, they enjoyed Curtis’ compliments on their actions. Curtis handed Megan her bikini and smiled hugely.

“Did you enjoy that, Curtis?” Megan asked coyly.

“Hell, yeah!”

“Did you get a hard-on?”

“Oh, yeah!”

Megan stepped forwards and without a thought to the audience, she plunged her right hand inside Curtis’ shorts.

“He’s hard,” Megan confirmed with a smirk. “Very hard!”

“And I thought Chloe was the dirty one!” Joshua commented.

“Chloe, may we?” Megan asked with a nod at the gangway below.

“Of course, our stateroom is all yours,” Chloe replied with a grin.

“Come, Curtis – time to come . . .” Megan announced as she dropped the towel and the bikini to the deck and dragged Curtis below.

“What was that you called your daughter, the other day, Paige?” Chloe enquired. “A brazen hussy?”

“Clearly, it was a major understatement,” Paige commented dryly as the four adults laughed.

“Give me that!” Chloe growled as she seized her own bikini from Joshua’s hand.

That evening

Position: 43.0542° N 86.2998° W

At anchor, two nautical miles due west of Grand Haven

Salty Swallow

“Mindy?”

“What’s up, Lauren?”

“There’s something out there.”

Mindy scooped up a night-scope and peered in the direction of the thirteen-year-old’s pointing finger. There was a boat, a few miles distant. It showed on the radar, as a medium sized vessel. What was odd about it was the lack of lighting and no navigation lights. Mindy grinned.

“Fancy a nighttime reconnaissance?”

Lauren’s face lit up.

..._...

“Seriously!”

Dave’s reaction was not exactly unexpected. Mindy simply gave her husband a kiss and ignored Lauren’s grimaces.

“It’s just reconnaissance, Dave.”

Dave was not convinced but he knew that there was no point pushing the fact so he nodded reluctantly.

“You keep an open channel, understand me?”

“Yes, hunky husband!”

“I feel ill!” Lauren groaned as she headed aft from the control station.

Always Wet

Lauren was *not* amused by the name!

“Stupid question, but are you both armed?” Dave asked.

Mindy pressed a hidden release and a cover popped off beside the helm of the rigid inflatable boat. Four MPX-K submachine gun butts were visible along with six Glock pistol butts. Mindy closed the cover. Lauren pulled up her top to reveal the butt of a small SIG Sauer P320 Compact pistol in the waistband of her shorts.

“Atta girl!” Mindy laughed.

“Lauren, you are really, really, starting to worry me!” Dave complained half-heartedly.

“I had a brilliant role-model,” the thirteen-year-old commented with a glance at Mindy.

“There are times when Mindy is *not* the correct role-model,” Dave commented.

“Humph!” Mindy growled.

“Get going, you pirates!” Dave chuckled. Inside he was very worried but there was not a great deal that he could do about it.

“This is not going to end well,” Joshua commented as he joined Dave at the rail.

“I have faith in Mindy,” Chloe added as she followed the receding RIB through a night scope.

Something was *not* right about the boat that was hove to, about seven nautical miles north-north-west of Grand Haven.

The boat was large, but mainly unlit. The navigation lights were not visible, although there was illumination around the aft of the boat and where there appeared to be activity of some kind. Now, I thought, what sort of people preferred to operate at night and keep to the shadows? The easy answer: Me! Well, other than me, it would be criminals.

As we approached within a mile of the craft, I cut the engine which allowed us to drift in silently towards the vessel.

“Mindy? I have a bad feeling about this.”

“You might just be right, Lauren.”

“You love this, don’t you?”

“Going into the unknown?” Mindy replied. “Yes, I do.”

“I like it too.”

“Let’s see what we can find out without being seen.”

..._...

At a closer range, the vessel appeared to be a tug with a towering mast on top of which was a small structure – presumably a raised bridge. She was not a new vessel, not by any means but she had a very business-like appearance. Size wise, she was twice the length of the *Salty Swallow* and of maybe 300 tonnes displacement. The name was not visible on the vessel’s stern – it appeared to be covered over which was yet another sign of nefarious activity.

On the open afterdeck, there was a lot of activity and as the RIB drifted closer, Mindy and Lauren were able to make out another, smaller, craft beyond the tug. It appeared to be a low profile workboat and cargo was being moved from the rear deck of the tug to the workboat's after deck. The packages were large and cuboid in shape. The contents of the packages were definitely not dense as a single man was able to handle each package with apparent ease.

"Drugs!" Lauren breathed before Mindy could say it.

"Oh, yeah!" Mindy replied.

"You going to go after them?"

"Maybe."

"How about we notify the authorities?"

"Where's the fun in that?" came Mindy's indignant reply.

"No wonder Dave's going grey!" Lauren laughed.

The Tug

Aboard the tug, four members of the eight-person crew were busy unloading the illegal cargo. Of the rest, one, a woman, was on the bridge on watch, a man was on the raised bridge, forty-five feet in the air, and two men were down in the engine room.

The Captain strode backwards and forwards on her bridge, eager to get underway and back to legal endeavours. Though being boarded by law enforcement was a rare occurrence, it was a constant threat. Apprehension by the Coasties with a large quantity of illegal marijuana aboard would spell the end to both her career and that of her crew.

"Captain! I have something – port quarter!"

The terse report over the intercom from the raised bridge was very unwelcome. The Captain swept up a set of binoculars and she ran out onto the port bridge wing where she aimed them towards the stern and over to port. There was definitely, something in the water – but what? The Captain's eyes went wide as she identified it as a RIB. Was it the US Coastguard or the DEA? She leant over the stern rail of the bridge wing.

"Let's get a goddamn move on!" she yelled.

"Last few, Captain!" came the response from the stern deck.

Forty-two minutes later

Salty Swallow

Dave's head snapped around as the single gunshot carried over the still waters of Lake Michigan.

He grabbed up the secure radio, but before he could press the 'transmit' key, he heard Mindy's voice through the speaker.

"Calm down, Dave – they missed!"

..._...

Four minutes later, *Always Wet* pulled up to the stern platform and Lauren threw over the painter.

"Find anything?" Dave inquired as Lauren stepped aboard.

Lauren grinned and the young girl looked over towards Mindy who was expressionless.

"Pretty boring, really," Lauren replied.

"I'll bet!" Dave growled as he scrutinised his wife's expression.

The following morning

Salty Swallow

Marcus was not a happy man when he came aboard for breakfast. Ryan looked grim, also. Both men walked up to Mindy and looked down at her.

"What did you do?" Marcus asked and Mindy scowled.

"Why is it that when something goes to shit, everybody thinks that I've got something to do with it?" Mindy demanded.

"Well, if it wasn't you, then it must have been Lauren," Chloe said casually; a twinkle in her eye.

Lauren raised her hands defensively.

"I'm only partially responsible – maybe five . . . ten percent . . ."

Mindy growled.

"Twenty-five?"

Mindy cleared her throat in an exaggerated fashion.

"Fifty-fifty?"

"I'll go along with that," Mindy conceded.

"The Coastguard found a boat, drifting, not a mile from us, early this morning," Ryan commented.

"Eight people were aboard – three were dead; two shot and one, err, mutilated."

"They needed a little persuasion to spill their guts," Mindy replied and Lauren nodded.

"That last guy sure spilled his guts!" Marcus growled. "Did we mention the hundreds of thousands of dollars of Marijuana?"

"Is that what it was?" Mindy replied with an attempt at innocence.

"Innocence is *not* your strong suit, Mindy!"

"Okay!" Mindy growled. "We caught them shipping drugs – we boarded and questioned them. No harm, no foul."

"Mindy, honey – your idea of 'no harm, no foul' differs greatly from that of every other human being on the planet," Marcus said slowly.

Mindy just shrugged and Lauren smiled sweetly.

“It was a dark and not so stormy night,” Mindy began.

“I saw something strange out on the water, so Mindy and I went to investigate,” Lauren put in.

“Piracy?” Marcus inquired.

“Not exactly,” Mindy replied tartly.

...+...

The tug had departed, heading in a north-westerly direction at six knots leaving the smaller vessel to search for the intruding RIB and its occupants.

“There it is – a few dozen yards off to starboard!” the Mate yelled to the Captain.

“Stop engines,” the Captain ordered his helmsman.

The *Lakes Lynes* lost way quickly once the propeller was stopped and the sixty-five-foot vessel drifted to a halt. A couple of yards away, the RIB rocked in the larger vessel’s bow wave. The Captain looked down into the RIB and he saw two shapes lying on the bottom boards of the RIB as it was swept past and then grappled by two men near to the stern.

“Get aboard and see who they are – see if they are alive. If they are – ensure that they are not!”

..._...

Two men jumped down into the 4.3-metre Avon Seasport Jet 430. The RIB was able to carry eight people comfortably but for the moment, only two were present. Both appeared to be female – one was very young. For some reason, their heads appeared to be covered, but that may have just been a trick of the darkness. As the first man laid a hand on the shoulder of the young girl in the bow, he felt a movement. He pulled the shoulder around and in the light of his flashlight, he saw that the girl wore a mask which covered her entire head. The mask was dark grey and trimmed in teal. His focus was on the mask and he never saw the fist as it struck his left temple.

The man in the stern was in the act of examining the woman near the helm. He missed the assault on his crewmate but he turned as he heard a splash when the man went overboard. Suddenly, his vision went hazy and he fell towards the bow and then darkness enveloped him.

..._...

Hit Girl jumped up and in two bounds, she reached up and grasped a short Jacobs ladder before racing up and over the bulwark. A man attracted to the splash found himself face to face with an apparition that arose before him. He tried to yell out, but instead he found himself kicked to the deck. He barely registered another shape slipping over the bulwark as he lost consciousness.

“Nightmare – starboard!”

The youngster dove for the starboard side of the bridge structure and made for the bridge hatch. Hit Girl did the same to port. As she approached the hatch, Hit Girl could make out the red-infused bridge and two forms – one at the wheel, to starboard and one nervously looking ahead out the bridge windows to port. As she passed through the port hatch, the closest man turned and his eyes went wide as he took in the slim, masked form that strode towards him.

“What the hell are you doing on my vessel?” the Captain demanded.

“Bringing hell down upon you!” Hit Girl growled.

“Stop!” the helmsman called as he raised a large pistol and aimed it at Hit Girl’s chest.

“You should have fired, not hesitated,” she growled.

The helmsman never saw the shadow emerge from the darkness at the starboard hatch, but he felt the arm as it wrapped around his neck and then the hand at the base of his skull as he was flipped over and thrown to the deck. He dropped the pistol and yelled out in agony as his right arm was wrenched up his back.

..._...

After a thorough search, eight men were lined up on the after deck, on their knees. The man in the water had been retrieved and he knelt on the steel deck dripping water. Of the rest, all had regained consciousness – at least enough to be interrogated. Hit Girl walked along the front of the eight crew and enjoyed the glares and angry looks. She could see it in their eyes, despite their obvious overt defiance; it was their – fear! They at least had an idea about who was pacing before them, even if they had not recognised the purple trim to the woman’s mask.

Nightmare stood to one side and monitored the mean and covered Hit Girl as she began her interrogation. The thirteen-year-old was pumped full of adrenalin, and she was amazed at how the night’s events had unfolded. She was partnered with Hit Girl, again; it was a dream come true. Hit Girl walked behind the men and then stopped behind the Captain, the third man from the port side.

“You are the Captain. You are responsible for that shit, below,” Hit Girl growled.

“We have nothing below . . .” the Captain tried before Hit Girl whipped him hard with the muzzle of her pistol.

“Humour me – what is it?”

“Marijuana – for personal, medical use,” another man growled.

“You must get through a lot!” Hit Girl growled back as she stepped behind the man who had spoken.

“Only, I was *not* born yesterday . . .”

With that, Hit Girl shot the man in the back of the head.