

Author's Note: *Welcome to the pilot chapter of Hoods . . . this is a completely new story – I hope. Call it a Kick-Ass Reboot. Will the story work? Only time will tell. The story will be based on the Arrow universe but with Oliver Queen replaced by one Dave Lizewski and we introduce Mindy Macready. Other characters from the Kick-Ass universe and the Arrow universe will feature. For the moment, this will be a one-off, one-chapter story, unless of course, readers would like to see it continued.*

Synopsis

2011

Dave Lizewski, a fifteen-year-old boy, lives with his parents, James and Alice, and his younger sister, Thea, in Chicago, USA. James Lizewski is the billionaire CEO of Lizewski Enterprises. Mindy Macready, a thirteen-year-old girl, lives with her parents, Damon and Kathleen, in the same city. Damon Macready, an ex. CPD Lieutenant, now owns and operates a private security organisation called, Wildcat, with his former CPD partner and former CPD Sergeant, Marcus Williams.

At the beginning of July, 2011, Dave and his father are last seen flying from Tokyo to Hong Kong when their aircraft suddenly drops out of the sky. By a curious quirk of fate, in the same patch of sea, Damon Macready and his daughter, Mindy, are cast adrift when their yacht mysteriously sinks.

May 21st, 2016

The sun shone brightly and all was quiet.

That soon changed as a man burst out of the thick dense tropical greenery. He was running, although sprinting might have been a better word. Ahead of him was a large baete tree and then there was a rustling of leaves as the baete tree shook – the man had jumped and he was climbing the tree very quickly as if it was second nature to him.

Out of the top of the tree, there broke through the head of a man in a crudely made green and yellow hood. Just as crudely made was the man's clothing which covered his well-built frame. On his back was a quiver of arrows and in his left hand he held a compound bow.

There... On the horizon was a shape – something man made and coming closer across the seemingly endless expanse of black sea. The man almost dived out of the tree as he scrambled to the ground before he broke into another sprint and headed towards the coast.

By the time the runner had reached the coast and then taken a large rock in three enormous strides, the fishing trawler was now much closer and easily recognisable and more importantly, within easy visual range.

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The compound bow was held out at the full length of his left arm, the left elbow slightly bent. His right hand drew an arrow from the quiver and struck the tip on a rock – the tip burst into flames. He knocked the arrow onto the bow string which was then pulled back to its maximum extent by a strong right arm.

The entire set of movements was quick, fluid and could have easily been missed it was so fast as the flaming arrow then coursed through the humid air and down towards the beach dozens of feet beneath him. Seconds later there was a huge explosion on the beach as a fireball erupted into the blue sky before the purposefully stacked wood caught and burned steadily.

Somebody must have seen the fire as the trawler slowly turned back towards the beach having already turned away from the island.

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The man in the green and yellow hood turned away from the beach and he waved his hands in the direction of a large cliff, half a mile away. He was answered by the steady waving of another pair of arms which belonged to a young woman clad in dark purple clothing of a similar cut to the man's own green clothing. She herself wore a similar hood, it was dark purple with a pale mauve colour which trimmed the hood and other parts of her clothing.

One week later
Saturday, May 28th

Chicago, USA

"I've never seen anything like it..." The black man said, his tone incredulous.

"I've never *read* anything like it, except maybe in 19th century literature," The female Doctor replied.

"The last thing that anyone would expect to find on a deserted island..."

"...is that it's *not* deserted."

"The island they were found on was called 'Lian Yu' . . . it's Mandarin . . . for 'Purgatory'."

"I can't tell you *why* they're alive... Because for five years . . . that island did its best to kill them both."

One week earlier
Saturday, May 21st

The Island

The man hugged the young woman as they stared at the rapidly receding hell that they had left only an hour previously.

The woman, while she appeared strong-willed, quickly broke down and hugged the man tightly. On closer inspection, you would have found tears flooding down the man's face too. Neither had spoken much since they had boarded the trawler but the young woman looked up at the man.

"We're safe, Dave; finally, we are safe."

The man looked down at the young woman and he smiled.

"Yes, Mindy, we are."

One Week Later
Saturday, May 28th

Chicago
Northwestern Memorial Hospital

“Forty percent of *his* body’s covered in scar tissue, slightly less for *her*. Second degree burns on *his* back and arms – the same for the girl. X-rays show at least twelve fractures, seven for her, that never properly healed...” the doctor explained.

“Oh, my God,” the tall blonde woman said as she turned to the black man who stood beside her.

“I want you to prepare yourself, Kathleen. The Mindy that you lost, might not be the one that we have here, today.”

“Has she said anything?”

“No, she’s been very quiet.”

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Kathleen Macready tentatively set foot into the hospital room where her daughter stood over by a window and stared out at the city. Beside her, an IV stand held a clear bag of fluids which fed via tubes into Mindy’s left forearm.

“Mindy...?”

The almost eighteen-year-old young woman who bore very little resemblance to the thirteen-year-old that she had last seen, turned and faced her mother. She smiled happily.

“Mom.”

In the next room...

“Sweetheart!”

“Hi, Mom,” Dave grinned as he hugged his mother for the first time in nearly five years.

“I’m so glad that you are alive...”

Dave really did not know what to say or do. Having not seen his mother for so long, he was out of practice when it came to that kind of love.

Two hours later

“Well, this is a turn up for the books, Kathleen.”

“I never realised that my daughter had such a temper – that comes from her father.”

“Whatever happened to them on that island – in those five years – those two are in love...”

“Alice, I have to agree.”

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There had been a major ruckus when the hospital had refused the request for the two young people to share a room – it was against hospital policy. Mindy had literally gone ballistic when it had been suggested that she might be separated from Dave.

Finally, they had both been moved to a room that they could share for the remaining few days that they would be in the hospital.

The TV...

A file photo of Dave Lizewski appeared on the screen with an anchor-man off to one side.

“David Lizewski is alive. The Chicago resident was found, by fishermen in the South China Sea, seven days ago and five years after he was missing and presumed dead following the air accident which claimed the family’s Cessna Citation M2 jet... Lizewski is the son of Chicago billionaire, James Lizewski, who was also aboard but is now officially confirmed as deceased.”

Dave idly flicked channels.

“...five years after disappearing in a flying accident, trust fund bad boy, David Lizewski, appears to be the only survivor of the ill-fated flight...”

The image cut to some file footage of one young Dave Lizewski, an insolent-looking boy of fourteen.

“Get that (BEEP)-ing camera outta my face before I shove it up your (BEEP)-ing ass, you little (BEEP)!”

“Ouch!” Mindy exclaimed from her bed and Dave blushed. “Would those missing words be *fuck*-ing, *fuck*-ing and *bitch*?”

Across Chicago

The twenty-year-old young man was paying no attention to the TV.

He was busy with his girl-friend – very busy...

“Marty...!”

“Oh, God...”

“...Lizewski’s return has everyone talking. Where was he? And how did he survive all those years without his trust fund?”

Suddenly, Marty bolted up off the bed and stared at the TV.

“Fuck!” He exclaimed as his girlfriend fell onto the floor “Oh, sorry, Erika...”

“Dammit, Marty!”

“He’s alive!” Marty exclaimed. “Dave’s alive!”

A few days later

Wednesday, June 1st

I stared out of the limousine’s window.

Mindy was doing the same on the far side. Both of us were getting our first glimpses of a city that we had not seen in five long years and not that long ago, never thought that we would ever see again.

“Marty is dying to see you – he’s been calling ever since they reported your return on the news...” Mom explained.

“Marty?”

“He’s my best friend...” I replied.

“Mindy doesn’t know about Marty?” Mom exclaimed. “What *did* you two do on that island for five whole years?”

I rolled my eyes – it was not the first probe about past events. For now, Mindy and I were saying nothing. It seemed that Mom just *had* to keep talking – we were apparently not allowed to travel in blissful silence.

“Your sister is nervous of course. But don’t you mistake that for anything; Thea was *so* distraught for so long.” Mom went on. “She never gave up hope, though – none of us did...”

Mom trailed off as Mindy sat staring at a pair of ice cubes that she held in her hands – she seemed fascinated by them as they slowly melted and the ice cold water ran over her skin and dripped from her hands.

“Dave...” Mom began and she sounded unnerved.

“First ice cubes that she’s seen in five years – me too for that matter.”

Mindy passed me a partly melted ice cube and I smiled back at her. She had not said a word since we had left the hospital. She had gone very shy and she had refused to tolerate anybody’s company but my own. That was why she was in the limousine with me and not heading home with her own mother.

Mom broke the moment.

“The staff is excited as well...”

I was very pleased when I noticed that we were almost home.

***Lizewski Manor
Barrington Hills***

The fifteen-year-old girl watched as the black limousine pulled up outside the house.

She turned away from the second-floor-window for a moment; she was nervous. But, she forced herself back to the window. She was worried to the core – she loved her big brother with all her heart and she had prayed for his safe return for so long. Then suddenly, out of the blue, he was back...

The two girls behind her were still jabbering away.

“I read on the internet that he had frostbite – you think his toes fell off?” Shelley asked her friend.

“Don’t be stupid, Shelley...” the other girl, Trish, replied.

Thea Lizewski turned to her two best friends.

“You guys’ve gotta leave before he comes in...”

“Not ‘til you calm down, girl. What do we have?” Trish cut in.

Shelley dived a hand into her knapsack and pulled out a pair of plastic containers.

“I got my brother’s Ritalin and my Mom’s Valium...”

“Screw that – I got some Roxy’s, courtesy of my Daddy’s ACL tear,” Trish countered.

Trish popped out a pill and crushed it to a powder on Thea’s desk. She then proceeded to snort a portion before she turned to Thea.

“Your turn, girl...”

Thea took the proffered rolled up bill that Trish had used to snort down the powder. Thea leaned down over her desk in a practiced and proficient manner.

As the driver opened the rear door of the limousine, I felt strange – a sense of foreboding?

Mom headed straight up the steps towards the front door. I turned and helped Mindy out of the car. I was about to follow my mother when the driver popped the trunk and before he could reach inside, I pushed him away.

“We’ve got it...” I said quickly as I seized hold of one end of an old army munitions trunk, marked with Chinese letters – Mindy grabbed the other end.

I had not seen the house for what seemed like a lifetime and it felt strangely unfamiliar.

I followed Dave inside the giant house.

There really wasn’t a choice; I was holding the other end of the trunk. To me, Dave seemed to have just set foot on Mars – he did not behave like the house was his home. He walked past his mother and stopped before an elderly couple.

“Welcome home, Mr. Dave,” the woman offered with a very friendly smile. I took an instant liking to that woman. She was about sixty and plump in a good way.

“Welcome back, sir,” the man added – he again, I liked. He was maybe mid-sixties and thin, but he had a very friendly face. “Can I help you with that?”

He indicated the trunk, but Dave shook his head.

“No, thank you, Ivan. Mindy, please meet Ivan and Raisa – they look after the house and have put up with me since I was born. Ivan, Raisa, please meet Mindy Macready.”

“Wonderful to meet you, Miss. Mindy,” Raisa said and she beamed an enormous smile at me – I blushed.

“Welcome, Ma’am,” Ivan added with his own enormous smile.

Alice, Dave’s mother, cut in impatiently.

“Your room is exactly as you left it. I never had the heart to...”

I turned, curious as to why Alice had stopped speaking. Dave dropped his end of the trunk as he saw the young girl who stood at the base of the sweeping staircase. The girl was beaming fit to burst – she had to be Dave’s younger sister, Thea.

“I *knew* you were alive – I just knew it!” She exclaimed with joy.

She raced over to Dave and clutched him tightly and very exuberantly. I saw her eyes – wild? I noticed that Dave melted into the hug. He had talked about his little sister, often, although the last time he had seen her, she had been barely ten-years-old – now she was almost a woman.

I could hear faint whisperings between them.

“I missed you. Every day, I missed you.”

“You were with me, Thea. The whole time.”

I felt her tears as I kissed her.

“Your brother is home and home for good...”

After a few minutes, Thea calmed down and she glanced past me with a curious expression on her face.

“*Who is that?*”

The tone of the question was *not* exactly friendly.

That evening

I stepped out of the hot shower and I felt remarkably refreshed.

After I had towelled myself dry, I stood before the full-length mirror in the bathroom and examined my naked body. It was still as well toned as it had always been but what had once been soft, virgin, skin was now covered liberally with scars. There was a brand on one arm, numbers tattooed on the other. I had several healed bullet wounds and I had a jagged scar across the front of my left thigh.

Over time, I had become used to the scars – they were like a roadmap and I could remember exactly when and where I had acquired each and every one. For a moment flashes of my past came on, unbidden, into my mind: flashes of . . . torture . . . blood . . . pain . . . fear.

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“Hey, honey...”

Dave was there, as he always was. He hugged me tightly. The trauma would pass – or so the doctor had said; I was not so sure... The feeling of Dave’s bare, but hairy chest, against my bare breasts was reassuring. Although I was naked, Dave wore a pair of joggers. His body was strewn with scars, just as mine was. He had tattoos just as I did and a vicious scar across his chest.

We had both grown up on that island. I was no longer the giggly young teen – and he was no longer the wimpy, care-free teen whom I had first met on that island, almost a lifetime ago.

The Dining Room

Mom had outdone herself – she was good at that.

Mindy had the look that mirrored how I felt. The food looked awesome and there was something of everything spread across the giant table. Only, neither of us were used to eating anything large – I actually felt nauseated. I knew that if I ate more than a few mouthfuls then I would promptly throw up – my stomach could not handle such rich and presumably tasty food.

Raisa, ever the mind-reader, came to our rescue.

“Would you care for something else, my dears?”

I looked over at Mindy and she nodded.

“Some fruit, maybe?” She enquired quietly.

“The same for me, please, Raisa.”

“I will see what I can find, sir, ma’am.”

As Raisa left the room, Thea punctuated the silence with a question that I assumed everybody had been avoiding. You could always trust Thea to speak her mind at the most inopportune time!

“What was it like there?”

The question was directed at me – Thea had made a point of pretending that Mindy did not exist; I obviously had some work to do there... I noticed that everybody else was looking directly at me, too, forks poised before their mouths.

“Cold,” I stated simply and I noticed Thea’s crestfallen expression and some equally disappointed expressions around the table.

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Raisa returned with the fruit. On her way, she stumbled and several items flew through the air, each of which Dave caught without any extraneous movement.

Everybody stared at his unusual display of dexterity.

“I am *so* sorry...” Raisa began.

“Не волнуйтесь, Раиса.”

Mom and Thea looked shocked.

“I don’t recall you learning Russian at school...” Mom muttered.

I just shrugged.

“Online course...”

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“What are your plans for tomorrow, dear?”

“I want to check out the office and then we have lunch planned with Mindy’s family,” I replied.

“The office?” Mom echoed. “You’ve not set foot in the place since you were about six!”

“Just a thought...”

“Oh – the lawyers will be over, tomorrow evening – for both of you; they will do what is required to get your lives back.”

That night

“I can’t sleep here – those hospital beds were bad enough; this bed is torture...”

I had to agree – neither one of us had slept inside, much less felt such a soft bed beneath our bodies in a long, long time. I looked over at Dave.

“How about we go sleep under the stars...” I suggested as I indicated the window and the increasingly stormy weather outside.

Dave smiled and he threw back the duvet.

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We were both very wet by the time we had crossed the manicured lawns and entered the trees.

The moss beneath the trees felt like home and I blissfully lay down on the ground. Dave wrapped himself around me and we slept like we had a thousand times before.

Then the nightmares came...

July 2nd, 2011

The Wildcat

“... three ... four...”

Another thunder clap announced itself outside the yacht’s hull.

“The storm is getting closer...” I announced.

“That’s not very scientific, Mindy,” Daddy chuckled.

“It works...” I grumbled.

“Yes, it does.”

There was another thunder clap – much louder than before.

“*That one was really close!*” I exclaimed and I felt scared.

“Relax, child. We’re okay...” Daddy replied as he wrapped his reassuring arm around me.

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We were *not* okay!

The cabin flipped onto its beam-ends and I landed on what used to be the port bulkhead. I saw my Daddy on his back a few feet away, his head all bloody.

“Daddy...”

I was cut off as a wall of raging water rushed towards me...

The Present

June 2nd, 2016

Thursday morning

It was Mindy's turn to be nervous.

I had barely spoken with Mindy's mother and the black man, who seemed to be very chummy with Mindy's Mom, since our return. I was not sure if Mindy had noticed – I knew from our chats on the island that she was a Daddy's girl and now that he was dead, she had lost that special link. She loved her mother, only it seemed that there was not such a special relationship there.

As we pulled up at the house, in River Forest, to the east of Chicago, Mindy pushed her hand into mine and she gripped my hand tightly.

I looked into her face – I saw apprehension and a lot of it.

Macready Family Home

River Forest

"Mindy!"

Mindy's mother wrapped her daughter in a hug. It took Mindy a minute but she soon reciprocated and I saw the tears falling. I stood off to one side, out of the way, until the large black guy strolled over.

"Hello, David – my name is Marcus..."

"Dave – not David; only my Dad called me that."

"Okay, Dave," Marcus replied and then he leaned in closer and spoke quietly. "I've known the Macready family since before Mindy was born. I see Mindy as a daughter, so you had better watch your step, young man."

"Marcus, please leave Dave alone..." Mindy said sharply – her ears were very sharp – and Marcus stood up straight.

I noticed that both Kathleen and Marcus were uneasy, although both made attempts at hiding their unease.

The explanation for their uneasiness soon appeared.

"Mommy!"

A young boy, maybe four-years-old, came running out of another room.

"Damon!" Kathleen said sharply. "I told you to wait in the Living Room."

Mindy's mouth dropped open and then after a moment she scowled.

"Damon?"

The boy walked over to Mindy and looked up at her.

“Min’y?” The boy asked.

“Mindy, honey,” Kathleen began. “Meet your brother...”

I glared over at Marcus.

“You’ve been fucking my Mom?”

I saw Dave cover his face with both hands – had I missed something?

“Mindy!” Mom exclaimed and I heard the dangerous part of her tone. “He is your father’s. I had intended to tell him *and* you when you both returned from your trip – I was five months pregnant when you left...”

I felt like a *total* idiot.

“I’m so sorry, Mom... You too, Marcus.”

“Mindy, I forgive you, and so does Marcus. We both love you and we are just *so* pleased to have you back – we were both devastated over what happened. We also know that you will tell us what happened to you on that island in your own time. The only question that I *will* demand an answer for is this: Where the hell did you find such a handsome young man on a deserted island in the middle of an ocean?”

I blanched at my Mom’s question and I felt my face getting *very* hot.

Lunch was actually fun.

Mindy had calmed down a lot and she was no longer apprehensive. She was laughing with Marcus and her newly-discovered little brother. She seemed to be a very different girl all of a sudden – we had not had all that many opportunities to laugh on that island – it was called Lian Yu for a reason... It appeared that young Damon had been brought up to know his big sister, even though she had been thought of as dead and I could see Mindy in him.

As promised, there were no questions about what had occurred over the previous five years. Marcus, instead, proceeded to embarrass Mindy with some stories from her past before the island.

As for her response to her mother’s question: “Just luck, I guess... He fell from the sky and he kept me alive.”

That evening

Barrington Hills

“It is time for you both to get your lives back,” the lawyer intoned. “A simple witnessed affidavit will suffice, to be then confirmed by a Judge.”

“We don’t need to go to the court?” I enquired.

“Have you been to court before, Mr Lizewski?”

“Just a few times...” Thea cut in. “There was the taxi he stole... The time he peed on that cop... Being caught inebriated...”

“Thank you, Thea!” I cut in with almost a growl.

Within another half hour, the forms to ‘undead’ us, were filled in and the lawyer headed off to find a Judge.

It had been a busy day and we had spent longer with Mindy’s family than we had expected, so we never did get to Lizewski Enterprises.

“Thank you, Dave.”

“For what?”

“Just for being there with me, today – even when I did make a damn fool of myself!”

I laughed.

“I’m used to your ‘crap’, Mindy; you know that.”

Mindy snuggled into me as we lay together on the floor beside the bed.

“You *peed* on a cop?”

“Not the best decision of my life...”

Mindy giggled.

The following morning

Friday, June 3rd

I awoke with a start, momentarily unsure of my surroundings.

I smiled as I saw the reassuring blue eyes of Dave which stared down at me. Those eyes had helped me keep it together for so long.

“Happy Birthday, my sweet...”

The kiss that followed made me feel like the woman that I was; I let out several moans but nothing more until Dave finally pulled his lips away from my own.

“Thank you...” I offered breathlessly.

I was eighteen and about to visit Chicago for the first time in five long years.

After breakfast, we received a visitor.

“Dave!”

“Marty!”

We hugged. I’d known Marty since about second grade.

“Mindy, this is Marty – he’s been my friend for like forever.”

“Marty.”

“Mindy! Dave – you dog; you get dumped on a deserted island and find a gorgeous chick like Mindy?”

Mindy went slightly pink before I rescued her.

“Let’s go, Marty!”

“Don’t let him get you into *too* much trouble; you’ve only just got back!” Thea called as the three of us headed out the door.

“Have you noticed how hot your sister has gotten – ‘cause I have not...” Marty commented and then quickly changed tack as I glared at him.

Mindy just laughed.

On the way into Chicago

“I am counting on a target-rich environment for your welcome home bash...”

“What?” I demanded as Marty continued on.

“You came back from the dead – this calls for a party; you tell me where and when and I’ll take care of everything – oh, sorry, Mindy; forgot you were there...”

I just sat back as Mindy rolled her eyes in the back seat.

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“This city’s gone to crap...” Marty said as he pulled up at the kerb. “Your Dad sold his factory just in time... Why’d you want to drive to this neighbourhood anyway?”

I gazed up at a fair-sized, high-ceilinged building on West Lake Street. Mindy followed my gaze, but said nothing.

“No reason...”

“So, what did you miss the most?”

“Erika...”

Marty looked a little bit stunned.

“Everyone is happy that you’re alive . . . and you want to go see the one person who *isn’t*?”

City Necessary Resources Initiative (CNRI) Office

“Hello, Erika...” I said.

The short girl with short black-hair turned and she froze for a moment. We left the office and talked for a few minutes as we walked down the street.

“You went to law school – you said you would.”

Erika stopped and she turned to me.

“Everybody’s proud . . . Why are you here, Dave?”

“To apologise – it’s my fault. I want to ask you not to blame her.”

“For what? For falling under your spell? How could I possibly blame her for doing the same things I did?”

“Erika, I...”

“*She was my sister!* I couldn’t be angry at her because she was dead, And I couldn’t grieve because I was so angry at her. That’s what happens when your sister cheats on you with your boyfriend... We buried an empty coffin; because her body is at the bottom of the ocean – where you left her.”

I felt like shit – worse in fact. “I know it’s too late to say it . . . but I’m sorry.”

“I’m sorry too. I had hoped that you would rot in hell for a whole lot longer than five years!”

Talk about a dagger in the heart. Laurel stormed off to where Marty and Mindy waited.

“How did you *think* this was going to go, Marty?” She demanded.

“About like that,” Marty conceded.

“Watch out for him, honey, he’ll fuck you up and spit you out...” Erika threw at Mindy as she headed back into her office.

Wow! Dave led a complicated life, I thought as we walked back to the car.

I think I’ve learned more about him in the past couple of days than in the almost eighteen-hundred that we spent together on that island. I could tell that he was hurting and maybe that was why I wasn’t paying too much attention to our surroundings at that very moment.

“Okay, so we got that out of the way. Good call. Now we’re ready to make up for lost time. If you’re not too sick of fish...” Marty began.

I heard a screech of tyres and I turned along with Dave to see a van careering towards us. What came next was like a well-oiled military exercise. Two masked men appeared from an alley and both raised silver-coloured pistols. There was no time to shout a warning as first Dave, then Marty and finally I succumbed to a dart in the neck.

As I fell to my knees, I saw a door open above us and a man appeared – he shouted at the men accosting us; the bastards – a third masked gunman – shot him for his trouble, with an Israeli assault rifle. The last thing I saw before darkness enveloped me was a young boy who had appeared beside his dead father and he screamed out a single word.

“Dad!”

July 4th, 2011

November-Eight-Two-Five

Everything was going badly wrong.

We should have been landing in Hong Kong but instead, we were fighting through a thunder-head and the aircraft was coming apart. The Cessna jet was rising and plunging dozens of feet at a time and I was feeling queasy, to put it mildly.

Dad was struggling with the controls as the jet dropped and turned like a rollercoaster. I was in the cockpit to assist Dad – I had some experience with the jet but only in a total flat calm. I heard a scream from behind me and I knew that Katie would be beside herself with fear. I wished that I could be back there with her, but my place was helping Dad to keep us in the air long enough for us to reach land – any land.

Then, it happened. Both tail-mounted jet engines stopped and a deathly relative silence descended on the aircraft. I flipped through the manual in my hands – I searched for the Engine Restart Check List, but then the aircraft dropped like a stone and I heard a muffled grunt as Dad's head hit the side wall of the cockpit.

He never made another sound.

The Present

Friday, June 3rd, 2016

I began to see light and I opened my eyes.

A hood had been ripped off my head. I struggled to get my bearings as the drug, with which I had been injected, wore off. I felt plastic on my wrists; they were zip-tied. I saw Marty, a few feet away – he appeared unconscious. Mindy was beside him and I noticed that she was moving, almost imperceptibly.

“Mr. Lizewski?” Came a yell.

I looked up. There were three of them, all wearing creepy Halloween skull-like masks. It looked like it was the leader who was interrogating me – his lackeys were on either side of him, a few steps behind.

“I ask the questions – you give me the answers...”

A small Taser was held before my eyes.

“Did your father survive the accident?”

I said nothing and focussed on the zip-ties which bound my wrists. Then the Taser was jammed into my chest; I used the extra force it gave me to break the zip-ties which bound my wrists. I screamed with the pain – more for effect than anything else. Out of the corner of my eye, Mindy was moving; both her wrists were free.

“Did he make it to the island? Did he tell you anything?”

I received another jolt of the Taser. I took a moment or two to regain my composure – it did hurt!

“Yes, he did...”

The dick in the mask seemed pleased with my ‘confession’ and he never noticed my demeanour change.

“What did he tell you, Mr. Lizewski.”

“He told me that I’m going to kill you...”

There was a moment of confusion, but then the gunmen laughed. I glared at the man on the right.

“Galil 5.56-millimetre. The man carrying the biggest gun is always the coward. You, I’ll have to hunt; you die last...” I turned to the other gunman, over to the left. “You think you’re faster than me. You’re wrong. You’ll get a shot off, but you’ll die second.”

The laughter changed to anxious chuckles as I then glared at the leader.

“And *you* – you, I’m going to kill first...”

“You’re delusional; you’re zip-tied to that chair...”

I waved my hands theatrically in the air.

“Not anymore... And neither is she...”

There was a mad scramble as I leapt up and seized the wooden chair that I had been seated on. I took the chair across the leader’s front, which shoved his Taser away and out of reach. The man with the Galil attempted to shoot me, but the chair absorbed the bullets.

I seized up a pair of chair legs and threw them into the air. Mindy grabbed them both and she attacked the gunman closest to her using the legs like truncheons – Eskrima style. The leader went for his pistol, I simply grabbed up another chair leg and rammed the splintered end into the man’s throat. As promised, he was the first to die.

The other gunman died second, again, as promised. Mindy drove one of her improvised Eskrima sticks into his right eye. She grinned as she did so. I looked around – the third man had run...

“Go!” she directed and I ran after the man.

I ran as fast as I could go.

The gunman had a head start, but I knew that I could run down prey better than anybody – except maybe for Mindy... I rounded a corner and found some stairs which led downwards. As I ran down them I grabbed the door frame at the bottom and lifted my body up horizontally. The gunman had emptied his entire magazine in my direction.

I jumped down while he swapped out his magazine and I ran after him. Wood flew from numerous packing crates as the gunman randomly sent bursts of bullets in my direction. I jumped upwards and used the walls, crates, anything to gain ground and keep out of the way of any bullets.

The gunman paused for a moment and I could see that he was frightened as he tried to seek me out.

..._...

He fired into some packing crates – presumably to scare me out – I was nowhere near that crate.

Click!

Empty magazine . . . oops...

I ran at the gunman and he saw me. The gunman fumbled for another magazine as I moved behind him. I punched the base of his spine – he collapsed in a heap, unable to move his arms or legs. I stared down at him. His eyes were a mix of emotions: he was pleading, he was terrified, he was desperate.

“May I?”

It was Mindy. I waved her in.

“You shot that boy’s father...”

“It was an accident – I didn’t mean to – you don’t have to do this...”

“Yes, I do...” Mindy growled. “You see... No one can know our secret.”

With a twist and a sickening crunch – Mindy snapped his neck.

“Damn, I think I broke a nail...” she growled unhappily.

Barrington Hills

“That’s your story?”

We sat in the living room and faced the angry looking CPD Detective. Another Detective stood behind my mother.

“You were abducted, brought to that warehouse, where you were interrogated, threatened, when suddenly, out of the blue, two ‘guys’, one wearing a green and yellow hood, the other purple, flew in and took them all out?”

“Yes, sir,” I replied.

“You?”

“That’s it, sir,” Mindy replied.

“Your luck never seems to run out, does it?” The exasperated Detective complained.

“Were you able to identify the men?” Mom enquired of the Detective.

“Scrubbed identities. Untraceable weapons. These were pros who probably figured you’d pay a King’s ransom to get your boy back. A parent would do anything to keep their child safe...”

“I don’t find your tone appropriate, Detective. Or, for that matter, your involvement in this case given the . . . personal circumstances.”

“Take it up with the Chief-of-D’s, then. In the meantime, case lands on my desk; I work it.”

“If Oliver, or Mindy, thinks of anything else, he’ll get in touch. Thank you, gentlemen, for coming.”

“Welcome home,” Detective Lance stated without much feeling.

Dave’s bedroom

“Adam Hunt?” Mindy enquired as she read the page on the computer screen.

“Yeah – he’s a target for Erika...”

“Is he in the book?”

I opened a small Moleskin notebook. I ran my fingers down the page, flipped to the next, and then stopped.

“There: Adam Hunt...”

“Let’s go find a place to work,” Mindy suggested.

..._...

We had only made it to the bottom of the stairs, when Mom appeared, along with a large black man.

“Dave – please meet John Diggle. He’ll be . . . accompanying *you*.”

“I don’t need a babysitter, and neither does Mindy.”

“This is something both I, and Kathleen, need. However, Mindy will have her own, err – minder...”

“Hi, Mindy, I’m Sarah Clarke – Marcus asked me personally to protect you.”

I gave up arguing and I smiled at the new guy who nodded in return and he opened the front door. Mindy went first with Sarah and we followed.

Mindy and I sat in the back of the Bentley while our ‘personal protection’ were in the front seats, with Diggle driving.

“So, what do we call you two?” Dave asked.

“Diggle’s good. Dig, if you want.”

“Sarah will be fine.”

“You’re both ex-military?” I chimed in.

“I am, ma’am. Army Rangers, 105th Airborne out of Kandahar, retired. Been in the private sector a little over four years now.”

“Ex. Diplomatic Protection Group, ma’am,” Sarah added in her British accent as Diggle continued.

“Now, I don’t want there to be any confusion, Mr. Lizewski, Miss Macready. Our ability to keep you both from harm will outweigh your comfort or your desires. Do we have an agreement?”

We never heard anything else as we both pushed open the rear doors and dove from the moving vehicle. From behind two parked cars, we observed the Bentley as it jerked to a halt in the middle of the street and both security officers jumped out.

They looked around but by then, we had moved on.

West Lake Street

The site was derelict and had been for several years.

After a brief look around, we threw over the previously stashed bags from the day before and we vaulted the fence. Mindy was all smiles as we approached the main building.

“We could do a lot with this place,” she said casually.

“And we will, my sweet.”

..._...

“Oh, wow!”

Mindy was transfixed by the place and to be honest, so was I. The main floor was open apart from four giant concrete pillars which supported the upper floor. The space was double the usual height – about nineteen feet. There were two more floors above with more conventional ceiling heights of eleven feet. Behind the main space was a large warehouse that extended back many feet.

We took the large freight elevator downwards, into the basement.

“Oh, Dave, it’s awesome!”

To be honest, the basement felt homely – no windows and the bare concrete walls and support pillars just seemed so basic. As on the floor above, the height was almost twenty feet and I already had plans... I gazed over at the rather large pile of scrap steel in the corner of the enormous basement.

“You ready to get your hands dirty?”

As we tidied the place, I got to thinking.

The abduction had been unexpected and it had forced us to move up our plans. I had told the Police the truth; the hooded vigilantes *had* been in that warehouse, and they were just beginning...

My name is Mindy Macready.

For five years, my partner and I were stranded on an island with only one goal: survive. Now, we will fulfil my father’s dying wish – to use the list of names that he left me and bring down those who are poisoning our city.

To do this, we must become someone else.

We must become something else.

I’d been stranded there for five years

I’d dreamt of my rescue every cold black night since then. For five years, I’d had only one thought, one goal: survive. Survive and one-day return home. The island held many dangers. To live I had to make myself more than what I was, to forge myself into a weapon. I am returning, not the boy who fell out of the sky but the man who will bring justice to those who have poisoned my city.

My name is Dave Lizewski.

