

**Wednesday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Lizewski Enterprises**

"As you can see, Dave, we've modernised quite a bit," Walter Steele explained as the party left the elevator.

"Not bad!" Mindy muttered.

"I agree," I added.

"Are you enjoying yourself?" Alice Lizewski asked.

"Yes, I am," I replied and I genuinely was enjoying myself; it had been quite a while since I had last been in that office.

"I remember when your Dad used to bring you into the office," Walter went on. "You were very young and you were always very excited."

"Dad let me drink soda in the office."

"So, that's why you enjoyed coming so much," Alice chuckled.

Then Walter began to talk 'business'. Talk about boring! Whatever Walter was talking about; it was so over my head; my mind began to wander.

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**July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

**Northern South China Sea**

**Lian Yu**

We spent the first night in the shelter of the plane.

I lay on the floor, just aft of the cockpit so that I could stretch out. Mindy lay a few feet away. Neither of us had said very much to each other since our first meeting a few hours previously. To be honest, the atmosphere was a bit frosty. But I had no problem with that; I couldn't stand the girl!

I closed my eyes and very soon I dozed off.

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**The Present**

**Wednesday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Lizewski Enterprises**

Dave seemed very disinterested in what Walter had to say as he prattled on about diversifications and other fancy shit.

I held Dave's hand tightly as I felt *really* out of my element with so many strange people and in a very strange world. Don't get me wrong, I had spent many happy days with Daddy in *his* place of work, but that had been a long time ago. Now I just felt uncomfortable in such stark surroundings.

I found myself drifting back to another set of uncomfortable surroundings.

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**July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

**Northern South China Sea  
Lian Yu**

I felt so alone.

At least when I was trudging through sand, or jungle, or whatever else there had been between the sea and the wrecked plane, my thoughts had been on moving forwards – something purposeful. Now that I was doing nothing physical, my annoyingly overactive imagination quickly took over. I saw flashes of my Daddy dying; the scene with him putting a bullet through his head would repeat in my mind in ever increasing detail and goriness. I kept seeing him pull the trigger. I kept seeing a chunk of his skull fly off into the sea. I kept hearing myself scream and scream. I kept waking up in a cold sweat and I'd start to panic in the darkness. Then I'd doze off again and find myself back in the raft. Around and around it went.

In the end, I gave up and I lay down beside Dave. He allowed me to move in closer and despite my feelings towards him, just having his warm body against my own made me feel so much better and the dreams seemed to mellow – slightly.

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**The Present**

**Wednesday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Lizewski Enterprises**

As I snapped back to the present, I found us back in the elevator and on our way down.

We excited at the first floor and headed towards the main doors. I began to shake at what awaited us. It was a horde of newsies and the sight scared me. I instinctively moved closer to Dave and enjoyed the warmth of his body and the instant reassurance that I felt at his presence.

The moment that we burst out the door, we were enveloped by the horde. Questions came thick and fast, many of which were unintelligible in the free-for-all. I felt hands on my waist – Sarah was there and she guided me through the throng towards the car. Dave got there first with Diggle and I was very relieved as Dave pulled me into the car and Diggle slammed the door before he pushed his way around and into the driver's seat.

"You know, I spent the first twenty-seven years of my life in Chicago and then the next five in Afghanistan," Diggle began. "You want to know what I learned?"

"There's no place like home?" Dave responded facetiously.

"No. Just the opposite," Diggle replied. "Home is a battlefield. Back home they're all trying to get you. Get you to open up . . . be somebody you're not sure you are anymore. Or I could be wrong. Maybe after five years alone, you two are not as messed up in the head as you both have every right to be."

He was disturbingly very close to the mark with that comment.

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**July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

## ***Northern South China Sea***

***Lian Yu***

After six days, together on that island, our attitude towards each other had thawed to the extent where we had each stripped and washed as the other had pretended not to watch. Waking up that first morning to find a girl that I barely knew cuddled up to me fast asleep, was a little surreal. Back home, I would have enjoyed being in such a position. Any sexual thoughts were non-existent. I knew that I was in hell and as far as I knew, the girl was my only companion.

Strangely, after our impromptu wash, our minds had begun to operate better and we had both come to the same conclusion; that we needed to bury our dead parents. That was easier said than done, however, as we first needed to select a location and secondly, we would need to move the bodies – a task that neither of us relished.

Nonetheless, it was a necessity.

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## ***The Present***

***Wednesday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016***

### ***CNRI Office***

“Well, we anticipate that Somer’s attorney will attempt to paint you as ‘blinded by grief’ or ‘looking to make a quick buck’,” Joanna explained.

“It’s *not* about the money!” Emily Nocenti retorted angrily. “I just want *justice* for my father.”

“Emily,” Erika replied supportively. “There are a lot of people who don’t want this trial to proceed . . . dangerous people.”

“My mother died when I was a baby and my father has been the only family that I have ever known, and . . . and they slit his throat! They are going to have to kill me if they want me to give this up.”

“Let’s hope it doesn’t come to that...” Erika said darkly.

“And it won’t,” another voice interrupted.

The three women turned to see Detective Lance striding through the office with three uniformed SCPD officers in tow.

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“What’s going on?” Erika demanded.

“What’s going on, is that you three are getting round-the-clock Police protection, okay? Get used to their faces as they’re going with you everywhere that you go . . . no arguments.”

Erika glared up at her father.

“I’m a lawyer; I live to argue.”

“I’m your father; I live to keep you safe.”

Joanne sensed the tense atmosphere and she wisely decided to take Emily away.

“Emily, let’s go get a coffee.”

“Yes, why not do that,” Detective Lance agreed and he waved two of the uniformed officers forwards. “Go with them.”

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“Protective custody? I seem to recall you trying that once I discovered boys and it didn’t work then, either.”

“This isn’t a joke, Erika. Martin Somers got attacked last night.”

“What?”

“Yeah.”

“By whom?”

“Doesn’t matter. Point is, you have whipped up a storm with these guys. Until the dust settles, you will be protected, okay? End of discussion.”

“That might have worked when I was eight, but it’s not going to work anymore.”

“End of discussion, Erika! You’re insistent on doing your job; that’s great. But this is me doing mine, not just as a father but as a cop. These people are more dangerous than you are willing to admit and you’re making them angry.”

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### ***That afternoon***

#### ***The Docks***

The woman was tall and of Asian origin.

She had flowing white hair and she carried herself in an authoritative manner. She walked towards the man who was seated at a desk.

“Thank you for coming,” he said without standing.

“Anything for a friend,” the woman replied.

“We are not friends. You smuggle drugs . . . I let you use my port.”

“For which, you are paid a lot of money, Mr Somers.”

“I don’t get paid enough to have arrows shot at me. You need to take these people seriously. They are a bigger threat to your operation than Nocenti ever was.”

“Except now, it’s Nocenti’s daughter who is the problem. Unlike your hooded friends, we know where to find *her*.”

“Don’t be an idiot. You take out Emily Nocenti and Erika Lance will never let this go. She won’t stop until she burns you, me, and the entire Triad to the ground.”

“Then we kill Miss Lance.”

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### ***That same time***

## **Barrington Hills**

*'...The attorney for shipping magnate, Martin Somers, has confirmed that his client has no intention of testifying and is maintaining his innocence in the wrongful death of Victor Nocenti...'*

Dave glared at the television and he was about to punch the screen when Thea walked into the room.

"Hi..."

"Where's Mindy?"

"She was hungry so she went down to the kitchen. What's wrong?"

"I . . . I need to show you something out back."

...\_...

"Sometimes, when I felt . . . whatever . . . I'd come here."

After a short walk through the grounds, they both stopped before a pair of tall granite gravestones. The right-hand one of which depicted:

*James Lizewski*

*1958 – 2011*

*A leader, a husband  
a father, whose light  
was dimmed far too early*

"About a month after the funerals, Mom stopped going out. Pretty soon she stopped talking all together. The house got so quiet. So, I'd come here . . . to talk to you."

The other stone depicted:

*Dave Lizewski*

*1996-2011*

*A loving son and  
brother, whose light  
was dimmed far too soon*

"Stupid stuff. What I was doing that day. What boy I had a crush on. And then sometimes, I would ask you . . . beg you, to find a way home. Now, here you are, and I felt closer to you when you were dead. Look, I know it was hell where you were – I saw the scars. But, it was hell here too. You gotta let me in, Dave. You gotta let someone in."

Seeing my own grave shocked me a bit. Hearing what Thea had said, hurt me. I knew it had to be difficult for them all not knowing. By the time I returned to the bedroom, Mindy was back with some food. She had brought some for me too. As we ate together, sitting on the floor, I explained where I had been and what Thea had said.

"Go see her," Mindy suggested.

"You sure?"

“Go!”

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### ***That Night***

#### ***The apartment of Erika Lance***

There was a knock on the door and the very tired lawyer did not look very happy at being disturbed – in fact she was also more than a little worried after what her father had said back at her place of work that same afternoon.

Cautiously, she approached the door and after a peek through the spyhole, she visibly relaxed once she saw who it was. She opened the door.

“You okay? There’s two cop cars outside.”

Erika ignored the question.

“How am I supposed to stay away from *you* if you won’t stay away from me?”

“I...”

“What are you doing here, Dave?”

“My sister pointed out to me that I have been distant, since I got back, and that it would probably be a good idea if I let somebody in.”

“So, you thought you’d start with the first person you pushed away?”

“I did that to protect you. Then I saw you yesterday and I realised that I hurt you.”

Erika waved him in.

“Thank you.”

Erika made to close the door but a hand held it open.

“Hi, Erika!”

“Mindy. . .”

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Dave wandered through into the living room and he absorbed his surroundings as he went. He chuckled.

“This place has not changed in five years.”

“I haven’t really had the time to redecorate,” Erika replied in a sarcastic tone as she watched Mindy wander around looking at everything with intense curiosity.

“I’m a jerk. Before the island, I was a jerk. And now, I’m just a damaged jerk.”

“What’s in the bag?” Erika asked as she noticed the paper bag for the first time that Dave held in his left hand.

“I thought about many things on the island . . . but there was one thing that I thought about – even dreamt about – every day. I promised myself that if I ever got to do it again, I’d do it with you.”

Erika felt a little worried at the insinuation – at least until Dave held up a large tub of ice-cream. Erika visibly relaxed.

“I’ll get three spoons,” she suggested and headed for the kitchen.

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As they ate, the three of them talked.

“Why are you *both* here?”

“It was Mindy’s idea, in fact, and she pushed me to come.”

“Oh.”

“My mother wants me to join the company. She wants me to ‘take my rightful place’ in the company.”

“I can’t exactly picture you as ‘Master of the Universe’.”

Mindy giggled at that.

“No.” Dave replied. “After five years, we have plans. We have things that we have to do and we can’t do those if I am attending board meetings and stockholder’s briefings.”

“Dave, you’re an adult, you *can* say no.”

“Oh, I tried.”

Erika was very aware of how difficult it was to say ‘no’ to one’s parents!

“Well, then, don’t tell her. Show her. Be the person that you want her to see you as. Trust me; I have plenty of experience with disapproving parents.”

Dave grimaced and Mindy scowled.

“I have been at the receiving end of your father’s disapproval.”

“He blames himself more than he blames you. He thinks that maybe if he and Sarah had been closer than she might have told him about the flight and then he could have stopped her from going.”

“I am sorry.”

“You apologised already.”

“It’ll never be enough. . .”

“Did you hear that?” Mindy interrupted suddenly.

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“No,” Erika replied, but Dave had noticed Mindy’s expression.

“There’s somebody on the fire escape,” she advised Dave.

Dave jumped up and held out a hand for Erika.

“Come on!”

They both ran for the front door with Mindy a few feet behind. They were only feet away from potential safety when the door exploded into the hallway. Men seemed to appear from all sides with guns raised. Dave pulled Erika back towards the living room and Mindy dove for cover as bullets struck the walls all around them. They bolted into Erika's bedroom just as the window exploded and another man vaulted through onto the bed. Dave yanked Erika away from the man and attacked him, putting him out cold. Dave ran into the living room.

"Mindy, stay with Erika," Dave yelled as he went.

A tall woman with flowing white hair awaited him with her hands raised in a fighting stance.

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The evening had gone better than I had anticipated – at least until the crap hit the fan!

I had suggested the ice cream – I thought that it might break the ice. Dave had mentioned that he and Erika had enjoyed eating it on many an occasion. Dave had not been so sure, but what did a boy know! Two cop cars were parked outside the apartment – we had noticed them on the way in – and they were obviously on watch. I figured that it had something to do with Somers. I had seen the news article too and it had enraged me to see the bastard so blatantly ignoring our 'advice'.

I looked out the destroyed bedroom window and saw the very same cop cars – I also noticed a dark stain on the side window of one; no help was forthcoming from there! But I did notice two familiar shapes running towards the house.

I just hoped that they were not too late.

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### ***The apartment of Erika Lance***

I sensed a movement and I pushed Erika behind me just as there was a metallic sound from behind us.

As we turned, the gunman made to fire his submachine gun. But instead of automatic gunfire, there were the sharp reports of a pistol as two bullets passed straight through the gunman. He dropped to the floor and Diggle burst into the room from the window. Diggle thrust Erika and me to the floor behind the bed and ran towards the living room. I instantly sprang up and followed.

A white-haired woman was fighting Dave but she turned away and made to flank Diggle. Diggle struck out at the woman but before *she* could strike, she received a kick from another form that had just entered the room via the hallway from front door.

The woman struck out at Sarah and she produced a small, but very lethal, knife. Diggle attacked the woman and they both fought. Dave and I looked for a hole so we could get Erika out of the apartment but the woman was watching for that. More men appeared from seemingly nowhere and engaged Sarah who, it seemed, was more than capable of looking after herself.

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The woman who was fighting Diggle was very good and she managed to force Diggle down, but only for a moment as she was kicked back against the wall. She made to stab Diggle but Mindy threw a kitchen knife in her direction. The knife struck the bitch's hand and she dropped her own blade. She made a run for it, out the door, narrowly avoiding bullets fired from Sarah's pistol.



Diggle grabbed up his own pistol.

“Are you hurt?” he demanded.

“No.”

“Are *you* hurt?” Sarah demanded of Mindy.

“Course not.”

“This is *exactly* why you need a bodyguard, Mr Lizewski!” Sarah growled.

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**July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

**Northern South China Sea**

**Lian Yu**

We had picked the place because of its view.

The headland stuck out into the sea a way and we knew that entombing the bodies there would hopefully keep the critters at bay. On two sides of us, was sea and a drop into the ocean. Of the other two sides, one was a wooded slope to a lower cliff and then trees that stopped about thirty feet from the cliff edge.

The effort involved in moving two adult bodies was huge. The effort was made even worse by our relationships with the bodies in question. Several times we both had to pause and rest – that rest often involved throwing up. During our rest periods, we began to gather rocks. Mostly smooth rocks initially, but eventually anything that we could find. In all, the operation took almost eight hours of toil.

Dave had just laid the last rock and I had turned to face the sea; I was still shy about crying and I had been unable to hold it in any longer. I heard Dave suddenly yell out . . . and he kept yelling. As I span around, I lost my footing and I fell backwards but not before I had caught a glimpse of Dave . . . I was horrified by what I saw – there was what could only be an *arrow* which had pierced his chest, from the back to the front, and the pointy end was all bloody.

As I fell backwards, I could have sworn that I saw a hooded man who seemed to be holding a bow. The bow was moved slightly so it pointed in *my* direction and that was barely a second before I felt a burning sensation in my right shoulder.

I passed out with the ever-increasing pain.