

*The story begins on April 2, 2030, in a small town in Maine.*

## **Part 1: Getting to Know Mandalay Hawk**

### *Chapter 1: The storm that lit the fire*

**Mandalay** could hear and feel the panic in her dad's crackly voice. His last-ditch effort to get emergency supplies before they evacuated had become a nightmare. Through the phone static, she heard him say he wouldn't be able to get home, because police had closed the roads.

There would be no evacuation. Mandalay was stranded alone.

She stood in her living room, staring out the window, seeing what Mother Nature had unleashed on the coast of Maine: The weather experts called it a MaineCane - the biggest hurricane ever to hit Maine - a category 4 storm expected to pack 150 mile per hour winds and dump more than three feet of rain. Trees in Mandalay's yard were already snapping like small twigs. Water from the Back River was rising towards the house. And this was just the start.

Mandalay was 13 and lived alone with her dad, two miles from the closest neighbor.

Mandalay tried calling her father back. All she got was: "I'm sorry, the number you are trying to reach ..."

She clicked off her ring phone as her house shuttered and shook from the wind. She knew she had little time and only one option, because they didn't have a basement or a secure room. She needed to build a fort in the back of the living room, away from the window, a fort that would give her a fighting chance of surviving this storm. She was a strong girl from helping her dad chop wood in the backyard. She went to work.

She pushed and pulled the couch to the back of the room, then dragged the big chair next to it and tipped it over. Then she dragged her desk, her mattress and the coffee and kitchen tables

and tipped them over, creating a sturdy perimeter. She pushed and pulled the dining room table and turned it upside down so it formed a roof. She tied a thick rope around the table and shoved the end of it into the fort. She then put on her dad's rain pants, her heavy boots, gloves and two raincoats and climbed inside and yanked and yanked the table over her head. She didn't recall ever praying in her life before, but she was now.

Within a few minutes, she heard the sharp crack of the living room window, then a howling wind so ear-splittingly loud she could barely hear the glass shattering, the tree limbs smashing through the house and the debris whipping around her.

She had draped a thick blanket over her head and held onto the rope for dear life - the rope that was holding the table in place despite the ferocious winds, holding onto that rope so that an avalanche of torn branches, cracked glass and broken roof didn't cascade down on top of her. She held on for hours, focusing on one simple thing, holding that rope so that she could tell her dad how she kicked butt and survived. She then noticed water was creeping up, now covering the lower part of her legs.

As the wind howled, she heard more cracking, as if something was splitting open. Then something fell ...