

Dave Liston

Dave
Liston as written by Mike McMillan of Spotfireimages.com

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Fallen
Friend

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Dave
Liston smiled upon the gathering of people in the woods.

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He braced
his hands beneath the small round window and stood in the crowded twin-prop
airplane. He wiped the sweat from his eyes and snapped the chinstrap on his
helmet into place. His heart pounded as he tightened his leg straps. He had
never felt this nervous before a practice jump. "Two jumpers!" boomed the
spotter at the open door. Three thousand feet below the circling ship, Dave's
girlfriend waited in a meadow known as the "Big Spot".

Kristin
shaded the summer sun from her face and squinted at the plane buzzing far
overhead. Standing among a crew of smokejumper trainers, she quietly wondered
why her boss told her to take the morning off - just to watch Dave jump.
Kristin's three friends from work seemed filled with giddy anticipation on the
winding drive through the hills above Fairbanks,
Alaska.

"Get
Ready!"

The
spotter's hand came down on Dave's shoulder and he threw himself to the wind
stream. Seconds later, he pulled the green handle from his harness, sending his
parachute to the sky with a loud crack. He drew in several deep breaths,
fixing his eyes on the jumpspot. Minutes later he turned upon final approach,
sinking below the treetops. The wind faded near the target, and Dave knew his
landing would be rough. His boots hit first as he tucked into a tight roll. His
helmet hit next, the impact filling his metal facemask with dirt.

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The rest
of this story!