

A capturing lambda can be a coroutine, but you have to save your captures while you still can

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We saw some time ago that [capturing lambdas which are coroutines result in lifetime issues](#) because the lambda itself returns at the first suspension point, at which point there's a good chance it will be destructed. After that point, any attempt by the lambda body to access those captured variables is a use-after-free bug.

```
winrt::IAsyncAction DoSomethingInBackgroundAsync()
{
    auto a = something();
    auto b = something();
    auto c = something();

    auto callback = [a, b, c]()
        -> winrt::IAsyncAction
        {
            co_await winrt::resume_background();
            DoSomething(a, b, c); // use-after-free bug!
        };
    return callback();
}
```

This problem is so insidious that there's a C++ Core Guideline about it: [CP.51: Do not use capturing lambdas that are coroutines.](#)

One workaround is to pass the captures as explicit parameters:

```

winrt::IAsyncAction DoSomethingInBackgroundAsync()
{
    auto a = something();
    auto b = something();
    auto c = something();

    auto callback = [](auto a, auto b, auto c)
        -> winrt::IAsyncAction
        {
            co_await winrt::resume_background();
            DoSomething(a, b, c); // use-after-free bug!
        };
    return callback(a, b, c);
}

```

However, this workaround isn't always available because you may not control the code that invokes the lambda.

```

void RegisterClickHandler(Button const& button, int key)
{
    button.Click([key](auto sender, auto args)
        -> winrt::fire_and_forget
        {
            co_await winrt::resume_background();
            NotifyClick(key);
        });
}

```

You aren't the one who invokes the lambda. That lambda is invoked by the Click event, and it passes two parameters (the sender and the event arguments); there's no way to convince it to pass a `key` too.

One idea would be to extract the work into a nested lambda. We control the invoke of the nested lambda and can pass the extra parameter that way.

```

void RegisterClickHandler(Button const& button, int key)
{
    button.Click([key](auto sender, auto args)
        -> winrt::fire_and_forget
        {
            return [](auto sender, auto args, int key)
                -> winrt::fire_and_forget
                {
                    co_await winrt::resume_background();
                    NotifyClick(key);
                }(std::move(sender), std::move(args), key);
        });
}

```

The outer lambda is not a coroutine. It's just calling another lambda and propagating the return value.

The inner lambda is a coroutine. To be safe from use-after-free, it is a captureless coroutine, and all of its state is passed as explicit parameters. Here is where we sneak in the extra `key` parameter.

Now, I'm working a bit too hard here, because the coroutine body doesn't use `sender` or `args` so I can accept them by universal reference (to avoid a copy) and just ignore them. To make sure I don't use them by mistake, I'll leave the parameters anonymous.

```
void RegisterClickHandler(Button const& button, int key)
{
    button.Click([key](auto&&, auto&&)
        -> winrt::fire_and_forget
        {
            return [](int key)
                -> winrt::fire_and_forget
                {
                    co_await winrt::resume_background();
                    NotifyClick(key);
                }(key);
        });
}
```

But what if I told you there was an easier way, where you can have your capturing lambda be a coroutine?

The trick is to make copies of your captures into the coroutine frame before the coroutine reaches its first suspension point. (Note that this trick requires eager-started coroutines. Lazy-started coroutines suspend immediately upon creation, so you have no opportunity to copy the captures into the frame.)

```
void RegisterClickHandler(Button const& button, int key)
{
    button.Click([key](auto&&, auto&&)
        -> winrt::fire_and_forget
        {
            auto copiedKey = key;
            co_await winrt::resume_background();
            NotifyClick(copiedKey);
        });
}
```

We explicitly copy the captured variable into the frame. When execution reaches the first suspension point at the `co_await`, the captured variables disappear. Lesser coroutine lambdas would tremble in fear, but not us! We laugh at the C++ language and say, “Go ahead, take those captured variables away and turn them into poison. It doesn't matter because I made my own copy before you turned them evil.”

The tricky part, though, is making sure that we don't touch the original already-freed captures and operate only on our local copies. Somebody coming in later and making a change to the function may not realize that the captures are poisoned and try to use them. Oops. Look who's laughing now.

Next time we'll look at a way to make this slightly less error-prone.

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