

Combat Aircrew Seven

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*This book is dedicated to my beautiful wife,
who has shown super-human patience with me.
I love you.*

Prologue

During the Cold War, the only thing that stopped American or Russian military strategists from taking over the entire world was the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), where a Multiple Independently Targetable Re-Entry Vehicle (MIRV) launch by America on Russia or vice versa, would automatically lead to a “doomsday” response by the nation under attack. Mutual destruction of both America and Russia was thereby guaranteed. MAD resulted in nearly thirty years of unprecedented peace and quiet, caused solely by mutual nuclear fear.

In early October, 2003, Russia discreetly invoked MAD again, but this time in the Middle East in direct response to Israeli threats to make a nuclear strike against Syria with submarine-launched American Harpoon missiles. Quietly and with the minimum of fuss, Russia deployed its most advanced tactical nuclear missiles and crews to both Syria and Iran, thereby sending an unmistakable diplomatic signal that if Israel attacked Tehran or Damascus with nuclear weapons, Russia would in return, via Syria, instantly and anonymously vaporize the Jewish State.

The Russian missile type deployed in Syria and Iran is the P270 Moskit [Mosquito], called the SS-N-22 “Sunburn” by NATO strategists. This missile was once described, by Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, as “the most dangerous anti-ship missile in the Russian fleet.” The ship-borne version of this missile is launched from deck mounted quad tubes, but since Rohrabacher made his comments, Russia has adapted the Sunburn for submerged launch from submarines. Western defense experts unambiguously view all versions of Sunburn as the “most dangerous

anti-ship missile in the world.”

In 1989, Israel was trying to replace its obsolete Gal-class submarine fleet, while simultaneously working to arrange financing for a new submarine. Having failed to extract these big-ticket items as gifts from America, in 1991 Israel turned its sights on Germany. After a period of negotiations, Germany agreed to build and provide the first two Dolphin class submarines free of charge, and extend a loan to Israel for the third submarine.

The nuclear warheads for these missiles can be either American or homegrown but no matter which, Israel had to make it known that the nuclear capability was real, for there is no point making a nuclear threat if you cannot back it up with real nuclear muscle. This was achieved by leaking the information through high profile Israeli media assets, who initially plastered the information all over the Internet. This completed stage one of the exercise, which was swiftly followed by an official statement of absolute deniability.

In the meantime, Syria decided that it also needed a small but capable submarine fleet.

In the spring of 2004, Syrian officials met with Russian officials to determine if the Victor class submarine would serve their purposes and to discuss a price. The Russians were quick to approve the sale of three Delta III class submarines with nuclear capabilities. These submarines were purchased in order to counter the threat posed by Israel.

The Russians provided the Submarines with full crews who would work with the Syrians until they were comfortable operating the sophisticated equipment on their own. These submarines would only operate in the Mediterranean basin.

PRESENT DAY: Highly trained and heavily armed members of Syrian backed Al Qaeda operatives are flying into Russian airspace at an altitude and, on a course that wouldn't draw attention to the aircraft.

Chapter 1

As the small jet aircraft crossed the Finnish border into Russia, the door was opened. Eleven men were holding hands not only in prayer but to keep close to each other as the parachutes were opened. The first to open would be at 5,000 feet and the others would deploy their parachutes in ten second increments so that there would be enough time to clear the landing area for the next jumper.

They left the small jet at nearly the same time, only to be swallowed into the inky black night. They had extinguished all of the jet's interior lights prior to takeoff to facilitate good night vision right away. These eleven parachutists were conducting a High Altitude High Opening jump where the jumpers open at a high altitude, such as tonight's 25,000 feet, and glide long distances to the landing zone. These men were to use oxygen until they were at 10,000 feet where there is enough oxygen to sustain the life of someone not acclimated to high altitudes. To parachute at night into a wooded area would mean suicide for less trained men.

Military skydiving rigs are known as High Altitude Precision Parachute Systems or "stealth parachutes" because they cannot easily be seen from the ground. These parachutes are made with a non-reflective parachute nylon. All of the handles are located in the same place and these jumpers had added an oxygen system and attached several days' worth of gear on the outer attachment points. The canopy size is a typical very small 360 sq ft on both the main and reserve chutes. Under all of the equipment and supplies attached to the parachute harness, each member also wore the Grad-1 tactical assault vest. Each vest was tailored to the capabilities and skills of its wearer.

While some may carry a single handgun and ten various blades, another may have two handguns and a sub-machinegun. One man even added a shotgun to his vest though it seemed a highly unlikely weapon for this mission, their leader, Ahmed Al Haasan, left such choices to his men.

With the parachute and harness rigging, supplies, and weapons vest, each man was carrying about 85lbs of weight. It was going to be a very trying landing. They would be landing in a tiny clearing in the woods, but were told that it was soft, level footing which might mean all the difference. After many practice jumps during their training, they knew to land with their legs bent and to roll upon touch down.

Though they were ensured that tiny red Christmas lights would outline the landing zone, they still relied on their intense training and homed in on the site with all confidence. The men all used GPS or Global Positioning System to find the clearing. Eleven smallish men with smallish parachutes and smallish packages landed as light as leaves in the clearing behind a senior Russian Admiral's home. Al Haasan greeted each jumper as he landed. He was very proud that his own leaders had given him choice of men to accompany him on this mission. Each was skilled with all type of weaponry and had exceeded all expectations during their training. These weren't young men who were easily convinced to carry out suicide bombings. These men were in their late twenties and early thirties. They had been battle proven inside Iraq as well as with their brothers in Afghanistan. One of these men had single-handedly placed a backpack filled with explosives aboard a commuter train in Spain and killed 200 people. This one act was timed to kill masses of people just before an election and frightened the public so much that it affected the outcome of the election for the Spanish Presidency.

It was a singular success and he had become famous within the terror network. His work there done, he volunteered for the next daring mission and there was not a mission more daunting than what hand his men were to carry out.

Everyone landed well except for one man who shot to his feet as if nothing happened. He shook it off and tried to act as if there was nothing

wrong. He threw off his rucksack and fell on top of it with fire in his eyes and a strained smile.

Yes, there was something wrong with this one. Al Haasan took out a blade and cut away the lower leg of his jumpsuit. It was as he thought, a compound fracture with the bone protruding from the wound.

Al Haasan spoke softly to the man and congratulated him for all that he had done in the name of Allah. He recommended that the man write a letter home and he would personally deliver it describing the bravery that he had shown.

There was no paper or pen so Al Haasan would make his first appearance to the admiral only to retrieve paper and pen.

Al Haasan walked up the short road to report to the Russian admiral's home. He knew the grounds after looking at satellite photographs downloaded from the internet.

He knocked and the Admiral, who was expecting him, answered the door. "Ahmed Al Haasan, it is so nice to finally put a face to the hero of your cause."

"Admiral, I have business with my crew and wish to borrow a tablet of paper, a pen and a cotton sheet. I will also need a bar of soap and a bucket of water."

The admiral returned with the requested items.

"I will be back very soon."

Al Haasan returned with the writing materials and everyone found something to do while the man wrote his final letter to his wife. He told her details of their mission and that he must be left behind. He told her of the love that he had for her and promised that Al Queda would ensure that she would be taken care of financially.

"Will my family receive any compensation?" asked the wounded man.

"Yes they will, you have my word on it. It is customary to help the widows of our holy men, so you can count on it."

"Thank you my friend for everything you have done for our cause."

He closed his eyes for the inevitable and he knew that he would feel no pain.

Suddenly a voice, "Al Haasan, This isn't necessary. I can have him

seen by a wonderful doctor tonight. He might be hobbling around on crutches but I'm sure you have worth for him."

The young terrorist knew as well as everyone that he couldn't be left alive and Al Haasan shortened the conversation and the man's pain and regret by placing a bullet in his head. He asked all of the men to pray for their fallen comrade and to give praise to Allah that more hadn't been hurt in probably the most dangerous parachute exercise in history.

He approached the admiral like a wild cat might circle its quarry. "What brings you to our private ceremony?" he hissed. "You don't know what our orders are; in fact you know nothing of us or our cause. Like all capitalist nations you only care about payment. Well, you are guaranteed your payment, but I warn you not to meddle in my affairs."

"Rather than have our first meeting tonight, I would like to meet with you in the morning. Will food be available for me and my men?"

"Of course, and that would be for ten and not eleven," The admiral digged.

"Yes, that is correct." The jab wasn't lost on the terrorist.

His men, of course, knew that this was the only thing to do. He wouldn't have been effective on the submarine and he certainly couldn't run.

They took to their work with gusto deep in the woods and, using the folding shovel that one of their group brought, they began to dig. The digging wasn't easy; it was very rocky ground. When they had a hole that would accommodate the body sufficiently, they felt it was as it should be.

They called for Al Haasan to lead the prayer for their fallen comrade.

Al Haasan cried for the man as he fingered the letter to his wife. He had never married, but he understood how strong the bond could be between man and wife.

The men prepared their friend for burial.

The prayer to God for the deceased Muslim is a common collective duty (Fard Kifayah). This means that Muslims should offer this prayer for death.

Al Haasan knew the prayer by heart after such a life of violence.

When a Muslim dies, the whole body, beginning with the exposed parts of absolution must be washed a few times with soap or some other detergent or disinfectant, and cleansed of all visible impurities; this is called “Ghusul.” When the body is thoroughly clean, it is wrapped in one or more white cotton sheets called Kafen, covering all the parts of the body.

Al Haasan stood beside the body facing the Qiblah at Mecca with the followers behind him in a straight line. He raised his hands to his ears declaring the intention in a low voice to pray to God for the particular deceased one, and said, “Allahu Akbar” (Allah is greatest). The worshippers follow the imam’s lead and after him place their right hands over the left ones under the navel as in other prayers.

Al Haasan said, “Allahu Akbar” without raising his hands and recited the second part of the Tashahud.

“O Allah! Grant forgiveness to our living and our dead. Grant forgiveness to those who are present and to those who are absent, and to our young and our old folk, and to our males and females. O Allah! Whoever you grant to live from among us, help him to live in Islam, and who of us you cause to die, help him to die in faith. O Allah! Do not deprive us of the reward for patience on his loss, and do not make us subject to trail after him.”

Al Haasan and three of his men said, ‘Allahu Akbar’ without raising their hands. The rest of his men fell in behind following the lead of Al Haasan step by step and recited privately the same utterances in a low voice.

After completing the prayer, the body was taken to the grave site; the men walked in front or beside the body. During this process silence was required. The body is lowered for burial with the face resting in the direction of Mecca. When lowering the body down, these words were said: “In the name of Allah and with Allah, and according to the sunnah of the messenger of Allah upon who be the blessings and peace of Allah.

“O Allah! Make him our fore-runner, and make him for us a reward and treasure, and make him for us a pleader, and accept his pleading.”

They placed a stone under their fallen comrade’s head to raise it up.

After placing the body in the grave the dead body was covered with white cotton sheets of standard material. They then filled the pit with soil, and raised the level of the grave a little less than one foot in a sloping way.

The grave was built and marked in a simple way as is the custom in the Islamic faith. They knew that any extravagance in building the grave or dressing up the body in fine suits or the like is non-Islamic. It is false vanity and a waste of assets that can be used in many useful ways. It is strongly against the teachings of the Islamic religion and the prophet Muhammad.

Chapter 2

The weather had suddenly moved in on them and it was ugly. Keflavik was advertising the precision glide slope at 500' ceiling with two miles visibility. The big P-3 aircraft started its lazy left hand turn to try again. The nearest alternate airfield for the P-3 was Leuchars in Scotland. Patrol squadron 3 often had to divert to Scotland and use these facilities when bad weather at Keflavik weather made landings there unsafe. The Patrol Squadron Three “Aces,” as they were known as, became a frequent sight at this base; especially during the deep winter months when Keflavik was snowed in with blizzards that even the most brave pilots would not attempt, no matter the decision height, which was the height that you waved off or increased altitude because they couldn't see the runway. They could continue to try until they reached their reserve fuel amount and then they would have to fly to their alternate, which was just over 800 miles or 2 ½ hours away.

If they had ended up flying to their alternate, Leuchars was actually a great place to spend a night or two. Lieutenant Karen Madden, the Patrol Plane's Commander, loved to visit Milton Lea and just rent a bike or go horseback riding. In the evenings there is a Theatre—not a movie theater—but an actual stage performance. There was Dog racing, Casino gambling, antique shops and even a mall. Leuchars' train station was within a short walking distance from the town center. St Andrews is also just a short distance away and is one of the oldest and most famous golf courses in the world, but of course no one aboard had brought their clubs. One of the other senior Lieutenants in the squadron swore that if he took his clubs on every flight they wouldn't get soaked in by the weather and would land safely at Keflavik; on the other hand,

if he forgot to bring his clubs they would have to divert to Leuchars and leave him suffering without his clubs.

There is no question that this is golf's Mecca and a course that every golfer, from weekend hacker to accomplished players, must play at least once. It is an emotional experience replicated no place else.

Karen wasn't a golfer and once she wore out the local sights she started taking the one hour train ride into Edinburgh.

Karen liked to hike up the royal mile window shopping, but wouldn't actually buy something until she came down from the Castle; she didn't want to be lugging heavy bags up the steep stone stairway. Edinburgh Castle started life as an Iron Age fort, the castle contains within its walls St. Margaret's Chapel, the oldest building in the city and the staterooms where James VI was born in 1473. From the castle she could see extraordinary views of the city from three directions. The castle was magnificent and she had witnessed the daily tattoo on a previous trip to Edinburgh in August. The Castle Esplanade is the venue of the world-famous Edinburgh Military Tattoo, the annual occasion on which the Army presents a lively program of music, marching and historical re-enactments under floodlights before large and appreciative audiences.

No matter what the draw to Scotland, Karen's aircrew were tired and wanted a few beers before falling asleep to be awake and alert for whatever tomorrow brought. The aircraft had enough fuel for several passes and everyone was tired and crossing their fingers. Not only were the winds and blizzard high, but so were everyone's hopes. There was a severe crosswind that would mean that would have to make the approach at an extreme angle.

She was sitting on the jump-seat for now. She would move into the right pilot's seat as they got closer to the airfield. For the duration of the flight, she found herself drifting off, thinking about her new second pilot (2P). She had a really goofy grin on her face, and was just floating in a space that she could only describe as, "Wow! What was that that just hit me?" She had forgotten how enjoyable that feeling was. It was unexpected and unlooked for, and she thanked her God for giving it to

her again. She just wanted to enjoy this sensation for as long as she could and not think about it too much or blow it out of proportion; just enjoy it for its own sake.

At the risk of blowing it out of proportion, she only wished that he was closer so that it would be easier to see his face because she really hoped that they would get along as Patrol Plane Commander (PPC) and 2P.

All that aside, it was late, and she had to get this aircraft on the ground and the severe weather seemed to hammer her all the way down. Her day wouldn't end there. She would have to stop by her desk to take care of some paperwork before heading over to the debrief.

Billy very comfortable with her abilities and had witnessed several other near-miraculous aerial acts. If anyone could land in this weather it was LT Karen Madden—but she decide to let Vince, her 3P make an attempt. It would serve him well to experience an actual instrument approach. He reached the decision height, which is the minimum height that an aircraft can descend to without seeing the airfield. If he saw the airfield at the decision height he could ask for Visual Flight Rules (VFR) to land at the airfield. Karen wasn't about to put her crew in danger, so when Vince waved off after he couldn't see the runway, she took over the controls. Vince first passed control to Billy.

“You have the controls.”

“I have the controls”

When Karen got in the left seat Billy passed control to Karen.

“You have the controls.”

“I have the controls.”

She banked left for another try, all the time watching the approach plates, which diagramed the airfield and advertised all of the minimums as well as radio frequencies.

Karen tried to shake it off, but she found herself incredibly attracted to Billy. When she first saw him around the squadron spaces, she prayed that he wouldn't be added to her crew, but fate put another bomb in her lap. She was already frustrated with a terrible marriage and if the CO threw that hand grenade at her, she would lose her mind, or at the very

least, be continually distracted. She imagined what it would be like to be with Billy. She hoped that he was all rested up from the long trip from Brunswick only to be thrown on this mission. She would take him at his word that it was worth the effort, and she was glad if she was able to help him enjoy it a bit. She hadn't enjoyed herself so much in a very long time.

Earlier, Billy asked for Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) assistance for an instrument approach due to weather. The controller happily provided flight instructions with corrections to flight path and Karen met all altitude restrictions. They were directed down to decision height, which is the minimum altitude that an aircraft can reach without seeing the runway.

Billy said into his headset, "No luck on that pass. Is there a lot of traffic or can you work with us until we can break through?"

The girl giggled, "Don't worry, we have several controllers and I'm yours until you get tired of me."

Billy caught the obvious come on and laughed out loud. "Thanks Jelly, I look forward to our time together." Karen on the other hand thought it both crude and unprofessional and that the enlisted girl had no right talking to Billy that way...had no right speaking to her second pilot that way. She then reminded herself that if the young controller had met Billy, the young girl would be too excited to assist with any landings and would have to make up some an excuse to her supervisor explaining why she couldn't take this aircraft...he was that good looking.

To meet official guidelines Billy was required to repeat the entire script. "Lima Xray One Two turning left to try again. Billy asked for Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) for an instrument approach again due to weather. The controller again provided flight instructions with corrections to flight path and Karen met all altitude restrictions. They were directed down to decision height and they still couldn't see the runway.

"Are we even flying over a runway?" Billy asked.

The controller laughed and assured him that there was indeed a runway under their aircraft on at least two occasions.

The crew was getting worried that they might be in for another 3 hour flight just to sleep and come back to try again.

Karen set up for another precision approach and responded to all course corrections. At 300' she declared that she had the runway in sight and requested VFR clearance. It was granted but Billy didn't see the runway at all. He was petrified but when the aircraft descended through 200 feet he could finally see the runway lights. He looked over at his senior pilot and swore that she was smiling at him. She surely had balls he thought.

"Visual approach approved. Good luck Lima X-ray come visit the air force sometime."

Karen was mortified. Was his voice that smooth and silky? She thought about it and thought that it actually was. He had a kind and confident southern accent that put everyone at ease.

"I sometimes think I would like to 'Aim High. See you around, Jelly."

Karen reached over and slapped his hand and immediately blushed. "You shouldn't be talking to enlisted folks like that. Isn't that right, Petty Officer Moore."

The senior flight engineer had to agree with LT Madden though he also agreed that she sounded really nice.

Billy laughed out loud. "Who says she was enlisted anyway, I used to date a Marine Aircraft Control Officer and she regularly worked the monitors."

"Well, I doubt that *she* was an officer."

"Okay, I promise not to flirt with the air traffic controllers if you'll promise not to slap my hand again."

If he even thought about heading across the flight line to meet this girl Karen would lay into him like a tornado.

Chapter 3

The Russian Admiral, Ivan Gurevich was on a hill overlooking over his naval base. Despite two blemishes on his record he still had an outstanding career, but he still couldn't believe that he allowed himself to become involved in such a traitorous affair. His stomach turned over every time he thought of it. It kept him awake and he didn't have his wife to comfort him. He was resigned to his fate.

He suddenly experienced a burning, aching, gnawing pain between his navel and breastbone. He had developed a stomach ulcer after his latest failure and the pain sometimes nearly brought him to his knees. His doctor told him that he had to stop smoking and to limit his drinking to a minimum. He had hoped that he could just make changes to his diet, but the best that could be expected with a diet change would be an improvement of his symptoms, but would not help the ulcer heal. Though his doctor told him to quit smoking and drink, he did neither. If necessary he would use his rank to request a specialist to perform surgery, which might mean cutting one or more of the nerves to the stomach or widening the opening of the bottom of the stomach. The worst case would involve removing part of his stomach. He dealt with the pain as he dealt with his embarrassments, quietly taking in all of the negative press and protests from his superiors.

It is late March and the temperature is 27 degrees in Murmansk, Russia, a port city in the far northern fjords of the Barents Sea. The Murmansk Region is located in the northern most territory of Northwest Russia in the Kola Peninsula, above the Polar Circle. The region borders Finland to the west, Norway to the northeast, and the Republic of Karelia (another region of Northwest Russia) to the south. The total

population is 1,600,000 people. Due to the region's proximity to Norway and Finland, Murmansk Airport conducts international flights to several cities in both countries. Murmansk is also the location of a commercial seaport on the Barents Sea which operates year-round with the assistance of ice breakers.

Murmansk benefits from a friendly warm eddy from the Gulf Stream. Still, there are two or three months that require the Icebreaker ships to keep the sea lane open. In the early 1990s it was revealed that the Soviet navy had been using the sea as a dumping ground for its spent nuclear reactors. The world's environmental groups protested loudly but their protests fell on deaf ears. The Russian admiral that oversaw the unauthorized dumping was Russian Admiral Ivanov Gurevich.

Presently, at the Russian Navy facility in Murmansk, Admiral Gurevich is hosting a group of Al Queda representatives at his home not far from his submarine base. He is awaiting the leader of the terror cell, Ahmed Al Haasan. He had formed an unholy alliance with terrorists and after a time with his guests, he saw that his lifespan was becoming shorter and shorter. Not only had he sold a nuclear ballistic missile submarine to these terrorists, he had surely sold his soul as well.

This meeting was scheduled in order to confirm the price of the training of the Al Queda crews. In addition, they would discuss the training that they were to receive during the next two weeks and how they would be concealed. For the latter problem, the admiral would propose tents set back into the woods in an area where his men could intercept anyone wandering around the post.

The most difficult problem of the exercise was identifying probable volunteers from among the more than 200 Russian submarine crewmen who would agree to provide the training. When a potential instructor was identified, he was approached carefully and, when a positive contact was made, the newly recruited crewman was asked to recruit another for a bonus in his payment for the two-week training session. Within three days, the admiral had his volunteers who pledged their silence and hard work. He explained that these men were from Syria and that they had strong ties to the Motherland. Some of the men bought it, but just as many smiled knowingly. By making these comments, he hoped

to ensure that, if word leaked, he might be able to convince his countrymen that he too was duped. He even had official looking documents that explained the entire operation. He knew that the odds were slim that anyone would believe his story but he at least made an effort at a way out of scandal. Most of them were entirely mercenary and he could easily understand their motives; theirs were no different from his.

Lately, the government had asked its military men and women to take cuts in pay and even to work without pay for long periods of time. The Russian crewmen were excited with the payoff that they were to receive for training these foreigners. Most knew that they were training terrorists but they vowed to provide outstanding training, nonetheless.

Admiral Gurevich is a sturdy man with a full head of salt and pepper hair. He maintains very strict military bearing even though he is selling an Oscar submarine without his country's approval. At 6 foot 3 inches tall and 260 lbs, he is an imposing figure not unlike a bear. He looks down to his shoes that shine like a mirror, thanks to his butler. His face is deeply creased and lined from years of smoking, age and worry. The admiral has lived and worked in and around the Russian Navy for his entire life, for as far back as he could remember. Even as a young boy, he worked with his father as a painter's helper at the powerful Russian naval seaport near his family home at Sevastopol. He couldn't wait to get up in the morning and walk with his father to work. The heavy lifting cranes reminded him of dinosaurs. He took his job very seriously, so seriously that his father worried that he was toiling away his childhood. His father didn't understand how much information he was taking in and that this information might someday make him an admiral in the Navy. His father died far before he could see his son in the uniform but Gurevich thought that his father had proudly looked down on him...but no more. If he were looking down now, his father would be mortified by what his son was about to do. He truly admired the man that operated the dinosaur.

The admiral wishes that he had been given a position at Sevastopol at least once in his career. It would have been so nice to have enjoyed the warmer weather with his wife, daughters and his birth family. He

is proud of what he has done throughout his career, but just as saddened by the turn of events that brought him to his point.

Fourteen months earlier, an Oscar identical to the one that he was about to sell; and turnover to Al Qaeda terrorists, plummeted to an uncontrolled collision with the sea floor that killed the entire crew to the dismay of international rescue crews. Several days after the submarine sank in the Barents Sea Russian officials questioned the training tactics used at the major northern submarine base. The promotion of Admiral Gurevich was held up until investigations were complete. He still had nightmares of the terrifying hole on its starboard side. Video provided by the Norwegian dive teams showed terrible and severe damage all the way from the bow of the submarine to the conning tower (or sail). The tower contained the control room, meaning that the crew would have lost control of the vessel when disaster struck. The extent of the damage suggested that many members of the crew may have died within minutes after the vessel plunged more than 350 feet to the seabed.

He was further embarrassed when his President ordered the Navy to accept offers of assistance from the west. Britain and Norway sent rescue teams right away, the British rescuers ferried a sophisticated LR5 mini-sub to the site, while Norway sent a dozen civilian divers experienced in deep-sea work off oil rigs.

After many months of uncertainty, charges were brought against Admiral Gurevich. He was ordered to retire and, at present, he was due to turn over his command to another admiral in two weeks. He hoped to join his family in America the day after the change of command. In Miami his family was finding it easy to fit in. In Miami you're likely to hear the language and music of many cultures; dine in exciting restaurants and take a mini tour of the world. He couldn't wait to kick off his shoes and swing his wife around in his arms on the miles of wide, white sand beaches. Each time he spoke to his wife, she told him of her adventures. She described having a cup of café con lecher in Little Havana, Miami's Cuban community; strolling past art deco architecture in the city's artsy South Beach district; and exploring trendy Coconut Grove.

He looks even wearier lately as he contemplates the relationship that he has allowed to develop between himself and the Al Qaeda terrorists. It was a sort of knee-jerk reaction when the terrorists approached him. After fourteen years of low pay, after the cold war, and after his country worked to make their new democracy work, he was ripe for the kind of monetary offer that he was presented with. He sees his traitorous behavior as a pay off that he feels he deserves after being let down by his government.

Finally, Al Haasan arrived. The admiral met the senior of the terrorists at the door and greets him. The terrorist thanked him in halting Russian for the hospitality, but for the next two weeks the admiral planned to distance himself from the clandestine operations.

“Please ask your men if there is anything that they need and we will work hard to make it happen.”

“That’s very generous, Admiral, but I cannot let my men get soft when our mission looms in front of us. I’m sure it is very hard to understand our motives. I have no preference for what our target might be so when our religious leaders give us a task, we take it on with gusto.”

“Are you satisfied with the training that we are providing?” asked the admiral.

“Yes, I am very satisfied,” Al Haasan said. “After only two days, the information is flowing into my men like the Vodka that your men are so fond of.”

Admiral Gurevich didn’t reply to that last comment. He knew that the terrorist meant no harm and that it was the way of his people to be coarse of tongue and ill-mannered.

“I’m glad the training is going well. We have moved up the day that the Submarine is to get underway. Another submarine is arriving earlier than scheduled due to an illness that has fallen over many of the crew. Your submarine will leave in ten days.”

Al Haasan was beside himself with anger. He notes the incredible

shine on the admiral's shoes and the impeccable uniform. He guessed that the admiral never put to sea for any significant orders and had languished around the Kremlin for most of his career, carrying briefcases for his superiors and holding onto train straps while his seniors sat in the comfortable train cars.

They could easily condense the training to allow for the extra day, but he was used to being in complete control and this change of schedule reminded him that he was at the mercy of the submarines schedule. He cooled off quickly and returned to the conversation.

"The training in Syria was very basic so we are happy to be training for the actual submarine that we will commandeer," The admiral flinched at the word and Al Haasan took more than a little joy in the jab. "In Syria we were limited to two or three older Soviet submarines including 2 Romeo-type diesel-electric submarines, transferred by the Soviet Navy in 1985. These ships were diesel electric which is a completely different animal than a late model nuclear ballistic missile submarine."

At that moment one of the younger and braver terrorists quickly approached Al Haasan with what must certainly be significant news. He caught Al Haasan by surprise and by the time he reached Al Haasan, he had a knife at his throat. Admiral Gurevich was amazed with the speed and calmness that Al Haasan demonstrated as he made the knife appear, seemingly out of thin air.

"What is it, stupid imbecile," Al Haasan demanded, knowing the affect that his actions were having on the admiral. He had seen his man approaching but thought that it was a great opportunity to show what a powerful force he was to reckon with.

The young man whispered something in Arabic and Al Haasan arose without apology and asked the admiral to arrange for another meeting that evening.

"Is there anything I can do," asked the admiral

"Perhaps there is. Your men are working hard to get the submarine simulator back up and running but each moment lost in training is hurting our ability to take their positions on the submarine."

"If you will get your men to head into the woods to read their

technical manuals, I will have the best simulator repairman out here in moments. He will certainly wonder why we have a portable trainer here behind my home, but I'll have an answer for that question if and when it comes up."

"Thank you, comrade." This was the first time that Al Haasan had called him a friend and the hardened Admiral knew that his friendly demeanor was a result of his anticipation of getting underway with his ship.

The admiral contacted the main simulator facility and asked for Petrov. The receptionist announced, "Petrov, Admiral Gurevich is on the line for you." The grouchy technician slowly made his way to the phone stopping along the way to give advice. He did this to impress his colleagues that such communications were common with the Admiral.

"Yes sir, my Admiral, Petrov speaking."

"Good, Petrov, how are you my friend," he asked.

Petrov answered loud enough for several people to hear, "I am fine, Admiral, and my family is fine as well. We are well taken care of under your leadership."

"Now you complement me when I don't deserve it," Gurevich answered.

"What can I do for you, Admiral?"

"Well, I have a mobile simulator behind my home that I use to keep myself in touch with current tactics and it has shut down and I certainly can't make the repairs. I can't even change the tire on my car."

"Admiral, I will be there in 15 minutes with two men and tools and materials to fix whatever the problem is."

The admiral walked up the slope to the simulator and found Al Haasan still fretting over the simulator's traitorous behavior.

"Al Haasan, I have three of the best repairmen on the way and I suggest that you return to my home while they perform their maintenance. Your men should remain concealed until you tell them to continue with their training."

"I've already asked the trainers to do the same just in case we have a man with a loose tongue."

When the admiral and Al Haasan arrived back at the Admiral's home, the terrorist uncharacteristically welcomed a glass of brandy.

The admiral sized him up. The terrorist hadn't bathed in several days, though portable showers were available for the entire group. He either cares nothing for personal grooming or didn't want to risk being caught in a compromising situation. He dedicated himself to his God first and his men second and if it meant not bathing to protect the latter then he would do it. He made no apologies.

Earlier in his career, Admiral Gurevich was assigned to an acquisition post. He hated it because it took him away from submarines, but it was necessary to fill that position to improve his chance to promote to admiral. From his acquisition post he recognized that every member of the terror cell used the same Grad-1 tactical assault vest. It was designed for the elite Spetsnaz units of infantry and mountain regiments, as well as for the anti-terror special operations teams of Russian Army and the KGB. The vest included a radio-pouch and a daypack on the back.

Additional pouches could be attached using clips. The pouches on the Grad-1 tactical assault vest fit: 8 AK magazines, 8 pouches for grenades, 1 bayonet or knife, and a military radio pouch. Of course these vests had been thoroughly modified almost to the point that the Admiral almost didn't recognize them. Al Haasan foregoes the radio pouch to fit a small profile sub-machine to the back of the vest. Though this and other vests were made for the Russian military, these were also for sale throughout the world as was many other Russian military assets.

“The training is going better that I had hoped. My men have learned a lot all ready and I am requiring them to study their manuals so that they only have six hours per day to sleep. Our mission will be the most magnificent military attack ever carried out.”

The Admiral recognized the irony of what this man called a military attack when it was really nothing more than a terrorist plot. He didn't care one way or another. As long as he wasn't attacking Miami it didn't matter to him. On second thought, he also hoped that they wouldn't

attack Orlando either. He had always hoped to someday have a picture taken with Mickey.

Chapter 4

The aircrew could only see the runway by looking to the right of the aircraft centerline. The winds were so angry today that Karen had to bring the aircraft in at 35 degree approach angle and then straighten out just before touchdown. It looked as if the aircraft was flying into the hangar. It was always scary to fly out of Keflavik and they hoped they wouldn't have to do a repeat performance at night.

Karen didn't fly the sexy fighter jets that get all the attention on the news programs. She flew the four turboprop engine P-3 Orion that carried enough firepower to alleviate the need for many of the Fighter jet missions.

"It looks like the Norwegians are here," said LT Billy Jordan, the co-pilot keeping a close eye on the engine gauges as they prepared to shut them down.

"I heard the French and Canadians are coming also," replied Karen.

"This is going to be a great exercise, I love hanging out with the French and Canucks," said Billy, "I'd love to weasel the Ops Officer into letting me fly with the Italians." They have a dome under the shaftpit where you can get a 360 view. That would be worth choking through all the cigarette smoke."

Karen replied, "There is NO WAY I would fly with the Italians. Their aircraft are ancient and their tactics are ridiculous. They can only monitor half the number of sonobuoys that we can," she added, "Not to mention that they treat women as no more than tits and ass."

Billy thought to himself how correct she was. He also quickly imagined what her tits and ass looked like and put the thought out of his mind instantly. He quickly felt guilty and then smiled because she

was the one who brought it up after all.

They taxied/slid up next to the Norwegian P-3 and Karen and Billy went through the shutdown checklist.

“Observer to port window,” Karen barked into the Internal Communication System (ICS).

“Observer here, Ma’am,” reported the in-flight electronics technician (ICS).

“Shutting down engine one.”

“Shutting down number two.”

After a pause Karen continued, “Shutting down three.”

“Shutting down number four.”

“All engines secured,” said the IFT.

After shutting down the four turbo-prop engines, Karen and Billy left to take care of all the maintenance paperwork and left the rest of the grunt work for the third pilot (3P), LT junior grade (LTJG) Vince Sembello, who got to the squadron in December, just as the squadron was deploying. Vince was a Naval Aviation Cadet (NAVCAD), he apparently did rather well on his flight aptitude test (he nearly aced it), and so the Navy recruited him into the NAVCAD program. The NAVCAD program recruited only highly placed college students who had not yet received their undergraduate degrees. NAVCAD proposed to give these aspiring Navy pilots two years of concentrated training, and grant them a degree, a commission, and wings all together.

Vince was born and raised in Boston and his accent did not fail him. Karen thought it odd that a city only a few miles from her own would have such a different accent. Vince was still shy and kept to himself. Karen thought that was the smart course of action: Get a handle on your job and the squadron before you let your personality break out. Hell, Karen had been in the squadron for over three years and no one, not even the other female officers knew much about her. She was feeling comfortable with Billy, her second pilot (2P) and thought she could talk to him if she needed someone.

Karen and Billy put on their government issue foul weather coats that had an extension from the face so that the wearer could better bear the needle sharp cold. The extension allowed the exhale to warm the

inhale

They passed LT Scott O'Neil and Karen told him that they would meet the rest of the crew at the debrief. O'Neil grunted something that sounded like "okay." O'Neil, the TACCO (Tactical Coordinator) was busy shutting down his equipment and finishing up the paperwork that documents every tactical flight. The rest of the eleven person crew were similarly shutting down and finishing paperwork. They will all meet up again later at the debrief.

Karen commented that the battery was weak on preflight and that she was going to take a look at the gauge. It required her to climb under and into the nose gear well and reach up to see the gauge.

Billy followed her into the nose wheel well. "What have you got in mind there, big boy?" She giggled, "I can certainly do this on my own."

Billy didn't even know why he followed her into the wheel well and attributed it to tired wandering. From the line shack it looked strange to see two sets of legs in the cramped wheel-well. The line chief saw them go into the wheel well together and wondered if something was going on with those two. She was beautiful and he was very handsome, but he knew that she was married.

Billy knew that Karen would take care of the maintenance paperwork, so he headed upstairs to his office. Billy was also the squadron's Legal Officer. He reports directly to the squadron's Executive Officer (XO) and Commanding Officer (CO). In collaboration with the Personnel Officer and Career Counselor, Billy ensures all personnel are fully acquainted with their rights and obligations under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and that the required articles of the UCMJ are explained to members as required by current directives.

Furthermore, Billy advises the XO and CO on recommended disciplinary action in all cases of breaches of military discipline and initiates all Non-Judicial Punishment proceedings. As the Legal Officer, Billy can also aid in wills and power of attorneys, and guiding members to the right place for more professional assistance.

He received about six months of training that made him familiar with any legal issues that might come up in the squadron. That six

months took him away from his training and studies so that when he got back, he was way behind his peers who got to the squadron at the same time as he. He studied day and night and pleaded to go on flights that would help him catch up with his friends.

As he came off of the stairs, he saw John Dunn standing at his door in a heated argument with one of the Master Chiefs, the most senior enlisted person besides the Command Master Chief. Billy could hear that the Master Chief was cursing very loudly; so loud that anyone in the hangar could hear. Billy was quick to weigh in.

“Whoa there, Master Chief,” he said, “I’m not sure what your beef is with LT Dunn here, but he is your senior officer and I’m going to tell you one time to turn your ass around and go back downstairs while I get to the bottom of this.”

Billy was very obviously upset and asked if he could come in.

“John,” Billy started, “We just landed and I only have a second to grab some folders before heading over for debrief. Can you meet me at the barracks in an hour?”

“No,” said John, “I’m supposed to be downstairs pre-flighting for a mission right now. Can I stop by your room tomorrow morning?”

“That sounds good, I’ve got duty tomorrow and besides a shopping trip I’ll be around all day.”

Billy knew Karen would be waiting for him in maintenance control. He told her to give him a few minutes. He then called the Master Chief out on the Hangar deck. That’s when he laid into him.

“MASTER CHIEF, STAND AT ATTENTION,” Billy ordered, “YOU HAVE NO BUSINESS TALKING TO AN OFFICER LIKE THAT. I DON’T CARE WHAT YOUR PROBLEM IS, BUT YOU BETTER GET OVER IT FAST. NOW YOU GO BACK TO YOUR WORK, I’M DONE WITH YOU.

The master chief blushed and thought of responding but thought better of it. He was certainly humbled but he deserved it.

“Wow, Billy,” Karen said, “What happened to get you so upset?”

“I’m not upset,” Billy said with a hint of a satisfied smile. The Master Chief was yelling at John Dunn loud enough to be heard across the hangar. I figured that it would be appropriate to put him at attention in

front of the hangar so that all the enlisted folks could hear him get the same treatment. Are you ready to go to the debrief?”

“Yeah, let’s go.”

That was a side of Billy that she hadn’t seen. The laid back coolness could be replaced with appropriate charm.

26-year old Karen Madden has a commanding way and presence about her. She holds her head high. She has short blond hair that flips out at her neck. Her hair and light skin added to her beautiful Irish features. She is rather tall at just below 5’9”.

She is the highest ranked Lieutenant in her squadron and she is the Patrol Plane Commander (PPC) on Combat Aircrew Seven, better known as CAC-7. It was a great place to be and much more than she had expected. She was just about finished writing up all the aircraft problems and required maintenance when Billy came back down.

“Any murders since we’ve been gone?” she kidded. The Maintenance Senior Chief laughed out loud. Billy didn’t get much respect as a play-acting lawyer, but that was his lot in life for now. “What are you laughing at Senior Chief? Do you think I couldn’t have handled the O.J. case better than Johnny Cochran?” The Senior Chief only laughed harder.

The whole crew arrived within minutes of each other except for the IFT who remained onboard the aircraft to make any repairs to the electronic system and run diagnostic tests. The debrief was uneventful and after a look at the TACCO and the NAV/COM paperwork, the debriefing officer announced that this flight earned them a qualification, one of the many that P-3 aircrew are required to achieve, usually within a month but some were required every three months. It was a bonus to earn this qualification because it would give them more free time in Maine. The remaining qualifications would be completed next week at the Naval Air Station, Brunswick Maine, where they were stationed. They would have to do some simulator work and several tactical flights.

She was happy that she had gotten stationed near her family though she knew that her husband Larry was less than excited. He had mentioned on several occasions that she spent too much time with her family and that he wished she would spend more with him. She

answered that with an invitation to join her at her Mother and Father's house more often. She didn't know what he was doing when she was at her folk's house.

Iceland is unique. It is a large country, about the same surface area as Ireland or the State of Virginia, but is sparsely populated, with only 3 persons per 3 miles living mostly along the coast. The interior of the country contains stunning contrasts. It is largely an arctic desert, punctuated with mountains, glaciers, volcanoes and waterfalls. Most of the vegetation and agricultural areas are in the lowlands close to the coastline.

The average summer temperature in Reykjavik, the capital, is 51°F in July and average winter temperature in Reykjavik are similar to New York City's, about 32°F in January. The mild climate stems from the Gulf Stream and warm ocean currents from the Gulf of Mexico. The weather is also affected by the East Greenland polar current curving south-eastwards round the north and east coasts. For two to three months in summer there is continuous daylight in Iceland, and early spring and late autumn enjoy long dark nights with heavy snowfalls occurring quite often. The days are very short in mid-winter.

Among the most distinctive features of Iceland are its glaciers, which cover over 11% of the total area of the country. During the past few decades, however, they have markedly thinned and retreated owing to a milder climate, and some of the smaller ones have all but vanished. By far the largest of the glacier caps is the Vatnajökull glacier in Southeast Iceland with an area of 3,240 square miles, equal in size to all the glaciers on the European mainland put together. It reaches a thickness of 3,000 feet. One of its southern outlets, Breidamerkurjökull, descends to sea level.

Earlier in the week, as part of a two day tour, Karen, Billy and Scott visited Gullfoss (The Golden waterfall) which is Iceland's most famous waterfall, and one of the natural wonders of the world. It is a mighty waterfall originating from a glacier. Gullfoss was just a few miles from

another natural wonder, the world-famous Geysir. There is a pathway that takes you to a platform where you can view the spectacle. So close to the northern edge of the falls and the viewing platform you could get very close to the thundering waterfall.

There are many such visual wonders but the three American's were excited to go horseback riding. Karen and the guys were happy to get out in the clean crisp air and mount a horse for a long enjoyable horse ride. They arrived at the farmhouse and the three fought their way through some type of black fly that seemed to have body armor. They knocked on the door. They could see that the family was having lunch and the wife seemed put out that we had arrived exactly on time. It took her a few moments to coach one of her sons out to set up the riders. The insects were more than they could stand; it wasn't that they bite or anything, it was that there were literally millions of the vermin. So many that you couldn't even see in front of your face due to the constant onslaught. The man introduced himself as Gestur Jóhannsson and apologized for the bugs when he saw how concerned they were about them. He led them into the stable and outfitted them with screen masks to protect their faces and gloves for their hands if they felt they needed them. Karen put on the gloves and the guys stuck them in their pockets.

They looked around and only saw what amounted to ponies and asked where the horses were. He told them to look around them; these were their trusty steeds for the next four hours. Karen didn't mind, as long as the horse could hold them she was all for it. She couldn't wait to spend the afternoon riding through the rural countryside aboard the most unique horse on earth. The Iceland horse is a small, friendly and sturdy breed that was brought to Iceland by Norwegian settlers in the 9th century. Billy had been forewarned not to call these horses small in the presence of an Icelander and was saddened that his two companions hadn't taken the bait. Karen was a bit of a novice and needed to be led around a little before she was ready to go. Scott was fairly comfortable in the saddle while Billy looked like he was born there. After they got back they thanked Gestur for such a great time. All agreed that the trip was a success and they settled in for the four hour drive back to Keflavik.

Billy was truly impressed that Karen set this whole thing up and he truly enjoyed the trip.

Chapter 5

On her way to her stateroom for a little nap she stopped in for a visit at the “Brass Nut” which was a corner stateroom that had been converted into a squadron officer’s bar. It had been established not a few years ago by another squadron that was tired of sloughing through blizzards to get to the Air Force bar that didn’t have the homey atmosphere of the Brass Nut. Though the Admiral whose title was Commander, Iceland Defense Force Fleet Air Keflavik, encouraged them to spend more time with their Air Force counterparts, he saw things through Rose-colored glasses. The Air Force weren’t as welcoming or as rowdy as the young Navy officers, so they were happy just where they were.

She was dead tired but she thought that Billy would already be at the brass nut and she was right.

“Can I get you something?” he asked, “Looks like we’re well stocked to host the foreign aircrews; lots of booze in here.”

She pulled up a chair and asked for a beer, “and it don’t matter what kind as long as it’s a light beer.” Karen still had a strong Maine accent in Billy’s opinion, and he knew that he still had his East Texas drawl which actually made some folks impatient—seems he didn’t speak fast enough. After a few years in the military, accents seem to get lost little by little.

Billy thought how much he liked her voice and accent and the way she could calm the crew when stress was high.

“This place is going be rockin’ when all the foreign aircrews get here. It’s going be a blast,” said Billy.

“Except for the duty crew,” she said. “You know that tomorrow we get the honor of serving about 70 people in this tiny little bar. You know

they'll be smoking cigars." she added, "God, I dread that."

"How about another beer?"

"Okay, but I'm really sleepy."

"A couple more beers will really help you sleep."

"Yeah, I suppose I could hang out with you for a couple hours."

Each day one of the 12 aircrew had duty and one of the officer aircrew duties was to inventory, purchase and make available all manner of libation. Karen didn't need all manner of libation, she needed a light beer. She went around the bar to the seven small refrigerators and found the light beer she was looking for. She looked for the purchase log and Billy told her to put it under his account. She went to Billy's page and made an entry for a Bud Light.

"I'm looking forward to a day off tomorrow," Karen announced, "I have to do a re-enlistment for one of the troops tomorrow. Do you want to come?"

He was flattered that she thought well enough of him to ask.

"Yeah," Billy answered, "That would be great."

"Billy, come here, I want to show you something." They left the bar room and she took him down the hallway and presented her room with a sort of girlish charm, "Check it out," she announced.

"Wow," was all he could manage.

In contrast to the men's rooms, which were drab, gloomy gray walls, as drab and gloomy as the view out the window, all of the bunks had old Government Issue bedding and scratchy blankets. Karen wanted none of that and had gone into Keflavik the day that they arrived and purchased a white, yellow and blue throw rug, and a full-size wooden bed frame, which was painted a dark pastel blue. She also purchased the matching chairs not only because they completed the set, but because they were perfect for her room. She found a small writing desk in crackle white finish at another shop for \$450. She didn't care how much it cost; if she was going to be living here for 6 months, she wanted to be comfortable. With her LT aviation pay and her husband's LT doctor pay; she needn't even worry about such things. Besides, she could probably count on selling it to someone in the relief squadron when their six-month deployment was over. It was also common to

buy an inexpensive used car and sell it to someone on the relief squadron, so it wasn't a stretch to expect to be able to get at least some of her investment back. Her door was always open unless she was sleeping.

"Do you think we should steal the Lieutenant Commander's (LCDR's) station wagon and hide it in a snow pile somewhere?" Karen offered up.

"We'll talk about it later, but I think we should shovel snow into the entire interior of their car."

She was tired right now and wanted to take a nap before the most of the squadron were back from their ground jobs. In addition to flying duties, officers held leadership positions in all of the enlisted workshops. She was the division officer for Airframes (responsible for the repair of all external flight surfaces and the oil and hydraulic testing,) and her other team was the Powerplants crew who were responsible for the four engines on each aircraft for a total of 48 engines.

She thought how lucky she was to be in this squadron of 65 officers. It was time for her to get ready for bed though so she shut her door and put on a cotton pajama top with matching shorts. She settled under her sheets and tried to sleep, but she was too excited to fall asleep right away.

Billy came back quickly, "I think it would be better to fill it up with snow since we don't know who has the keys or where they are."

Karen promised, "I'm going to leave my door open so stop by as soon as you are ready and I'll help you recruit."

She didn't want to be left out of anything and would sometimes dream up pranks against the senior officers in the Squadron. She could count on about half of the 60 or so junior officers to participate in any attacks on the six senior LCDRs. The CO and XO were off limits due to their senior positions and accomplishments.

Billy left her to sleep for about one hour before returning to her room with a cloth tape measure. The smell of the room was entirely feminine. A scent of perfume didn't quite cover the smell of woman. They had been working hard and her sweat was understood and to him was beautiful and intoxicating.

There was a formal coming up and since he she had showed him her closet, he didn't see a Dinner Dress Blue uniform or a formal dress hanging. He knew that she had only brought a frumpy Service Dress Blue uniform skirt and jacket with obnoxious black shoes. He intended to carefully take her measurements and have a ball gown made to fit perfectly and have CAC-2 bring it with them when they came back in a few days.

He had brought a cloth measuring tape to take her measurements for a beautiful gown. He eased the end of the tape beneath her waist and measured a 24 inch waist, 34 ½ inch hips and he walked over to a chair where one of her bras that was draped over a chair and noted that she was 34C and he estimated her height was 5' 8". He checked three pairs of shoes and they were all size 6. He placed a light kiss on her neck and left her room just as quickly as he came.

He called the hangar in Brunswick and asked for the Command Duty Officer. Billy explained the situation and asked if someone could drive down to Portland, perhaps on an LL Bean trip, and pick up a formal dress and matching shoes with pantyhose to match the dress. He would be paying ahead so there wouldn't be any tab to pick up. They needed it soon and wondered when CAC-2 was due to reposition to Keflavik. The CDO told him that it was no problem picking up the dress but it had to be ready within three days because that was when CAC-2 was leaving. Billy thanked him and asked if he could talk to him directly when it was time to pick up the dress.

After that call, he phoned Amaryllis Clothing in Portland and gave them the story and made sure they understood that she was very lean and curvy and required a formal dress and matching shoes and with nude pantyhose. He paid by credit card and described that they would need it in two days. The salesperson advised him that two days was a rush job and required an extra 25%. He told her that the extra charge was understood and that he would pay the total up front with his credit card. He also asked that it be boxed nicely and sturdily since it would be flying from Brunswick to Keflavik Iceland.

His plan was really beginning to take shape.

"Fuck," he scolded himself, "I forgot to get her some neck and ear

trinkets.” He left immediately for the Base Exchange. *Fat chance*, he thought.

When he was safely in the exchange he asked the attendant to show him some jewelry that would match a green satin ball gown. She took him first to the cheap baubles that were unsatisfactory even to his eye. She then showed him a delicate pearl necklace with matching earrings and bracelet. Without looking at the price, he announced, “That’s it, that’s perfect.” \$400 later he was thrilled to be taking care of Karen like this. He hoped that she didn’t hear about the formal until later. He didn’t want her to suffer over the fact that she had nothing to wear.

At about 6pm, she heard the most awful racket in the hallway. It sounded like Billy was drunk and fighting with someone. Karen cracked her door about four inches only to see Billy bouncing off of the walls and yelling for everyone to “Lay to mateys; the Brass Nut awaits your company and your company’s company.” He looked absolutely charming to her and she hurried from her door to put on something for the party that had obviously developed since she had last seen her second pilot.

Another slam on a door. “Lay to ladies, we’ve good friends in the Nut!”

“Shut the fuck up, Billy, we’ve got a preflight in five hours.” One of the officer’s cried.

“Whoa,” Billy spun about. “I’m very sorry to have awakened you.” He was almost in tears for that mistake.

Next he stopped by Karen’s room, but he didn’t want to disturb her. Her door was cracked open about four inches so he looked in on her. She wasn’t in her bed and as he scanned the room he saw her nude body outlined in the bathroom and closet lights. She was breathtaking. The sight sobered him enough to get away from the door before he gave himself away. He stumbled backward into the wall and slid down it to the floor.

He called, “Fifteen men on the dead man’s chest!”

She remembered the line from *Treasure Island*

Karen replied with him, “Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!”

He called, “Drink and the devil had done for the rest!”

They both said, “Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!”

She soon came out from her room and helped her friend onto her bed. He needed a short nap at least.

As she started to go, he began to speak... and then he stopped short and fell off to sleep. Karen would wonder for days what he was about to say to her just then. Billy was more revealing with his words when he was in a state. And she would give anything to know what he had on his mind these last few weeks.

At over six feet tall, she had to lay him on the bunk at an angle so that his feet could hang over the side. He looked so handsome in the light of the bathroom and closet. He was a kind and gentle man and everyone in the squadron felt a kinship with him almost immediately. She left him to sleep but vowed to herself to come back for him in an hour or so. She had some tricks up her sleeve tonight.

Karen was wearing a pair of low rise khaki trousers and a tank top with built in bra over which she wore a matching cardigan. She wore rugged but simple shoes with extra thick soles with faux fur lining. She chose these for the first of her clandestine missions.

When she got to the Brass Nut all manner of cheer was under way. “KAREN!” someone announced.

“KAREN!” the person screamed again. There was someone just nearly as drunk as Billy was.

The welcome brought on more stares than she was comfortable with so she went straight to the foosball table. This professional table had proven to be very resilient over the years.

It was first stolen from the “Olive Pit” in Sigonella, Sicily, which is another Patrol Squadron deployment site.

It remains a mystery how they got this 300lb monster out of the Olive Pit, down the stairs, into a van apparently, and up the ladder of the aircraft, through the main cabin doors. Then back through the main cabin doors and into another van, and up the stairs of the Keflavik barracks and into the Brass Nut without anyone ever complaining or

admitting to it. It just disappeared from Sicily and Reappeared in Keflavik.

She was a fair player and signed on as partner with LT Kale who was due to play, not the next game, but the one after. After most of the eyes were off of her, she made her way around to the bar and greeted the other two females in the squadron.

“Hi, Jan. Hi, Lori,” Karen said, “Looks like this place is gonna cave in at any minute.”

Both women laughed, “This is the most rowdy group I’ve ever seen. The festivities have even moved to the pool room, which is usually ignored. It’s packed down there too. Isn’t it wonderful?” Jan said.

“Yeah,” Karen said with less enthusiasm, “Our crew has duty tomorrow. I’ve got to clean this mess up in the morning.”

“Oh, too bad,” Lori said with regret, “I guess you guys will be restocking and serving tomorrow too, huh?”

“Here’s one consolation,” Jan offered, “We’ve already fielded all the sexual comments and the pinches so tomorrow might be a little less rowdy.”

“Oh God,” Karen looked across the bar, mortified, “See that Italian guy playing quarters?”

They picked him out easily. He was trying to bounce a Euro into a shot glass filled with whatever liquor he desired. If he had made it into the shot glass then he wouldn’t have to drink the shot. He missed however and drank back the shot and screamed in the most obnoxious manner.

“If he comes near me call a corpsman,” Karen said, “Last time we had one of these exercises, he was worse than a horsefly. I couldn’t get him off of me. I finally kned him in the groin and, as he doubled over, I kned him in the mouth.”

Kale called for Karen and waved her over. As Karen passed the Italian he recognized her and dropped his eyes to her chest and said something probably as vulgar as he was.

One of the British aircrew understood Italian and told Karen that he said, “Look at these beautiful breasts that I made love to during the last exercise.”

Karen reacted immediately by grabbing a handful of hair from the back of his head and pulling him off of his barstool and onto his back. His head bounced with the impact. Karen apologized for knocking him off of his stool and extended her hand to help him to his feet, but when he was halfway up she slammed her knee into his solar plexus. He was speechless as he took his place back on the stool. She left him with an apology, “Sono spiacente.” She saw his reaction out of the corner of her eye and was happy that he wouldn’t be messing with her anymore this time around.

Karen knew that if word got back to the CO that she would be in a lot of trouble. She could only hope that the Italian jerk would be too embarrassed to complain.

Karen took up position at the foosball table and, though she played fairly well, the other team had the table for most of the evening due to their very outstanding play.

Karen and LT Kale were whipped unceremoniously, and Karen was off to find Billy for her first clandestine mission.

“Billy,” Karen said as she shook him, “wake up.”

When he didn’t wake, she stealthily kissed him on his lips. She almost melted into him and instantly knew that what she had just done was wrong.

“Billy,” she pleaded, “WAKE UP.”

Billy shot up at once in his drunken stupor and exclaimed, “Yes sir, I was just taking a nap.”

“Billy,” Karen said softly, “It’s me, big man. Do you feel like going outside?”

Billy said, “Sure, Karen, I’ll go outside. What are we gonna do outside.”

Karen said, “I have two shovels leaned up against the LCDR’s vehicle and I think that we should fill it up with snow.”

Billy was awake now and laughed out loud. “You are a feisty little animal aren’t you? Okay, I’m with you. Is the car unlocked?”

Karen replied, “Yep, I say we make our move right now and make quick work of it. The longer it takes the more likely we are to be caught. I say we leave the left doors closed and shovel into the right doors.

There are people in the pool room, so the noise should shield us, but there is still the risk of being seen.”

They made their way down the stairwell and out the main door and turned left to walk past the pool room window to scope that danger out before continuing to the vehicle.

They saw no danger and continued at an increased pace and opened both the front and rear right doors and immediately began moving snow from the snow bank to the car. It only took two minutes or so but they were out of breath as they closed the doors on the car.

Karen ran to the side of the building and buried the shovels. She would come back and pull them out after the Lieutenant Commanders finished their work digging out the interior.

They slipped past the pool room window and through the main door and up the stairs to her room for debrief.

Karen was beside herself with excitement. It had always irked her that the LCDRs wouldn't even loan the car for the shortest trips. Well, they'll have their work cut out for them when they try and dig it out.

Billy was quiet and gazing at her. He wasn't drunk anymore, he felt at peace. He told her how happy he felt after that mission and thanked her for inviting him.

Billy said, “That was the most fun I've had in a long time. There is no way that they can tie it to us.”

Karen said, “I can't think of anyone else I would rather do it with.” As soon as those words left her lips she blushed a deeper red than blood itself. I guess I'm thanking you back for such a good time.

Karen caught herself, she was letting herself guard down with Billy and she was supposed to be happily married, which was only half true for over a year now.

In a week or so her crew was due to return to Brunswick, Maine and Commander, Patrol Wing Five. After over four months deployed to Iceland she would get to go home. Not only would she get to see her husband and try to work things out, she would also see the rest of her family that lived about 15 miles from the base. She grew up in a very loving working class home.

“Billy,” Karen said, “I’ve got to do a reenlistment tomorrow morning so I’ve asked the crew to do my shopping for me. I wonder if you would like to come along so that I’m not the only officer there.”

“Sure, Karen,” Billy answered, “I would love to. I haven’t had a chance to see the Blue lagoon yet. Did you ask permission? We’re on duty you know.”

“Yeah, I did,” Karen replied. “We’ll follow the bus in the maintenance van and when the reenlistment is over, I promised to return as soon as possible. Billy, what were you about to say when I put you into bed earlier?” her stomach curled with part fear and part temptation and she hoped that he would remember.

“Karen, I was very drunk and though I do remember what I was going to say, it was extremely inappropriate.”

“Billy, I think you know that I think that we have more than business between us.” Though she was as drunk as Billy, she still couldn’t believe that she had just said that. Taken at face value, her statement could very well be benign.

“I know, Karen,” Billy said as he took her hand into his and gently bit on her fingertips.

It was electric. She felt the pulse throughout her body and decided right then that she never wanted anyone the way she wanted him right now. But it was all wrong.

“Karen, as much as I wish I could claim you as my own, you are married. Neither of us can take a chance at being found out. I want you but I want you as my own.” He set his beer to the side and moved to kiss her. God, he wanted to taste her lips.

Before he could she put her hand on his shoulder and pushed him away. “It’s getting late and we both need some sleep. Please knock on my door when you wake. We should talk more when we are sober.”

Chapter 6

The next evening Karen and Billy met 70 enlisted people at the Blue Lagoon which is a beautiful pool of geothermal water rich in unique natural minerals such as silica mud and blue green algae. The water temperature is kept between 100 and 110°F. The water is constantly refreshed and is completely exchanged every 24 hours. It is comprised of two-thirds saltwater and one-third fresh water. The water comes from bore holes as deep as 6,000 feet. In its travels through porous lava, a blend of sea and fresh water undergoes mineral exchange and then near the surface, concentration occurs, due to vaporization, evaporation and finally, sedimentation. The water is led via pipeline directly to the Blue Lagoon.

Karen wasn't a stranger to reenlistments or the Blue Lagoon. Being one of three females, she was often requested for the ceremony. This would be her second at the Blue Lagoon in as many months. It was just wonderful to float in the warm, silky waters of the Blue Lagoon while watching the curtains of colored light of the Aurora Borealis fill the spring nighttime sky. The sky was gray and the air cool, alternating between drizzle and pelting rain.

The highway from the Air Base hotel to the Blue Lagoon cut through moss-covered lava fields. The bus driver let the enlisted folks off in a parking lot and Karen parked nearby. They followed a short trellised path cut through the lava and eventually arrived at entrance to the Blue Lagoon main building.

In Iceland, the custom is to shower completely before putting on a bathing suit, as opposed to putting on your suit and then stepping into the shower, so Karen left her clothes in a locker, wrapped up in her

towel and took her bathing suit with her to the showers. She left the towel and suit in the rack, got in the shower and soaped up and shampooed her hair. There were at least 20 other women showering, so she didn't feel exposed. She then put on her bathing suit and walked outside where she was greeted by Billy and then the Blue Lagoon like an old friend. The bright, cloudy, aqua-colored water steamed into the gray sky. The color is due to the combination of natural minerals, blue green algae and white silica mud. The lagoon extended into the mist beyond her sight. The air was quite chilly and the driving rain stung her skin, so she hurried to get into the warm water. After a few minutes, she was oblivious to the weather and got down to business. A very audible murmur came from the troops as they approached. She was as beautiful as any model and she was very embarrassed by the attention. The females appreciated Billy's looks as well. He had been on the swim team in High School and had developed such a love of the sport that he found a pool wherever he could so that he could keep up his chops. The swimming had worked his body hard and he had developed a fantastic physique. Karen got everyone to gather around waist deep and then she and Petty Officer Reyes raised their right hands and she began reading the oath to Petty Officer Reyes who repeated it in rehearsed blocks of text.

Karen started, "I do solemnly affirm that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the president of the united states and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the uniform code of military justice. So help me god."

Petty Officer Reyes repeated the oath.

There was a small mountain of silica mud on the shore of the lagoon and once he was sworn in, many of his friends took handfuls of the white mud and pelted him with it. Billy should have anticipated that one industrious enlisted man would heave a heavy mound at Karen's chest and it surely happened. The blast was powerful and her bikini top fell down to her midsection. Billy lunged over to shield her breasts and took note of the man that made the throw. He would be quiet for

now, but planned to put the fear of Billy into him later.

Without any acknowledgement, Karen simply replaced her top carefully and moved off to a warmer area. She floated. She chatted with other bathers. She wandered about. It was heavenly. Her skin felt incredibly. She was kind of glad to have duty. She hoped to spend more time with Billy. She found herself interested in everything he said. He wouldn't be drunk this time. Last night, he couldn't even focus his eyes on one point.

"I heard about the hurt you put on that Italian guy. I'm surprised that he didn't learn his lesson the first time around."

Karen said, "I have patience for most things but I will not be insulted."

"You're just a badass!"

"Billy," Karen said, "I don't know anything about your family. Do you feel like telling me about your life before this?"

Billy thought it was sweet that she was interested enough to ask for personal information.

"Sure, I have three sisters, one two years younger than me, one that is four years younger and another that is seven years younger. I didn't grow up in one place. I was born at the San Diego Naval Hospital in California. Then my dad got out of the Navy and we moved to Houston, then Colorado, then New Mexico, then back to Colorado and finally ended up in Austin. My dad was a bit of a vagabond. It was a pretty good life, I suppose. We never knew any different and moving was just a part of life. The only time I got really upset was when we left Loveland, Colorado. I had finally gotten the head cheerleader as my own and not a week passed before we were loading the U-Haul. When I was 16 my father sent me to my uncle to save money. Those were tough times. My uncle worked me sometimes for 16 hours in a day. I finally got fed up and had enough money for a Greyhound back to Austin. When I got there I took a job at a manufacturing company. I was allowed to leave High School at 11:45am so that I could get to work 45 minutes later and I would get home at 12:15am. I would do the same thing everyday. After I graduated, I joined the Navy as a jet mechanic. My first assignment was with Fighter Squadron 151 assigned to the aircraft

carrier, USS MIDWAY. After 3 ½ years with the Vigilantes of 151, I transferred to shore duty where I worked fulltime as a work center supervisor and went to college at night and on weekends for 3 ½ years. I got my degree, applied for flight school, and here I am. Any questions? There will be a quiz.”

Karen saw past the Aw’ Shucks act that was also somehow true. She saw a very smart and calculating officer that was going to do very well with his life.

“How about you. What got you here?”

“Well, I grew up alone with my mother and father who you will adore. They are the greatest parents and people I know. I grew up in the family home that had been handed down for many generations.”

“Did you know,” Karen continued, “that Naval Air Station, Brunswick, Maine, was commissioned on April 15, 1943, and it’s primary purpose was to train Canadian and British Air Force pilots of the British Naval Command. It was shut down for a while, but was reactivated in 1951 with the primary mission of anti-submarine warfare and P-3 operations.

“My father has always provided Lobsters to visiting aircrew to Brunswick. When I was a kid my father would take orders from P-2 Neptune aircrews from Jacksonville and he would meet them on the tarmac and deliver their orders out of the back of his red pickup, the same one I drive now.”

“No shit!” Billy said, “How old is that truck?”

“Well, It’s a 1972 model so that would make it a 32-year old blood red jalopy of a pick-up truck.

“When I was about ten, he would let me run out to the airplanes to deliver the lobsters. They laughed at me at first and I was so angry that I screamed at them to shut up. I cried all the way to the truck. I told my father what had happened and he told me that they weren’t laughing at me, but were happy to see such a beautiful young girl delivering their lobsters.

“I kept at it. When I wasn’t in school I was with my father delivering lobsters. I remember some of the aircrew commenting that my feet must be boiling on the hot tarmac, but I had kid’s feet with all of the

calluses that come with the tiny package.

“I think I was 16 when I started driving and delivering on my own. I had really developed an interest in these big P-3 aircraft. I would daydream about how it might be to fly a P-3.

“When I graduated from High School I applied to the Naval Academy and was readily accepted when they saw my grades and my application letter that told them how I delivered lobsters to P-3 crews throughout my childhood. Heck I had to connect to the Navy somehow.”

“Listen, Billy...about last night, I know that our feelings are right and good but at the same time I happen to be married. He isn't the best husband a girl could ask for, but I'm giving him the benefit of the doubt.”

“You're right of course. I never should have come on so hard. I just feel so good when I'm around you, do you know what I mean? I just feel right and comfortable.”

“When I first saw you I only saw how handsome you were, but after working around you for these few weeks I began to feel precisely the same way as you describe. I wish I could promise something more but as long as I'm married, I'm married.”

With that cleared up, they just floated around in the beautiful, sulphur-smelly mess that is the Blue Lagoon.

Karen announced that the “fucking Air Force” had scheduled a formal dinner party and she had absolutely nothing to wear. All she had was her frumpy Service Dress uniform that felt as bad as it looked. She shrugged it off as doom to fate but still wished she had thought ahead to this possibility...the Air Force officers are awfully formal so she should have know.

The Al Queda leader met again with Admiral Gurevich as scheduled. The admiral thought it wise to meet with the terrorist regularly to check the progress of the training and the mood of their leader.

“Ahmed Al Haasan, how are you my friend,” greeted the admiral.

This was the first time that the admiral had called him a friend and

the hardened terrorist knew that his friendly demeanor was a result of his anticipation of payment.

“I am fine, Admiral, thank you for asking. My men and I have enjoyed comfortable cots and good food, and I thank you for that.”

The Admiral found that the terrorist preferred to be addressed by his full name upon first greeting. He thought him to be very vain and uncouth.

“Thank you, Comrade,” the admiral caught himself. He was no comrade of this trash. “How is the training going, I hope you are satisfied with my training crew. They were selected from the best in the squadron.”

Al Haasan knew that they were recruited not for their abilities but for their greed. “The training is going as planned and we expect to be ready soon enough to meet your change in training time.” He still held the admiral in contempt for costing them a day in the costly and consuming training.

“Do you think that an extra day would have made much difference?”

“Certainly, it works out to a 10% loss and it will certainly show while we are underway. Have you notified the submarine CO yet?”

“No, not yet,” the admiral answered, “I am awaiting the right time to tell him about it. I’m certain that he will be suspicious so I should wait until the last minute to advise him of the agreement between Russia and Syria to conduct coordinated operations. I intend to notify him verbally and with forged documents that he would be hosting ten Syrian submariners. I will describe that Russia and Syria are finalizing plans to transfer two Delta III class nuclear submarines to the Syrian fleet. Israel already possesses three Dolphin-class submarines and Syria feels it needs submarines to counter that threat.”

“Now,” the admiral started, “there will be at least one sentry at the gates to the submarine moorings. He will be well-trained in security. I can advise the captain of the submarine to expect your men at precisely 10pm. After your men have cleaned up the training site, they should head directly to the entrance to the submarine pier. Only once everyone has arrived, should you all make your way to the submarine’s gangplank.”

“Very clever; I like the Russian and Syrian idea. It sounds like you have given this some thought,” congratulated Al Haasan.

“Don’t forget that I’m in this as much as you are. I can only hope that I can escape before the Kremlin discovers what happened.”

Al Haasan wasn’t moved.

“Please dine with me, Al Haasan.”

He thought of making an excuse but he knew that this dinner would likely be much better than the rations at the camp.

“Thank you for the offer; I would very much like to stay for dinner.”

The admiral tapped his wineglass and a steward arrived immediately. The admiral advised the steward that Ahmed Al Haasan would be dining with him tonight and that he should set placing for two. Al Haasan thought how aristocratic this admiral was. He used his full name again and it was appreciated.

As they moved into the kitchen the Admiral told him about his childhood in Sevastopol. Al Haasan considered how the conversation was flowing and was at ease with the admiral and told him of his childhood.

“I came from a small town of 10,000, but I’ve since been told that it has grown to 40,000, though I can’t imagine what the draw might be. I was an orphan from a dusty little village. Situated between much larger towns and cities; I’m sure you have seen these villages; these khaki colored hovels seem to flow out of the ground. Even as a child I was made to work for the thousands-year old art of brick making. Fifteen to twenty children work at the brick factory, depending on the season mainly as the drivers of the donkey carts.

“In the scope of Syrian history, Nawa village is relatively young. It has been sustained by a very simple and time-tested industry. Apart from the machinery used to cut the soft sand and clay into individual bricks, the factory and its environs look no different than they may have thousands of years before.

“My father had a large family to feed. The sullen faced 33-year old truck driver struggled to feed his family of five and was eager for his two eldest sons to be old enough to work, until he was killed by robbers. It was senseless since it was obvious that he was a simple laborer and

had nothing of value. His daily wage was insufficient to buy even the simple staples such as rice and potatoes sometimes. My three sisters and I were sent to an orphanage but it wasn't for me, so I left the orphanage and my sisters when I was 12 years old. Since leaving Nawa, little has changed for the impoverished little village surrounding the plant.

“A great man came from my village many centuries ago. Imam Yahya ibn Sharaf al-Nawawi was born in the village of Nawa. Nawawi spent most of his life in Damascus where he lived in a simple manner, devoted to Allah, engaging single-mindedly in worship, study, writing and teaching various Islamic sciences. The life of this world seems scarcely to have impinged upon him. He was a versatile and extremely dedicated scholar whose breadth of learning was matched by its depth.

“Imam Nawawi died at the young age of 44 years, leaving behind him numerous works of great importance, the most famous of these being the famous 5th Century Hijri. This is considered by many as the most important book after the Koran simply because it is a summary of authentic traditions of the Prophet Muhammad.”

It had never occurred to the Admiral that this man was capable of such devotion to his faith. He didn't know that Al Haasan had long before studied the Koran and decided that this faith would provide him with reason to take up arms with the first terrorist group that would allow the young boy to join.

“As for my sisters, I haven't seen two of them since I left the orphanage but I did see my older sister when I was 15 years old. She said that I had grown so much that she didn't know me.”

“Are you interested in taking a walk?” asked Al Haasan

“That would be fine I suppose, where are we going?”

“I thought it would be wise to tell you what the plan is after the training is complete.”

The admiral lit a cigar and offered one to Al Haasan who refused.

They made their way to the hilltop behind the admiral's home. He had pulled some strings to have a submarine simulator moved to the top of the hill. The crew that delivered it got 570 rubles each to keep their delivery quiet. He explained that the crew of the Oscar class

submarine Celjabinsk was behind in their qualifications and he intended to whip them into shape with simulator time and book study. The delivery crew nodded in ignorance and was happy with the rubles as explanation enough.

The admiral had spent many hours in simulators over the years, but he humored the terrorist's tour of the simulator. He described several positions surprisingly well and seemed to have a very good working knowledge of the key submarine positions.

"Please come with me, Admiral," Al Haasan was obviously proud of their accomplishments and wanted to share them with someone; even someone that surely despised them and only saw them as a large payoff, "out here along the sentry lane."

The admiral followed Al Haasan out to the sentry lane that hadn't been used since the clandestine training began.

"What do you think?"

"I don't know what you mean," answered the admiral.

"Upon completion of the training, we will have official quarters for the trainers and my men. I will speak of the certain victory in the name of our God and then you will speak your very motivating words. Your men will be facing my men and after the speeches we need to clear away because that is when my men will open fire."

The admiral protested strongly, "Why in God's name would you want to execute the men that worked so hard to train your men? ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND? I WOULD NEVER HAD AGREED TO THIS NIGHTMARE IF I HAD KNOWN THAT YOU PLANNED TO KILL MY MEN!"

Al Haasan put another blade at his carotid artery and replied, "There really is no other choice but to terminate their lives. It would be less than 24 hours before word got out that we had commandeered your Oscar. We need at least 2 days to get around the horn off of Norway and submerge for our quiet, but expedited trip to New York City. I cannot count on ten men to hold their tongues for that long without bragging about the money they earned training Arab submariners. Russian interrogators have a strong reputation for getting information out of their citizens. After all, one million dollars has already been

transferred to your Miami bank account. I am still trying to determine whether your tongue might be loose.”

Chapter 7

When combat aircrew had duty it was the responsibility of each officer to schedule and buy the ingredients for a dinner for 7 officers. It worked out well that each person would only have to cook once per week, but they had to calculate carefully so that there were some leftovers for the sixth or seventh day for the four big boys and one girl. The crew ate at Wendy's restaurant on the day when all rations were gone. This procedure was repeated every time the crew had duty, which was usually every seventh day, what with aircrews on detachment and getting requalifications in Brunswick.

Lunches were prepared at the hangar by a staff composed of the troops and they turned out some wonderful lunches. Even the Air Force stopped by once in a while to visit their dusty little hangar. The Air Force had the best equipment and lodging that money could buy and the Navy folks made due with the leftovers.

It wasn't absolutely necessary that each officer take turns cooking, but all seemed to like the idea of eating together rather than cooking for themselves every night. Wendy's worked for one night and then everyone was tired of it. They loved it when Karen cooked.

She seemed to love spending time with the people she cared most about. For her, preparing a meal was both a gift from the kitchen and a gift of love. After all, she takes time out of her busy day to prepare a great meal for her crew. Lately, she had found it very satisfying to spend this time with her crew, all the important people in her life. She brought her friends into the kitchen to cook with her as often as possible. By cooking together, family and friends can spend quality time together. The meal becomes more than good food, it becomes its own occasion.

Since she put forth the most effort in her dinners, she asked that the other officer's help her with chopping vegetables or other gofer jobs. If you share the cooking, weekday meals can go from the frenzied drudgery of one person planning, cooking, and cleaning, to a shared event to which two or more people can look forward.

Since Billy and Karen copped out on the shopping trip, a couple of the other officers copped out and got 15 bean soup packages and the required additional items. The 15 bean soups were good and certainly filling but after about 20 dinners of 15 bean soup, everyone else on the crew was in an uproar. The 15 bean soup contingent held their ground however, and soon enough everyone was done with their shopping. They knew that they would have hell to pay with Karen and some of the more timid took their groceries straight to their room, thereby putting off the inevitable tirade.

Billy brought in the last bags that were loaded with Karen's eggs, flour, soy sauce, ginger, minced garlic, parsley, green onions and of course, chicken. Billy looked at her with disbelief and had to sit down at the sight. Karen had spent about 1 ½ minutes changing out of her uniform but she looked good enough to eat. The yoga pants followed her form perfectly and accentuated a superb ass. Her top matched but was a little loose around her tiny belly and gave little glimpses as she worked around the kitchen. The black material did well to hide her nipples but couldn't hide the fact that she had an impressive bust.

Cooking put Karen at ease and she needed it right now. She was due to go home in a few days and she didn't know what kind of reception she would get from her husband. Most of the families made such a deal over the arrival of their boyfriends, girlfriends, wives, husbands and children. She was running about 50/50 on the greeting prospect and expected no less this time.

First, she browned peanuts in a skillet with olive oil for only 30 seconds. She removed them and set them aside. She dredged the coarsely chopped chicken through beaten eggs and then through a bowl of flour before adding it to the hot oil with a tablespoon of shredded ginger, ¼ cup chopped green onions and garlic. She lightly stirred until the mixture until the chicken was well cooked. She then added a

tablespoon of soy sauce, one half cup of parsley and the peanuts and cooked through.

She sat down with a half bottle of Robert Mondavi's "Private Reserve" Chardonnay '00 from the Central Coast of California, which she found in the big refrigerator in the Brass Nut. She didn't know how it somehow made its way from California to Iceland but it was just what she needed.

Before she left, she and Larry had a huge rout over the subject of children. He wanted children "NOW, dammit." She wanted to wait at least until she was on shore duty. She did, after all, want a part in their raising.

"Of all nature's gifts to the human race, what is sweeter to a man than his children?" that was one of Larry's most recent comments regarding children.

"It's really an amazing time in any person's life when they join in the creation of a new life. I believe we are not only creating a life, but a soul that will last forever and has a chance to make our child make a mark on our city, our country or our life."

He had continued, "I've always thought the saddest situation is a married couple who actively decide not to have children. These couples are making a decision to do without, even though they can't understand what they are giving up. Children are not only a responsibility; they also become your greatest teachers in life. No one ever complains about personally having too many children."

Except Karen, she didn't lack maturity, and the unwillingness to undertake responsibility; she liked children just fine and she certainly had enough patience to raise children. She didn't have a difficult childhood, she wasn't selfish and self absorbed and she didn't want to have children just so that they would have guests when they were old and lonely. Her life was complete and she wasn't different from any one else except she didn't want children until it was right and she knew that she needed them to fulfill her. And she damn sure wasn't going to let her husband push her around about it.

Karen was up for tonight's dinner so she prepared a recipe her favorite recipe for Thai chicken with rice. Her hair was swept up in an

untidy bun. She looked better relaxed than a most women looked after spending hours getting dressed.

Dinner was ready when the guys returned from the liquor store. She went down to see if she could help bring it all up.

When Karen got downstairs, most of the aircrews arrived back at the barracks after work, there was a definite buzz of voices scattered about talking in low tones. When they saw CAC-7 getting back with enough beer and booze for a restock, they went back to their quiet discussions. Karen was the first to ask.

“What’s going on fellas?”

“Well, we really shouldn’t be talking about this,” the Lieutenant was making excuses.

“Well you are, now aren’t you, so how about letting us in on it,” Karen demanded.

“LT Dunn was caught having sex with one of his junior enlisted personnel.”

Karen asked, “Can they prove it?”

“Look, guys,” another Lieutenant butted it, “talking about it behind his back is wrong. I’m sure that we will here the formal charges when they are released. . . isn’t that right Billy, you are the legal officer.”

Another Lieutenant ignored the first and said, “He was surely going down.”

“How’s that,” asked Karen

The LT answered, “Apparently the Avionics Division officer took photos and video.”

“Now that is bullshit,” Karen said. “What are the odds that the Avionics Officer would also be in an off limits dance club and then somehow wander around the side of the building at that moment to not only take video, but also flash photography.”

“If what you say is true, he has just signed away his Navy career.”

Billy whispered to Karen, “He’s also just signed away a great family. Jennifer is a wonderful mom and wife, but I don’t see her putting up with this.”

Though it is common to see Officers in relationships with other Officers, it is taboo for an officer to have an affair with an enlisted

person, even if they are both single.

When the whispering and muttering stopped, Billy looked toward the hangar and saw John Dunn walking through the snow from the hangar, probably refusing offers for a ride.

Billy asked Scott, Tom and Vince if they wouldn't mind unloading the van that was loaded with beer and liquor to restock after last night. They also had all the groceries for the week. They agreed without any grumbling.

Slowly, the meeker of the voyeurs meandered back into the barracks to avoid John's eye when he arrived. And Karen asked, "Hey, would you guys lend a hand and carry a couple cases of beer while you're headed back inside. We would really appreciate it."

By the time the last two cases were safely in a volunteers hands, there was nothing left for Scott, Vince and Tom to carry.

"Thanks, Karen," Tom said. "You're the best pilot and person in the whole wide world."

She punched him hard in the shoulder.

"Ow, you big bully."

Karen wasn't sure what made her stay to visit with John, but decided that she would just as soon be with Billy for a while. Maybe John would describe the sex, if there was any. It would be the closest thing to sex that she had had since the deployment started four months ago. Her biggest thrills lately were bumping into Billy in confined spaces.

John continued for a couple steps and with tears in his eyes, he asked, "Would you two mind spending a few minutes in a dog's room. I could use some company right now."

Billy slapped him on the back and asked him, "Is it alright with you if Karen sits in?"

For the next eight days the terrorists used the submarine simulator during the night time hours to avoid drawing attention. They spent some of the morning studying their manuals before sleeping. They repeated this routine for the eight days and then reported to the admiral

that they were ready for their trip. Two weeks were certainly not enough to make an accomplished submariner but this training, in addition to the general training they received in Syria, made them somewhat comfortable with each submarine position. They wouldn't be operating the equipment but would be monitoring each crewmember to assure that they wouldn't do anything to sabotage the mission.

Training devices installed at the Murmansk training facility included emergency ship control, combat control systems, sonar ocean acoustic training, submarine piloting and navigation, the Shipwreck anti-ship or anti-surface missile, and the rocket assisted torpedo Stallion, The Terrorists didn't bother with Damage Control Team Trainer and Firefighting Team Trainer. They would leave that up to the Russian crew and God.

When the day arrived that the submarine was to get underway, the admiral asked his aide to schedule a visit to the submarine. He wanted to meet with the ship's captain and the crew.

He knew that he was sending them to a certain and painful death. He knew also that the Northern and Black sea fleets would send every available ship and submarine to find the Oscar and destroy it. He knew that they would consider the lives of the 107 men and 48 officers before destroying the submarine. He imagined that once a Destroyer and hunter/killer submarine had contact with the Oscar, they would follow it in order to determine what their intentions are.

When the admiral was to show, the crew was standing at attention near the ship's gangway. The admiral wasn't prepared with a speech, but had long ago learned how to deal with this situation.

The admiral left the crew at attention and took the opportunity to stop and have a word and shake hands with each of the crewmembers.

He went on with an improvised speech for another minute or so directed at the formation of men and then asked the men to return to their ship. He wanted to speak with the submarine captain and asked the Executive Officer to dismiss the men. After the men were aboard the admiral followed the captain and his XO up the ladder.

"Captain," he began, "Here are your orders." The captain took the orders to his stateroom where he and the XO presented keys to lock

away the orders. “You’ll find that your formal orders are standard, but I am here to tell you what isn’t standard about this cruise. You will be training ten members of the Syrian Navy. You may recall that our government recently sold them three Delta III class attack submarines. They’ll be monitoring and absorbing all that they can before returning to Syria to similarly train their new submarine force.

“Syria’s Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam recently made a business visit to Russian Federation. He was here to convey a message from President Bashar Al-Assad to our President, Vladimir Putin and to meet with a number of Russian Federation senior officials. Following his return to Syria, I received a message from the Submarine command that we were to host the Syrians as part of a friendship mission. Putin concluded his statement by underlining the coordination between the Russian government and the Baath Arab Socialist Party in Syria. President Putin had personally fielded the request by Syria to allow certain of their naval submarines to get underway with a Russian nuclear submarine and to observe and live among its crew. This was to be the first such integration in the history of the Russian navy but there was no strong argument against it.”

The captain grimaced as expected but assured the admiral that they would accommodate the foreign submariners and provide any training, rations and berthing that they required.

“How many of the Syrians can we expect?” asked the captain.

The admiral replied, “I’ve been told that there are to be ten and that they have been taught to keep their kit to the minimum required, but that would last them for the six-month deployment.”

The captain was surprised at this, “We are to live with these foreigners for the entire deployment?”

“That is the word I have received, but perhaps I can arrange a port visit to Sevastopol in a couple months.”

The captain was very happy with this lie, “I think that is a very good plan, my Admiral. I will look forward to the radio message that authorizes the port visit. Such a visit will put them much closer to their own country and I’m sure the Syrians would enjoy such a wonderful city with such great weather at this time of year.”

Chapter 8

After the admiral had completed his visit to the submarine, he sent for Al Haasan.

“Hello, Admiral,” the terrorist greeted. “I hope your visit to the submarine went well.”

“Yes, it did indeed,” answered the admiral with a flash of anger. “I had the opportunity to likely send them to their graves.” He glared at the terrorist. “I don’t know what your intentions are once your mission is completed, but I hope you will consider having a ship near the coast of Syria to transfer your crew without harming the remaining crew.”

Al Haasan replied, “The lives of your crew are secondary to our mission. There is every possibility that the Americans will locate the submarine in short order and monitor our activities. If one of the American anti-submarine aircraft can localize us they will notify any attack submarines in the area. In this case, we can only hope to get our missiles airborne before we are destroyed. My crew has been briefed on that possibility and is eager to challenge the Americans and to meet Allah if that is to be our fate.”

“You and your crew are very brave and determined,” the admiral said with truth. “My countrymen have lost faith in their government in the last decade and religious activities are not so popular. My countrymen are not so determined to put their lives on the line for their country or their God. Our government has been slowly selling all of our military equipment piece-meal throughout the world, to any country with an acceptable offer.”

“What is the difference between the Christian martyrs of the 1st century and the Muslim martyrs of the 21st?” Al Haasan asked, “Are

they not essentially of the same mindset, both willing to die for their faith? Is there any distinction? The first noteworthy point is the fundamental difference between being prepared to die for a cause, and to kill for it. While Christians in later times have often been ready to do both, this was not the case in the first three centuries. There is no suggestion that the early Christian martyrs wanted to kill anybody.”

The admiral said, “Some do seem almost overeager to suffer and die for Christ, and the Muslim terrorists notably display this same enthusiasm for death. But I suppose this is understandable under your circumstances.”

Al Haasan continued, “Our people hear stories similar to what you describe, but it is so different from our culture and beliefs that we lump all cultures not Islam as God-less. Our people are not moved when we here of death and destruction in these countries, in fact my people celebrate any catastrophe in other cultures. In the Koran, everything that happens, good and evil, is the direct result of Allah’s will, and nothing else. This partly explains the fatalism inherent in the faith; and belief in the resurrection and judgment at the end of history. In Islam an individual’s good and bad deeds will be weighed on a scale and if the good outweighs the bad, the person will enter paradise.

“Infidels, by the way, mean you, kind Admiral. The Koran teaches Muslims to wage jihad when they are strong and to compromise with the prevailing society when they are weak. This is a reflection of Muhammad’s own fortunes. When he fled Mecca to Medina, he told Christians: ‘We believe in what has been sent down to us (the Koran) and sent down to you (the Bible). Our God is the same as your God.’ But later in Medina when Muhammad was strong, Allah told him: ‘Fight people of the Book who do not accept the religion of the Islam until they pay tribute by hand, being inferior.’”

“I think that is a very cold and selfish way of thinking,” said the admiral.

“I can understand your opinion,” Al Haasan soothed the admiral. “It is just the way that the world has become throughout the ages. Who is to say what will come of the democratic elections in the Islamic Iraq? What will be the consequences of such an event in one of the

most holy regions, suddenly governed by political figures instead of Islamic religious men; pious men? It is madness to even imagine what the effect will be.”

“It is good to talk with you this evening,” the admiral announced. “As it is said, it is lonely at the top. I don’t receive many visits after my recent failures, so I welcome our exchange of ideas.”

AAI Haasan replied, “It is nice of you to say such comforting words. I am experiencing the same feelings this past month as the leader of our unit. I’m sure you will agree that it isn’t smart to become too familiar with junior personnel.”

The admiral decided that now was the best time to dig for information that might even save his own neck. “I have over thirty years experience in submarine warfare and have done very well, the last two years excepted.” He continued, “Please let me analyze your plan and tactics and I can certainly give direction will surely increase your chances of survival.”

Al Haasan didn’t take the bait and raised his handgun to the admiral’s head

He knew them all to be ruthless and wondered how many men would be killed. The hair on his neck stood up. He could see murder in their eyes. They had probably been recruited at a young age and only knew brutality and murder. He felt as sorry for them as he wished for their quick deaths.

The terrorists had been thoroughly trained and were standing in ranks to hear words from the admiral. The admiral had arranged the day prior to have the simulator returned to the training facility and gave all of the crewmen involved enough money the day before in hopes that the money would be left to their families. It was amazing what could be bought in Russia for the right price. He imagined it to be true for the rest of the world.

He hadn’t seen much of the world except Murmansk; however, he and his new bride had married and honeymooned in Greece. It was a Perfect Greek Wedding. The most beautiful wedding he could imagine took place in the village of Vathi on the island of Sifnos in the Greek Cyclades. He, of course, invited friends and family, but understood

when they were alone at the wedding. A Russian couple who were not officially guests of the wedding but they had met the day before just happened to be staying in the village and when they saw them they invited them to their wedding.

After the wedding they went into the town to see if there was any nightlife to enjoy. They found a nightclub with a mixed crowd of Greeks and foreigners and the dancing went on through the evening. Even the priest danced. The admiral thought that if he was ever to recommend a place for marriage, this was exactly how he would describe.

That was really the only good travel memory that he had; but he held out hope for a reunion with his family at Miami International Airport.

The admiral notified the training crew that they should arrive at 6pm for words from the admiral directed at the Russians and the terrorists as well. He told them that he would have a few short words and that they would likely have to suffer a probable lengthy speech from Al Haasan. This would also give them a chance to say farewell to their very studious pupils that they had so diligently tutored.

This final act, thought the admiral, *would seal his fate*. He knew that he would be dogged for this act for the rest of his life even if he was never caught, the chance of which, was slim. He had been a dedicated Russian enlisted man and then junior officer until finally being selected as an Admiral; though a Rear-Admiral, an Admiral nonetheless. He had dedicated his life to his work to impress his colleagues, family and ultimately, himself. He would never enjoy that pride again. He remembered when the Grand Prince, or Knyaz and his own wife changed his shoulder boards. She was so proud and was still proud of her Admiral to this day.

He could not believe that he had allowed himself to join forces with madmen. Everything he had ever worked for was for naught. He wondered what his wife would think if word leaked that he was involved with this band of terrorists. Didn't this make him a terrorist as well?

He wanted to empty his stomach and was just about to do just that when Al Haasan made his appearance. He straightened and made his way to the bar. "Can I get you something to drink; perhaps a cigar?" Al

Haasan accepted both.

“I think I know how you must feel,” the creepy terrorist shared as he lit his cigar “There was a time when I was given the same orders to terminate men of my command that were conducting operations unknown to me and to serve their own purposes; not unlike your trainers who are misleading their captain. Anyway, when I got word of the unlawful behavior I had the men line up much like this and watched them gunned down. I personally put a bullet in each man’s head.”

They made their way to the hill behind the admiral’s home, where his men worked hard to train the terrorists and they would now witness their slaughter.

The Russian crewmen were just as culpable as the admiral since they were singled out for not only their training ability, but also their love of Rubles over the motherland. The admiral never had any intention of sharing any of the payoffs. He still felt that their deaths would haunt him unlike any decision he ever made.

The Syrians were in formation and were rather distant from any roaming ears.

The admiral hated himself for what was to occur in the next few minutes. The Russian crewmen were at attention across from the Syrians and each of them knew that after a speech by their admiral and words from Al Haasan, they would receive their payment. Each of them had dreamt what he would do with his reward.

As expected the admiral gave a rousing speech to the Russian crew “wishing them the best as they left this life.”

The crew wasn’t sure what that meant except that perhaps they would be transferred to another ship or even Sevastopol. Some smiled at the thought of the beautiful Mediterranean city.

The admiral then turned over words to Al Haasan and walked back to his home. He didn’t have the stomach for what was to come.

Al Haasan congratulated them on their accomplishments to date. He then told them that the difficult part lay ahead.

After speaking, he stepped back

Without missing a beat, he spouted out orders in Arabic. His men then raised their weapons and opened up with automatic rifle fire that

were muffled by a high technology silencer.

One man put several bullets into the admiral's house per his request and then they all dragged their victims further into the woods. They covered the bodies with leaves and twigs and then ran to a truck that they drove several miles before driving it into the woods and abandoning it. They buried their rifles several yards away and covered the disturbed ground with leaves and branches. They buried these weapons because they would be too unwieldy for use in the Submarine and they didn't intend to show their hand until underway for a while. They then set off for the two-mile run back to the submarine. They were certain that this would draw attention away from the possibility of a hi-jack of the Russian submarine.

When Al Haasan approached, he came quickly; the admiral thought that he would surely die. Instead, the terrorist extended his hand and thanked him for the training. He left just as quickly to join his comrades for boarding the submarine.

After the terrorists were safely onboard the submarine and underway, the admiral notified police that someone had shot at him and that he saw men running through the woods to a vehicle over the ridge. There was a lot of noise behind the admiral's home, so that is where the investigators started their search. The murders had been timed so that the Oscar II would be getting underway as soon as the terrorists came aboard.

The terrorists didn't know that the nuclear warheads that they were so excited to use, had been switched out for missiles with 750kg High Explosive instead of 500kton nuclear warheads. The switch had been made in accordance with the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. The 750kg high explosive warhead is still quiet powerful, but would require the ship to approach within 300 of the U.S. coast thereby increasing their chances of detection.

The police quickly discovered the tracks with fresh imprints in the mud. If they could match the tread to a vehicle then they would have their man. They followed the tracks but didn't locate the truck until the next morning.

The admiral was certain that the government investigators would

hold him under strong scrutiny given his checkered final years in the Russian Navy. He hoped that he would be able to hold his own against these professional policemen. When the subject of the Oscar II came up, he reported the actual and reasonable track the Oscar II would follow until 3000 nautical miles from the United States. They were to perform tactics training against another Russian submarine from Sevastopol. They would also certainly stop periodically to listen for U.S. boats. It was a six-month deployment with no scheduled port visits.

It was clear to him that he would probably not get away with this, so he transferred the one million dollars to a U.S. bank and sent his wife and two daughters to their uncle in Miami, Florida. He hoped that there existed a very small chance that he might survive the next two days and make his way to Miami. It would be so wonderful to live in such a warm and exciting city.

Chapter 9

John Dunn wasn't a bad looking man. In fact, he was rather handsome. His major flaw on first assessment was that he was so damned shy. He was of average height, build, had Black hair and deep blue eyes. Karen could see how a young enlisted girl would try and grab onto this Lieutenant aviator.

"Who knows, his wife might kick him out, she gets out of the military and they take on the world together." It's not such a stretch from the viewpoint of a young woman. Karen knew Petty Officer Sanchez and she acknowledged that this was a very beautiful and smart young woman. She probably knew what they were doing was wrong, but she let herself be taken away by the rush of passion.

"John," Billy began, "just what were you guys busted for. Most of us know that you two flirt around with each other. Did it get past flirting?"

They already knew that whatever took place was at the "Top of the Rock" (The Rock) Enlisted Dance Club that provides night club operations for the enlisted community of Naval Air Station Keflavik. The facility also offers pool tables, and slot machines. Normally, officers are banned from the club unless there are special events such as comedy improv, sumo wrestling, bingo, or command functions.

"Listen, Billy, you were the legal officer and I trust you. I'm putting blind faith with Karen. I need to know that what is said in this room stays in this room."

Karen and Billy both agreed with Karen looking forward to some steamy sex talk.

"Karen, I have to ask your point of view on my marriage before we

talk about my mistake last night.

Karen, how should I approach Jen with the news.”

Karen was having her own troubles at home and was pretty sure that Larry was having an affair.

“John you need to share your feelings of remorse more than once. You need to allow Jennifer to question you and give her reassurance. Be empathetic for the pain you’ve caused her. You need to understand that Jennifer’s reactions are typical. Learn to share your emotions including your fear that Jen may leave. Just be patient. She’ll need time.

“Jennifer needs time to process, talk and explore her feelings more deeply and understand that she might have post-traumatic stress like symptoms; difficulty sleeping and concentrating, hyper vigilance and intolerance for things that bring up memories of the affair. She needs to be able to talk about it when she needed to know more about what happened. I am experiencing similar problems and those recommendations will work.”

Billy was surprised that anyone in his right mind would cheat on Karen.

“Okay, tell us what happened,” Billy said.

“I was at the Rock: I know we’re not supposed to go there, but I did and that’s that. Anyway, once I got in, everyone made me feel so welcome that I really let my guard down and just had a great time. Petty Officer Sanchez eventually came in with her girlfriends and went to the bar. Someone whispered in her ear and, next thing I know she was heading straight for my table. We have flirted around a lot. I thought it was innocent enough, but she looked so good last night that I became more familiar with her.”

“What do you mean, more familiar,” Karen asked.

He didn’t explain, he just continued with his story.

“What did you do together?” demanded Karen.

“We danced for about an hour or two and had some hot wings to counter the alcohol. In fact, I stopped drinking altogether at that point.”

Karen thought that she would scream if he didn’t tell the good stuff. “What happened after you stopped drinking?” Karen asked.

“Well, we danced for an hour or so more and we were having such a good time. Everything was just friendly you know? Anyway, we ended up outside for a breath of fresh air and to dry the sweat that the dancing had created. It was windy on the front side and too cold for our wet clothes so we moved around to the side behind the retaining wall where there was no wind. It was so perfect; standing under these Icelandic stars and breathing the fresh air. Suddenly she came to me and kissed me.

I stopped her,” he added.

Karen rolled her eyes. She wanted to hear about sex! She wanted them together at this point so that this story might give her hope for her own screwed up love life. She had no idea how serious the situation was for John and Lisa.

John continued but in a more hushed wavering voice. His eyes watered and he stopped talking long enough to get a bottle of Jim Beam bourbon out of his closet.

Karen rolled her eyes again. *Come on already*, she thought.

“Brass Nut booze is too expensive. They charge the same amount for a shot of Jim Beam as they do for an expensive scotch. I just started buying my own,” he said. “Come to think of it, Mr. Jim Beam should be sending me Christmas cards, all things considered. I’ve certainly consumed a truckload of this fine nectar.”

Karen looked over his shoulder. His closet was immaculate. She noticed that shirts followed trousers, trousers followed flight suits, flight suits followed Service Dress Blue Uniform and so on, but the thing to note was that they were nearly perfectly pressed and separated equally. Now this was a man that took time for the details.

“Do you have any sodas?” Karen asked in order to see the inside of the fridge.

“Sure do,” he said as he opened his refrigerator. “What would you like?”

Karen was stunned, not only was everything in order of type, she could swear that the entire refrigerator was alphabetized. Karen could understand the tears better. He had built up his world and sorted and filed every aspect and now it was all crumbling down around him.

“A Diet Coke please,” Karen continued. “What happened next. What did you get in trouble for?”

“Well, Lisa was wearing a skirt and sweater and we began to kiss. I broke it off because I suddenly saw myself laying my wings on the CO’s desk. She pulled me back down to her and we began to kiss again. I surely weighed the possibilities and let her pull my mouth deep into hers. I can’t describe how attracted I am to her and since the sparks were so hot, I thought that she must feel the same towards me. As we kissed I rubbed up and down her back and lower still. She kept telling me ‘Come on, come on.’ I grabbed her ass and slowly began to pull her skirt up as we kissed. ‘Come on.’ As her skirt bunched around her waist, I let my hands slide down her butt and was excited to know that she wasn’t wearing any panties. I knelt in front of her for a moment to taste her, but we were both aching for relief. I kissed back up to her breasts that she had brought out for me and I helped her turn around and place her hands on the side of the building. I had only just entered her when two of the chiefs came around for a smoke.

“We were almost dressed, zipped and buttoned when one finally recognized what was going on. Now, this is where I need your help here, Billy. The report said that we were found in a state of near undress and stunned to have been found. I don’t know how damning those words are, but I need for you to tell me how it looks and what’s going to happen to me and what is going to happen to Lisa; that’s Petty Officer Sanchez’ first name.”

Billy was the squadron’s legal officer and that is obviously why John invited them to his room.

“A rumor here in the barracks is that photos and video were taken of you having sex. Is that true?”

“Not true,” John said hotly. “I can’t believe my good friends have already convicted me.”

Billy began, “That is good news. Based on what you have told us, the possibilities range from dishonorable discharge, which costs all benefits and one year in prison, and/or a bad-conduct discharge for Petty Officer Sanchez and dismissal from the military for you. Now, that’s the worst that could happen.”

John was stunned. “Since she didn’t work directly for me, will that make a difference?”

Billy added, “Keep in mind that it’s all up to the CO and what the report says specifically was going on. In my opinion, you will both probably be restricted to the barracks for the rest of the deployment.”

Karen didn’t hear any of Billy’s sage advice. She was still watching through her mind’s eye the outstanding description that John gave of his sexual liaison with the very pretty Lisa Sanchez. She thought she would pull her hair out if she didn’t get any soon.

John said with more than a little anger, “You saw that Master Chief attacking me outside my workspace when he had absolutely no knowledge of what happened last night. He just did it because he knew here were a lot of the enlisted on the hangar bay and he wanted to be seen by everyone of them berating a senior officer.”

“Billy, that was out and out disrespect of a senior officer and I want him punished at least enough show the enlisted cannot talk to officers like that. If his behavior is precedent setting then the squadron is in a lot of trouble...I know I have no business to talk.”

Billy saw the confrontation and it had occurred to him what it might mean to the young enlisted since he was enlisted at one time himself.

John continued, “I can’t imagine what the enlisted personnel thought when they saw a Master Chief scolding an officer at the top of his lungs. His purposely projected his loudest voice to reach into every workspace in the hangar.”

“I took care of him, John.” Billy cut in, “I had him at attention in the middle of the hangar and yelled that he had no business talking to an officer like that. I think Karen will vouch for me; she heard me all the way to maintenance control.”

“I thought he was going to crap his pants,” Karen said

Both Billy and John looked at her as if she had lost control of her mouth.

“That was pretty gross, Karen.”

Soon Billy got Karen to her feet and guided her to the door.

“John, try and get some sleep and go about your life like nothing happened. There is no video and the only evidence is a report that said you were in a state of undress, whether that means putting ‘em on or taking ‘em off is not clear. The worst that can come of this is being tied down here in the Barracks. I think the real bad guys are the chiefs that interrupted you right at release, and I’m sure Petty Officer Sanchez feels the same. Women have the same urges and I’m sure she’s frustrated.” Billy smiled at Karen. “Take care my friend and let me know if you need anything else. The XO and CO will speak to you through me, so I’m sure we’ll be talking again soon.”

Karen had turned about ten shades of red at the statement obviously directed at her sexual frustrations. He was more intuitive than she realized. She would tuck that little tidbit of information away.

“Thanks for embarrassing me, stupid,” she said with a smile.

“What did I say?” he asked innocently.

They met up with the other officers of their crew in the Brass Nut. They were just about finished stocking the hard liquor and the beer in the refrigerators.

“Hey guys,” said Vince, “The Operations Officer stopped by and told us that an Oscar submarine was picked up on SOSUS headed south from that Barents. We might get to fly on it. If so we will be flying out of Bodo, Norway. Wouldn’t that be a blast?”

“I hope we can. You guys would love Norway,” said Billy.

“It’s really beautiful,” Karen agreed.

Billy and Karen agreed to do the cleanup. Before clean up, Billy and Karen were interested in tonight’s dinner.

“Who’s turn to cook,” Billy asked.

“Scott’s turn.”

“What delicacy do you have planned for us Chef O’Neil?”

Scott answered, “I’ve decided on a recipe passed down from my grandmother’s grandmother and has provided joy for my family throughout the ages. It is a recipe that requires several types of beans combined with a nice smoked sausage first sautéed in garlic and chopped onions before being combined for a long simmer.

“16 bean soup, you jerk,” said Karen. “I thought we agreed that we would try and be more creative.”

Karen continued, “You saw my shopping list and it is very creative because I love you all deeply, and I want each of you to be happy and satisfied after your meal.”

“Oh shut up,” was the collective answer to that devoted love.

Scott smiled to himself, certainly with his back to her. He knew not to get her upset. She wouldn't explode on site, but would simmer slowly until she got her revenge.

Scott was a prior enlisted man like Billy was, except that Scott had made it all the way to Senior Chief before applying to be a Naval Aviator. He was much older than the rest of the officer crew at 36 years old. But he was beloved on the crew for his calm demeanor and soothing manner. When the crew was frantically trying to regain contact on a submarine that they had lost, it was common for Scott to head back and tell the crew that it was alright and that if we got him, great. If we don't then that's the way it was to be.

Scott drove 69 miles one way to get to work. His extended family lived south of the base and in addition to his Navy duties, he was pastor of his own congregation in the heart of his family community.

The other officers felt sad about what Karen said at first and then, after contrasting what was just said with her behavior in the past, they said, “Shut up, Karen, you would feed us frogs if they were cheap enough.” They all laughed.

“Okay, Okay, who is cooking tomorrow?” Tom almost left the room intact, but Karen intercepted him.

“So it's young Tom to feed us tomorrow, and what can we anticipate? 16 bean soup again.”

“Oh no, nothing like that. Though some of the preparation is the same. I've settled on a lovely seven-bean soup.” He ran from the kitchen to avoid the fury of Karen.

“Okay, I hope I can count on you guys to come up with something new next time. You can find recipes on-line or at the grocery store.

Billy and Karen got to work in the Brass Nut and it was no easy task. The floors were a sticky mess, but that was expected and they

both went through two buckets of soapy water before their boots stopped sticking. They then went on a cleaning frenzy on the foosball table. They played a couple rounds to determine where the sticking points were and then went to work on the table with another bucket of cleaner. This took some time as the goals were hard to reach into. Karen got that pleasure because Billy's mitts were way too big to get into the goal holes.

Finally, they turned their attention to the bar surfaces and the head (bathroom.) Billy took the bathroom and Karen took the serving surfaces and any spills onto the refrigerator tops.

When they were happy that it was clean enough, they decided to get some sleep so that they would be able to take turns fielding the booze requests from the foreign aircrews.

She heard that the British had arrived with a Nimrod aircraft. This is one of the aircraft on her shortlist that she truly admired. She hoped that she would have the chance someday to tag along with the Brits.

Billy and Karen agreed to stand the first watch at the bar, but the others had to immediately get dressed to takeover after they are awakened. It would not do to have only one officer tending bar for any amount of time.

Karen told Billy that she intended to wear civilian clothes for maximum comfort. She anticipated a very rowdy night with another aircrew that were supposed to be inbound.

She left her door open a little and Billy wondered if she knew that she knew that he had seen her during the first Brass Nut fiasco. He took the a chance and looked in and once again scanned the room to her closed. She was a true heartthrob with a long and slim body. She admired her ample and proportional breasts as she put on a bra. He scanned down to her pubic bone that was lightly covered with blond hair. He watched her turn around to select her outfit, giving him the chance to stumble away. He had absolutely never seen such an extremely sexy, beautiful and intelligent woman and he further wondered whatever could drive her husband to treat her with less than adoration. No doubt this was not merely physical attraction, but something deep in his heart and soul.

Billy went to his own room and put on some nice khaki slacks and a purple long sleeve sweater. He knew it would be likely that it would get hot at some point, so he wore a purple tee shirt under the sweater. He knocked on Karen's door.

"Come in," Karen said.

"Karen, I'm wearing a sweater, but it's going to get hot so you should have a tee-shirt in case it gets too hot."

"If it gets too hot I'll just come back for something cooler."

She looked so good in her overalls in maroon corduroy. She didn't want to draw any unnecessary attention though she was sure that she would get several invitations and straightforward invitations to join them at another location. She never got over the fact that various foreign squadrons hadn't addressed the sexual harassment that was taking place every day and night. On her second thought; unless it conflicts with the exercise, nothing is going to be said.

At 6 pm the Brass Nut was already hopping with drunken activity. While the CO and XO didn't make it last night, they had no excuse for tonight. It was fun and reassuring to have the CO and XO around to stop anything that got out of hand. That reassurance was not founded they found out soon enough. As soon as the XO got a gut full of Wild Turkey, he fell in with the rowdiest of the visitors. There was a pretty intense competition at the dart board and the XO's team of two were winning by a shallow margin and when one of the U.S. Lieutenant Commanders went to remove the darts from the board, the XO threw a dart with full force that penetrated the Lieutenant Commander's hand right between the tendons and into the board. The Lieutenant Commander called the XO a drunken asshole that couldn't hold his liquor. As he left the bar, the XO stumbled after him challenging him to a fight, even going so far as to spin the Lieutenant Commander around as he tried to open his stateroom. The CO slowly made his way to the altercation and screamed for the XO to stop. This sobered the XO enough to make him realize what he had done. The CO decided on the spot that the XO was banned from the Brass Nut and if he needed a drink, he could order it from the Brass Nut telephone, otherwise he was restricted to his stateroom when not working at the hangar.

Chapter 10

Once the terrorist crew were onboard they planned to allow the ship to get underway and safely around the horn of Norway before showing their intent.

“This is a fantastic ship,” announced Al Haasan and his crew that understood limited Russian smiled and shook their heads in agreement. The Oscar CO couldn’t know that they were armed to the teeth with a variety of blades and handguns that they could use expertly. They had been trained under very brutal teachers. If a trainee made even the smallest mistake, the trainee would be beaten severely by not only the trainer but his fellow students.

“We cannot go to our knees, but we would like to face Mecca for prayer, I hope this is okay?”

It had been four hours before the leader had requested any assistance so he was surprised with the request to allow the Syrian crew to pray to their God.

“Concerning prayers,” explained Al Haasan, “Sunni Muslims pray specific prayers five times each day so please mention that fact to the submarine CO. Specific movements to be performed along with these prayers include, when praying, to face toward Mecca so please have your navigator on watch provide a direction for us to face. This term has a range of meanings, for example, the notion of a struggle against temptation or the effort to live a righteous life. Jihad also means ‘shooting wars.’ There is no doubt the Koran encourages military conquest or that Islam was spread by the sword, particularly in its first 100 years.”

“Yes, that is fine, I understand your devotion to your religion, XO what is the bearing to Mecca?”

“Thanks be to Allah.” The collected Syrians chanted, *“We thank him, turn to him, ask his forgiveness, and seek refuge in him from our wicked souls and bad deeds. Whoever Allah enlightens will not be misguided, and the deceiver will never be guided. I declare that there is no god but Allah alone; he has no partners. I also declare that Mohammed is his servant and prophet.”*

“O mankind! Fear your guardian lord who created you from a single person. Created, out of it, his mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women; fear Allah, through whom ye demand your mutual rights, and be heedful of the wombs that bore you: for Allah ever watches over you.

“O ye who believe! Fear Allah, and make your utterance straight forward: that he may make your conduct whole and should and forgive you your sins. He that obeys Allah and his messenger has already attained the great victory.”

The crew of the Oscar showed respect for their religious offering but as soon as it was finished the crew became a chattering bunch of monkeys, each trying to get the attention of the CO and the XO to make their reports. The CO wondered why he saw several square edged shapes under their uniforms. Perhaps the Syrians knew that they would need toiletries and so had placed them in the back of their uniforms.

The CO also reflected on the differences between his religion and that of the Syrian’s Sunni Muslim religion. He compared their very strict vows and daily prayer with the Russian Orthodox that didn’t really require any attention. Only the old and feeble latch onto the Orthodox faith to improve their chances to visit the holy gates. A visit to church is really uncomfortable.

Russian Orthodox churches are built in a cruciform with the altar facing east. Everything in the church is placed according to tradition with a specific reason and a symbolic meaning. The altar is separated from the nave by a wooden icon screen called an Iconostas. The Iconostas has three doors: the central or Royal Gates. Deacon’s Doors with icons of the archangels, Michael and Gabriel, are on the left and

right sides of the Royal Gates. The deacon, altar boys and other men enter these doors, but no women are allowed behind the Iconostas. At the top, an icon of the Annunciation with the angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary. An icon of the Last Supper is above the Royal Gates and an image of Jesus Christ above that, with the holy birth-giver of God (Mary) to the right and St. John the Baptist to the left. This grouping of three images is called the “Deesis.”

In the Russian Orthodox, church people usually stood or kneeled during the liturgy, out of respect for the presence of God. Some folding chairs for the elderly and infirm were placed along the walls. People make the sign of the cross with the thumb and first two fingers of the right hand joined at the tips with the third and fourth fingers closed at the palm, as a symbol of the Trinity, by touching the brow, the breast, the right shoulder and the left shoulder, meaning that every power of mind, heart, soul and strength are dedicated to the service of God. When the priest or bishop blessed the people, it is with the fingers held to form the Greek letters IC XC—the first and last letters of Jesus Christ. The faithful receive communion from the chalice with a spoon. Communion is in the form of a small piece of proskir, or blessed bread, soaked in wine. Confession must precede communion, either before the liturgy or the night before, and the communicant must have fasted since midnight.

“Thank you, Captain. It was very kind of you to allow my men and I to pray to our God...do you have a God ,Captain?”

“Why, yes I do. I am Russian Orthodox, but my religion doesn’t require so many pauses for prayer throughout the day.”

The Terrorist didn’t take offence. “I understand and I imagine your men must find our religious practices to be quite comical. It really can be quiet pressing on a strict schedule such as that on this wonderful ship.”

“Come to the chart and I will show you our intended track.”

Al Haasan was interested to see though he knew that the submarines course would change soon. He smiled.

“Here we are at the Northern most point of Norway. Once we turn south we will submerge and travel through the underwater trenches to

a point east of the island of Jan Mayen. At Jan Mayen we will alter course slightly towards the Faroe Islands between Iceland and the United Kingdom. We will meet our playmate there and perform practice attack procedures. During these procedures, we will be running drills such as an engine room fire to create confusion while we continue to prosecute the other submarine.”

“What submarine will you be up against?”

“We will be playing with an Akula hunter/killer.”

This news took some of the wind out of the terrorist’s wings. He would need to turn the submarine earlier to the west to avoid detection from the Akula. He didn’t know if their purpose was broadcast yet, but he couldn’t take chances. He would see this mission to the end...the very end.

The Akula is the quietest Russian nuclear submarine ever designed, and the low noise levels came as a surprise to Western intelligence. The Akula can launch a range of anti-submarine and anti-surface vessel torpedoes. The submarine has eight torpedo launch tubes, four 650 millimeter and four 533 millimeter tubes. The Improved Akula and Akula II have ten with six 533 mm tubes. The four 650 mm tubes can be fitted with liners to provide additional 533 mm weapon launch capacity. The torpedo tubes can be used to launch mines instead of torpedoes.

It seemed that Al Haasan rarely slept and he took immense interest in everything that happened on the ship. If Syria wanted a dedicated man, they got him in Al Haasan. His crew slept little as well. There were only ten of them and they were sleeping four at a time for six hours at a time. This meant that they would only sleep for six hours at a time before standing their next watch for 24 hours.

The navigator was just about to announce the turn towards Jan Mayen when Al Haasan placed his hand over the Navigator’s.

“Make our course 230 Navigator.” The captain was taken aback with this and asked what was going on. The CO started making his way to the Navigation console to settle this misunderstanding when he felt a pistol at his heart.

As soon as their leader lifted his handgun to the CO’s chest the

word passed almost immediately among the terrorist crew and they quickly drew their handguns that were so small that no one ever even noticed the telltale signs of a weapon. Except for the leader, the terrorists all carried a heat treated magazine body for long-term feeding 10-round capacity. The CO looked around and saw that each of the ten junior men also had weapons drawn. He remembered the squarish object in the sleeping man's vest. He now knew it wasn't a shower kit after all.

Al Haasan pressed the barrel of the weapon against the CO to move him away. He carried a model 92FS Beretta compact 9mm it had a compact overall size and weight. It had a chrome lined bore that the CO thought he might take advantage of with time. It had a combat trigger guard and plastic grips. The magazine held only 10 bullets, but the CO imagined it would take two seconds to eject the magazine and replace it.

His men carried the Browning 22. To many this may be "just a 22," but to handgun aficionados, it's another firearm that bears the name Browning. As such, the Buck Mark has received all the attention, engineering and craftsmanship given to guns of considerably higher cost. One of the Russian crew was a weapons aficionado and recognized the caliber and power differences.

Al Haasan then took the Internal Communication System (ICS) microphone to address the crew of "ST GEORGE THE VICTORIOUS."

"Gentlemen," he announced, "My name is Ahmed Al Haasan and I will be in charge of all submarine operations. I will not call myself the Commanding Officer because it would be presumptuous to make that comparison. My men and I have commandeered this wonderful submarine in order to make an attack on the United States of America. I'm certain that a number of you feel elation that we will be making such an attack. You must be warned that my men and I have trained for many years to kill in many ways, so I urge you to shake off any urges you might have to try and disarm one of my men. It is impossible. I do not say that as a braggart might, I say it as fact. If you make any move to touch one of my men, you and anyone around you will be executed.

"Now," continued Al Haasan, "There is an Akula nearby that most

certainly has orders to destroy this submarine. It is important that you run silent for some time.”

“Sonar operator,” Al Haasan spat, “Why didn’t you report the Akula contact?”

“This is an exercise and we were expecting them as they were expecting us.”

Al Haasan continued on the ICS, “We intend to evade all submarines and warships. Being found will mean sure death. Your government may have put all the pieces together and since we have maintained radio silence, we can expect many Russian warships to be hurrying to the point north of Jan Mayen. We have turned 230 to miss Jan Mayen by many miles, so we should be safe for a while. We will take the submarine around Iceland and to the west of that Island and follow a track that will get us safely past the icebergs south of Greenland and to the Grand Banks off of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. We will then launch our missiles and disappear as stealthily as we arrived. After our mission is complete we will sail the submarine across the Atlantic, drive through the straits of Gibraltar and make our way finally until we can reach a port in the Mediterranean.”

Al Haasan urged the CO to join him in the CO’s stateroom for words. When they got to the room, Al Haasan was very impressed with the relative luxury that the ship’s captain enjoyed. While the CO poured two glasses of brandy; to put his adversary at ease, and to put himself at ease.

Al Haasan looked around the room and saw that it was decorated with photos and certificates of his life accomplishments. There were many plaques commemorating his service in previous commands, but what really caught his attention was a photo of the captain in formation with a wrestling team. His spoken Russian was weak but his comprehension of written Russian was nil.

“Captain, this photo of wrestlers; it is you?”

“Yes it is,” answered the captain.

It was a new day and, at present, Combat Aircrew Seven were on station just south of Iceland. It was a beautiful day for flying with unlimited visibility. They were working with a Destroyer and flying on a U. S. Submarine. The Destroyer had requested, by message, that a P-3 provide tactical support in the prosecution of a U.S. Submarine. Karen asked the Destroyer Captain if he would be amenable to allowing the aircraft to conduct photography training after the anti-submarine exercise. The captain agreed happily. During the anti-submarine training, the crew were pretty much being driven by the submarine so Karen decided it was a good time to take some time to train the Billy and the Navigator, LTjg Tom Morgan on tactics and give them a tour of the equipment onboard. She put the Third Pilot in the left seat which is where the senior pilot normally sits. She pretty much left him to his own devices, which frankly, scared the hell out of him. She knew he would do alright and she was right there if needed.

“Just do what they tell you, Vince. Call me on the ICS if you need me. The TACCO and the operators know what’s going on, so they can help you keep your head out also.”

She told Scott that she would be bothering his Sensor operators. The TACCO (Tactical Coordinator) told her that it wasn’t a problem, but the Sensor 1 and Sensor 3 were kind of busy. When it came time for Billy and Tom to sit on a formal board to become Patrol Plane Commander (PPC), or TACCO they will need to have all of this knowledge at the ready.

First she asked them to describe in basic terms, what each crewmember does.

Tom fielded this question, “We have three pilots, two flying at anytime and the other resting for the next rotation. We have two enlisted flight engineers that sit between the pilots and monitor all engine gauges and make recommendations when a problem is identified. Behind the curtain is the TACCO and the Navigator/communicator (NAVCOM). The Navigator obviously plots the track that the pilots will fly. In addition, he is responsible for plain and encrypted radio transmissions. We have three enlisted aviation warfare specialists and also, an enlisted in-flight electronics technician designated IFT.”

“Good,” congratulated Karen. “Now let’s go and take a look at what they do.”

Next, she started at the TACCO station which is the senior Naval Flight Officer station onboard. He described how he used his computer display to show the flight station where ships, submarines and even sonobuoys were in relation to the aircraft. Sonobuoys are equipped with an acoustic receiver and a radio transmitter that emits radio signals when it detects underwater sounds. They are called buoys for short. They are really nothing more than microphones deployed into the deep water that can transmit any sound they pickup to our receivers.

All weapons are released from this station with the exception of rockets and bombs. She then took them back to where the Sensor operators; Sensor 1, Sensor 2, and Sensor 3 did their magic. The Sensor 1 and Sensor 2 were busy scrolling between DIFAR sonobuoys.

Karen started, “When the TACCO drops a DIFAR sonobuoy, and they are able to monitor all sounds, natural and mechanical on their displays here. We also carry DICASS sonobuoys, but they alert the submarine that we are here so we only use them when the submarine is too quiet and when active ‘pinging’ buoys would give better ranges. We have pretty good ranges out here so we don’t expect to use them. The operators monitor their equipment carefully, scrolling between groups of sonobuoys looking for any noise in the water that might correlate with a submarine. You can see Petty Officer Dubois is looking at DIFAR 3 right now and if they get contact, I recommend that you come back and see the needle in the haystack that they regularly pick out of the noise.”

Karen was called to the flight station and turned the trainees over to the Sensor 3 who gave a tour of his station.

“Okay,” he started, “Real quick, this is the Infrared Detecting Set (IRDS) not unlike the one you see on the television program *COPS* when a helicopter is helping with the chase. It provides passive imaging of infrared wavelength radiation to visible light emanating from the terrain along the aircraft flight path for stand-off detection, tracking, and classification capability. Here is our radar system; The Synthetic

Aperture Radar (SAR) is capable of multimode operation to provide periscope and small target detection, navigation, weather avoidance, long range surface search. SAR provides detection, identification, and classification capability of stationary targets. Inverse Synthetic Aperture Radar (ISAR) provides detection, classification, and tracking capability against surface and surfaced submarine targets. ISAR provides range, bearing, and positional data on all selected targets, and provides medium or high resolution images for display and recording. Right here is where I control the MAD indicator. The MAD system is like a big metal detector. If we fly over or close to a submarine, I will get a disturbance on my display. When you here me call ‘MAD MAD MAD,’ that’s my cue to the crew that we have just over-flown a submarine. Do you have any questions?”

They thanked him and went back to their stations in a techie daze. They didn’t realize that they just had a brush of the knowledge that they would gain with time and how deep into the systems they would have to delve and regurgitate at their qualification boards.

Within minutes, the TACCO took a radio call from Keflavik that asked them to return ASAP. It was such a pleasant day and the crew were surprised that they were being recalled. They were only two hours into their mission and were now on their way back home.

The Destroyer was working on the same frequency so they weren’t surprised when Scott explained their departure and said farewell to the submarine.

Karen had another idea, “DELTA FOUR ZULU this is XRAY EIGHT DELTA, before we leave, do you mind if we conduct photographic training.”

“That’s fine XRAY EIGHT ZULU, we’ll be looking for all aspects and your departure after completion.”

The aircraft started on the port side of the ship at 200ft altitude and about 200 feet from the ship. The first pass was from stern to bow and the In-Flight Technician (IFT) took photos of the port aft aspect, the port side and the port bow. Vince executed a left hand 360 degree turn for photos of the bow. The IFT took photos of the starboard side of the

ship, the bow head-on, and the port bow. Vince did another left hand 360 degree turn to bring the aircraft down the starboard side of the ship. The IFT took another photo of the starboard bow and then took photos of the starboard side in two areas and the starboard aft section. Vince conducted his next and final left hand cloverleaf, so that the IFT could get the final photos of the starboard aft, aft and port aft portions of the ship. Karen thanked the captain and turned to Vince and congratulated him for some very nice airmanship. You could tell that Vince was beside himself with pride. Karen was considered one of the best pilots in the wing and a complement from her was gold.

When they got back, they went straight into a brief when they expected a debrief.

“This is very strange, Billy,” Karen commented. “We have other aircraft and crews available for these sorts of things.”

Billy replied, “Sounds like we are ramping up for a full-scale anti-submarine prosecution. This might turn out to be fun.”

“I just hope it doesn’t interfere with our return to Brunswick in three days,” Karen worried.

As they waited for the briefing officer, Karen quizzed the crew on the Oscar.

“Okay...Billy,” Karen started,. “What is the size of the submarine and describe the propulsion and speeds.”

“Damn, Ma’am,” Billy protested, “That’s an awful lot to ask a simple boy from deep Texas. Let me see here, the length is 505 feet with a 60 feet beam tapering to 29 feet at the after portion. Now, regarding the machinery, it’s just like I had in my first pickup.”

Everyone laughed out loud.

“If I remember correctly the Oscar uses nuclear plants with two GT3A turbines; for 98,000 hp to drive 2 shafts and 2 spinners. The speed is 28 knots (nautical miles per hour) submerged; and 15 surfaced.

“There are 107 enlisted men and 48 officers.”

Karen was dumbfounded, soon after she put him on the spot she was embarrassed for him and herself but she was taken aback by his knowledge.

“Okay, next. Tom, can you describe the weapons on the Oscar.”

Again Karen thought that she was asking too much. What she didn't know was that the crew were studying on their own in case they came in touch with this submarine.

Tom answered with authority. "The Oscar II carries Shipwreck active radar homing air to surface missile which is good to up to 300 nautical miles at 1.6 Mach; the war head can be either the 750 kg high explosive or the 500 kiloton nuclear version. They were supposed to have removed the nuclear tips two years ago under the non-proliferation treaty.

"Another anti-surface missile onboard is the Starfish missile which has a range of 24.3 nautical miles. Also, they carry the Novator Stallion fired to 54 nautical miles with a payload consisting of the type 40 torpedo (Veder).

"They use a combination of 65 and 53 cm torpedoes for a total of 28 weapons including tube-launched Anti-ship missiles.

"Oh yeah, they can also carry 32 Mines."

Finally, the briefing officer arrived, followed closely by the squadron's CO and XO. They were intent on listening to the brief and were surprised to see all of the Tactical Manuals opened to the information on the Oscar. They expected nothing less of Lieutenant Madden's crew.

Chapter 11

Once every one took their places around the briefing table, the briefing officer began:

“Apparently an Oscar II class submarine is in the vicinity of Jan Mayen and the Russians have asked the US government to help them to locate it. There is a possibility that the sub has been hijacked, though that is just speculation. Our SOSUS arrays have the submarine in this general ellipse and we will provide updated information as it becomes available.”

The Sound Surveillance System, or SOSUS, is a fixed component of the U.S. Navy’s Integrated Undersea Surveillance Systems network used for deep ocean surveillance. SOSUS consists of fixed, bottom mounted hydrophone arrays connected by undersea communication cables to facilities on shore. The individual arrays are installed primarily on continental slopes and seamounts at locations optimized for undistorted long range acoustic propagation.”

Scott knew the SOSUS information to be a ball field estimate at best. Sometimes, like today, the ellipse would be over 60 miles long and 45 miles across. It is impossible to use that information and would only get lucky if you put a pattern based on SOSUS information. He understood that it was the best information available, so he kept his mouth shut and listened to the rest of the brief.

The briefer continued, “We’ve called Bodo and let them know that you will be arriving early this evening and they have pledged to have berthing and food. They understand that you are required twelve hours crew rest before flying. The Norwegians will also participate as will the Royal Air Force.”

Billy asked, "Prior permission is required, will you take care of diplomatic clearance?"

"Yes, we are already working on that."

Billy thought that they weren't working on it at all, but would be now.

It was a hastily prepared brief, after which, the briefer highly recommended that the crew do whatever the situation called for, and apologized for the limited information but promised them that they would provide aircraft separation or at least get channels to perform turnover requirements. I suggest that you brush up on the Norwegian, English and Italian capabilities in the Tactical Manual. Do those readings only after you've carefully read the information in the operational order.

Since they had already spent so much time in the air or working otherwise, they would sleep a night before being launched out of Norway tomorrow. Karen would meet with one of the Norwegian planners when they arrived to get an idea of what they were required to provide.

After lift off the next day and the aircraft was at cruising altitude, the crew settled in for the 1080 nautical mile, 3 ½ hour flight from Iceland to Bodo, Norway; Scott called Billy and Tom for some weapons training. He described to them and quizzed them on the P-3 weapons load.

From the outside the P-3 looks like a simple transport plane with a funny tail, but it's weapons payload is fierce; the aircraft can carry up to around 20,000 pounds of various weapons including Torpedoes, Depth Bombs, Mines, Harpoon Air to Surface Missiles, Maverick Air to Surface Missiles, Rockets, and sonobuoys, which work similar to microphones, and allow the aircraft to detect, localize and track submarine. The aircraft is also equipped with flares to allow the aircraft to evade heat-seeking missiles.

Karen brought along with her two cans of plain sardines and three

Blue Nose certificates

Karen confirmed with the enlisted men that they indeed had qualified as Blue Nose. They affirmed that they had and would be happy to help with the uninitiated. Karen first called Billy back since he was in the right seat.

“Ever hear of the Order of the Blue Nose?” asked Karen.”

Billy smiled and knew that he was stuck on this airplane and overmanned. “Yes, Ma’am, I have.”

“Well we are going to qualify you right now.”

“With your nose, you must push this ice cube from here to the flight-station and report back here when you have accomplished your mission.”

Billy wasted no time in getting down on his hands and knees to push the ice cube to the flight station.

When he returned he seemed proud that he was done, but that was not to be.

“Hold your head down,” ordered Karen, “With this blue marker I am designating you as a Blue Nose.” Finally, close your eyes and open your mouth. She dangled a sardine over his mouth and dropped it in. Billy chewed without a peep. He even seemed to enjoy it.

“I hope you do like it, Billy, because you have to finish the tin.”

After Billy was finished, he was ready to puke because of the turbulence and the little fish.

Next it was Vince’ turn to repeat the ceremony. He got down on his hands and knees to push the ice cube to the flight station. When he returned he was happy to have the blue now, but had to actually lie down after smelling the sardines.

Karen left Vince with Sensor 2 and Sensor 3, so that they could make sure he finished up the sardines. She showed her sadistic side when it was called for.

Vince finally made his way to the flight station and sat on the jump seat until he felt good enough to get back into the seat. Karen proudly showed her photos of the ceremony and promised a disc to the new Blue Noses.

“Listen up,” Karen announced over the ICS, “I have one more

certificate and plenty of sardines if we have any fibbers onboard.”

The aircraft was over Norway after only 3 hours flight time and Karen requested that the aircraft fly VFR, which means she is responsible for her own aircraft separation.

It was just at twilight when Karen called everyone to the flight station or to an unmanned seat with a window. When every one was present she warned that she was going to turn to the left and point the nose down. It was a smooth execution so no one was the weaker. When she leveled out at 200 feet the crew were silent with awe. She planned to arrive at the most beautiful time and was so happy to share such a beautiful sight with the crew.

The aircraft skimmed along the calm fjord waters at 200 feet. The walls of the Fjord towered over them. There were many small homes built into the rock with twinkling lights as they passed. Karen thought that if there was a photo of what Christmas should look like, it was this fjord. As beautiful as it was it seemed so very lonely. She was sure that sunsets and sunrises were wonderful, but it took a special person to live so isolated. At the end of the Fjord, Karen went back for another look. This was the most beautiful place on earth right now and she wanted another chance to drink it in.

As they left the Fjord, Karen banked left over many small wooden painted in pastel colors. Maybe twilight made them seem pastel but they were beautiful nonetheless.

Karen requested permission to land and was authorized immediately. They landed and everyone got their paperwork and Tom and Vince went looking for a lockbox to keep the top secret and secret materials. The rest of the crew finished with paperwork and the flight engineers waited for the fuel trucks to arrive to top off the fuel tanks.

They were very surprised and thankful for the accommodations. Each person had their own rooms with plenty of space and their own shower stall with generous storage. They were going to be here for two days and most preferred these new surroundings to barren and boring Iceland. They were at Bodo airport on the eastern seaboard of Norway.

The Norwegians wasted no time in getting CAC-7 on the flight schedule. Precisely 12 hours after landing, they were sitting in a briefing room. The Norwegians had provided a wonderful breakfast and everyone was fat, happy and ready to go.

The Norwegian briefer handed Scott a message that must have seemed to the Norwegian as Greek. In so much techno-speak, it was an update to the SOSUS ellipse and Scott was supposed to use that information to decide where to place his search pattern.

The Norwegian briefing officer gave a very general brief for a possible location as they had no idea where the Oscar was. They did give a good brief for what the requirements were for turnover in case CAC-7 did come up with contact on the Oscar.

Their relief will be a Royal Air Force Nimrod, the only jet powered Long Range Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) in military service. The Nimrod offered the advantages of speed and height in transit. It was still capable of long on-task periods and, more importantly, possessed stealth with the quiet jet engines which is so important in the Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) Role. Most propeller-engine Maritime Patrol Aircraft make a discrete resonance that is easily detectable by submerged submarines whereas the jet noise of the Nimrod is virtually undetectable.

The Nimrod bomb bay carries the Stingray torpedo and the Harpoon missile for the ASUW role. Internally the aircraft can carry around 150 sonobuoys of several different types, both active and passive.

Its low profile makes it seem smaller than the P3, but the wingspan is 115 foot and an overall length of 127 feet compared to 100 foot wingspan and 116 foot length.

The internal bay can carry up to nine torpedoes, bombs and depth charges, and Sidewinder air-to-air missiles can be carried on underwing pylons for self-defense.

Turnover aircraft would use tactical air navigation system (TACAN) channels 29 for incoming aircraft and 92 for outgoing aircraft. This was a standard procedure that ensured separation of the aircraft because not only did the aircraft get bearings from each other, they also got

ranges.

Many countries, including Norway, fly the P-3 anti-submarine patrol aircraft. Far from sight of land, skimming over rough seas whose depth and darkness hide a possibly hostile submarine, ten men concentrated on instrument panels, scopes and detection devices as their P-3 Orion flies an ASW search pattern. The P-3 is from a long line of Navy patrol planes. Four constant-speed turboprop engines, swinging 13 1/2-foot paddle-blade propellers. For sea level ASW work, one engine may be shut down to achieve increased time on station.

Crew efficiency is increased not only through improved equipment over recent years. The aircraft has air conditioning, electrically heated floor panels, and plenty of stand-up and walk-around space. Controllable, polarized lighting reduces eyestrain, and comfortable adjustable chairs cut crew fatigue.

The tactical coordinator (TACCO), along with sensor operators, monitors the plane's sophisticated electronic detection gear, including sonobuoys, radar, the Infrared Detection System (IRDS), MAD and electronic countermeasure equipment. Navigation and position location are assisted by inertial, GPS and computer navigation systems, as well as tactical navigation devices such as the Replacement Inertial Navigation Unit (RINU).

Scott analyzed the information updated by the ASWOC in Keflavik but decided against it.

"Karen," he said, "I'm not very comfortable with this ellipse and I recommend a two-line barrier that extends from the southeast corner."

Karen walked back. "Why do you feel like that is more likely? The ASWOC data is based on set hydrophones and should be pretty accurate."

"Look at this. This is the ellipse that they provided. It's 200 miles by 60 miles. There is absolutely no way we can search that area so we have to choose a smaller location to search. If the Russians are still searching for the Oscar, which is obvious with all the Russian Destroyers out here as well as the submarines that we can't see, then I don't think anyone knows where it is, but the Russian ships would be looking in the area where he was lost. If we put a 16x16 barrier with a

one mile separation between sonobuoys right here, we can possibly catch him going east.”

“Well, I don’t see how I can argue with you. You go do that TACCO stuff you do and let’s catch us a submarine.”

Karen liked Scott a lot. He was a Pastor of his own Church. He wasn’t a fire and brimstone Pastor that forced his religion on everyone who crossed his past. He was; however, quick with a “God Bless.” But that was actually endearing and made her feel a little more anchored and safe. Yep, Scott was one of the good guys...and he was easily the best TACCO in the squadron and probably the whole Air wing of five squadrons. She thought that she might bring up the subject with the XO and see if they would consider him for Naval Flight Officer of the year. She already knew that she was going to be nominated for Pilot of the Year because of some loose senior officer lips.

Scott smiled and started inserting the pattern and executed all of them so that the flight station could mark the first sonobuoy to the aircraft and then mark the rest in relation to the aircraft. This is meant to keep displays up to date so that when they get contact they would know which way to fly. The sonobuoys have a rather weak VHF signal that might be hard to lock onto if they are on one side of the pattern and the submarine is on the other. Karen decided to climb higher to allow for better monitoring.

Now the boring part, Karen thought, We are going to be out here with our little pattern in the middle of this great wide ocean and stumble on an Oscar submarine.

They monitored for an hour or so and there was a lot of neck rubbing and shifting in seats until Scott decided to extend the pattern straight out from the first pattern.

“Sensor 1, you monitor channels 1-38 and Sensor 2 monitor 39-72. We’ll get those buoys in the water right away.”

“Wait, TACCO, I think I have contact. It’s weak and it’s on DIFAR 9.”

“Flight inbound nine. Let’s synchronize the aircraft’s position to DIFAR 9 sonobuoy with an “aircraft correct” and then synchronize DIFAR sonobuoy 23 with a “buoy correct.” I think he’s headed right

between those two.”

“TACCO is right; I have him on 23 and 10 as well.”

“Well, we can’t mark all of them in one pass so we’ll stay with 9 and 23.”

Scott said, “After you mark 23 make a standard rate turn to the left and we’ll put a slash of buoys in front of him. Sensor 1, kill DIFARS 1 through 8. We might need those channels later.”

“TACCO, flight, we’re marking 23 now, now, NOW.”

Scott waited a moment then began his drops. 33 away, 34 away, 35 away, Sensor 2 are you entering these into the system?”

“Roger, TACCO.”

“DIFAR 36 away. Flight come left and let’s mark 36 on a heading of 270. I think that is 90 degrees off of his course and we can cross DIFAR 36 with a couple more buoys. Sensor 1 can you classify yet?”

“Yes, sir. It’s an Oscar all right, but I’ll need a few minutes to classify to which hull if I’m able at all.”

Karen was excited that they were the first to locate this ghost submarine that so many assets had been assigned to find. She was gonna hug Scott as soon as they landed. It would be a while though, since they still had three hours left of an eight hour flight.

Just as Scott had predicted, the submarine was on a course of 230 at 25 knots.

Once they had that information it was a coordinated effort to stay ahead of him with sonobuoys. They calculated their Sonobuoy ranges to be about 1,000 yards and he was doing 25 knots. They might even run out of sonobuoys by the time their relief arrived on station.

Oh, shit, Karen thought. “NAVCOMM have you been relaying this information to the ASWOC in Keflavik and the operations office at Bodo?”

“Why yes, Ma’am, I even told them the coordinates of the search area so that the ASWOC could eat crow.”

Karen was gonna hug everyone.

The rest of the on station period was pretty uneventful. The submarine maintained course and speed with no deviation so it was a simple matter of putting a line of sonobuoys out in front of it and place

some across it's course in case he turned. If he turned they would start all over and put a pattern around the submarine and once two buoys were in contact they would mark those buoys to correct their real position and then fly down the submarine's course dropping sonobuoys along the way.

Finally their relief was inbound. Karen talked to the pilot of the Nimrod to coordinate a turnover.

“Victor Romeo Seven this is Romeo Two Uniform, we are at 200 feet and see you at 078 degrees. Recommend you maintain your heading and we will depart heading 270.”

“That sounds nice, Karen, especially the *turnover*.”

Karen tried to shake off her disgust. “Did he really think that was clever? What a boy.”

Chapter 12

Since CAC-7 had arrived at around midnight they weren't put into the rotation until the next night. Karen awoke early and, though she knew some of the guys would rather sleep in, she awoke them anyway.

"Come on, guys," she urged, "Let's go in to town. I want a Reindeer burger."

They all laughed.

"I'm serious, there's a restaurant right outside the gate that serves Reindeer burgers. Come to think of it they might be joking? Do you think they would joke about a thing like that, Billy?"

Two of the heads remained under their pillows. "Come on, I'm serious. We should take this opportunity to do a little sightseeing. Have any of you guys been to Norway? Well, you can't fairly tell your family that you visited Norway if you stayed in bed."

That got to them. After she left, they climbed out of their beds.

"Oh yeah," she added, "Norway is pretty expensive so make sure you have enough cash.

"Do they take dollars?" Vince asked.

"I'm not sure, but they'll take credit cards."

Karen told them that she needed to stop into the operations center for an update and to let them know that they were headed out for some sightseeing.

She came back out after 15 minutes or so.

"Listen up guys, the Brits lost our Oscar about 30 minutes after we went off station. That means we will need to bow down to Scott our genius TACCO to come up with a plan to catch the sub again."

"Don't worry;" said Scott, "I already know where he is."

Everyone laughed at that except Scott. He was dead serious.

Tom wanted to stop by the small aviation museum on the base and everyone agreed. They were all stunned to see a United States SR-71; unofficially nicknamed the “Blackbird,” the SR-71 was developed and flown by the United States as a long-range strategic reconnaissance aircraft capable of flying at speeds over Mach 3.2 and at 85,000 feet. Even now, 15 years after it last flew it still held many speed records. How it ended up here was any ones guess.

After Tom was happy, Karen announced that she wanted to see Bodø’s rich bird life at the archipelago. No other town in the world boasts such a large concentration of sea eagles. There are many glaciers and bird islands; perhaps the most important are to the Lofoten Islands. She promised that, after the bird-watching, they would head into Bodo for lunch. She was thrilled to be enjoying something that her mother had done since she was a little girl. At age four, Karen was already digesting just about everything that her mother taught her and was already reading children’s books with great pleasure and comprehension. One of their favorite activities was to walk through the forests and along the coastline picking out birds. Though her knowledge was no match for her mother’s, she wasn’t shy to call a Loon a Loon and an Osprey an Osprey.

That was then and this was now. She caught a small movement from the edge of her binoculars that peeked her interest; she swung around and was eyeballing a Great Gray Owl. She managed to see it within 15 minutes of their arrival and the rest of the crew shared her joy insofar that they would now be able to search out the less rare cold beer. Karen wouldn’t budge until she saw a sea eagle and within 10 minutes one showed up. No other town in the world has a larger population of this majestic bird and it took Karen’s breath away. She made sure to get digital photos of the Sea Eagle as well as the Great Gray Owl with his wide alert eyes. She didn’t expect to see an Owl in the morning, but apparently Norwegian wildlife live by their own rules.

Here she was so many years removed from that little girl but the excitement of watching birds still put her at such content.

They had to wait until 1pm until the place that Billy chose for lunch

opened; Nordloenningen, a laid-back cellar pub sometimes featuring live music, such as blues, country, or rock. They also served pub grub ranging from burgers to omelets. The paintings on the walls were done by local artists.

That night they pushed their luck by spending a couple hours at the largest nightclub in Bodø; the Rock Café und Nightclub which can hold up to 550 people, mostly in their 20s and 30s. The DJs were fantastic; some of the best they had heard. There was only a \$6 cover charge and Karen really let her hair down. She had been bundled up in military issue four weather gear outside, but after she visited the coat check desk, she showed up in a gorgeous Plunging-V Jacket Pantsuit that showed a lot of cleavage. She also had a pair of heels in one of her pockets of the parka.

They danced and had a great time and when it was about 10 hours from preflight, Billy started to corral everyone and get them back on the road. He pulled everybody out of the club and dragged and cursed as he tried to get everyone out. Karen was very drunk so he helped her get her parka and foul weather pants. He had to help her to take off her dance shoes and put on her foul weather boots.

As he helped her with her boots, he smelled her delicate perfume. It was almost imperceptible. He was not only intoxicated with three rum and cokes; he was intoxicated by this woman's power and confidence while at the same time being so delicate.

The next morning the crew got to the brief just in time. They all quietly thanked Karen for getting them out of bed for such a good time. They were just as satisfied as Karen was.

The brief wasn't at all similar to the last. The operations watch officer told them that the Russian government had every indication that this submarine was hi-jacked, but they didn't know who or why it was so. The operations officer gave his best guess as to why the British Nimrod crew lost contact and the Norwegians were unable to regain

contact. He then handed Scott the message from the ASWOC and still wasn't able to understand what it all meant. It was in English and he assumed it was somehow encrypted and since they used the same ciphering equipment so he assumed it must be very technical. And it was.

Scott poured over the locating data and shook his head. "This is all wrong. It doesn't make any sense."

Karen was sure that Scott was going to throw the SOSUS information into the trashcan on the way out but he restrained himself. He would give it another look in the airplane and come up with a game plan.

After they were airborne they contacted the Nimrod on station and coordinated an altitude swap.

Scott had reviewed the SOSUS ellipse and determined that it was erroneous. He built a pattern that wasn't even in the ellipse and he knew that, if they didn't get contact, he was in a world of hurt.

Scott called Karen to his station. She was the mission commander and had final say on whatever the crew did.

Scott showed her the ellipse and described that it was nearly the same data that they were given for the first brief except that it include the locating data and the location of where the submarine was one hour after the Norwegian crew lost it. "He did something to lose them and I think he turned 90 degrees to the west and is heading 270 degrees or thereabouts. If we project out 22 hours from the point that contact was lost, he would be approximately 616 miles east south east. I don't think he changed his speed of 25 knots because that would make his propellers create air bubbles that we could track for a great distance. If I were a hi-jacker of a nuclear submarine, I would head for the United States and that is why I think this is the best place to start. If you can kick it in the ass, we can be there in 1 ½ hours."

"Okay, Scott," Karen said, "You're the magician. Make us famous."

Scott smiled and started inserting the pattern and executed all of them so that the flight station could mark the first sonobuoy to the aircraft and then mark the rest in relation to the aircraft.

After all four engines were on line and indications were good, Billy

asked for permission to taxi.

“Cleared to taxi,” the controller said.

“Cleared to taxi,” Billy was required to repeat.

“Lima Xray 11 cleared to taxi to runway 26.”

“Lima Xray cleared to runway 26.”

“Ground switching to tower, have a nice day.”

“Lima Xray 11 cleared to switch tower, I wish you luck on your mission.”

“That was nice, don’t you think?” Billy asked Karen

“Shut up and talk to the tower.”

“Tower, Lima Xray 11 requests clearance for takeoff.”

“Lima Xray cleared for takeoff, have a good flight.”

“Lima Xray cleared for takeoff, thank you.”

“Karen, did you hear what the ground controller said. I think she likes me. I’m going to look her up when we get back. I don’t think I’ll get in trouble even if she’s enlisted as long as she is foreign.

Karen didn’t and wouldn’t answer his blithering.

Billy grinned from ear to ear.

Karen still had butterflies about Scott’s plan, but she trusted her TACCO. Karen dropped the sonobuoys and marked them all into the system before climbing to monitor.

Now the boring part, Karen thought again, we are going to be out here with our little pattern in the middle of this great wide ocean and stumble on an Oscar submarine.

They monitored for an hour or so until Scott again decided to extend the pattern straight out from the first pattern.

“Sensor 1, you monitor channels 1-38 and Sensor 2 monitor 39-72. We’ll get those buoys in the water right away.”

“TACCO, I have contact on DIFAR 3. It’s definitely the same Oscar II.”

A cheer went up throughout the plane.

She didn’t have time for it, but Karen rushed back to give Scott a great big hug. “You are a genius TACCO!”

“I’ve got him on 2, 3, 4, 28, 29 and 30. Closest point of approach (CPA) will be DIFAR 3 and he’s running over it.”

“Flight inbound three. Aircraft correct nine and buoy correct 29. After you mark 29 correct it to the aircraft and fly 270 so that I can put out some more buoys. Sensor 2 drop 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 from the system and watch your screen and enter 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, and 38 when they come up. Flight we will drop 33 through 36 down course and come around to drop 37 and 38 on the way to mark 35.”

Karen couldn't believe Scott's intuition and the crew's good luck. They had once again located this ghost submarine again after so many others couldn't.

“NAVCOMM?”

“Yes, Ma'am, they've all been notified and our relief will get here early so we only have one hour left on station.”

Scott was saddened by that, he was excited to chase this submarine in any direction, deep or shallow all day and all night.

“TACCO, Sensor 2. I think we have another contact. He's distant on DIFAR 2.

“Sensor 1, take a quick look and tell me what he's found.”

“TACCO, second contact is a U.S. Los Angeles class submarine.”

“Yes,” Karen screamed, “the TACCO surely pulled the rabbit out of the hat this time. Nice job everybody. NAVCOMM please pass this new information on so that any oncoming crews won't drop any DICASS and give away the American sub's position.

Soon they were joined by the British; the same crew that insulted Karen last time. She thought she would get them back after Scott briefed them thoroughly. Karen even asked them to read Scott's words back to them.

Karen contact the flight station on the Nimrod “Victor Romeo Seven this is Romeo Two Uniform, we are at 200 feet and see you at 078 degrees. Recommend you maintain your heading and we will depart heading 270. We found the submarine for you and hope you can maintain contact, Mate.”

The Nimrod pilot was the same and was quick to reply, “Contact and mate? That sounds like a good time to me. I look forward to it, Victor Romeo Seven out.

Billy called the ASWOC in Keflavik and recommended that they

simply return to Keflavik now since they were only one hour out, instead of flying all the way back to Bodo to turn around and fly to Keflavik after they slept.

It only made sense and, after a call to the squadron XO their request was approved.

The crew knew that this was just a layover for their return to NAS Brunswick, Maine. Their qualifications were about to expire so they would get a nice, but busy trip home and then, as they were leaving the area they got a radio call from someone alternating speaking in Russian and English.

Several of the Russian submarine crewmen had gotten together to hatch a plan that would have one of the crew rush the Syrians while wearing a hand made armor. After he is supposedly killed, they will fire him through the torpedo tubes. That is the sticking point right now.

“Are you sure you want to do this?” whispered the senior sonar operator. “Even if the bullet hits your armor, you still have the torpedo tubes to deal with. I know that American SEALs are regularly deployed through torpedo tubes, but I don’t know what training is required.

The junior cook answered. “I think that I will use the SEAL technique that calls for the person in the torpedo tube to bend over as far as he can and then kiss his ass goodbye.”

“Shut up, dumbass, this is very dangerous. You might be killed.” The sonar operator turned away as he started to cry. He was truly going to miss this idiot even if he survives.

The tension on the submarine was not unlike a man standing before a firing squad. The leader of the terror cell had not flinched once since they got underway.

A couple hours had passed and the sonar operator knew that the guards were tired and looking forward to their relief momentarily. When the Russian sonar operator stood up, two Al Qaeda were on him instantly.

“Where are you going?” the man said in Arabic.

The operator looked to the leader for translation.

The leader laughed, “He is suggesting that if you move so quickly again that he will sleep with you.”

This broke a little of the tension, but left the crew wondering if it was truly what he said.

The Sonar operator made his way to the galley under the harsh gaze of his Al Qaeda handler. He grabbed a biscuit and announced, “There is an aircraft tracking us at present and we don’t want to wait so long that the aircraft loses contact and flies away from us.”

Earlier, the Russian crew determined that the highest caliber handgun was with Al Haasan who maintained a position near the periscope podium.

They had improvised a Flack Jacket with towels and baking trays. The cook thought it was a risk worth taking and 100 feet below the surface is probably as good as it’s going to get.

“Point him out,” asked the cook, “you’ve spent a lot of time out there but I don’t know one from the other.”

“Do you see the man nearest our Capitan?” said his comrade. “He has the highest caliber weapon.”

“If you could try and get one of the other crewman to shoot you, there is less chance that the bullet will penetrate the armor you’ve put together.”

“We’ll coordinate getting the ship at or above 100 feet so that the pressure won’t be so severe on your ears and lungs when you enter and eject through the torpedo tube,” said the senior Sensor operator.

“I’ll come back and alert you when we are nearing 100 feet,” he added. “We also intend to distract the man with the big gun so that you take a lower caliber into this wonderful armor you have made.”

Later, when the Sensor operator returned, he advised the cook, “When you hear the clatter forward of the periscope station, that will be your cue to rush the Russian operators. Be sure and give them enough time to aim their weapons carefully into your torso so that the jacket will stop the bullet. I will then check you for life and I will announce that you have been killed.”

The operator continued, “If the thought of firing you through the aft torpedo tube isn’t determined right away, I will recommend it. We have a life raft, life jacket, radio and we’ll also provide you with a Latitude Longitude that you can announce over the radio.”

Soon enough the cook heard the commotion forward of the periscope and the cook didn’t hesitate to approach the operators with a large knife raised. When the closest man saw him, he fired his weapon into the heart of the makeshift armor. The cook fell seemingly mortally wounded. The senior Sensor operator rushed to his side to check his pulse.

He cursed them in Russian and held his friend and cried. Al Haasan ordered that he be fired from the aft torpedo without ceremony.

The CO bellowed, “THAT MAN ONLY HAD A SIMPLE BREAD KNIFE. IF YOU’RE MEN ARE SO WELL-TRAINED THEN WHY CAN’T THEY CONTROL A SITUATION LIKE THIS. YOU HAVE KILLED ONE OF MY MEN AND YOU WILL GET MINIMAL ASSISTANCE FROM ME FROM NOW.

“The longer the body stays on board, the greater the chance that disease will spread. I’m sorry about your friend, but he was attacking my crew.”

The main guard then ordered everyone back to work and told two of the Russian crew to fire him from the torpedo tubes. They thought ahead to assemble his kit near the torpedo tube and added a mirror to his lifejacket, life raft, radio, and the Latitude and Longitude which they wrote on his wrist with a black marker.

They put their friend into the torpedo tube with the advice to take a deep breath and to pull the rip cord on the life raft to help him with his ascent. They told him to equalize his ears when the tubes were flooded and then to equalize regularly on his way on the way to the surface.

“Good bye, my dear brave friend,” said the senior operator. “You will surely earn the Order of Lenin for your selfless actions today. You are a very brave man and I hope that my children will grow to be as you are. I wish you luck on the surface. The radio is set on the common radio frequency so you should make contact soon. Keep in mind that we are far from land so you will have to wait for a ship to rescue you.

Success to you, my friend.”

The submarine’s Commanding Officer instinctively knew that a highly agitated crewman or a hijacker can bring disaster rather than a peaceful resolution. He thought that the hijackers were likely to be as scared and nervous as the hostages. Any violence will likely be directed at people whom the hijackers perceive to be a threat or a nuisance. There would be no negotiations, hostages can sometimes be used as bargaining chips but these terrorists seemed content with the thought of death.

He called Al Haasan to his state room. After words with another guard, he joined the CO in his stateroom that had been screened for any weapons earlier. The only dangerous object was the brandy decanter. The captain offered to share a drink over their discussion and Al Haasan agreed, although he wasn’t accustomed to such treats.

“Al Haasan, I would like to give my men an announcement so that we do not have any further murders.”

Al Haasan didn’t answer right away. How could this man call it a murder when his crewman rushed my men?

He showed Al Haasan his latest revision of his announcement;

“My crew, I ask you to prepare yourself mentally and emotionally for a long ordeal. If you are told to keep your head down or to keep a certain body position, relax into that position. You may need to stay that way for some time. If you are addressed by Syrians, respond using a relaxed tone of voice. If you or another crewman needs assistance due to illness or discomfort, request assistance from the Syrian nearest you and he will get help. If you are singled out by a Syrians, respond to questions. If you hear gunshots, immediately lower your head or drop to the floor. If instructed by a rescuer to move quickly. Put your hands up in the air or behind your head. Make no sudden movements. Ask for permission before you try to recover your possessions.”

By this time the Russian government knew that the submarine was manned by terrorists and were scrambling to locate them. They had less information than the Americans and hoped to find their submarine before the submarine broke any international laws or barriers. In addition to dispatching other attack submarines, they also sent out

several cruisers and destroyers. In discussions with US officials it was determined that there was a possibility of locating the terrorists and preventing the launch of short range missiles. If the US Attack submarines, destroyers and cruisers, and Patrol Squadrons could maintain 24-hour per day coverage once the submarine is found, the coalition might be able to determine their intent.

Once on the surface, the Russian cook threw his radio into the raft and climbed aboard. Judging by the pain, he was sure that he had burst his left eardrum at the very least. He knew that the ascent from the depths hurt his ears and sinuses fiercely, but he was more worried about the pain in his chest. Once he had mounted his life raft, he ripped away his armor and found that the bullet had not made it through his baking pan flack jacket. He cheered for himself and cheered for his friend that came up with the idea. He didn't know at the time what his chances were now that he was in the middle of the sea route just south of a point between Norway and Iceland. He knew that if he didn't get to work generating some sort of communications, he wouldn't last through the night. It was still light at 4:00 pm, so he felt a sort of good luck that he was meant to carry out this mission. After he got his lifejacket back on and had arranged all of his rescue gear and the provisions that are included with the raft, he concentrated on generating communications.

He took the hand held VHF radio and following the instructions of his crewmates, he keyed the microphone and announced in Russian and the English:

“I am a crewmember of the submarine ST GEORGE THE VICTORIOUS. I am at latitude 62 33N and longitude 010 11E. My ship is heading 270 degrees and 25 knots, over!”

Suddenly, Billy heard a weak mayday. He asked Karen if she heard it and she replied in the negative. He was certain that he heard something and asked Karen to listen to Channel 16 on VHF.

After a moment, they heard nearly frantic Russian language and then they heard another version in halting English.

“Mayday, I am a crewmember of the submarine ST GEORGE THE VICTORIOUS. I am at latitude 62 33N and longitude 010 11E. My ship is heading 270 degrees and 25 knots, over!”

The Russian cook was surprised to see an airplane nearby, so he used his mirror to flash the airplane while calling out on the common radio channel. The aircraft used his signal as a beacon and flew towards it. All the while the cook was announcing the Latitude and Longitude of the submarine in English and Russian. The aircraft over flew the life raft and passed the position and sea state to the US Submarine that had been following the Russian submarine at a distance.

The USS HONOLULU attack submarine was following the Oscar in his wake at about 6.000 yards. Since the Oscar was traveling near the surface the HONOLULU didn't have to expend effort to shield its operations. CAC-7 was off station, but flew to the symbol proved by the Navigator that was designated as the latitude and longitude advertised. They dropped to 200 feet when they were well clear of the Nimrod. They were searching for this weak radio signal. They happened to be carrying a rescue raft kit that the squadron wanted returned to NAS Brunswick but they thought that they might use it here. As the closed in on the source they saw a small red life raft with one person in it.

The occupant of the life-raft didn't speak English, so he simply read his message again. "Mayday, I am a crewmember of the submarine ST GEORGE THE VICTORIOUS. I am at latitude 62 33N and longitude 010 11E. My ship is heading 270 degrees and 25 knots, over!"

After the first pass Karen noted the wind direction and on the next pass she asked the IFT to drop smokes on her word.

"Launch first smoke!"

"Launch second smoke!"

The aircrew readied the life-raft kit at the main cabin door.

"All right, crew," Karen announced, "We will drop the first life raft and the other two packages will follow as the first life raft pulls them. Make sure you stand clear. Could one of you put some foul weather gear in a trash bag? He looks like he's freezing in that raft.

"TACCO, drop on my word and toss the garbage bag and we'll just hope he retrieves it."

"Third now; Now, now, NOW!"

Scott pushed the first life raft and the IFT moved the second package,

the rescue gear, to the door as Scott tossed the garbage bag out. At the same interval the second life-raft deployed.

Karen came around to see how everything worked out and she was happy to see that the current was taking the kit directly to the crewman that claimed to be from a submarine though she couldn't imagine what offence might earn on a trip off of your ship in this cold and harsh part of the world.

He grabbed the trash bag first and rolled into the very generous American life raft that had all sorts of goodies available in the many pockets and pouches.

The submarine commander hated to break contact, but he made the decision to surface and get this man onboard since he didn't stand much chance of surviving the weather here in the gap

"Navigator mark datum," the Commanding Officer ordered, "we'll use this position and their last course and speed to regain contact. I hope," he added under his breath.

The cook was looking to the east when he saw the most magnificent sight of his life. A disturbance in the sea about 100 yard from him soon developed into a submarine had performed an emergency surfacing not 100 yards from him and splashed down into the water with beautiful strength. He didn't know one submarine from another, so he could only hope it was a friendly. He saw some of the crewmembers put a life raft into the water and attached an outboard motor and then the men raced to pick him up.

He was in a better spirit by the time he got to the U.S. submarine where he recited everything that his crewmembers knew of the terrorist's plans. One of the officers had detailed what had happened since their boarding their ship with the terrorists. All the while, the ship's corpsman, a medically trained crewman, had been looking over their new crewmate. He announced that both eardrums had burst during his trip through the torpedo tubes.

He motioned the Commanding Officer and explained, "It looks like

they put together a pretty good flack jacket, but it wasn't enough to stop the bullet from bruising his sternum. He should be fine and we can certainly get him a job in the galley as soon as he's feeling well enough." He smiled.

The captain smiled back at the levity.

The Submarine captain stayed at periscope depth long enough to pass along the situation and the information that the cook provided concerning the hijack of the Oscar and what he knew of their intentions. He would leave it to the politicians to decide what to do and he would make sure to download messages more often than was usual. Normally the submarine would come to communications depth every six hours, but he was certain that decisions would be made quickly regarding the hijacked submarine. He could also be sure that Russian Navy ships would be all over the place since they would have a position and course and speed of the submarine.

Chapter 13

The return flight was busy, but very happy. The TACCO was always stuck with the majority of work on the way home, but the NAVCOMM was a close second.

They were the first crew to make contact, which is always a bragging right enough, but his second catch was incredible. They had deployed the rescue kit after practicing the procedure many times. They then communicated with a U.S. submarine to coordinate the rescue. The cherry on top was seeing the emergency surfacing maneuver by USS Honolulu who had the presence of mind to tell the P-3 crew that they should be ready with their cameras for emergency ballast blow at latitude 62 33N and longitude 010 11E. Not only did the IFT take several photos Karen was on the jump seat and also got several shots with her digital camera. She played them back immediately and the crew agreed that they were fantastic pictures.

After three days of a very successful prosecution of the Oscar, CAC-7 was on their way to Keflavik for an overnight stay before continuing on to their home base of Brunswick, Maine.

Upon their arrival the CO, XO, and Operations Officer were waiting at the ladder and as soon as it was extended to the tarmac, they rushed up to congratulate the crew. They were overwhelmed with the greeting and attention. The Operations officer described the excitement of the Norwegians. Apparently, the Norwegians had put in their debrief message that each time CAC-7 turned over good contact, the Norwegians and the British promptly lost contact. Further, CAC-7 regenerated contact with minimum position reports and described that their last localization pattern was 300 miles from that recommended.

According to the briefing officer, the words “voodoo magic” was in the report. The message was a glowing appreciation for CAC-7’s professionalism and premier anti-submarine warfare and they hoped to someday work with this aircrew again.

Besides Karen, Scott and Billy, the rest of the crew were busy with their post-flight procedures and some last minute prepping of their debrief paperwork. Karen asked if she could read the message to the crew. The CO and XO agreed, but took the time to slap backs and congratulate the crew for a job well done. Upon exiting the aircraft, the CO said that he would be looking forward to seeing the officers at the formal. Karen was mortified. She had assumed that their hard work and good fortune would have made them immune to the formal party. You could see in their eyes the pride of what they had accomplished and now they would be going home tomorrow.

“It don’t get any better than this,” said Scott. “I’m really proud of you guys and I’m honored to be on this crew.”

Billy answered, “Shut up, you mushy girl.”

Everyone laughed and made their way to the official debrief which was just as complementary as the CO’s greeting.

After they got to the barracks, Billy sprinted up the stairs to retrieve the dress ensemble to place it on her bed. He was beside himself with excitement.

Billy was in the passageway when she went into her room. She didn’t even see the boxes. She went straight to the Service Dress Blue uniform and Billy could see how disappointed she was with her luck. As she pulled the skirt off of it’s hangar she spotted the boxes on her bed.

“What the hell? Somebody’s been in my room.”

She lifted the cover of the box and pulled the tissue aside and started to cry. She took the dress out of the box and held it against her self and she walked to the full height mirror and was overwhelmed by the color and the cut.

She knew instantly who was responsible and shut her door as she pulled him to her and kissed him hard, as hard and as hungrily as she had ever kissed.

When she broke the kiss, she found herself crying. She stripped nude right there in front of Billy and slipped the gown down and over her shoulders. He helped her zip and it was as if she were poured into the gown. Even her breasts were supported perfectly with a hint of her simmering sexuality.

“How did you know my size?”

“I know it was sneaky, but I visited you in your sleep. The fit needed to be perfect. I know you like deep rich colors, so I thought emerald was the best choice. I wanted everyone to see you as I see you—subtly sex. There’s more, sweet girl.”

“More?” She opened a smaller box and discovered delicate shoes that were of the same material. She tried them on and they were a perfect fit.

She approached him for another kiss, but he stopped her.

“Put on the bra that you would wear with this dress.”

She lowered her gown, not at all embarrassed in Billy’s presence. He helped her to clip her bra and zip her top up again.

“Close your eyes,” Billy directed, “I hope you like these.”

She opened her eyes and saw the pearl necklace that was simply perfect for her dress.

She began to cry. Not just a happy cry, but a deep gut-wrenching cry from a woman who had endured enough to simply break at any time.

He held her as she cried and put a towel on the front of her dress, so that it wouldn’t suffer from cosmetic/tear damage.

Billy lay on her bed while Karen got her hair ready.

He couldn’t imagine a sexier hairstyle than Karen’s. Her hair has a loose wave and was cut with medium length layers that make her hair appear shorter than it really is. She styled it to fit cut, with long brow brushing bangs, she had purposefully parted her hair off center and fringed the neckline to frame her face and accent and soften her facial features. Next she curled her hair with a large barrel styling iron to smooth and bend ends over. Afterwards, she added a loose zigzag part down the middle and misted with a touchable Finishing Hair Spray and tucked the sides behind her ears, “So that everyone can see my beautiful earrings.”

Finally she was ready to go. She wanted Billy to escort her, damn the rumors.

Billy looked dashing and extremely handsome in his dinner dress tuxedo. When he saw her in the dress and shoes, with pearls around her long luxurious neck, and a perfect face with minimal makeup; She was easily and truly the most gorgeous woman at the event and to Billy, the most beautiful woman in the world.

After escorting Karen around the ballroom, he left her to herself in order to quell any possible rumors and, more importantly to sample what appeared to be a magnificent spread.

So far, no one had enjoyed the food and Billy laughed that it was just like these tight-ass crowds to wait for someone else to partake before gathering at the trough themselves. He was right. He barely had anything on his plate before the buffet was swarmed over.

It was a splendid spread; warm crab dip, Chicken salad enclosed in puff pastry, Potato puffs with sour cream and caviar, Spinach soufflé with blue cheese, Stuffed mushrooms: vegetarian or with sausage, Feta cheese and spinach in filo triangles, Crudités, a beautiful vegetable arrangement, and Mango salsa with spicy, lime pita.

Billy got the first two dances with his dream girl and congratulated himself for his work to get her a nice dress for tonight.

Karen was in great demand as a dance partner and Billy even got an invitation from a British woman who was obviously married. She wasn't really interested in dancing so to speak, she was more interested to know if he would like to make love to her. She was certainly beautiful, but had a big gold band on her left hand that was just as powerful as a stop sign. She saw his concern and assured that her husband was fine with it and enjoyed to watch when invited.

Billy admitted, "It's a most gracious offer, but I am not accustomed to such forwardness and probably wouldn't perform very well."

Just then Karen fell onto his arm. The champagne was working its magic on this princess and he could tell it was time for her to get to her room.

"You enjoyed yourself," he commented.

"It was one of the most wonderful evenings I've ever had and I only

wished that I could have danced every dance with you.”

That was a heartfelt statement, not an off-hand comment. He glanced toward her and saw that her eyes were half closed and there was a slight smile on her lip. The questions he'd wanted to ask seemed inappropriate. There would be other times. Instead, he let her doze through the ride.

By the time they pulled up in front of the barracks, she was sound asleep. He didn't want her to awaken now. He wanted to take the time to study her face in the light of the Iceland snow and a full moon. With a little sigh, Billy got out of the car and watched her.

They weren't due to preflight for the trip to Brunswick until 1000, so Billy and Karen threw themselves into the Brass Nut once again. The word had already gotten out that they had enjoyed incredible success in localizing and tracking the Oscar. After much slapping on backs, Karen called Billy into the passageway.

“Billy,” Karen said, “I had another idea just now. Do you know those cheap radios in all the rooms?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Well, what if we took the speaker out of one of those radios and placed it in one of the Lieutenant Commander's room. If we could come up with enough wire we could rig it so that any of the officers could stop by his room and work their way into his dreams or, at the very least, make him think a ghost was in his room.”

“Now that is a great idea. I bet the Aviation Electricians have the wire we need. I'll call right now and see if they can drive over with enough to reach from the Maintenance Officer's (MO) room to the telephone. The telephone will throw off the MO so that he doesn't know what is going on.”

It wasn't even ten minutes before the maintenance van pulled up with about 50 feet of wire that was perfect for their needs. Billy thanked them and took the wire upstairs to plan the entry into the MOs room.

“He's in the Nut as happy as a clam with a big ole cigar in his mug.

I checked and he left his door open and I also took the speaker out of my radio. I think the best place to put the speaker is in his refrigerator grill. We can run the wire up into the crawlspace above his room—that's your job—and I'll route the wire through the fake ceiling to the telephone. We'll attach a microphone to the other end and keep it in the ceiling until someone needs to use it. We'll try and get the word to everyone so that the entire officer's mess can enjoy this."

By the time they got to bed, more than half of the officers were told of the prank.

Karen and Billy weren't going to be able to enjoy their superb prank, but it might possibly be in working condition when they returned in a week.

Within minutes of shutting her door and getting into bed there was a knock on her door. She had been too tired to shower or to put on pajamas, so she decided to sleep in the nude. She had always preferred to slumber naked, but was usually careful to wear a pajama for bed while away from home.

If it was Billy, she would open the door slightly and run to the bathroom to put something on and place her backside toward the door in case he wanted to peek at her firm posterior.

It wasn't Billy, It was John Dunn and he was crying.

"Karen, do you have time to talk for a while?"

"Sure I do, just let me put something on. Wait here a minute. Karen put on some very practical pajamas and then let him in. As he passed her, she noted that he smelled heavily of whisky.

Karen helped in over to one of her comfortable chairs and gave him a box of Kleenex.

"Let me go and get Billy. It would be more appropriate if I had two men in my room," she lied.

She ran to Billy's room and knocked loudly. "Billy, you've got to come quickly. John Dunn is in my room and he is acting strangely."

Billy didn't reply and Karen didn't want to knock louder at such a

late hour. She tried his doorknob and it was open as she expected. As she entered the room she saw that he too slept in the nude. She opened the door wider for better lighting. She lost her breath at his beauty. His body was perfect and he wasn't the hairy oaf that she had married. She walked up to his bed and carefully pulled a sheet over his generous shaft.

She went back to the door and whispered loudly, "Billy, wake up." She tried two more times and the third was a charm. He groaned with frustration and asked who it was.

"It's Karen," Can I come in?"

"Give me a minute."

He swung open his door. He was in his flight suit, "At least I bothered to put on pajamas you dirty pig."

"Shut your pretty little mouth, how do you know that I didn't take a shower and put on a fresh flight suit in case we got called out again?"

"Listen, John Dunn is in my room and it's almost 2am. I was hoping that you would be there with me to hear what is going on with him."

"Is he drunk?" Billy asked.

"Yes he is and in a bad way."

"Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum."

Karen just laughed as they made their way to her room where John was crying and babbling something in a drunken stupor.

"Hi, John, what's going on, man."

"I lost my wings this evening. The CO wasted no time in setting an example for the rest of the squadron. Lisa is being processed out to the Navy this week and she is beside herself with grief. Now that the guillotine has dropped. I'm not shy to talk to her at the enlisted barracks when I feel like it... She cries and she cries. There is nothing I can do. I try to hold her, to console her, but she shakes me off. Of course I deserve some of the blame, but she did pursue me that night and she knew that she was going to get me to make love to her."

John continued, "I haven't told my wife yet and I'm terrified to think of what she will do. You know her family lives in Jacksonville, near the Naval Air Station. I'm sure she is going to take our girls to her mother's and I'll be lucky to see them ever again."

“Wait,” Billy interrupted. “No matter what, the judge is going to give you visitation rights. She cannot keep them from you no matter what happened. In fact, the judge isn’t even going to want to hear about the adultery. Divorce is seen as an agreement to end a marriage and nothing more. It doesn’t matter how horrendous yours or her behavior has been, the Judge doesn’t weigh it in the divorce. That said, if there were child abuse issues then we’re talking another issue altogether.”

“So we all agree that I will never fly for the Navy again and since I don’t have enough hours for the airlines, I’ll need to start looking for a new occupation. Man, after all is said, I didn’t even get my rocks of at the Rock.”

They all laughed and Billy laughed through tears.

“Thanks for talking to me, you guys. You make a great couple.”

“Hey, what did you mean by that?” Billy demanded

“Well you are always together and it’s obvious by the way that you treat each other and look at other that you have a very close relationship. Man, me and my big mouth. I wasn’t speaking for the squadron, it’s just the way I see things. Anyway, if what I say counts for anything; you two would be a perfect couple.”

Karen couldn’t remember when she had been more embarrassed and shooed them both out of her room. Billy protested and Karen said, “I want you out of here most of all.”

Karen saw John stumbling to the telephone presumably to call his wife and break the news. Karen thought how the discussion might go: Good news, honey, I’m coming home this week. Bad news, I’ve lost my wings over an affair with a junior enlisted female. How are the girls?

Karen suggested to Billy, “Since we’re awake, how about you and me unlocking the Brass Nut. We can put away a couple beers before we hit our 12-hour deadline.”

Billy thought that was a fine idea. Seems he is always ready for a

gulp or two of booze.

Karen fumbled with the combination and finally got the chain off of the door. The chain was there to keep any of the aircrew from getting any booze in the early morning hours. Well it didn't help this time because the combination was well known; in fact, it was etched into the door by some friendly drunk.

Karen was off-limits, but he was sure that she loved him as much as he loved her. Loving her was a challenge. He'd intended to get close to her, even if it meant no physical contact. He would make certain Karen's best interests were protected. But...he smiled as he stared at the beautiful lady sound asleep in her bed. There was no law that said he couldn't enjoy the proximity while he was at it.

He brushed a hand over her hair, and she murmured. He traced a fingertip down her cheek, and she sighed.

His breath was taken away and he pulled back, tried to think it through, then, as had been his lust for several months, he did what he wanted to do. He covered her mouth with his as she slept.

Soft and lax in sleep, her lips yielded beneath his, slipped apart as he traced her shape with his tongue. Now he tasted her sigh as well as heard it. The bullet of sensation slammed into his system, leaving him straining for more. His hands itched to touch, but he curled them into fists and contented himself with her mouth.

He so wanted to take her to make love to her.

He thought that there were some rules that weren't meant to be broken. After all, he was the squadron's Legal Officer

She was dreaming, a glorious, heavenly dream. She was floating down a long, quiet river. She was drifting with the current, dozing on cool blue water. The sun rained down on her in golden streams, warm, healing, compassionate.

Her mind, hazy with fatigue and wine, gave only minimal effort to clearing the mists. It was much too comfortable in dreams.

But the sun heated, the current quickened. Excitement bounced like sparks along her skin.

Her mouth moved under his, then parted on a groan so that he was invited in. Without hesitation he slid his tongue over hers and was

driven half mad by her lazily seductive response. With a quite oath, he nipped her bottom lip. Karen shot awake stunned and stirred.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing?” She pushed herself back against the wall and shoved at him in one indignant move. When the heel of her had connected with his breast bone, he realized how much stronger she was than she appeared to be.

“Satisfying my curiosity... and getting us both in trouble.”

She snatched her purse off her night stand, but managed not to smash it into his face. Words were better. “I had no idea that you were so desperate, or so lacking in conscience. How dare you force yourself on a woman while she sleeps?”

His eyes narrowed, flashed and darkened. When he spoke, his voice was deceptively mild. “It was a long way from force, but you may have a point.” Putting his hands on her shoulders, he hauled her against him. “But you’re awake now.”

This time his mouth wasn’t soft or seducing, but hot and hard. She could taste the anger and the frustration. A desire shot like a bullet through her.

She needed. She’d forgotten what it was like to really need. To thirst for a man the way one thirsted for water. Her defenses in shambles, she was assaulted by sensations, longings, desires. The torrent left her weak enough to cling to him hungry enough and enough for her to plough greedily into the kiss.

“Billy, remember where and who we are. Anyone could see right through us if we fell in love.”

Her arms were around him, binding them together like rope. Her mouth—god, her mouth was urgent and frantic and hot. He could feel the quick, helpless tremors that coursed down her body, her shuddering breaths. He forgot to be angry and frustration was ripped apart by edgy blades of passion. That left only desire. His fingers dived into her hair, curled tight. She insisted that they stop and he leave before the got into a terrible mess. Billy knew she was married, but the wine had allowed him to gloss over that fact for the last few moments.

“Inside!” He could hear his own blood pump as his mouth raced over her face. “Take me inside of you.”

When his teeth scraped lightly down her throat she nearly cried out with need. But she struggled back. Responsibilities. Order. Caution.

“No,” She called out years of restraint, spiced with painful memories, and resisted. “This isn’t what I want.”

“We are moving too fast, it’s too irresponsible. God, I know you can read my eyes and I want you to know that I feel the same way. The problem is that I have a conscience and religion.”

“Those values don’t mean a lot to most people, but they are an anchor for me. I’ll admit that my marriage isn’t turning out the way most people imagine theirs will...I’m so tired and drunk and I wish you would wake me up in the morning so that we can talk this through.”

“Of course you’re right. I’m so sorry that I tried to force myself on you. I can’t blame it on the drink, though we’ve had a few this morning. When I saw your door opened, I meant to close it but here I am, guilty as charged. I promise it will never happen again. Usually, I am a man of patience and I hope I haven’t insulted you too much just now.”

She pushed herself down from the wall, so that she was on her pillow. She turned on her side so that she could see Billy.

“How do you see this situation,” Karen asked, “I mean, where is all this going? I feel the same way for you as you do for me. I’m married to a man that I’ve lost interest in and I’ve found you; a wonderful person that I feel very comfortable with. You are incredibly handsome and warm-hearted and I think that you are the man I should have waited for.”

“Karen, I feel the same as you do. When I think of you I get butterflies and wish that someday you could be mine to hold and love. If it is to be, then I will be the luckiest man that ever walked the earth.

“I’m going to bed now so sleep well.”

Billy kissed her lightly on the head before leaving her room. He wondered if he had ruined it all in his blind haste to steal a kiss.

Earlier John Dunn had gone to the Parachute Rigger shop after talking to, or more truthfully, being talked to by his wife. He asked if

they had about 200 feet of parachute cord. They were happy to oblige. It only cost about \$50 for 1,000 feet and they had enough on hand for two or three years.

John thanked them and started out on his trek to the LF tower. He knew that with time his world would turn back upright, but he had no idea what the future held and didn't care for the wait. He had spoken to Lisa after he got off the phone with his wife, Jennifer. Lisa didn't blame him, but was pretty upset that she would soon be looking for a new job. She knew that John had lost his wings and that gold device was a big part of her attraction for John. She was embarrassed to admit it to even herself, but she knew they didn't stand a chance. She knew that when a spouse leaves their family to take up with another man or woman, that relationship only stood a ten percent of surviving.

After his visit with Lisa, he stopped behind the LF tower maintenance shed.

It was almost impossible to get over the fence. It took so much effort that he didn't know if he would have enough energy to climb the tower. *Wow*, he thought, *1000 feet is awfully high*. He began his ascent with is line over his shoulder.

At about 500 feet he was surprised at how much the tower swung in the wind even with the cable supports. At 750 he almost decided to finish his plan. The tower was swinging enough to test his grip on the crossbars. He decided to continue from the inside and use his back to battle the sway and his chest for the opposite force. Just below the 1,000 point there was an X crossbar that he thought would work fine.

John decided suicide was the solution. No matter what anyone says, suicide does solve problems, at least his problems. If he succeeded, it would solve them once and for all.

He thought that suicide was a decision every single human being has and sometimes is our only decision. And sometimes, for some people, maybe it is the right decision.

Unless you can know your future perfectly, he thought, *you cannot know, with any certainty that, in fact, things will get worse*. It seemed to John that predicting the future only worked when the prediction says that things will get better.

His life, that he had so carefully crafted, had fallen apart and there was no way he could reverse any or all of the events that brought him to the top of a 1,000 foot tower, therefore, he decided that he must kill himself.

John carefully tied a hangman's knot around the crossbar and then tied another that would barely fit over his head. This knot is used for the gallows-tree as well. The force to close it is adjusted better than with the gallows knot. And because it is bigger in the neck it is believed to break the neck easier. That would make it more mercy-full as the gallows-knot which kills by strangling. He was straddling a cross member to keep himself steady while he did his handy work. He knew the Gallows knot would hold, but he was worried that the one around his neck was too loose and would slip off of his sweaty, slick neck. He decided to try and tie the Gallows knot close to his throat. He couldn't see what he was doing and was tying by memory, which is a real challenge when you are 1,000 feet up on a swaying tower. That done; it was time to put it to the test.

"Mr. Beam, it's been good knowing you. You have always helped me through the tough times but it's time to Part Company. Good luck, Mr. James Beam," John laughed as he fell. "Wow, 250 feet is a very long way."

Later the next day, an object was barely visible near the top of the LF tower. Several people had gathered while the maintenance man made his way to the object. He could be seen reaching over and retrieving something before heading down. When on the ground he handed over John Dunn's nametag and an audible cry came from the crowd. The maintenance called for help and the necessary equipment to necessitate a quick recovery of the body. *The sooner the better*, he thought. We should leave him some sort of dignity by not gawking at his body in rotations of fans of the gruesome. When the extra men arrived, Billy was quick to offer help but was denied do to insurance issues. John was lowered with more of the same parachute line. It took nearly two hours for two men to weld a pulley and lower John slowly and carefully by taking two turns on the pulley.

As soon as Billy heard about the suicide, he went straight to Karen. He knew she would need him if she already knew and would certainly need him if she didn't. He found her at the Officer's barracks packing for the trip home.

"Karen," Billy started, "I need to talk to you and I want you to sit on your bed." Karen had some silly little romantic idea and just as soon she banished it.

"John Dunn killed himself last night."

Karen was more than speechless, she couldn't talk, couldn't move. She sat upright and began to cry. She seemed more like a sad ventriloquist dummy than a vibrant and beautiful woman.

She cried out loud. She cried and she cried. "He was going home next week. Does Jennifer know?" She didn't even wait for an answer. She cried and she cried. Billy wanted so much to sit next to her and comfort her and after a pause that's exactly what he did. He sat next to her to let her know that he cared about her and understood the pain of loss. Though he didn't show his emotions as easily, he still felt very strong about what had happened. He must have gone to his death right after their meeting in Karen's room last night.

Karen put her head on his shoulder and commenced to soak his flight suit with her tears. He thought how nice it felt to be this close to her and he put his arm around her.

She looked up at him with watery eyes and a snotty nose. If ever a man wanted to laugh, he only need seek out a crying woman with a snotty nose. Billy had to fight to keep a laugh from coming out.

Karen tried to console herself by making plans. She vowed to visit Jennifer at their home in Brunswick and give her condolence. She didn't really know Jennifer, but she felt like she knew John and hoped that her thoughtful visit would be welcomed. An idea popped into her head and she got on the barracks phone and called around and got in touch with the Hospice of Mid-Coast Maine. She was happy that she had thought ahead and called around Brunswick to see if there might be any help for the families of Suicide victims. She got lucky and located

help. She would inform them of the “Survivors of Suicide: For those Left Behind” support group is offered twice annually. The local group meets the second and fourth Wednesday of the month from 6:30 to 8:00 pm.

Chapter 14

After the flight to Brunswick, Karen finished her post-flight checks and went into the women's head to freshen up just a bit before she would meet her husband, Larry, who is probably, hopefully, waiting for her like the other families. She was wearing a Victoria's secret bra and panty *just in case*. She stretched the collar of her tee so that there is just the suggestion of a wanton woman in a hormonal rage. Truly, she just hopes he is happy to see her.

He isn't in the parking lot—she can't see him anywhere. She thought there was the chance that he wouldn't be there to greet her after four months apart, so she wasn't devastated. She was, however, a little embarrassed. She gives the lot the once over once again and put her head down as if to comb her locks with her fingers as she makes her way to her car. She then heads home like anyone would. She was furious, but there is absolutely no argument with a Doctor's schedule. She somehow thinks it was intentional this time though.

Scott told her, "The Officers on the crew recommended a get-together tonight and planned to party a little with the crew tomorrow."

"Great idea," she said, "give me a call later and we'll put together the details."

She forgot where she parked her pickup truck. This just added to her imagined humiliation. When she was 16 her father gave it to her for her birthday. They had bought an old International Scout and he was proud to tell anyone who would listen that, "When she was new, this old Scout came with a 10-year warranty. Is that confidence or what?"

Karen's pickup is a sort of maroon red 1972 Dodge that had an extra coat of paint amateurishly applied years ago and now the paint

had the sort of fog as if it had sat in the sun for many years. The truck was home to several spring snakes. If you weren't careful where you sat, the spring would launch itself through the tiny hole in the dry cracked Naugahyde seat cover and bite you on your ass or your leg. She is very happy with her truck and did all the regular maintenance herself. It is a 4X4 with a V8, 400 horsepower engine. It is just perfect for the small and sometimes dangerous roads in and around Brunswick.

She isn't into cars like many people; she is, however, into clothes, shoes in particular. She hoped that Larry would still be interested in a shopping trip tomorrow.

On the way home she decided that no time was better than the present, and started searching for the Hospice of Mid Coast Maine. She had idea which street it was on and hit pay dirt on her first venture off of the main road.

She explained to the receptionist what had happened to John Dunn in Keflavik and wondered what kind of services they could survive. The receptionist doubled as a nurse and Karen followed her as she completed her rounds.

Karen saw an unlikely suicide victim in the first room that she passed. It was a girl, no more than 15 with her hands strapped to the bed rails. She seemed peaceful and told the nurse so.

"That one has made two attempts on her life and requires sedation and restraints unless the Doctor is in with her. You see, honey, it's for her own safety."

Karen mentioned that the girl was awake and asked if she could visit with her. This was as much a visit for the young girl as it was a way for her to understand John's death.

"Hi sweetie," she said quietly and gently. "Do you have a minute to talk?"

"Well, here. Let me check my daily planner. Yes, I do have an opening right now, but we'll have to make it quick because today is clown day and I want to give him my full attention."

“I can rub my face real good and put some lipstick on my nose for a few minutes with you.”

The girl smiled at the thought. “Who are you and what are you looking for?”

Karen hadn’t thought of a reason for the visit and was caught off guard.

The girl continued, “Did a family member or friend recently commit suicide?”

“Yes,” Karen admitted quietly.

“How can I help you? Do you want me to tell you how bad you feel when you are at the brink?”

Karen felt more collected and tried to take better control of the situation. “I want to know how it feels to know that you are leaving so many people behind that love you.”

“I only left my father, my mother doesn’t count; he is the reason I decided to leave this stinking earth. There has to be something better after this life.”

“It didn’t happen until I wasn’t so young anymore. I was eleven when I was first raped by my father.”

“Oh sweetheart,” Karen cried softly. She could only imagine what it was like to be so innocent and so trapped beneath her father. She reached out and held her hand.

“My mother didn’t believe me and to this day denies that anything ever happened. I blame her as much as my disgusting father. So what brings you here to Disneyland?”

Karen laughed out loud for both of their benefits. It really was funny, considering that the girl was strapped to her bed as if in preparation for one of the many rides at the amusement park.

“I’m Sissy, by the way. Cecilia for short.”

Karen introduced herself.

“I am 17 years old when I’m not a patient here, I work mucho hours on providing a comfortable place for the many “lost souls” that feel as if the world has forgot them. I have spent every waking hour since age 12 fighting my depression and battles with suicide. When I was 15, my boyfriend committed suicide and that truly became an eye opener for

me. I started to see that there is so much “ugliness” in this world and that I could do what I could to help. I work with people in the group forum talking to the ones who have gone through it themselves, so I can make sure I know the truth about what I feel is the right thing for me.”

After an hour or so, Karen decided to head over to John Dunn’s house. She was sure that Jennifer was in hysterics still, but she wanted to drop off the information packet that she had picked up from the Hospice of Mid Coast Maine.

Jennifer was home—apparently alone—when Karen showed up. She was sitting on the top step of the stairs that lead from the driveway to the house.

Karen was tentative, but she was also committed to talking with Jennifer. She walked up the steps, still in her flight suit, the same flight suit that John had worn for so long.

“Hi, Karen,” Jennifer managed, “would you like some tea, I just made some.”

She got to their apartment and went upstairs to the bathroom to wash away the 13 hours of flight. The shower left her feeling much better and a bit more forgiving. She looked into her closet for something to eventually surprise her husband with. Though there is a bit of animosity with the fact that she still isn’t ready to have children, she could still knock him out with her stunning looks. Her closet is like most women, nearly 100 shoes, but with just about everything in the J-Crew and Victoria’s secret catalogs. She didn’t shop with them just because they were provocative; the clothes just seemed to fit her perfectly. Her wardrobe is actually very sensible with that in mind. She did have some of their sexy ensembles also.

Suddenly she froze. She slowly walked to the side of the bed with

her heart dropping and then breaking. On the nightstand is a single earring. Whoever she was, she was brazen. Karen wasn't sure if a fist fight was acceptable in this situation but she knew she could rearrange a face right now. After a time, she decided to hold this information for another time.

Larry came home about 20 minutes later, as if 20 minutes wasn't enough time to meet her like all the other families. He is in good spirits and playful and kissed her in all of her favorite places and she did the same. She told him about the get-together at the Officers Club and hoped that he could come. He nearly declined and she felt it, but he agreed. She was so happy. Her handsome Doctor husband was going to go and get trashed with four of her best friends. She chose to wear a white boat neck sweater with a polka dot skirt. It is a sensible outfit, but apparently she should have worn a bra. Her nipples were perpetually hard on top of her very pronounced breasts and she wanted to be ravaged by her husband.

"Larry, this is Vince Sembello, our third pilot," they shake hands.

"This is our TACCO, Scott O'Neil, the soul of the weapons systems."

"And over there is Tom Morgan; he is our Navigator and Communicator."

"You already know Billy."

"Everyone, this is Larry, my husband. He kills people at the hospital."

"Listen up, guys," Karen announced, "That Oscar is headed this way. The Ops O said that his current track would bring him just north of here."

"Nobody knows this guy better than us," said Scott, "We'll probably be the first to locate and then we'll spend the rest of the week relocating him after every other flight loses him."

The officers all laughed at what they believed to be true. That was the way it worked out while flying on the Oscar out of Norway. CAC-7 seemed to have all the luck when it came to this Oscar.

Karen added, "Anyway we need to get the word to the enlisted crew so that they can keep it in the back of their minds when they decide to tie one on at the Liberty Lounge. We really ought to put notes on their doors at the barracks in case their out in town at Joshua's."

Karen is very playful tonight. She is trying to block out the earring that she found so near to where she lays her head; she even does a rather sexy dance for him. This he does not appreciate and leads her to the door. He asks to leave. She told him that she needed to tell her friends. She smiled to the crew as she announced that they were going home.

They didn't speak at all on the way home. That's not to say that they didn't have anything to say, they were just being careful.

As they near the front door of their house he asked her, "That dance. Is that how you behave on deployment?" Karen started to cry at the accusation.

"Just what the fuck do you mean?" she asked loudly, "You are the one who is responsible for the fucking earring I found next to my pillow. I sure don't remember buying such a cheap trinket! Whose is it, Mr. High and Mighty."

"Listen I'm just trying to make you happy and if you want to make me happy, have my child. That's all I ask and you are holding me back from my dream."

She knew how much children meant to him, so she dropped the subject of the earring. He soon went to bed and Karen stayed at the kitchen table with what was left of a bottle of wine that she opened only two hours ago. She couldn't see straight, but she knew that she had married the wrong man. In her drunken stupor she questioned whether she would even have gone out with him if he weren't a somewhat handsome Navy doctor. What could be better? A happy marriage with a successful doctor pretty much won the prize. *Is that all she saw*, she thought. How shallow she had been. They didn't have much in common and, long-term, she imagined that he would want to retire to Florida while she realized that she belonged on the Maine coastline. After a half bottle of white wine, she stumbled to the couch where she immediately fell asleep. Larry didn't check on her so he couldn't know how cold she might be.

Karen dreamt of flying. She loved that big Patrol torpedo bomber. She was one of the best pilots in the wing and she was to be nominated by her squadron as the Association of Naval Aviation Pilot of the Year.

This was a huge honor and she was a shoe-in after the last two week's exploits.

She dreamt of Billy. She dreamt that she and Billy were married and traveled the world together. She dreamt that he would never let another woman sleep in her bed. He was everything that she didn't wait for. If she were single, she was sure he would court her. But she was not. She was married to a self-centered pantywaist that most assuredly didn't deserve her love.

Larry was much friendlier the next morning. He asked her if she wanted to go shopping and she said, "Ummm, Yeah!"

She wore a very simple light sundress and as they neared they walked up the ramp to the sidewalk shopping center a breeze came up behind her and lifted her skirt to expose her scanty white French cut panties with European lace garter stockings. When she tried to hold the back down the front blew up as well. Now she is nearly frozen, but she kept her wits about her and squatted and twisted the skirt and held the back with one hand and the front with the other. Larry watched with amusement, but didn't offer a hand.

She was not about to ruin her shopping trip about such happenings.

After their first stop on a day of shopping fully scheduled, Larry said he needed to get back to the hospital. She searched her memory for a beeper or a cell phone noise and didn't remember any.

"Larry," Karen said, "how did you know that you were needed when I didn't hear either your cell phone or your beeper?"

"Karen," Larry said, "I called in while you were in the dressing room. I have to get back to work and that's the crux of it."

She didn't care that they weren't going shopping; however, she did care about the way he was taking the curves and dips in the road and she was quick to let him know. "Larry, this isn't the Daytona 500 and this isn't a flat track. If someone comes around one of these corners we are going to have an accident and that's a promise. Take it from someone who grew up here."

They were supposed to spend the day shopping. She had hoped that they might even head south to loot LL Bean, but neither of them were in the mood for it. Larry wore slacks with a cotton shirt and tie. She wondered if he had ever worn anything else. She wondered just how much she really knew him after all. She wore a pretty vertically striped dress. Unlike Larry, when she is off duty, she played the part to a tee. She looked over at Larry as if for the first time. She saw a compact, but powerful man. He wore his hair short, like a Marine would. His skin is a dark olive color owing to his Greek heritage. She looked at Larry and she saw the seriousness that he would probably never shake off. He is proud to be a doctor and he is a good doctor. Right now, he is going too fast and she reminded him again.

“Larry, you are going too fast and you are doing it to scare me.”

“I don’t mind a little speed; don’t you understand the rush of speed?”

“Yes, I do. I was doing 480 knots just yesterday.”

He didn’t like being outsmarted at all and increased the speed even more.

He was counting on her to tell him when they were coming up on a particularly sharp curve. Even if she said nothing, he would see her hand dig into the middle console grip.

At the next curve, she relaxed her grip which urged him on. As they rounded the corner, a Moose jumped out into the road at the most tragic time. Karen screamed instinctively as the car skidded a full 400 degrees before coming to a stop. Karen then climbed out of the car to see if anything could be done to help the poor beast. As she examined the huge animal, with no help from her Doctor husband, she determined that it was probably just stunned. No sooner than she stepped back, the beautiful creature regained its footing and crashed through the woods. *Poor beast*, she thought. Larry showed no interest in the Moose, his only concern was the \$1,500 or so that being stupid was going to cost on this occasion.

Once back in the car, Karen asked, “why do you drive like that when you know it terrifies me. Why can’t you try and give someone you love a bit of piece of mind.”

Karen began to cry, “Why can’t you just show simple warmth and

show that we are in this together; it would mean the world, but you cannot even show that simple concern.”

Larry asked her, “Well have you thought about it.”

She knew what he was asking and she was ready for the question. “I thought I had an idea of what I thought a family is until last night when I found Julie’s earring on our nightstand. Her name is Julie, isn’t it?”

He pulls over into a safe place, so that they could talk.

“Karen.” He reaches for her, but she pulls away. “I’ve always loved you and I hope you have known from the beginning, how important children are to me.”

“Children are more important than our marriage; admit it,” Karen nearly screamed, “what are your intentions with Julie. Is she already pregnant with your 2.3 children?”

Larry said, “Karen, do you remember your words when I asked about children? You said ‘Honey, children never even occurred to me this early in our marriage.’”

“I said it and I meant it, and I still mean it. I’m not ready to start a family yet. Finding that earring was a stinging slap in the face. You’ll get rid of her now, and I’ll consider allowing you to be my husband.”

“Honey, I’m trying to be a good husband.”

“You are not a comfort, Larry.”

“You just go on with your little snide remarks about my family and how you ended up here when we could have taken orders to Hawaii. Your negativity depresses me day after day. You are no comfort at all.”

“Shouldn’t I need comfort too?” Larry asked. “You aren’t the only one who is frustrated in this marriage. I have wanted children from the start and you knew that.”

Karen admitted in her mind that she did know how much children meant to him, but she also knew that she wasn’t going to bear them for him. He had broken his vows and her trust and she was too strong to allow it.

“Larry, I want a divorce,” Karen told him

Larry turned to her, “What?” he asked. “What did I say? What did it mean?”

“I just can’t live with you anymore,” Karen said. “I’ll move my stuff into my parents place.”

“Into your parents place,” Larry echoed.

“I want you to RIGHT NOW; take me home to my family’s home.”

Larry starts to protest, but knows it will serve no use.

Chapter 15

The terrorists were sleeping in six hour shifts, which allowed for six guards on station at all times, the most efficient guard time while enjoying the minimum amount of sleep necessary to stand a good post. Al Haasan decided that showering would put them in a vulnerable position, so none chose to bathe. As another security measure, the terrorists stood by while the chief engineer welded the doors to the handgun and rifle cages. A guard would periodically check that the welds hadn't been cut.

“What thoughts must have gone through your head these last two days,” hissed Al Haasan, “to see your crew under my command must be very painful, no?”

The captain didn't answer; he vowed to exchange words with this animal only when necessary.

Al Haasan continued, “I can understand how you must feel about me but only good can come from any discussions we have.”

The captain felt this to be a necessary time to talk.

“What is your intention for my ship?”

“My intention is the intention of God. Tomorrow is our third day. We have lost our pursuers for now, but it is only a matter of time before they regain contact. If the Russian Admiral that sold us your ship didn't make it to Miami, then I'm sure that the entire western Russian fleet is looking for us. Soon we will turn west and pass Iceland en route the Grand Banks. We will travel swiftly, but quietly. I am sure that the United State's Underwater SONAR arrays have picked us up, but they can only give an estimated position.”

“When you said the admiral sold you this ship, what did you mean?”

“I meant just that. My leaders transferred one million U.S. dollars to his bank account in Miami. His part of the bargain was the training of our crew and access to one Russian Oscar class nuclear ballistic submarine.”

“Are we speaking of Admiral Gurevich?”

“Yes, the same. He isn’t a man of principles; that I’m sure you will agree. He is a good bargainer though. We offered \$500,000 to start and then agreed to \$750,000.”

The captain was puzzled, “I thought you said the dog received one million dollars.”

“Oh yes, I forgot to mention that he required us to pay the extra \$250,000 so that we could execute the Russian crewmen that provided such excellent training.”

The captain sighed in agony. Those men were his and the admiral said that these so-called Syrians were to take their positions in their place. He vowed that he would avenge theirs and the cook’s deaths by killing Gurevich himself if possible. He couldn’t imagine a Russian military legal proceeding that would fault him at all.

“You do know that this is a suicide mission, don’t you?”

“It doesn’t matter to me or my men. We have long trained for these last days and are not afraid to die. Of course it would be better to launch our missiles over New York and Washington DC from the Grand Banks and then escape to the Mediterranean and Syria. Your men could then be returned to Russia.”

“Why would you launch from the Grand Banks,” the captain asked. “Our missiles only have a 300 mile range.”

“HOW CAN THAT BE TRUE? WE WERE LED TO BELIEVE THAT YOUR MISSILES HAD A 3,000 MILE RANGE WITH A NUCLEAR MIRV.”

“Nuclear weapons?” the captain said. “We don’t have nuclear weapons.”

Al Haasan rushed to the missile tubes and asked one of the weapons officers to show him one of the nuclear missiles that were soon to be delivered over the eastern seaboard where the Multiple Independently Targetable Re-Entry Vehicles would scatter over New York, Boston

and Washington DC. The ordnance officer barely had the doors open to explain that this ship wasn't outfitted with nuclear weapons. When he realized that these weren't the nuclear version, but the less effective cruise missile. He was shaking with rage and shoved the ordnance officer toward the periscope platform.

"WHERE ARE THE NUCLEAR MISSILES?" he screamed, "WHERE ARE THE NUCLEAR MISSILES? SOMEONE HAD BETTER SHOW ME A NUCLEAR MISSILE RIGHT NOW."

When no one spoke, he placed the barrel of his pistol against the ordnance officer's head and screamed once again.

"WAIT," yelled the captain, "WE DIDN'T KNOW. WE DIDN'T KNOW THAT YOU REQUIRED NUCLEAR WEAPONS. WE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THAT YOU WERE TO BOARD OUR SHIP. ALL NUCLEAR WEAPONS WERE REMOVED LAST YEAR WHEN THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY WAS SIGNED."

Al Haasan felt beaten and tired. His head was now on his chest as he swung side to side. He mumbled something in Arabic and replaced the barrel to the officer's head and fired without looking. The Russian officer fell in an awkward manner and the captain cried out his name.

"Why?" asked the captain letting his voice steady. "Why would you do such a thing when it is no one's fault that you don't have the weapons you require? I never told you that we carried such a weapon. Perhaps you have been duped by the person that got you onto my ship."

Without answering he walked over to the navigation chart.

"What is the range of these missiles that you carry?"

"Our Granit missiles have a range of 300 nautical miles. In order to be in range of both New York City and Washington D.C., we will need to close the coast to within 250 nautical miles."

"Wouldn't that give them more opportunity to engage and destroy our missiles?"

"Certainly, but I'm sure your plan has stealth built into it and if we aren't tracked by then, it will certainly be easy enough to slip over the continental shelf into deep water under the hypothermic layer. We can leave as quietly as we came."

This pleased Al Haasan. He was beginning to think he could count

on the captain to protect his ship and not allow his crew to make the deadly mistake of trying to rush the crew.

When they arrived at her parent's house, Larry came in to say hello.

He had been invited to dinner and he didn't want to be so rude as to put Mrs. Madden out and leave her with all of this fried chicken and all the fixings. Mr. Madden was out running his pots and wasn't due back for an hour or so. Larry helped himself to a beer and grabbed a chair in the living room.

Karen knew he was there, but she didn't go to him. She didn't go to him and tell him that, "it was all a dream and that, of course she would love to have children. The sooner the better."

Finally, after what seemed an entire day, Mr. Madden pulled up in front of the house in his trusty Scout.

Karen appeared in the living room and her eyes flashed at the sofa where Larry sat. When Mr. Madden arrived, his daughter was quick out the door to gather all of him that she could stand.

Mr. Madden reached out a hand to Larry who turned to catch it. She breathed only a little less uneasily as she saw the friendly exchange and saw the sternness of her father's dark and steady face. He knew that there were some serious problems with this relationship, but he wasn't about to get involved in. She knew that he knew and she admired his self-control which appeared unshakable.

She was surprised that Larry remained to dine with the family. It was certainly one of the more quiet dinners since everyone could feel the animosity Karen showed for Larry.

Mrs. Madden came back and forth, carrying dishes.

"I know," she recommended, "Why don't Larry join Mr. Madden for a short fishing trip in the morning."

"Larry, I'd love to have you come along," Mr. Madden said. "I have plenty of gear that you can choose from. I can even help you with a choice if you aren't familiar with the local fishing grounds."

Karen snorted into her glass of tea. The thought of the button down

doctor being an expert at anything more than admiring himself seemed unlikely for the moment.

“Do you fish, Larry?”

“I did when I was a child. Just with worms and a small rod and reel package. I would just sit for hours by a pond near our home. I went there with a few other boys from our neighborhood and we would sit there and tell stories while we waited for ‘the big one.’ It was rumored that there was an enormous catfish in that pond. One of the boy’s father had even seen it, in fact he had almost caught it, or so he said. There were certainly some big fish in there because we caught several during our many trips together. After a while that owner of the land told us that we couldn’t fish there anymore. There weren’t any other fishing spots, so we just sort of fell apart as a group.”

Karen listened with some astonishment to this part of Larry that she didn’t know about. This speech was easily the longest that Larry had addressed to her family since he had known them. Apart from short responses to questions from her family, he was pretty quiet and aside from this most recent description of his childhood fishing exploits, it was the first time he had admitted to anything as personal as a childhood. The more he spoke, the more he seemed to warm to the subject.

Mr. Madden said, “Well you’re welcome to join me.” He put a piece of chicken in his mouth.

“That’s very kind, but I think I have imposed enough. Besides, I’m on duty at the hospital tomorrow.”

Karen knew that to be a lie and that statement wiped out any good feelings she had developed during dinner.

He was bewildered after the accident and then Karen’s request for a divorce. He sulked for an hour or so and eventually found her in the quiet living room and agrees to a divorce. She is nonchalant until she saw his tail lights and then she went outside and cried on the lawn until she choked and then was coughing and crying at the same time. She cried aloud, but soon found herself a bit relieved and laughing. He was gone and she went to her mother who had always helped her through everything and this was everything to her.

The next morning she got to the hangar before anyone else, she

thought. She needed a few moments to compose herself before getting down to Division business.

Billy came into her office. She wasn't ready to see him yet, but was very kind to tell him to pull up a chair.

She said with a slight snuffle that they had lost the Oscar again and the ASWOC wanted CAC-7 to try and regain contact. Apparently their exploits were causing quite a commotion and bets were being taken from Bodo to Keflavik to Brunswick. It was quite thrilling actually.

No matter how fucked up her personal life was, she had her crew and they constantly amazed her. Billy was another story altogether. As she slowly drifted away from a terrible marriage, she felt a soft tug towards Billy.

Billy said, "I don't know what is wrong in you life but I do care, a lot; but you need to know that it's taking a toll on the crew. I can see it if you can't. That's all I have to say and if you want me to leave it at that, I understand. But if you want a caring ear, I'm here." He then left and closed the door behind him.

His words were enough to let loose all the tears that she had been saving for a time when she could be alone with herself. On instinct she put on her sunglasses in case one of the troops came in.

She put it out of her mind. She wasn't sure if he felt the same way and if he did, they couldn't act on their impulses while they were in the same squadron. It was absolutely forbidden while she was married and that fact couldn't have been proven out better than the tragic loss of John Dunn.

She began to cry again. Thank god for sunglasses. She decided to take a walk around the flight line.

Chapter 16

Al Haasan headed up the stairs to the weapons cage to give words of encouragement to one of his young men when he discovered that he was sleeping at his post. He kicked the young man with all of his force, but the man didn't awake.

"Wake up, you infidel," Al Haasan hissed quietly. "Wake up." There was no movement and he noticed that one of his blades was missing. The handgun was handcuffed to his wrist as it should be. He looked up at the weapons cage and saw that it had been opened at the lower right corner of the cage. It appeared that the pilferers got only 5 handguns and a single shotgun.

He knew the crewmen were just below and to the left of him. He heard telltale voices whispering around the corner in front of him.

He quickly presented an impressive knife that he placed between his teeth and lips. The Knife was a "Masters of Defense" Mark V ATAC Fighter with a 6 3/4 inch carbon steel blade. This knife was designed to dominate and deliver in any situation. The high carbon steel with a titanium carbo-nitride finish provided the ultimate sharpness as well as the toughness necessary in field applications. Al Haasan had bought it a few years ago at a gun show in Kansas. He normally used it when he ran out of bullets, or when shooting was just not appropriate. He placed his handgun in his belt and just as quickly made an automatic rifle appear from somewhere in his gear. It was an H&K MP5, one of the smallest sub-machineguns on the international market.

There were three Russian crewmen that overcame the young terrorist. He had fallen asleep on his watch and that is what the Russian crewmen had counted on, given the strict sleep schedule that the main asshole

had them on. No one could last long under these strict rules and it was just a matter of time. They were counting on numbers. With the officers there were over 150 Russians against only 10—now 9 terrorists. The numbers were surely with them. They knew that their friend in the kitchen was alive and in a raft somewhere waving at airplanes. The sonar operator had written down the latitude and longitude and these men had high hopes that they would be able to surface and throw these stinking terrorists overboard and then head to the sonar operators position and scream praises to his name and bring him aboard and feed him like he was the President. He was truly a hero and they hoped that he had survived his crazy scheme.

They were in a crouched position at the platform below the weapons cage when they first saw the boot of a terrorist. They each raised their handguns and one shotgun.

Just as he planned, they directed their attention to his boot when they should have either trained their weapons at the place where his torso would be or even higher to destroy his head.

Al Haasan stepped out of his boots and considered the situation. Since the weapons cage was painted to silhouette the weapons for easy accounting. He knew the smart thing to do would be to allow them to live, but the problem was how to spare them when they were so well armed. He felt that he could easily kill each of them. He had trained for his entire life to kill and he was very good at his craft. He decided to let them live.

The terrorist left the weapons cage platform with a lively step. He made his way to the control platform where he made his report to the captain that there were four of his men near the weapons cage and they had five handguns and a shotgun.

“They also killed my guard. I’ll have to talk with my men about standing a proper watch.”

When the captain made no move to intervene, Al Haasan slashed at his face with the sub-machinegun and dug in to near the bone for about two inches. This would surely leave a gruesome scar. But that wasn’t the first thought for the captain.

“He took down the microphone,” he said. “Will the men who killed

the Syrian guard and took weapons please return the weapons to the cage. You have two minutes to finish the job before guards mount the cage platform. My crew, we are under tremendous stress but these men are trained for one thing and one thing only and that is killing. You have killed one of theirs, but they are willing to overlook it since they have murdered two of our crew. Please put the weapons back quickly.”

Al Haasan had been donning a blue jumpsuit while the Captain spoke and took the ball cap from one of the sonar operators and joked that he would bring it right back and that he was playing a trick on the captain.

Just as the captain was finishing his plea for the return of the weapons, Al Haasan had positioned himself just below the weapons cage. After each of the weapons were back in their cozies, Al Haasan took the steps by twos and caught the first crewman in the throat with his combat knife. He was able to make short work of another crewman before the last two came to their senses and decided to grab for the weapons. It was too late. Al Haasan drew two vertical lines up their torsos with the sub-machinegun.

The captain rushed to get a blind message out to anyone who could hear. “Mayday, Mayday, this is the Russian Submarine ST GEORGE THE VICTORIOUS. We have been hijacked by Al Queda terrorists who intend to attack the east coast of the United States with 24 Shipwreck missiles. They have already murdered six of my crew.”

Two surface combatants heard the message as well as both of the US Submarines that were trailing at a safe distance. In addition, the communications facility onboard NAS Keflavik covered multi-path HF, EHF/UHF SATCOM, and terrestrial communications systems. The building was outfitted with a state-of-the-art physical security systems; independent seven-day capacity for drinking water and sewage disposal, so the building could be operated in a “buttoned-up” configuration; CBR air locks/decontamination space; and survivable communications connectivity with associated facilities. They had the full attention of the staff of the National Command Authority due to the reliability of their communications, but the back up reports by surface ships and an

aircraft on station gave incredible credence to the possibility of a national disaster. They passed on this information to the admiral who would advise the command authority. He granted the watch officers request to notify all of the Patrol Squadron Commanders of the latest transmission.

Onboard the Russian submarine the Sonar operators had much earlier put in training tapes that showed only white noise on their displays. The terrorists didn't have enough training to know the difference, though the Sonar operators and certain others of the crew knew that they were currently under the close scrutiny of an American Destroyer, a Russian Destroyer and an American nuclear attack submarine.

Al Haasan had finished his work. Pure elation! It couldn't have been described better than pure elation. He remained with his works until he became tired and so sad. Death is beautiful and deeply depressing at the same time.

He remembered how wonderful it felt to kill neighborhood animals in his small village in Iraq. When he killed his first human, he ran home as fast as he could so that he could masturbate by conjuring up images of his fresh kill. He has never been able to reach the pleasure plateau that he enjoyed when he killed his sister. Of course, he described the perpetrator and incident with such incredible detail so that the authorities would believe it. He still masturbated over the details of her murder regularly.

He returned to the control room and happily returned the ball cap to the Sonar Operator who found it drenched. He looked at his fingers and showed his friend. "That son of a bitch dumped my hat in hydraulic fluid. That's the last time I loan him anything."

Al Haasan reported to the captain that the weapons had been returned and asked if he could have about ten men to help to move the weapons to the torpedo room where they could be jettisoned. The captain's nose injury was being attended by the ship's corpsman. The captain directed the corpsman to see if anything could be done for the men at the weapon cage.

The captain agreed and asked the Chief of the Boat to gather the necessary crew.

“By the way, Captain,” Al Haasan said, “the four men who took the weapons are making a terrible mess up there. Five of the ten should bring cleaning equipment and some method to move the bodies.”

If your intention is to shock me then you have failed. Two things told me that those good men wouldn’t survive today. One, you are a sadistic pig and two, I heard the gunshots.

Al Haasan screamed, “WHY IS OUR DEPTH ONLY 100 FEET?”

The captain bluffed, “If you would like to look at our chart, we are directly above a sea mount that is only 150 feet below the surface. We will make our depth 500 feet as soon as we are clear.”

CAC-7 didn’t need to search this time. All bets were off. The Russian submarine captain had been making regular transmissions that were being translated nearly as fast as they left his microphone. Within minutes after take-off, CAC-7 was inbound and had a pattern and sonobuoys selected. The flight station need only follow the VHF signal and when the needle started to swing, the TACCO released a DIFAR and Karen started a turn that would allow for a one mile spacing for the remaining buoys.

The TACCO was surprised that the Sensor 3 didn’t call MAD.

“What’s going on back there, Sensor 3? why no MAD call?”

Sensor 3 replied, “I can’t get a signal with all the outgoing radio traffic. It messes up my needle.”

“Okay, NAVCOMM, try and hold your radio calls when we are inbound the submarine. If you listen to the play-by-play you will know when we are inbound.”

Karen asked for the crew to milk as much as possible out of these sonobuoys. The aircraft behind us is down so it might be a while before we get relieved.

“Inbound on heading 190 degrees, 300 ft and 300 knots,” Karen said for the benefit of the ICS and radio recorder.

“MAD, MAD, MAD!”

“Flight, continue on this course and I’ll get enough buoys in the

water to track for a while. Sensor 1 and 2, these are all DIFAR separated by a mile. 1 away; 2 away; 3 away; 4 away; 5 away; 6 away. Now flight come around to mark DIFAR 4 on a heading of 280. We'll cross the "T," and turn right to mark 1 and continue flying 190 dropping a mile a part."

"Contact, DIFAR 2. Its strong contact and it looks like he is running right over it."

"We're using DIFARS at 400 feet depth. NAVCOMM relay to the ASWOC that we have passive contact with medium life and 400 foot strings."

"Roger."

"Crew, we would normally tighten up the spacing on these sonobuoys, but our relief is going to be late and I don't want to lose contact due to running out of buoys."

"TACCO, Flight, we are inbound DIFAR 4 and we will aircraft correct since this is our first correct. We'll be quick about getting around to buoy correct whatever you designate."

"Thanks, Vince."

The TACCO went ahead and dropped a buoy where the aircraft thought it was. The actual needle swing on DIFAR 4 came about 700 feet later. The TACCO put out another buoy a mile after the mark.

"TACCO, I have same contact outbound from DIFAR 3 and it looks like two other submarines are coming in on DIFAR 1."

Karen asked, "TACCO should we fly down and buoy correct 1 through 3?"

"NO," answered the TACCO, "That would probably be two US submarine escorts and even if it wasn't, we still need to concentrate on the first contact so that we don't run the risk of losing contact trying to track three different submarines at once. Once the trailing submarines pass through our corrected sonobuoys, we will know who they are and precisely where they are."

Karen tried to keep her mind off of Billy. She wouldn't do it but she

would surely like to ask how he knew that she needed a dress, how he knew her precise size and how it all got delivered to Iceland within days. Billy found out about the formal at the same time she did. The pearls were real and she couldn't imagine how much that set him back.

She felt more than grateful, she felt a deep emotion that she couldn't keep bottled up very easily and she knew that she would have to hold her emotions in check before she gave herself over to him completely.

At the same time, Billy was lying in one of three cots in the back of the aircraft. Since their relief wouldn't be on station for quite some time, he decided to get some sleep before his turn at the yoke.

He was extremely satisfied with his performance in getting Karen's dress ordered and delivered in time for the formal. He was certain that she was in love with him and he could understand the conflicts that could come about by that. She was still committed to trying to make an unhappy marriage a happy one. He hated to admit it, but he wanted more than anything for her to leave her husband and give him a chance to make her happy. Since the formal, he had purposefully avoided her so that she could think things through.

"TACCO, Sensor 1."

"Go ahead Sensor 1."

"Sir, the two submarines trailing have unique signatures that we are able to pick out of the noise. The lead submarine is USS Jacksonville 10,000 yards behind the Russian and USS Pittsburg is in trail 3,000 yards behind Jacksonville."

"NAVCOMM, who is the Guided Missile Destroyer?"

"It's the USS Mitscher."

"Maybe we ought to generate a message that describes not only the hostile contact, but the friendly ships as well."

"Sensor 1, which buoy is the Oscar closest to?"

"TACCO, he's fading on 4 and I recommend we get more buoys out in front of him."

"Flight, mark DIFAR 1 fly 190 and we will buoy correct 2, 3 and 4

and drop 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. After we drop 9 we'll come around and cross the T on 8."

"Sensor 1, what buoys are the American subs near?"

"TACCO, US subs coming in on 1 but it's weak contact. I estimate that the US Subs are following in the Oscars baffles at approximately 10,000 yards."

"NAVCOMM, make sure to snapshot positions of all warships so that the ASWOC gets a better picture. I know it's a pain in the ass... I used to be a NAVCOMM and I know it's tough, but it has to be done. We are the eyes for a lot of very important people."

The crew continued to drop sonobuoys down the submarine's course and dropped two on either side of that line. They were doing a fine job of maintaining contact while also conserving sonobuoys.

Billy made it to the shaftpit and relieved Karen at the right hand controls. "You've got the controls, Vince."

"I have the controls," Vince replied.

"Karen, have you seen the subs yet?"

"No, and I haven't heard anyone else announce that they were visible yet either."

"TACCO, how deep do you think this submarine is?"

"Stand by and I'll check the bottom contour chart."

"After a couple of minutes," Scott replied. "They are on the continental shelf so I reckon them at between 100 and 300 feet."

"IFT, get your camera ready."

"Crew, we are going to climb to 1000 feet for just long enough to see if the submarines are visible from the sky. The waves are too choppy to see from this low. Shadow play is a problem as well."

After another pass, Vince pulled back on the yoke and the aircraft climbed to 5000 feet quickly.

"I see 'em, TACCO."

"We're going to track from here for a few minutes while you take photos. Can you get every ship in the photo?"

"Flight, IFT, no we need to be a little higher for that. Right now I can get one submarine and the Destroyer, but can't frame the other two subs."

Vince took them up to 1,000' and asked, "How's that?"

"Perfect, I've got them all and the lighting and contrast is awesome."

Karen was so pleased with her crew and couldn't wait to see the photos. If the picture looked anything like what she was looking down on, it would be an awesome sight and probably a famous one. She decided to take some of her own with her little digital camera that produced high-quality photos

She asked Vince to maintain a double standard rate turn over the ships so that she could get her photos. It would take a day to get the IFT's photos back from the Wing, but hers were automatic. After ten photos she played them back to see how they came out. They were outstanding and she could download them from her computer at the hangar to show the CO and XO.

"Here," she said, "take a look at these."

The crew dropped down just as the submarine was coming in on eight. They flew across the submarine's course to synchronize the positions of DIFARs 11, 8, and then 10.

The rest of the flight was cake. They tracked the submarine flawlessly. It was as if they thought that no one knew they were out here.

What they didn't know was that the Russian sensor operators had much earlier put in a white noise training tape and their guards didn't know the difference. Every man on the Russian submarine wanted to be caught and did everything they could to deny the terrorists the opportunity to use their submarine to kill innocent people.

Chapter 17

Instead of beers at the club, Karen invited everyone to spend an afternoon on her father's boat. Her father is a lobsterman like his father before him. Karen had become very competent at the boat controls and pot winch. She loved her father so very much and was proud of the kind and happy and good nature he possessed.

Mr. Madden delivered to other P-3 aircrew flying cross-country, but other aircraft also called in their orders and he even delivered an ice chest of Lobsters to a pair of F-14 fighters that were visiting from Norfolk, VA. Still though, mostly he or his helper would meet P-3 aircrews with their order of Lobsters.

Nowadays, he told her how proud he was that she was a Naval Aviator and he was so happy that she had gotten stationed right here at home. He knew that there was some friction with her marriage. He thought to himself that friction probably was an understatement, but he knew that these things eventually worked themselves out, and that she had family nearby that loved her.

Billy struck up a conversation with Mr. Madden when Karen announced that she was going to change.

"I love to fish in Maine in the summer," said Mr. Madden. "I usually do well enough in the summer that I can visit a couple of favorite places down in Bermuda during the winter," he said, "but I try to stay home as much as possible in the summer."

"Did you go to Bermuda this winter?" asked Scott

"Yep," he affirmed. "Karen's mom and I made the trip together this time."

"That's my lobster boat on that calendar." He proudly points to the

calendar hanging on a wall above the sofa in his living room, “We race ‘em up and down the coast. It’s a Northern Bay. She’s 36-feet long with a 15-foot beam and has a 430 horse-power Volvo engine.”

“There’s nothing better than Maine in the summer but, unfortunately, the winters can be harsh,” he reflected.

Karen returned after a quick wardrobe change. She marveled at the difference in the language and accents of these two men and noted that they never seemed to notice.

Everyone appreciated Karen’s invitation to her family home and thought it was just about the best idea anyone had in a while. She intended to get some sun, so when it came time to pick a swimsuit she lingered over the thong that she normally wore when she took the boat out by herself. Today was different however so she chose a more modest Victoria’s Secret bikini top and matching string bikini with sarong.

On the way out, she had shown them a scar on her calf that had she said had been made by a Lobster. Everyone raised an eyebrow. Now they weren’t so excited to be lobstermen after all.

She promised that she would take them fishing, but explained that the only way she could get the boat was if she agreed to work the lobster traps first.

The rugged stoney coastline of Maine was awesome from the boat vantage point. Over the years, Karen had collected many rocks from each area of Maine that she visited. She loved the coastline view; especially the lighthouse out near the breakers. She enjoyed watching the waves “crash” against the shore, feeling the salt flying in the air with the wind...while the waves carved beautiful images into the stoney coastline. She considered staying in Brunswick to work at the Anti-submarine Warfare Operation Center. This wouldn’t be the best job, but it was a pretty good assignment with the added benefit of being close to her family. The premier job out of this first squadron would be with the training squadron in Jacksonville, Florida.

The first basket that she brought up with the winch was full of the

tasty critters. They pulled up three more baskets that were just as full with lobsters. She thought that now was the best time to pull her prank.

When she pulled up the next pot she checked to make sure it was full and then swung it over as she had all the pots before only, this time, she opened the pot before it was over the hold. The critters slid all over the deck sending Sensor operators, pilots and Naval Flight Officers running and slipping to dodge the pincers that had left the scar on Karen's leg. Vince was cornered by four of the hateful shellfish, so he decided it was safer in the water. He jumped and at the splash Karen exploded with the biggest belly laugh of her prankster career.

"You did that on purpose!" complained Billy

Karen replied, "There's one near your foot.

Billy jumped and Karen doubled over with laughter.

Two others decided that the water was safer.

"Karen rounded up all the critters giggling as she went and even had to take a pause while another belly laugh escaped.

The waterborne victims wouldn't come back aboard until Billy would confirm that all of the lobsters were safely below in the hold.

When she finished her fun with the lobsters, she set out for a great fishing spot that she knew of. When everyone was taken care of and had a line in the water, she prepared to get some sun. When she took off her light blouse and cut-off shorts, they were stunned by her beauty. She was wearing a coral colored bikini. Soon everyone else had changed into a swimsuit or at least removed their shirt to get some sun. Since some of the crew were wearing Speedos and the like, then why shouldn't she take this opportunity to get a full tan? She went to the front of the boat where she knew only two or three could sun comfortably. When she was in the front she removed the sarong to reveal a very sexy bottom to match her top. She was simply perfect.

Billy soon came around with a couple beers and saw that her eyes were closed he took advantage to admire her athletic body, generous breasts, and full red lips. He realized that she wasn't wearing any makeup. She took his breath away. He laid the beer on her tummy and she inhaled sharply. It was only fair since she took his breath.

"Billy," she cried with a smile, "you are such an asshole."

Billy took off his shirt to tan his lean body. He leaned against the cabin wall and put his foot on the bow and said nothing for several minutes.

“Tell me about your family, Billy,” asked Karen.

“Well, I already told you about my younger sisters and brother. My mother lives near my sisters. She divorced my father when I was 19. I had already joined the Navy at that time, so that left my sisters with my Father who was mentally ill. I still feel like I should have stayed around, but the Navy has been so good to me and I still go home about once a year to visit. My dad is getting worse and worse and I don’t know how much longer he will last. He has a Bi-polar Disorder which means he has incredibly high mood for a while and then will crash into a very dangerous depression. If you can imagine a horizontal line, you and I go up and down slightly on this line based on how our day was. We are sometimes happy but then something affects you so that you feel a little down. It’s not like that for my father. His “ups” are so inflated that he can’t control his impulses and his downs are devastating. He cries and has attempted suicide several times.

“During his manic states, he is completely obnoxious with an inflated self-esteem. He displays himself with grandiosity, and he doesn’t sleep for days. He is also more talkative than usual.

“I went with to his doctor last year and the doctor explained that when a person is manic, he has flights of ideas that race from subject to subject. He is easily distracted with an increase in social, work or sexual agitation. He gets involved in pleasurable activities that have a high potential for painful consequences such as unrestrained buying sprees, sexual indiscretions, or foolish business investments. It would take a month to tell you what he has been through.

“Other than that I can tell you I inherited my father’s handsome features and my mother’s shaft.”

“Shut up, you ass.” Karen said, “You shouldn’t talk about your mother like that.

“Yeah, you’re right. I just thought it would be funny to say after all the negative information I purged.

Billy changed the subject, “If you don’t mind my asking, how are

Larry and you getting on?” Of course he cared for Karen, but he still needed to act professionally and insure that her personal problems weren’t going to hurt the crew.

“The crew is counting on you to get us through these qualifications,” he said, and then added, “hell; I couldn’t do this stuff nearly as good as you can.”

“Billy, I’m fine,” Karen said. “I appreciate your concern for the crew, but I also know you care about me personally so, in that regard, my life sucks. Larry wants to have kids,” she continued, “but I’m not ready now and I don’t know if I ever will be.”

Karen added, “It seems to me that marriage is about vows between a man and a woman and I’ve never heard the term kids or children in the ceremony.”

“I can understand how you might feel, but think about it from his side.” Billy said. “This is a guy that probably did assume that the vows included children. I know there’s no compromise—can’t have half a baby—but at least explain whatever reason you have for not wanting a baby.”

“Heck, I don’t think I’m cut out to be a father,” Billy added. “Too much responsibility and I like to be able to come and go as I please.”

Karen said, “I think Larry has already picked my replacement. She left one of her earrings on our nightstand. How tacky is that.”

Billy could see tears rolling from under her sunglasses and across her face. He was heartbroken for her. He wished he could hold her and kiss her and tell her how he felt—tell her he loved her.

The boat had a grill and the Sensor 2, AW2 Miller, who was also from these parts volunteered to take care of dinner preparation. For 11 crewmen, he had the unenviable task of preparing two tails for each belly. That’s a lot. He got everything together before the trip and settled on a recipe and method to fit two lobsters into each of those beer-filled bellies. He filled a stockpot with enough water and herbs and fish stock to cover the lobsters, brought the water to a boil, plunged the lobsters headfirst into the water, and covered the pot. When the water returned to a boil, he cooked the lobsters for an additional 6 minutes. After 6 minutes, he grilled six lobsters at a time and while he was grilling he

was using a sharp knife to cut through the middle of the soft shell, but didn't cut through the back shell. He poured melted butter and lemon right onto the meat. When he cracked the first of the claws, the hungriest of the crew started crowding the grill. Miller poured additional melted butter and lemon on the claw meat and grilled as many of the critters would fit on the grill. He then grilled them with the shell side down for 8 to 10 minutes. He did all that three more times and was happy to see everyone enjoying their 22 lobsters.

After everyone had their fill of lobster and were tired of fishing, they made their way back to Mr. Madden's pier space.

On the way back in, Karen looked sadly at a piece of granite on the bank. There was an attempt to draw an angel on it with a lighter shade of granite, but now it reflected on the water less and less with time.

Billy saw what she was looking at and asked what it was.

"My sister died right there," she said, nearly at tears. "Her name was Lori and we were swimming between the boat and the wall and when the boat took a swell broadside, she was pinned. By the time the boat was pushed off of her, she had died of either drowning or the terrible damage done to her head and body."

Billy was touched, "I'm so sorry."

"She was so different from me," Karen continued. "It is so heartbreaking when you are so entirely connected with someone that it nearly takes your breath away when they are suddenly taken away." Karen was not crying; it was a calm rage that she was enduring right now. "She was a little taller than me I think, but she was beautiful. I used to follow her so that I could protect her if she ever needed me. I can't believe she is gone sometimes. It's been many, many years and none of us has ever really recovered. I don't guess we ever will."

Billy had an image of Karen with a sister as pretty as she. "I'm so very sorry for the loss of your sister and the pain your family has endured."

"I never had a sister," Karen said. "I was just fooling with you."

Billy was furious. He couldn't believe something so callous could have come from that beautiful face. But it did and he stormed off to get his cool. He didn't have a hot head that would require him to verbally

torch someone at an instant; instead he went away and tried to understand what was happening. Karen had just violated the closeness that he had been trying to foster for nearly a year now. He was in love with her for sure, but he cared for her more.

When the boat was secured, Karen ran up the steps and into the kitchen past her mother who saw her crying. She knew in an instant that it had to do with Lori.

The men stumbled in one by one and only saw remorse on only one face and it was Billy's. She called him aside and asked what had happened.

Billy replied, "This is none of my business, Mrs. Madden, but Karen did something sort of strange on the way in. She pointed out a place where she said her sister died and when I told her how sorry I was for your family's loss, she said it was she was just kidding. I felt like such a jerk. How could she do something like that? I've known her for a year and she has never humiliated me like that."

"Billy," Mrs. Madden stopped him, "Lori and Karen were as close as two children ever were and she has never really gotten over her death. Our loss has nearly ruined this family and we are so proud of Karen's accomplishments after losing her sister. Now, why she tricked you up, I can't tell, but I will say this. That girl thinks the sun rises and sets on your shoulders." Mrs. Madden continued, "Now, she is in her room crying and she is the last person in the world to bother when she's crying, so just leave her be for now. She'll be better tomorrow I'm sure. She may be a little shy around you, so just let her come around at her own pace."

Billy took the crew back to the barracks after nightfall. Everyone was quiet and reflective, and full of lobster, beer and good cheer.

Karen looked upon that day as one of her best and one of her worst. She showed everyone a great time. She let her hair down in front of the crew and showed what a goof she was and that she was more than just their Patrol Plane Pilot; but she broke trust with Billy and it hurt her heart to imagine how he must feel.

Chapter 18

Al Haasan ordered another guard to cover the captain.

Al Haasan said, “Alter route to approach Eastern Seaboard between New York and Washington to within 300 miles. You may make your depth 300 feet.” He decided that this was as good a time as any and found the blankets and pillow that he asked for at the foot of the control platform.

“Captain, I plan to sleep for a few hours,” as he spoke he demonstrated that he handcuffed his pistol to his wrist. “I hope that my snoring doesn’t disturb.”

The captain said, “There is a shower in my stateroom if you decide to shower. It will make you much more alert.”

“Is there was a closer shower to the control room,” Al Haasan asked.

“Yes, there is a head with a shower just behind you.”

Al Haasan was embarrassed that he didn’t know about it.

The captain smiled, the crew had been underway for five days and Al Haasan, or whatever his name was, hadn’t taken a shower. Hell, he had only slept for eight hours during all that time. Each time he slept near the control platform with two guards on either side of him. After four hours he would awake with his pistol drawn. The CO thought how pathetic it was to live your life in fear asleep as well as awake.

Al Haasan chose to drape his vest and weapons over the cabinet and showered with the door open. He showered quickly and wasn’t shy to step out of the shower naked. He quickly surveyed the room to see that all was normal and then quickly toweled off, put his uniform on, and put his vest on.

“Captain,” asked Al Haasan, “why do you work so hard on your

appearance. You always seem so alert and well heeled.”

“I am a model for my crew and it helps me to keep focus. If I look professional my men are likely to emulate. Of course we have a couple of rat crewmen, but they do their jobs so well I wouldn’t think of asking them to shower sometimes. If you look around you will see that most of my men are clean shaven and wear their uniforms with pride. The cook doubles as a barber for the crew. Since you have killed one of our crew, we are backed up for haircuts.”

“Captain, I too would like to look clean shaven. Could you arrange for a haircut here in the control room?”

“Yes, and you are welcome to wash your face before using my shaving cream and razor.”

After he reappeared without his beard, he could actually pass as handsome.

As he CO predicted, the rest of the Syrian crew slowly asked permission to also be well-groomed.

Al Haasan looked to the CO, he shook his head in the affirmative.

Al Haasan needed sleep badly lest he develop bad habits and make mistakes in judgment. He asked the same guards to watch over him as he slept.

The blankets and pillow were already laid out for him at the foot of the control platform. He thanked his men for the thoughtfulness and quickly dropped to the blanket and made enough noise to gain the attention of everyone at the Control platform. He made a show of the pistol handcuffed to his wrist and touched his temple with the barrel as if to tell them that they would end up with a bullet in that very spot if anyone approached him.

He fell straight to sleep and found himself in a dream almost immediately. All the faces of those that he had killed over the years were lined up before him with the wounds that dispatched them.

In his mind’s eye he saw a Spanish official and his driver obliterated by a well placed car bomb. That murder had earned much praise for him in the terrorist community. He saw his sister, naked with a knife wound that easily sliced through the bone of her ribs to her heart. He began to become hard. He saw his crowning glory. In March 1992, at

least 28 people were killed and more than 220 injured in a bombing of the Israeli Embassy that has never been solved. In July 1994, he killed 86 people, and scores more were injured in an explosion he set up which destroyed a seven-story building housing the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association and the delegation of Argentine Israeli Associations.

As he looked upon his triumphs, his hand found its way into his trousers. When a guard saw that he was masturbating, he covered his leader's crotch with the blanket. He had seen Al Haasan do this many times in his sleep and wonder what sort of fantasies such a man could have.

He came with true bliss as he looked upon all the faces and bodies that he had disfigured and sucked the life out of.

He then dreamt about his current project. If he could pull this off, he would be lauded in the ranks of Osama Bin Laden and Yasser Arafat.

He dreamt that his Russian submarine would take up a position 100 miles south by southwest of Atlantic City. He would surface at 9:30 a.m. to ensure that everyone who worked in New York City and Washington D.C. would be at their work. He would ensure that the coordinates....THE COORDINATES. He woke with a start.

"Navigator give me the smallest scale charts you have of New York City and Washington." He allowed Radio to trail a wire that would allow him to surf the internet and then had a laptop set up on the navigators table. He would spend the next few hours choosing his targets based on the most populated building in both cities and having those coordinates entered into the 24 Shipwreck missiles. He had nearly embarrassed himself by forgetting this all important step. He vowed to sleep a bit more before the launch time. He wanted to be in synch with the ship when it surfaced and fired its missiles. He had no way to know that the CO and the radio operator had warned everyone on the east coast of the United States of what the terrorist's intention was.

The previous attempt to get the photographic qualification while

they were still in Keflavik was denied due to aspect ratio; but it's another day and CAC-7 was busy with another attempt at the photographic qualification whereby the aircraft maneuvers to get eight photos of the ship at required image size and aspect. The air crew could carry out as many passes in order to ensure the qualification while they were time-limited during the last attempt. The crews always felt a little guilty about asking a surface ship to participate for more than thirty minutes.

They contacted a Russian destroyer who was obviously here to monitor the submarine full of his countrymen being held against their will. They would also likely be a part of a despicable terrorist act. Though the two governments were working together and no blame was being placed on the Russians, the Captain of the Destroyer was saddened that a Russian submarine was involved in the threat.

The crew requested permission to do several fly-bys for photographer training. The Russians agreed so they commenced an 8 point rig.

The aircraft started on the starboard side of the ship at 200ft altitude and about 200 feet from the ship. The first pass was from stern to bow and the In-Flight Technician (IFT) took photos of the starboard aft aspect, the starboard side and the starboard bow. Billy executed an expert standard rate right hand turn 360 degree turn for photos of the bow. The (IFT) took photos of the starboard side of the ship, the bow head-on, and the port bow. Vince did another right hand 360 degree right turn to bring the aircraft down the port side of the ship. The (IFT) took another photo of the port bow and then took photos of the port side in two areas and the port aft section. Vince conducted his next and final right hand cloverleaf so that the (IFT) could get the final photos of the port aft, aft and starboard aft portions of the ship.

They conducted the same procedure, so that they could choose the best photos before turning them into the Patrol Wing for grading. The requirements were strict, but they, the IFT, felt that he had some very good photos.

Karen thanked the captain and turned to Billy and said, "Thanks." Billy didn't ask why, he thought he knew that it was because he didn't judge her last night or badger her about her outrageous behavior.

Soon they were back on the ground and ready to go in for debrief.

The IFT had rewound his film and was hopeful that he could repair his failure with the camera on his last attempt. He hoped that this attempt with the Russian Destroyer would produce quality results. The crew didn't know that he had spent much of the previous evening going over every control and techniques with this camera.

When the crew arrived at the ASWOC for their debrief, they were ready to ask for another chance at the Oscar.

They had no sooner gotten the request out when the briefing officer announced that they were specifically requested to attend a high-level planning brief that was dedicated to the Oscar II.

Soon after their brief at the Wing, they were in the air for a quick flight to Andrews Air Force Base where the meeting was to be conducted.

Billy was falling in love with Karen and often stole glances at her to sate his desire. She is married and a bit senior, though not so taboo in his mind for lovers when they are the same rank. He knows there is a bit of a rift between Karen and Larry. He doesn't know the details except that she sometimes wears her sunglasses to cover her tears. He sees her pain and he sees her tears sometimes.

After the flight, Karen was sitting at the small table in the galley. The rest of the crew were similarly finishing up paperwork and shutting down their gear.

Billy sat across from Karen at the table and placed his hands on the table near Karen's.

"Karen...do you believe that I could love you for the rest of my years?"

She was stunned by the admission and wasn't prepared with a proper response.

"Billy, you have just shocked me and I need more time to think before I reply to what I hope you have considered carefully before telling me."

She hadn't been negative about the prospect at least, Billy reasoned. "I'll give you all the time and space you need and I'm sorry if I upset you. I respect that you are married, but that doesn't matter to me. What matters to me is that you know that I am utterly and deeply in love with

you and have been for a very long time.”

“Billy, please stop. You can’t know what I’m going through now that you have told me how you feel. I just need time.”

He placed his hands over hers and she marveled at how hard and strong they were. They were much too firm over hers. While she could have resisted, she chose not to.

He replaced her hands and was about to leave when she thanked him for the dress and pearls. “It was the nicest gift I’ve ever gotten and I mean it.”

“It was my pleasure and I thank you for dancing with me so often, I felt like a movie star.”

She forced herself to look into his eyes. It was difficult in such tight quarters. “I wanted to be able to take this relationship at face value, to enjoy it for what it was; just flirting between two adults who are attracted to each other. She took in a deep breath and released it slowly. I do love you. I know that it’s wrong to love a man while married to another, but that’s where I find myself. I know it is hard—oops bad choice of words—difficult for you and I know that you love me deeply; I can see that, I can feel that, but there is nothing we can do about it as long as I’m married. I know it’s old-fashioned to honor vows, but *I am* old-fashioned.”

“Karen,” Billy started, “I expect nothing less of you, but it is important to me that you know how I feel.” He looked around to make sure they were alone and leaned down to perch her beautiful face on his thumb. He turned her just a bit and kissed her lips. It was a small but sweet kiss, one that they would both remember.

During all the commotion, one of the radio operators pressed the buttons that trailed the extra low frequency (ELF), very low frequency (VLF) and low frequencies (LF). He trailed the wires, so that any nearby warships can hear conversations. The captain saw what his man was doing and after looking at how shallow they were running, he showed a V with his fingers. The radio operator pressed the button to extend

the VHF antenna.

The radio operator selected all four radios and keyed his microphone. The captain decided that he wouldn't risk the lives of any of his men. He took the microphone and announced "Mayday, Mayday" which was the international distress call. He hoped that a ship or aircraft would find them. He knew that they were a little over 150 miles off the coast of Cape Cod National Seashore and that many anti-submarine aircraft flew in this area. If any one is out here they will here this ship as a beacon covering much of the 0 to 300 MHz spectrum.

He looked over his shoulder to ensure that the commotion continued and then made another mayday call in Russian and English. His training years before as an enlisted radioman included an intensive concentration on the English language. "This is Russian submarine, ST GEORGE THE VICTORIOUS and we have been hi-jacked by Arabic terrorists who intend to attack New York City and Washington D.C. We do not have nuclear weapons, so we will close to within 250 miles between the two cities."

The captain looked around and amazingly enough all attention was directed at the elsewhere.

He felt it was noisy enough with the movement of the crewmen on their way to the galley for their afternoon meal, to make his calls. He knelt down to the radio operator to feign that he was in deep discussion with the operator.

Al Haasan stopped to ask what they were talking about. The captain's skin crawled and he felt that the radio operator was terrified. Crewman Vasilii Ivanov just needed to talk to someone. Al Haasan seemed to accept this response, but thought that a rifle stock across the face worked better than a comforting talk.

If the crew attempted a mutiny, Al Haasan worried that they wouldn't have enough ammunition for the 146 crewmen. Of course, knives worked close in, but the sheer numbers of the crew would overcome them. He wished that he could somehow hold onto them. His men carried the sub-machine gun as well as the 22 caliber handgun and two knives. He felt around in his flack jacket for a location for another weapon.

The Russian crew used the standard issue Model 1911-A1 Colt .45 caliber semi-automatic pistol. A Browning design, the M1911 in its stock form was never the most accurate handgun, but made up for this with one of the most effective single-shot man-stopper cartridges ever produced. And, as handguns are intended to be used at very short ranges, accuracy was less an issue than some might think.

There were also six Thompson sub-machineguns, which fired the same .45 ACP round as the M1911 pistol. These were normally fitted with the straight 20-round box magazine, rather than the 50-round drum magazine usually seen in gangster movies.

Al Haasan didn't feel comfortable with the crew without any guards, so he sent two men forward to keep guard on the control room. The remaining guards were to decide the best place to conceal these additional weapons.

He explained, "They had killed six of the crew, but there still remained 151 officers and men and he didn't know what professional or handcrafted weapons remain onboard."

As Al Haasan made his way back to the control room and the communications suite, the captain replaced the microphone in its wire holder.

"I think that last slaughter will go a long way towards thwarting any other revolts for at least a while. I'm sure we will have enough ammunition to put down a revolt, but they might get close enough for our blades."

CAC-7 happened to be airborne when these transmissions began and Sensor 1 announced that he had a weak signal on channel 16.

Normally, the TACCO would have made a mental note to not use the equivalent buoy, but this time he asked the flight station to dial in 16 to see if they got a point.

Karen said, "There is no way that this Oscar is this far west. Vince, dial in VHF 16 and let's give a listen."

Karen selected the radio record function so that if they did find communications on the Submarine, they would have proof when they

got home.

She thought that the only way it could be him would be if he turned do west before Jan Mayen where the prosecution continues though the submarine still hadn't been located after four days.

The submarine captain broadcast once again. "This is Russian submarine, ST GEORGE THE VICTORIOUS and we have been hi-jacked by Arabic terrorists who intend to attack New York City and Washington D.C. We do not have nuclear weapons so we will close to within 250 miles between the two cities."

"I can't hear it yet, but I can sure see it." Karen had dialed it up on her VHF indicator and had a point to the source of the transmission. "TACCO, I'm inbound the transmitter and I recommend a Bravo pattern of DICASS active buoys around the contact."

"Hear it?" Vince demanded. "A very quiet voice is calling Mayday."

Karen added, "I heard it fine. Whoever it was described them as the Russian submarine, ST GEORGE THE VICTORIOUS and that they had been hi-jacked by terrorists who were planning to attack New York City and Washington D.C."

"TACCO, crew, we have a VHF point to the southeast and we're headed that way."

Billy laughed. "If that is anything more than a taxi cab radio, then I'm buying beers tonight."

From the back: "We heard that."

"SENSOR 3 get your MAD gear up and running."

"It's already to go, Ma'am."

"Alright, here we go. My needle is starting to slowly turn from south to north"

"Okay, who or whatever it is it's just to the west of us. We're going to extend south and then roll right to come back closer. The needle spun as if it was about a mile away.

She came back around for a north to south run closer to where the sub should be judging by the needle swing on the last pass.

"Okay, I've got a fast spin here."

"MAD MAD MAD," broke in the Sensor 3.

The TACCO was very sharp and was ready with an active sonobouy

that he fired as soon as he heard the MAD call

“Holy shit, it’s a submarine.”

“Sensor 1, Sensor 2 is your gear fired up.”

“Yes, Ma’am, we turned it on when we heard the beer bet. We are online.”

“Next MAD, TACCO deploy a Bravo pattern. Put a passive sonobouy in also so that we can classify.”

“Okay, I’m working on a pattern... Sensor 1; I punched out an active sonobouy on the MAD, so you can start pinging away. After you get contact on the active buoy, send it down to 400 feet and then 1500 feet. We want to get an idea of what our best active ranges are.”

“Roger that, TACCO.”

“TACCO, we have active contact and it looks like his course is two five zero at about 22 knots. We’re sending DICASS 1 from 90 feet to 400 feet.”

“TACCO, we still don’t have a pattern on our display.”

“I know, I know, I’m working hands and elbows back here.”

“Now that there is a tiny break,” announced the Sensor 3. “Mr. Jordan will be buying a lot of beer tonight and you are all invited to the first class mess.”

There was excited agreement all around and Billy was resigned to empty his wallet for his fine crew.

Karen was sitting in the front seat and asked Vince to relieve her while she went back to generate a message for the reporting authority.

“Listen, Tom, I know this is a pain, but we need to be very specific about what we heard. Here are my notes and you can compare them to your own and let me know when you are ready to send by teletype, HF and UHF all.”

This was Tom’s bread and butter until he moved over to the TACCO seat which usually took year and a half of heavy training and testing.

He took out his ciphering manuals and drafted a message that matched her notes pretty well. He called her back to see. She looked at it but it was in a secure code that changed daily. He had placed the corresponding words over the proposal and she was very satisfied. “Good Job, Tom,” she said, “Thanks for doing that. “Go ahead and

send via both secure HF and UHF.”

While the NAVCOM was on the radios, the Sensor three complained that the electro-magnetic field interfered with his MAD system.

The NAVCOM had already sent the message via teletype and HF and decided to wait until the next pass to pass the message on the UHF frequency.

“There’s your pattern. You see DICASS 1 on your screen, fly to it and try to get a close aboard mark on it to correct the aircraft to the system. The other buoys are DIFAR and we’ll buoy correct DIFAR 4 straight down a 250 course. A Buoy correct will tie the system together with the other buoys. After you mark 4 maintain heading and I’ll punch out another DIFAR a half mile down course and then we will turn to cross the T.”

“Sensor 1, go ahead and enter DIFARs 2 through 34. We’ll watch this big submarine drive right through the middle of our pattern. What kind of DIFARs did we load and what ranges are you seeing Sensor 2?”

“I have a DIFAR at 100 feet with contact and am dropping it to 400 feet and then 1000 to find best depth. Please co-locate three buoys and I will compare.”

“TACCO,” Sensor 2 said, “We’re getting the best ranges on DICASS at 400 feet.”

“I agree TACCO,” said Sensor 1, “we are getting better ranges at 400’ for the DIFAR as well.”

Karen said to Tom, “NAVCOM let’s get this all in ciphered format and get it off to the ASWOC. I’m sure they will be extremely interested in an Oscar II this far west of where everyone is looking.”

“Don’t get too feisty,” said Billy, “we still have to classify this guy not only as an Oscar class, but as the one that is wreaking havoc all over the north and Icelandic seas. “Don’t get too excited folks; let’s take it easy, you know cool... like a rum and coke; Sensor one, do you think that you can classify this Oscar as the same one?”

“Flight, Sensor 1. We built a profile earlier that automatically identifies this submarine as the very same.”

Karen thought how nice it was to be flying with super cool Billy

Jordan.

They may have just stumbled onto this slippery submarine again. They were the only crews to generate contact only to have it shake it's searchers after CAC-7 were on their way back to base.

"Sensor 1, are you able to classify?"

"I'm working on it, Ma'am; expect to have him nailed any minute now."

"TACCO, kill active one so that I can put passive two on my display. I think he is about to run right over 1."

"Okay flight; mark DICASS 1 on a heading of 260. That will put him in the middle of our pattern."

"TACCO, Sensor 1, We have one Oscar II class submarine showing identical acoustic signatures as the one we flew on in Norway."

Vince said, "PPC, NAVCOM, listen to channel 16."

"This is Russian submarine, ST GEORGE THE VICTORIOUS and we have been hi-jacked by Arabic terrorists who intend to attack New York City and Washington D.C. We do not have nuclear weapons, so we will close to within 250 miles between the two cities."

"NAVCOMM?"

"I'm on it."

"Tom immediately dialed up the appropriate UHF frequency and selected the secure button that encrypted outgoing and decrypts incoming messages. The NAVCOM waited a moment for the tell-tale beep that told him that their conversation would be clear.

Every aircraft, warship or submarine had a call sign that changed daily or security purposes.

The NAVCOMM started, "Bravo Xray One, this is Delta Two Charlie."

Tom waited a couple minutes and tried again, "Bravo Xray One, this is Delta Two Charlie."

Finally, the watch officer answered. "Delta Two Charlie this is Bravo Xray One."

"Bravo Xray One, this is Delta Two Charlie, we have contact on Oscar II submarine bearing 160 degrees at 140 miles, Break."

The watch officer dropped his powdered donut on his uniform and

was muttering shit, shit, shit mostly for the submarine find than for his uniform.

“Delta Two Charlie this is Bravo Xray One. Say more over.”

Tom replied, “We have intercepted and recorded VHF communications from the submarine. That conversation was as follows: This is Russian submarine, ST GEORGE THE VICTORIOUS and we have been hi-jacked by Arabic terrorists who intend to attack New York City and Washington D.C. We do not have nuclear weapons, so we will close to within 250 miles between the two cities.”

“Delta Two Charlie this is Bravo Xray One.” Please maintain contact while we get your relief on the way and while we get word to the admiral.”

Tom affirmed this and gave a report to the crew.

Beepers and Cellphones went off immediately all over the base. The admiral got to the ASWOC before anyone and wanted to hear the story again. He was simply dumbfounded. He made sure that a replacement crew was preflighting and made his way back to his quarters to make some phone calls. A renegade submarine was headed towards America and this information needed to make it to the President immediately.

After arriving at Edwards Air Force, the crew was whisked to the briefing room where there were what seemed like more admirals and captains than were in the Pentagon.

This briefing was obviously very high-level.

The officers of the crew are sitting in on a planning meeting that will describe the roles that all units will play. Karen is smiling at Billy who is slouched in his chair, seemingly oblivious of everything that’s going on. She thought how he was so different from Larry. What a different animal he was.

The briefing officer at the podium described that the attack submarines USS Jacksonville and USS Pittsburg had localized the Russian submarine and were tracking closely. The Russian submarine

seemed to be making its way to a point within striking distance of New York City, Boston and Washington DC. It is seems certain that they will strike targets in each city; however, he admitted, there is no solid plan for an execution of attack tactics that will protect the lives of the Russian crews and still stop the 24 Chelomey SS-N-19 Shipwreck missiles carried by the Russian submarine.

The missiles had both inertial and command update guidance with active radar homing to 11-300 nautical miles at 1.6 Mach. These particular warheads carried a 750 kg HE payload that would cause unimaginable damage if they were to be aimed into a major city like New York, Boston or Washington.

Russia has asked for us to do what we can to preserve the lives of their obviously innocent crewmen, but once their missile bays are flooded we have no choice but to destroy the submarine.

“Rockeyes,” offered Billy.

The entire audience craned their necks to see who was speaking.

“What do you have in mind, Lieutenant?” the briefer asked.

“Rockeyes,” Billy said again, getting out of his chair.

Billy made it through the crowd and the stifling heat and walked to the dry board and started sketching.

Billy began, with his relaxed East Texas accent, “You’ve got two guided missile destroyers USS Mitscher and USS Laboon on station that can handle probably four missiles at once with Close in Weapons (CWIS) System.”

“For anyone that doesn’t know the CWIS System, it is a Phalanx Gatling-type gun that fires 4,500 rounds of 20mm projectiles per minute and is used as last defense for close-in missiles.”

Billy continued, “The submarines are trailing and aren’t much use for attack tactics unless we want to sink the Russian boat. They are better suited to radio positions, course and speed, and depth changes so that we can be more accurate with our attack passes. So, I propose that we have continuous coverage overhead with three P-3s at 300 feet, 500 feet and 700 feet flying at equal intervals from one another. These aircraft will be armed with MK-20 Rockeye cluster bombs. When the submarine surfaces, the higher aircraft will all descend to 300 feet

and weapons will be delivered at 300 knots. With three, or even four, aircraft in the air there will always be an aircraft inbound with Rockeyes which are really bomb-shaped canisters that dispense 247 shaped-charge bomblets. These MK-118 bomblets contain shaped charges capable of piercing 7.5 inches of armor. Each aircraft can carry 10 Rockeyes for a total of thirty with three aircraft in rotation. If we can deliver these bomblets onto the missile tubes, we stand a pretty good chance of jamming the missile tubes, denying the use of the cruise missiles and still protecting the crew. Keep in mind, we may need to help them to exit the submarine because we can't avoid hitting the sail with the submarine's missile tubes situated either side of the sail."

"Thank you! Very nice presentation, Lieutenant Jordan," The briefer said appreciative and turned to the assembly, "from Patrol Squadron. Two"

The audience applauded this very creative plan. Karen clapped the loudest, followed by the rest of the crew.

As he passed her seat, she wanted to jump up and hug him for surprising her with such knowledge and finesse. She always knew how sharp he was, but he only spoke when it was necessary and it was usually well thought out. She is so proud to be near him. He made his way to his chair where he resumed his slouch. Karen giggled.

The briefer asked how long it would take to get in the air.

Billy told him, "It would take about 30 minutes to drive back to Edwards Air Force Base. Our preflight would take another 30 minutes and then they would be in the air en route Brunswick, which will take about two hours. After a hopefully fast weapons upload we can be back here on station in about three and a half hours."

Karen added, "Here is the telephone of Patrol Wing Five in Brunswick, Maine. That is where we are based. Let them in on the plan so that they can get aircraft in the air, and tell them that we are en route to load Rockeyes and a full load of Sonobuoys."

Chapter 19

They arrived at Brunswick NAS and while the ordnance personnel loaded the aircraft with Rockeyes, Karen and Billy were summoned to the wing.

When they arrived, the admiral was there to greet them. It was rare to see the admiral, so it was a nice surprise.

“LT. Jordan, you and LT. Madden and the entire CAC-7 crew have made us all very proud. I hope that you can take a few moments to describe the scenario that you have well contributed to.”

Karen let Billy take this one, since it was his idea and Billy didn't hesitate to brief the admiral. He laid out the plan just as was briefed back in Washington. He was very detailed and even described the weapon systems that might come into play as well as the ships and submarines involved in the prosecution. The admiral listened quietly and after Billy finished, he spoke.

The admiral described how the international community were anxiously watching to see what would transpire. The terrorists had an extremely potent payload. Though everyone in the Homeland Security, Intelligence and the State departments knows that there are no nuclear weapons, they know the damage that cruise missiles pose if they are launched into a city. The President decided not to warn the public for fear of paranoid looting and mass exodus that would possibly result in more damage than the effects of a few cruise missiles. He was also very comfortable with the tactics presented by the CIA and one LT. Billy Jordan.

“This is a fantastic plan for use of so many assets. I'll just add that we will need to have other aircrew and aircraft standing by to relieve

you as required. I'll get our operations officer work that out with the various squadrons. I'll make sure they are briefed just as you have described the tactics."

By the time Billy and Karen got to the aircraft, the number one, three and four engines were running. Number two wasn't turning, so that they could safely enter the aircraft. As soon as they closed the door, Vince, the Third Pilot started turning number two. Karen thanked him for getting the aircraft and crew ready so quickly. That would save one and a half hours.

Karen asked the tower for permission to Taxi and was granted so quickly that it seemed that they had been waiting anxiously to get these aircraft up. Two other aircraft had taken off an hour earlier and were probably getting into position at 300 feet and 500 feet respectively. After they pulled out of the parking apron, Karen asked for permission to take off. This request was also granted almost immediately. Karen lined up and without even slowing, accelerated down the runway. Once airborne, she pushed the power levers probably farther than they had ever been.

Karen contacted the other aircraft and told them that they could be on station and in position in two and one half hours.

Billy had been watching her the entire time and realized that he was completely smitten with this woman who was so professional when it was called for, yet so feminine when she left this business of chasing submarines.

She could feel his eyes and she knew his feelings. She also knew that he wouldn't act on his feelings for at least two reasons. He knew that she was married, no matter how bad that marriage seemed to be from the outside. She knew that he was also concerned about the appearance of seeing an officer that is senior to him and on the same aircrew.

Relationships between officers of equal rank weren't so taboo and weren't nearly as bad as those where one officer had a senior rank. She is only senior to him because she qualified before him. He didn't know that she felt just as powerfully for him as he did for her.

Vince took the controls, so that Karen and Billy could discuss this

scenario again.

Karen said, "Now when we get there, we are going to be at 700 feet, but we'll need to confirm with the birds on station. If the sub surfaces, we all descend to 300 feet and we'll need someone watching the interval in order to avoid a collision. It's going to be very easy to get excited and make a mistake. In fact, we are going to be keyed up for the entire flight, so we'll need to rotate our observers periodically so that we don't get too locked up."

After an hour, the aircraft called up the aircraft on station.

Sensor 3 announced that he had radar contact on two warships and two aircraft.

Karen made the call, "Lima Four Papa, this is Delta three Quebec."

The other aircraft responded, "Delta three Quebec we have you at 90 miles. You'll be taking the 700 foot spot and you are designated call sign three. One is at 300 feet, two is at 500 feet. Once we have visual surfacing, all aircraft will descend to 300 feet with observers maintaining distance interval. All bombsights should be mounted and adjusted."

"Roger," Karen responded.

The Russian submarine captain got another chance to make another radio transmission while Al Haasan was in the toilet. He had the VHF antennae raised and was about to transmit their intentions when Al Haasan turned the corner. The captain quickly replaced the microphone and stood to greet Al Haasan.

"I hope everything came out alright."

Al Haasan didn't understand the comment. The radio operator nearly laughed out loud.

The captain raised his voice, so that it might be heard by anyone nearby listening to Channel 16.

"Al Haasan," he said in a loud voice as if his voice was being muffled by some unknown machinery. "We will need to surface to launch these cruise missiles."

“I know this well, why do you tell me again. I am very well versed in the operations of this submarine.”

The captain thought what an obnoxious little man this was. As a matter of fact, the submarine didn't need to surface at all to launch. He was happy that Al Haasan didn't know any better, the stupid little worm.

There was a Russian submarine nearby and the captain of USS Laboon realized that no one had been communicating the plan or the status.

He began on the common VHF channel 16, “Russian destroyer, this is American destroyer, over.”

“American destroyer, this is Russian destroyer Ochakov, over.”

“Ochakov this is Laboon, I wish to tell you our plan. Do you or any of your crew speak English?”

“Yes, I speak English and I thank you for your help.”

“Ochakov, when your submarine surfaces, we plan to use a cluster bomb. Are you familiar with such a weapon?”

“Yes, I am somewhat familiar. What is your intention for our crew?”

“We intend to use the cluster bomb only to disable the missile doors and we hope we can rescue the crew after the missiles threat has been dealt with. If it happens that we cannot hit the target with cluster bombs we will be forced to destroy your submarine. We are doing everything we can to save your brave men's lives, but we must protect our cities at all cost.”

“Laboon, I understand all. Of course I hope that our submarine can be saved, but I understand the devastation that your cities face if you cannot stop the terrorists. This is Ochakov, out.”

Immediately the captain of the Russian destroyer prepared and released a message to the Kremlin describing the situation and the American plan.

“I have visual,” said Sensor 3. “Mad, Mad, Mad.”

The TACCO instinctively dropped an active DICASS and passive

DIFAR at the Sensor three's call.

"TACCO, we can't drop sonobuoys out here. We might be dropping on one of the lower aircraft.

"Yeah," Scott admitted, "that was what is known as a class A brain fart."

"Scott, can you contact the other aircraft and ask what buoys they have in the water? That way we can be sure to overfly the submarine on each pass."

"Sensor 3, let's track with the MAD system. I don't know how effective it will be at this altitude but we should at least give it a try."

"That's a good idea."

"I'm on my way back."

"There they are," declared Vince. "I saw three submarines as clear as day. The water is really clear, but I couldn't tell how deep they were.

"Have you been smoking dope?"

"There were three submarines near the surface. I was too surprised to identify them, but if we can fly over them again, I'll sort them out."

Karen wrapped it up to make an expedited turn towards the submarines using the DIFAR as a homing point.

"Flight Sensor 3, I see two Los Angeles class submarines on either side of an Oscar class submarine."

"So," Billy said, "We have two submarines, two US destroyers a Russian destroyer and three bad-ass P-3s in the air. I think we have enough power out here to turn this Russian submarine into a ball of molten metal. Okay guys, let's get all the observer windows manned, so that we can see them surface as soon as possible. TACCO, let's go through the weapons checklist."

"Okay, are you ready?"

"Yeah, let's go."

"Circuit breakers."

"In."

"Wing store Rockeye selected."

"Wing station five selected."

"Bomb bay not applicable."

"Arming nose/tail."

“Release station—flight select wing store.”

“Okay,” Billy announced, “let’s stop it there so that there is no damage of early release. We at least got through half of the checklist.”

“MAD, MAD, MAD.”

“Smoke away, TACCO.”

“Roger. Flight, let’s come back around and fly over the smoke heading 260.”

“Roger.”

This continued for two hours or so and the crew was getting a little worn down after the initial excitement of flying on a hostile submarine.

Karen knew how they felt, so she keyed her microphone.

“Did you guys know that only in America can you get a pizza to your house faster than an ambulance?”

The crew laughed, so Karen continued.

“Did you know that only in America are there handicap parking places in front of our skating rinks?”

“Only in America do drugstores make the sick walk all the way to the back of the store to get their prescriptions, while healthy people can buy cigarettes at the front.”

“Only in America do we leave cars worth thousands of dollars in the driveway and put our useless junk in the garage.”

After the crew stopped laughing the In-flight Technician announced that he had a joke.

Karen said, “Well, let’s here it.

The IFT started, “There once was a man from Nantucket...

“Whoa there IFT, there’s a lady onboard.”

I know. I just wanted to see what you guys would do.

“What,” said Karen, “I want to know?”

Billy said, “I’ll tell you another time, okay?”

The aircraft on station were in formation. The two American submarines were in position as were the two Guided Missile Destroyers.

One of the other crews had to head back to base because they had indications that there might be metal chips in one of their engines.

Karen slammed her hand on the yoke. "I can't believe that they only scheduled three P-3s without considering the possibility of losing one before the shooting even starts!"

"Well, we'll need to tighten up spacing with double standard rate turns. That will give us a better interval so that a P-3 is overhead every two minutes or so; at least until we get some help out here."

"Flight engineer, monitor gauges as I shut down number one engine to conserve fuel."

The flight engineer was just about to make the same recommendation.

"Billy," Karen asked, "Please take the controls until I can communicate our intention to the other crew."

"You have the controls."

"I have the controls," answered Billy formally taking control of the aircraft.

"Lima Zulu this is Lima Xray" (there were only two aircraft on station so they abbreviated their callsigns.)

"Do you know if and when there will be a replacement for our playmate that just left?"

"Negative, Lima Xray," was the answer. "Our Weapons officer has one more aircraft loaded with Rocketeyes, so I'm sure they are preflighting as fast as they can. I'm sure they can get airborne in 1 ½ hours and then it will be an hour to get out here."

"In that case we'll need to tighten up our spacing with double standard rate turns so that we have more passes, and have a P-3 overhead every two minutes or so; at least until we get some help out here."

"Listen," said Karen in a commanding voice, "we are going to descend to replace our lost aircraft. We'll descend to 300 feet. When our playmate gets here, please coordinate getting them into position in our flight pattern. You can decide who gets the 500 foot slot, but make sure he understands that when the Oscar surfaces we are all to descend to 300 feet and use visual separation."

"Roger, nobody knows this sub as well as you, so you call the shots and we'll make sure that any oncoming aircraft understand"

"Flight, Sensor 3. It looks like he is surfacing."

“I have the controls,” exclaimed Karen.

“You have the controls.”

“TACCO, talk to our playmate on VHF and ask him to wrap it up and get on our tail for weapons drop. The Oscar is surfacing.”

When the submarines sail or conning tower broached the surface, Karen told the crew to hold on to something and that she was going to put the aircraft in a 65 degree left hand bank to get on the submarine faster.

By the time she got around, she could see the seawater roiling off of the submarine and she could see her target, twelve missile tubes on either side of the sail. She hoped that the captain of the Russian submarine could delay the launch for as long as possible.

“TACCO, let’s finish the weapon’s checklist!”

Scott was mortified that he had forgotten that all important detail. They couldn’t drop weapons without the weapons check list.

“Billy you work with the TACCO for the remaining checklist items.”

“Master Arm,” Scott blurted

“Master Arm selected.”

“Stand by for release button.”

“Standing by, wing station 13”

That concluded the weapons checklist and they were only required to do that section of the checklist for further drops.

This gave her time to train her bombsight on the target. At 300 feet and 300 knots, she dropped on the TACCO’s call.

“Weapon away now, now, NOW.”

The Rockeye was set to scatter it’s bomblets four seconds after release, so Karen immediately climbed in case there were any bomb fragments that might hit the aircraft.

Billy was in the right hand seat and yelled that it was a direct hit.

USS Laboon confirmed that it was a direct hit on both sides of the sail. He commented on the force of the 257 explosions.

“That’s one hell of a bomb,” he said.

“Lima Zulu, this is Lima Xray, are you inbound for second drop.”

“This Lima Zulu, we are one minute from the target, but we are having trouble getting a Master Arm light. Did you complete the

Weapons Checklist?”

“There was no answer and the lack of an answer told me that they were frantically looking for there Weapons Checklists.”

“Rookies,” Karen said, “Lima Zulu please climb to 500 feet while you work on your system and we will teardrop for a second pass from stern to bow.”

“Roger, we should be in position to descend to 300 feet after you make your pass.”

“Let’s make sure we coordinate that swap, it sounds dangerous.” Billy said, “TACCO are you ready for the checklist again.”

“Master Arm selected.”

“Stand by for release button.”

“Standing by, wing station 14.”

Karen knew that the other aircraft had forgotten to go through the weapons checklist and that mistake made it impossible to drop any weapons. She thought of what the debrief would be like for that crew when they got back home.

With the checklist complete, the aircraft was inbound with another Rockeye ready to go. She adjusted her bombsight once again—it was an archaic thing.

Scott started, “Weapon away now, now, NOW!”

Billy said that it was another direct hit.

USS Laboon was quick to congratulate, he had a front row seat to the bombings. *Binoculars were a great invention*, he thought. He still had his combat direction center trained on the submarine in case a missile sailed through the web of twisted metal that the two Rockeyes had stitched.

Sensor 3 had been monitoring the drops with his infrared detection system and declared, “One of the missile bay doors is opening.”

“Damn,” said Karen out loud.

“USS Laboon this is P-3 over.”

“Our operator of the infrared detection system shows that a single missile hatch has opened.”

“Roger, we’re on it.”

“Lima Zulu this is Lima Xray, clear the area, Laboon will fire CWIS.”

“Roger, Lima Xray, thanks for the heads-up.

The destroyer CO radioed down to Combat and told them to have CWIS Gatling gun ready to destroy a missile that was about to launch from the Oscar.

Karen checked the location of the other P-3 and told them to head north, clear of CWIS. Karen then climbed to 700 feet and got the hell out of there. She circled lazily to watch the CWIS in action and saw a missile being shredded as it left the submarine.

Al Haasan was beside himself with anger. This was a colossal failure and his handlers back in Syria would surely punish him and his crew; possibly even kill them.

Al Haasan asked the CO to turn the radio on to a frequency that the Americans could monitor.

Al Haasan spoke English as well as Russian and announced over the VHF common channel 16.

“Gentlemen, my name is Al Haasan. You have destroyed my plan to launch missiles into your cities. You should be proud that you were able to do it without killing any of the crew; however, you must realize that unless we are granted access to a fully fueled 747 with helicopter transport to the plane, my men and I will execute the Russian crew in the name of Allah.”

“I will give you 15 minutes to decide how to do this.”

“I have more,” Al Haasan continued. “So that we cannot be singled out, we will leave the ship all wearing the same uniform and our number will be 10 Russian and 10 men of god.”

The crew of the destroyer was scrambling to find a Russian/English translator. The captain went out on the ICS to ask for a Russian speaking crewman to rush to the helicopter. The operations folks already had the poster board and a marker and were holding out hope that someone spoke Russian. Suddenly, an unsure seaman wandered onto the flight deck and announced that he grew up in Russia. The aircrew smiled at each other.

“Listen, seaman,” the pilot said, “write this in Russian on this poster board. Use large letters.”

Prior to lifting off from USS Laboon, the crew of the SH-60 helicopter placed a large placard to the crew/shaftpit divider. The placard read in Russian, “Do not buckle your seat belts. When you here the helicopter’s bell ring everyone will jump out and swim toward the ship.”

They were betting everything that the terrorists wouldn’t be able to read Russian. Al Haasan used halting spoken language, so it was worth the attempt.

One of the pilots would make sure that the Syrians were buckled in snugly and didn’t explain how to release the harness.

The helicopter pilots planned to then exit the aircraft themselves, leaving the terrorists aboard to crash into the sea. The destroyer would then unload 4,000 rounds of 20 millimeter ammunition into the helicopter.

The submarines and USS Mitscher had already repositioned so that the 20 millimeter shredder could do its work without endangering the other units.

The first two Russian crewmen to board the helicopter discretely pointed out the sign to the other ten Russians. Only the Syrians were buckled in to their seat harnesses.

The helicopter lifted off and after a couple seconds the Russian crewmen jumped from the aircraft. When the pilot and co-pilot saw them clear, they pointed the nose to a safe direction and with the throttles up and jumped from the helicopter.

Laboon was quick to vaporize one of it’s helicopters. There wasn’t much left to float, but bodies could be seen floating along with pieces of wreckage.

After exiting the aircraft, the American aircrew and Russians were picked up by a life raft and upon arrival the helicopter pilot reported that they had transmitted over VHF frequency that the terrorists had begun shooting. The fast thinking helicopter pilot radioed that three of the terrorists shot at him, though everyone present knew that he was saving the captain’s ass. This insulated the captain of the destroyer

from any questions as to his decision to fire on the helicopter.

Within three hours there were two tug boats pulling the stricken Russian submarine towards Pier 84 in New York City. The Russian sailors were excited and sure to have the time of their lives.

Two American Destroyers followed closely. At 25 knots they expected to arrive in 12 hours or so.

Chapter 20

The aircrew were asked to return to New York City the next day. The White House staffer promised a cars to transport them from the airport to a Pier where the ceremony would take place.

The President's staff asked that the crews of the two Destroyers, the US submarines, aircraft aircrew and the remaining Russian crew all gather on the pier 84 where all the ships were pier side. The Destroyers trailed the tugboat that floated the submarine to the pier after a two hour trip.

When Karen's crew arrived at the pier, they were given a pamphlet that advertised, "The public is invited to tours of ships hosted at Pier 84 and the Brooklyn Vicinity. All visiting vessels will be open for public visitation. The vessels include the attack submarines, USS Jacksonville and USS Pittsburg, the Guided Missile Destroyers, USS Mitscher and USS Laboon, the Russian Destroyer Ochakov and the aircrew from the anti-submarine patrol aircraft from Patrol Squadron TWO."

"They don't waste anytime putting together a show do they?" said Karen. "Did you guys know that the President is supposed to land here on the pier somewhere and give a speech."

Larry looked around and sure enough, saw several men in immaculate suits talking into their hands. He told everyone where to look. He was very impressed with how quickly this all came together.

Karen passed the captain of a ferry who was muttering under his breath about all how all this nonsense was costing him business. In fact, the ferry services were a little cramped, but there was enough space for them to continue services.

An admiral that was assigned to the White House arrived ahead of

the President and corralled the crews from the various ships and suggested that they leave only essential personnel aboard the ships and get into formation at his signal. He promised to give them 15 minutes notice, so that they wouldn't have to stand at attention for too long.

By the time the President arrived, everyone was assembled and a very large stage suddenly appeared. The President shook the hand of every man and woman in formation. This took nearly 30 minutes, but no one seemed to mind. As he took the stage the place was uproarious.

He began, "Today, we are here to thank and these assembled men and women who today disabled a submarine that had been hi-jacked by Al Qaeda operatives. The submarine was targeting 24 sites in New York and Washington D.C.

"I can't tell you how glad I am to be here today to congratulate our fighting men and women for their hard work and today's success. We are happy to have the entire crew of the stricken Russian submarine, but we will work quickly to get you home to your families all over Russia.

"Nearly three years ago, following deadly attacks on our country, we began a systematic campaign against terrorism. These months have been a time of new responsibilities and sacrifice and national resolve and great progress.

"America and a broad coalition acted first in Afghanistan, by destroying the training camps of terror, and removing the regime that harbored Al-Qaeda. In a series of raids and actions around the world, nearly two-thirds of Al-Qaeda's known leaders have been captured or killed, and we continue on Al-Qaeda's trail.

"We have exposed terrorist front groups, seized terrorist accounts, taken new measures to protect our homeland, and uncovered sleeper cells inside the United States. Thanks to outstanding intelligence and military cooperation, these men and women before us today have put their lives on the line for their country and delivered a powerful strike against those that would bring suffering to our shores.

"For a generation leading up to September the 11th, 2001, terrorists and their radical allies attacked innocent people in the Middle East

and beyond without facing a sustained and serious response. The terrorists became convinced that free nations were decadent and weak. And they grew bolder, believing that history was on their side.

“Since America put out the fires of September the 11th, and mourned our dead, and went to war, history has taken a different turn. We have carried the fight to the enemy. We are rolling back the terrorist threat to civilization, not on the fringes of its influence, but at the heart of its power.

“The Middle East will either become a place of progress and peace, or it will be an exporter of violence and terror that takes more lives in America and in other free nations. The triumph of democracy and tolerance in Iraq, in Afghanistan and beyond would be a grave setback for international terrorism.

“The terrorists thrive on the support of tyrants and the resentments of oppressed peoples. When tyrants fall, and resentment gives way to hope, men and women in every culture reject the ideologies of terror, and turn to the pursuits of peace. Everywhere that freedom takes hold, terror will retreat.

“The heaviest burdens in our war on terror fall, as always, on the men and women of our armed forces and our intelligence services. They have removed gathering threats to America and our friends, and this nation takes great pride in their incredible achievements.

“We are grateful for their skill and courage, and for their acts of decency, which have shown America’s character to the world. We honor the sacrifice of their families. And we mourn every American who has died so bravely, so far from home.”

“I see it,” he said, “in the eyes of a hungry people every day here. They are starved for freedom and opportunity.” And he concluded, “I just thought you’d like a note from the front lines of freedom. You men and women, and all of our men and women serving in the war on terror, are on the front lines of freedom. And I want each of you to know: Your country thanks you, and your country supports you ...and, wait a minute; to our good friends the Russians, we lost a helicopter in this mission and you owe us \$10.2 million dollars.”

The entire crowd knew what had happened to the helicopter, so the

joke wasn't lost on anyone. The crowd laughed and cheered for nearly a full minute.

“Thank you, and may God continue to bless America.”

The President then began handing out awards. Karen was floored. Not only did the President know who and how many; he was about to make presentations. She didn't see how this could happen without a gaff.

“Will Lieutenant Commander James (the helicopter pilot), LT Peterson (his co-pilot), LT's Madden, Jordan, and O'Neil please step forward.”

He pinned the Distinguished Flying Cross on the five flyers.

Not in Karen's wildest dreams. This was one of the highest honors that can be awarded. Billy and Scott were similarly awe-struck.

“Will Commanders Willis, Jeffries, Wilson and Osborne please take the stage?”

The two Destroyer skippers and the submarine skippers climbed onto the stage and the president had moved away from the podium to present their medals. He presented the Bronze Star with Battle device to the senior officers. The President then left the stage and went through the formation again handing out Air Medals to the rest of Karen's crew and Navy Achievement medals for all 950 of them. Karen was stunned that he had enough medals to go around until she saw the boxes of Navy Achievement Medals stacked near the Secret Service. He started out trying to pin each one, but soon laughingly put them into the recipient's palm.

Chapter 21

The admiral had departed Murmansk minutes after his Change of Command ceremony where he formally turned over his post to his successor. After the 1 ½ hour drive to the airport; then the eight hour AEROFLOT flight to Washington D.C.; and finally the 2 1/2 hour flight to Miami, he was tired, but excited.

After such an uncomfortable trip, he was finally in Miami and he was overjoyed to see his wife and two daughters waiting for him at the gate. He hugged and kissed his wife and then squatted down to hold his daughters as they showered him with kisses.

He explained to his wife that the trip was very uncomfortable and he had been traveling for 16 hours with layovers. This she knew because she and her daughters had made the very same trip only two weeks earlier. She knew he needed a good meal and then a good sleep.

As they left the terminal for the garage, the admiral was stunned by the warm breeze. He automatically compared it to Murmansk and smiled to himself. He thought how he would love living here in Miami.

He chuckled as he passed under a sign that said they were headed to the FLAMINGO GARAGE.

Before she left, they discussed what type of car to buy for their new life in Miami. By the time he got there his wife had already purchased a car. She had bought a new blue Ford Explorer. He loved it and hugged her and told her that she chose well. She swelled with pride.

They stayed at the Loews Miami Beach Hotel. There was a wonderful kitchen with a full sized fridge, microwave, dishwasher, and oven; All the comforts of home. There were two bedrooms with

very comfortable queen size beds. Each bedroom also had a 13” TV. The main room had a 19” TV with a hide-a-bed couch, recliner and coffee table. The TV also had a Nintendo system. The girls were already in the early stage of spoiled.

As soon as they arrived, he showered off the travel scum and went straight to bed. He asked his wife to wake him in the early evening and they would all go out for dinner.

He didn’t sleep well. The faces of those that he allowed to be killed filled his dreams. The nightmares were very severe and when his wife woke him he awakened with a start. He looked around himself and remembered where he was and calmed a bit.

“What’s wrong, darling?” she asked.

“It was only a bad dream. I’ll be ready in five minutes to go out and enjoy our new home city.”

He didn’t own the proper dress for Miami, so he made sure that his wife had enough money for new clothes and shoes. He lived in Miami now and he certainly intended to dress and play the part.

She had planned to walk to South Beach and enjoy a cool drink and just watch people. Since their daughters were with them they would avoid the primary attraction to South Beach which is a topless beach. Apparently tan lines were a no-no in Miami.

Gurevich found a clothing store that showed very bright colors. He went inside while his wife waited outside with the girls. When the very pretty sales girl approached, he used his very broken English and communicated that he wanted to look like he lived in Miami. She was very polite and quickly came back with three sets of clothes. He loved them and almost bought them before trying them on. He went into the dressing room and tried them on and was very satisfied with her ability to guess his sizes. He chose a blue seersucker trouser with a white linen square bottom shirt so that he could wear it outside his trousers. He returned to the sales girl and asked if they sold shoes. She said that they did and asked his size. He only knew his size in Russian and told

her so. She asked for him to follow her. She asked him to take a seat so that she could measure his foot. She pulled and yanked on the contraption and magically announced that his shoe size was a 10 E. To match the clothes that he bought she recommended Leather flip-flops. He agreed and she brought him two pairs to choose. He was very happy with one of the shoes and told her that he would wear the shoes and the seersucker pants with the linen shirt. He asked her if she had a trashcan, so that he could throw his own clothes away.

His wife was extremely happy with his choices. She thought him more handsome than ever and was so proud to be walking along South Beach with her husband and beautiful daughters.

After a while they started heading back to the hotel and before they had even turned around, the girls pleaded to go to the swimming pool. He knew how to swim of course due to intense training for all submarine officers. He had never been in a pool for fun. The swimming pool was like none he had ever seen. It had a sculpted oceanfront pool, with cascading fountains, and a shallow underground tunnel to the private bar. It was a place where butler-served cabanas provided poolside refreshments.

He found a gift shop in the hotel that sold tee-shirts and swimming suits. He bought a simple blue boxer style. His wife had already bought hers when they first arrived in America, so it was a few minutes before she met up with her husband for a dip in the Jacuzzi. The waiter came around and asked if they would like a drink. He knew what he wanted and held back his wife who spoke English well. "We would like two Margaritas." He had practiced that phrase for two months. He had heard amazing descriptions of this drink and waited with excitement for the return of the waiter.

He warned the girls not to run around the pool.

They had the Jacuzzi to themselves since most of the people around the pool had sunburns of varying discomfort; the Jacuzzi was empty presumably due to the pain from suntans colliding with 100 degree

water.

He soon returned with their drinks and announced that he would put it on their room tab if they liked. His wife agreed and told him the room number. Gurevich loved this drink...it was so tangy and the salt was a great idea.

At 10pm he coaxed the girls out of the water. It was bedtime, he reported.

Gurevich was awakened with a million kisses from his wife and daughters. Usually he woke up grumpy before he had some coffee, but these kisses would dig through any bad mood.

“So, what shall we do today?” Gurevich asked.

“Let’s go to the zoo!” the girls cried.

“We can’t go to the zoo, the animals are at the beach surfing,” he kidded.

“Okay, we’ll go to the zoo and I think we should also go to the aquarium.”

As Gurevich had his coffee and Danish, he looked at the newspaper. He couldn’t read the words very well, but he saw a picture of an Oscar submarine. He called his wife over to read this to him.

The headline read:

United States Eastern Seaboard safe after Hi-jacked Russian Submarine attempted to launch its missiles against New York City and Washington D.C.

She went on to read the rest of the story and Gurevich was stunned. Al Haasan and his men were killed and his men had been murdered before the ship got underway. Perhaps it was the best idea to have killed his trainers because investigators would put the murders and rifles together with the hi-jacking. There would be no one to finger him.

On the way home he saw a submarine tied up at the Miami pier. He drove to it and told his wife and daughters that he would only be a moment.

COMBAT AIRCREW SEVEN

Russian Admiral Ivan Gurevich was on a hill overlooking the powerful United States Nuclear Attack Submarine.

He felt cold metal on the back of his neck and he knew.

As Gurevich fell, the man left as quietly as he had come. He would be on his way back to Russia after a three day holiday in this wonderful city.

Chapter 22

After all the pomp and circumstance surrounding the President's visit all of the crews from the different ships, submarines and aircraft started drifting to the sea of white vans waiting to whisk them all to various locations as requested.

It was an uneventful preflight and takeoff and Billy took this flight to allow Karen to work with Scott on one of the most incredible after-action reports ever written. As she got out of the right hand seat she leaned over and whispered almost imperceptively, "I love you." The words were barely out of her mouth when she hoped he hadn't heard what she had said.

"I heard that, Madden."

Scott was glad to have her help to remember the details of the entire mission with particular attention on the fact that CAC-7 scored the only Rockeye hits and both had been right on the money. Of course one of the missile bays had survived to open and launch its deadly payload, but the CIWS Gatling gun on the destroyer made quick work of that.

Back in Brunswick, there was the predictable excitement by the CO, XO and operations officer. This time however every aircrew available was there to greet and congratulate them. There were renaissance mugs that were full of champagne for the crew to drink non-stop until every drop was down. Karen couldn't even do it and most of hers poured onto her flight suit and eventually between her breasts. After the celebration died down to boot steps back to the hangar, Karen and Billy were doing the post-flight walk around to take note of any damage or loose fittings. Billy was following close and asked,

“how they were going to make this romance work. I don’t want to end up 750 feet up a radio tower.”

He immediately felt the glare. Karen didn’t blame him for the poor joke timing and had been dealing with the same problems. How to make it natural, as if love didn’t blossom on deployment.

Billy said, “Do you know I love you?”

“Of course, I’m not blind,” she said as her face flushed.

Billy said, “I know it’s all wrong and the absolutely worst time to tell you again how I feel, but I don’t have any control over myself when I see you. I find myself staring at you when we’re together and thinking about you when I can’t be near you. I think of you during my every waking moment.”

“I love you,” Karen said almost imperceptively.

“I heard that,” Billy said almost imperceptively.

“Larry filed for divorce two days ago.”

“I’m sorry that your marriage didn’t work, and I mean that. I’m sure that you will have many sad days for many months, but I want you to know that I intend to stick to you like glue and work my ass off to make you smile.”

“Billy,” Karen asked, “What do you think are the best jobs after VP-3?”

“Well, the cream jobs are at VP-30 in Jacksonville. It has the best prestige and loads of flying time.”

“I agree... I think I’m going to ask for VP-30 this month. I think this Distinguished Flying Cross will ensure I get that assignment. I’m due to transfer in four months and since I’m the number one aviator in the squadron, and you know I’m not bragging, the rankings are made public almost immediately to the chagrin of the CO and XO. Anyway, I’m going to VP-30 for sure and because you have the same medal, I am almost positive that you will get VP-30 as well, if you want it. I am privy to such discussions and you are held in high regard and will probably get what you want. You just need to concentrate on getting qualified so that when you get to Jacksonville a few months after I do we are free to be a regular, normal, happy couple. In the meantime, I think that between the two of us, we can get enough cross-country

flights to see each other once a week.”

They then concentrated their attentions on the pre-flight.

Karen commented that the battery was weak on preflight and that she was going to take a look at the gauge. It required her to climb under and into the nose gear well and reach up to see the gauge. Billy followed her into the nose wheel well and Karen giggled when she realized Billy had followed her into the wheel-well.

“What do you have in mind, big boy. I can do this by myself thank you very much.” He kissed her lightly and she ran her fingers into his hair at the back of his head and pulled him into her mouth. From the line shack it looked strange to see two sets of legs in the cramped wheel-well. The line chief saw them go into the wheel well together and wondered if something was going on with those two. He turned her to face him and kissed her lightly. She realized that this was what she needed. She needed Billy to fulfill her life. She grabbed his head and pulled his mouth into hers. He whispered that he loved her. She said she heard that.

It had been two months since the divorce and Karen was waiting on her parent’s porch. She had insisted to Billy that they wait this three months to let their minds settle and decide what they really felt. Karen knew now that she wanted Billy more than life itself.

Her parents could tell that this was a very important day for Karen, though she didn’t speak of it. They surprised her by leaving earlier in the morning for a full day shopping and partying before spending the night in Portland.

The curtains wave softly, the fresh spring scent of lilacs and the Atlantic blowing in through the window. The scent just exists, neither demanding notice nor escaping it. The soft hues of blue and violet wrap the room in a peaceful cocoon of quiet. She studied the room with great care. She wanted everything to be perfect.

She lit large candles and strategically placed them around the room. The dancing flames caused the room to appear to shimmer. The sensual

music of Thelonious Monk wafted softly through the room. Satisfied the room was now perfect, she went down to await his arrival. Tonight she wished to give only pleasure. Tonight will be there's to remember forever and it would be special. She thought she would lose her mind if he didn't arrive soon. Tonight she would surrender herself to the sensations of his body, and she knew that she would find rare delights to satiate her own needs.

He came to the door with a stunning smile and a bouquet of flowers. His was wearing a pair of faded jeans and a white tee shirt. He was in great physical condition and he was as confident as always. His appearance was always pleasing to the eye. His hair was soft, dark brown, and curly. His deep blue eyes sparkled in the light, like diamonds in the sky.

She answered the door with such anticipation that she found it hard to breathe. Her cropped blonde hair was freshly styled and her scent filled his nose with fresh aroma. She wore a simple tank top with a built in bra and a simple low rise blue Jean mini. She had the deepest blue eyes he had ever seen and a smile that was to die for. She had beautiful long slender legs that looked sleek and silky smooth.

As he entered the room, his cologne of spice wafted through the air as she inhaled. There he was standing before her; she couldn't believe it. Their time finally came. He was so masculine, sensuous and yet so sensitive and caring.

He gazed at her with a wanton stare. It took all his will power to keep from rushing over and taking her at that moment. Everything about her reeked of sex. From the way she pushed a lock of hair from her face to the way she walked across the room.

She escorted him to the sofa. He handed her the fresh cut spring bouquet. She took the flowers inhaled their fragrance and took them to the kitchen to put them in a vase of water. She offered him his favorite rum and coke and he accepted. She prepared the drinks and returned to the living room. She then turned on some soft romantic music and sat down across from him.

As they sipped their drinks and became more at ease with one another, she moved to the sofa to be next to him. They hadn't made

any elaborate plans, just to meet and share a drink.

He was thinking how he would love to taste her and smell her feminine fragrance. He was thinking of how he could pleasure her with his fingers, then his tongue. He wanted to caress her breasts and run his tongue around her nipples. He wanted to taste the sweetness of her flesh and pleasure her in ways she could only imagine.

Her mind raced as thoughts of undressing him danced in her mind.

He reached out to touch her hand and startled her. She noticed his glass was empty and offered him another drink. He accepted. As she poured the rum into the glasses, she felt a pair of hands caressing her back as they moved around to caress her breasts. He could feel her erect nipples standing at attention through the material of her clothing. As he caressed her body, she laid her head back to rest upon his chest. He began kissing her neck moving down to reveal an area of skin on her shoulder. She moaned at the pleasure of his touch. She turned around to face him. The two interlocked in a kiss that would melt Antarctica. The kisses grew more intense and heated.

He cleared a space on the counter top. She stopped him and grabbed his hand to pull him to her bedroom. Once there, he slid his hand slowly up her dress caressing her legs and inner thighs as he continued to kiss her with tender passion. He soon revealed there were no undergarments beneath the dress, but there was plenty of wetness for his fingers to dance in. He then removed her clothes completely. This wasn't the first time he saw her naked but now she was his, and that was all the difference. When he arose to kiss her, she tasted her own hot juices and it only added fuel to her fire.

Still kissing him, her fingers slid down over his body, moving his chest across her triggers the nerves to full alertness. As she opened his shirt, she nestled closer to him. He could feel the hardness of her nipples and gathered her large breasts while rubbing her passionately with his other hand.

Her firm breasts begged him to taste their pleasure and he obliged, making sure to tease each nipple with his tongue. She found the willpower to undo his jeans revealing black mesh underwear restraining a hard stiff shaft. His pants dropped to floor as he stepped out of them

and removed his shirt. While caressing his genitals, she noticed the skin felt taunt and soft. She could feel the veins along the sides bulging and throbbing as though they would burst at the stroke of her hand. She traced the tip of the shaft with her fingers and he let out a moan. He was still finger dancing in her hot softness, but now with a faster deeper pace.

He began kissing her with fury, pulling her closer as he removed his underwear.

“My you are a big boy, aren’t you.”

As he slid inside her, she wrapped her legs around his waist. He supported her as he moved her up and down. He moved faster and faster up and down the feeling was so intense she leaned back so she could get the full impact of his thrusts deep inside her.

He moved to support her against a wall as he continued to lift her up and down on his throbbing shaft.

Oh how wonderful this felt; she didn’t want it to end. He was deep inside her pushing and pulling her up and down on his member giving them both the ride of their lives.

She let out a loud long moan as she emptied her fluid onto his shaft. He could feel her juices trickle down his shaft and onto his legs. He continued to ride her as she pushed away from the wall allowing her body to lean back giving him deeper access to her canal.

He could feel his self about to erupt as he plunged deep inside her. His hard shaft throbbed and tingled as his sticky warm fluid spilled into her depths.

Exhausted, exasperated and quite satisfied he removed her from his staff, falling next to her on the bed. There would be a lifetime of intense and heated kisses.

She gathered herself up and slid down. She finished making the drinks and handed him one. They put their clothes back on and she led him back to the sofa. This time she sat next to him resting her head on his chest.

He wrapped his arm around her and mentioned, “Neither of us have said a word since I got out of my car.”

She looked into his eyes and said, “Making love with you after such a long wait says it all.”