

HUMMINGBIRDS BESIDE THE HUMMER

© Bob Ticer January 22, 2011

The Aspiring Writer

<http://BobTicer.com>

The Breach

His helmet muffled the hum of single-blade rotors as the aircraft carrier below became a speck amidst a giant ocean. The blades slowed, stopped, aligned with and retracted into the wings, tail and nose. After the hummer converted from a chopper into an airplane, it thrust forward with the roar of its jet engines.

The only cloud in the sky was a faraway jet trail. That'd be Air Force One on its way to Pearl Harbor for a stopover before it continued on its way to Beijing.

As the hummer neared Air Force One, Jay pulled back on the control stick. The aircraft climbed higher and higher for a dive at greater speed.

The hummer leveled off. It was ready for the computer on the aircraft carrier named the Ronald Reagan to take over.

“Does everyone see duck in sky?” Jay asked.

“Big brother has you covered,” replied the flight controller on the aircraft carrier.

“Watchdog watches duck,” said the voice from the observatory at Hickam Air Force Base.

“Big bird sees duck,” announced Admiral Young from Air Force One.

Jay smiled as he rotated his seat to face the flight technician in the rear seat. “Little sister ready for butterfly hop at mach three?”

Ken nodded. “Ready little brother.”

Jay gave a thumbs-up, turned back around and waited for big brother to take over.

Whoa! His seat jolted his back as the jet shot forward. Down, down, down it dived, faster and faster as the ocean closed in and something like a seagull went splat against the window.

Jay spotted tomcats closing in between him and Air Force One. A flashing red light lit up the dashboard. "Heat seeking missiles," he shouted.

His seatbelt grabbed his body tight and the world spun about him as the hummer darted this way and that while his seat swayed and spun to a frenzy of jerks and gyrations. One missile barely missed, then another and another. Those duds could still do damage. They did to his body.

When the barrage finally ended Jay had never appreciated stillness as much as he did then, but it was for only a brief moment.

Although the thrill outweighed the pain the hummer's sudden, sharp maneuvers had nearly stretched his neck out of joint. His body ached all

over. So nauseated was he that he nearly emptied his stomach.

“Everyone okay?” he heard the controller on the Ronald Reagan ask.

“Little brother ready to go again.”

“Little sister survived.”

“Roger. Is watchdog ready?”

“Watchdog ready. Switch over.”

Jay had fretted to surrender his fate to a distant computer at sea. Now he waited for one at the Hickam Monitoring Facility to take over. Even though watchdog was CIA, Jay knew nothing about him other than he'd take charge of the hummer during a mission. That was what this test flight was all about, but Jay suspected someone not adequately trained to fly this aircraft would crash it.

As Jay waited for something to happen, his lovely Susie entered his mind. He'd fly over a volcanic eruption and bail out over Los Angeles only to hold her gorgeous body tight. He couldn't wait to feel her in his arms and taste her sweet lips after he slipped a diamond ring on her finger.

The computer at Hickam Air Force Base should've taken over by now. The switchover from the Ronald Reagan to Hickam must've failed. "Big brother duck on big pond please respond to lame duck in sky."

There was no reply.

Something tiny was keeping pace slightly to his left outside the front window of the cockpit. He leaned forward for a closer view.

Impossible! Did his eyes lie?

Maybe the controller knew what it was. "Come in big brother . . . Is big brother there?"

Jay pivoted his seat. “Receiving anyone?”

Ken shook his head.

Jay, baffled by what he had seen, fixed his eyes on Ken. “Is there something you forgot to tell me?”

“Like what?”

“Like that little thing outside on my left with flapping green wings and the iridescent orange and red neck.”

Ken released the flexible straps holding his seat in place. As his seat slid up near Jay's, Ken leaned forward and stared in the direction of the hummingbird thing. “That's impossible. Someone has to be playing with us.”

“Hummingbirds beside the hummer. How many more surprises do they have in store for us?”

“We should abort.”

“Returning to big brother,” Jay announced to anyone able to hear him.

After Ken strapped his seat back in tight Jay moved the control stick and the hummer circled downward to the left. After nearly a one-eighty he attempted to halt the turn, but the control lever refused to move and the jet, with the hummingbird thing still by its side, continued to circle and lose altitude.

“Mayday, Mayday,” Jay hollered.

“Switching to backup computer,” Ken replied.
Still, nothing worked.



A blank monitor alarmed the President as he sat in fear of a failed outcome. As expensive as the hummer had been to produce, it could doom his first four years in office.

At least he had Admiral Young, George Kroft and Elisabeth Black along for moral support.

The Admiral hung up the wall-phone and looked back across the room at the President. "Monitors are also out on the Ronald Reagan and at Hickam."

The President gazed at the blank monitor. "Total blackout?"

"Must be a malfunction with the satellite. NASA should be able to fix it."

Hopefully it could, anyway. In need of reassurance the President waited to hear what the head of CIA had to say about the situation.

George, sitting beside a window three feet to the President's right, lowered his binoculars. "Something's wrong. It's circling downward."

The President gazed at the tall blond sitting two feet to his left. He had put her in charge of

Homeland Security. Maybe she'd reassure him it was only a minor complication.

“If the hummer’s scrambler is out of sync with the others, electronic signals could jam the control system,” Elisabeth Black responded.

The President grimaced. A jammed control system could crash the jet.

“Big brother must be asleep at the wheel,” George barked.

The President looked up at Admiral Young.

The Admiral stared down at George. “The Ronald Reagan completed its test. It’s watchdog’s turn to perform.”

“Could it be espionage?” Liz asked.

The President wondered what’d be worse, espionage, a mechanical failure, or incompetency from either CIA or the Navy.

“A leak would most likely come from Honolulu,” she explained. “It was George’s guy who tipped us off on al-Qaeda’s hookup with General Wong.”

George glared at her. “What’s your point?”

“If they’re aware we’re onto them, and if they know about our project, they’d try to sabotage it.”

The President waited for George's reply, but the head of CIA had his binoculars up to his eyes. “Send rescue. It’s on its way down.”

The President closed his eyes, fearing the worst.



As the hummer circled downward out of Jay’s control, his composure took another hit from a screechy voice that clearly said in plain English, “Have no fear. I control your aircraft.”

Jay stared at the hummingbird thing. He suspected new technology, but was it ours or the enemy's? "Identify yourself. State your business."

"My name is Netone. I came to your planet to learn its ways."

Jay pivoted his seat half circle and grinned when he faced Ken. "Aliens from afar, English-speaking ones at that."

Ken nodded. "Must be some kind of test."

"Don't know how this joker breached our communications but disengage him before we crash."

"No can do. We're locked in with this nut. Can't reach big brother. Can't reach Hickam. Can't reach anybody."

Jay spun his seat back around, not knowing what further action to take. Maybe the culprit was

CIA playing its own games. He attempted to move the control stick, but it still wouldn't budge.

With the hummer not far from a plunge into the ocean Jay was about to lose his calm. “What you want?”

“I want your help.”

“Why?”

“I need you to contact your leaders for me.”

“Why me?”

“The reason I contact you is because your aircraft scrambles outgoing electronic signals and unscrambles incoming ones. I have assumed you are more qualified to contact your leaders than are other humans with less status than is yours.”

“How come we communicate?”

“My drone bypasses your translator.”

Jay closed his eyes to calm himself. The intruder's manner of speech and its screechy sound indicated a computer program of some sort. Maybe Ken was right. This had to be a test of new technology. It angered him that he'd been kept in the dark about it. It gave him a bitter taste of CIA.

What the heck? His only option was to play along. "Okay, good buddy, I'll comply with your request."

He heard no reply.

He tried hard to move the control stick. It still wouldn't budge. He lost it, screaming, "Need something else?"

"I need nuclear fuel. Can your Scottie beam it to me?"

As the big body of water closed in, Jay's eyes opened wide. "Let go, you idiot. We'll crash."

“Because you seem to understand me not, I will digest more data before I contact you again.”

At the last possible moment the control stick finally moved. It came back with more ease than needed and Jay quickly moved it forward for the hummer to not flip out of control.



Nick Kusiak gawked when the hummer reappeared on the monitor. To see the aircraft smash against ocean waves was a sight too horrid to behold by this watchdog at the Hickam monitoring facility. Even though the hummer was made of a carbon steel alloy one-hundred times lighter, yet one-hundred times stronger than plain steel, he feared it had been damaged beyond repair. Even though flight suits were well-padded and multiple rings allowed free spin of seats in any direction, he suspected those

thumps could've crippled the crew for life, or have even killed them.

Nick watched the hummer skip across the ocean surface a mile or two before it finally bounced high enough to resume flight.

With audio restored Nick heard different voices: *“Little sister okay?” . . . “Did they test us or what?” . . . “Don’t know. Got any ideas?” . . . “What’d that little birdie tell us?” . . . “Little birdies don’t talk without moving their beaks.”*

Nick figured those words meant a small plane had gotten in the way. It shouldn't have happened. With satellite imaging and computers to guide the hummer, nothing except Air Force One should have been within ten miles of it. Either the equipment failed or human error was the culprit. He doubted a saboteur had breached the system.

More conversation came by way of the monitor: *“Little brother to big brother.” . . . “Big brother listens to little brother. Where you been?” . . . “In wonderland. Clear the driveway. We’re on our way home.”*

An investigation was surely in order. It could tie Nick up for hours and he was eager to celebrate the twenty-first birthday of someone special to his heart.

He checked emails to find out anything he could about the investigation. One came in with the name of the agent in charge of it, but no specific instructions were given other than for him to report whatever he knew with regard to the outcome of the test flight.

All Nick knew for sure was that the monitor had blanked out when the hummer nearly crashed. He hurried all the way out of the building to his jeep Cherokee and drove to CIA headquarters to

give his boss a report.

When he entered the building, the secretary was away from her desk and Dirk was out of his office. It seemed an opportune time to take a bold step. He went in, typed up a written statement and laid it on Dirk's desk. He then picked up the phone to bug it with an electronic listening device.

The sound of footsteps persuaded him otherwise.

“What you want?” Dirk barked.

Nick kept his cool. “The Navy had problems with its new spy plane. I put my report on your desk.”

The fax machine started up.

“Put it in an envelope,” Dirk said as he checked out the fax. “I'll take it with me.”

Nick found an envelope. He slid his report inside it and handed it to Dirk.

Dirk placed it inside a satchel with a strap hanging from his shoulder. “Nice of you to show up. Cover me while I take care of business.”

Nick frowned. “I’m late for a special occasion.”

“Sorry. Have to be at the airport when Air Force One arrives,” Dirk replied while not looking back as he hurried out of his office.

With Dirk’s departure Nick now had time to wire the room up good, even if it would make him late for a special celebration.

Investigations

Dirk hadn’t expected troubling news when he ambled into the private room of Eddy’s Chinese

restaurant where he and the crime boss usually met, but it seemed Eddy was perturbed about something. As they sat down across from each other at a table, Eddy crossed his index finger against his lips and then pointed it at a tiny disk that lay in the middle of the table.

Dirk responded with a smirk.

Eddy picked up the disk and handed it to Dirk. “It’s a bug.”

Dirk dropped it into a glass of water, patted his bald spot and wished he had as much curly black hair as did the short, slim man with a dark tan, but Dirk was Mr. Universe compared to him.

“They’re onto us,” Eddy said.

“Who’s onto us?”

“A Chinese waiter who calls himself Charlie planted it. We intercepted his texts to his buddies in Taiwan.”

Dirk stared at the tiny disk. “What’d you do about it?”

“I thought I’d check with you first.”

“You want my blessing?”

“I wouldn’t mind a little help.”

Dirk leaned back in his chair, his elbows pointed out, stretching his arms. “Sure. What’ll you offer for my service?”

“How about your neck? He sneaks messages in takeouts to Pete’s taxis. They’re delivered to this babe. I’ve got someone on her tail.”

Dirk grimaced as he lowered his chin to his chest and held his forehead with his fingers and thumb, taking time to connect the dots. It didn’t take long for them to connect.

He glared at Eddy. “Didn’t you check Charlie out?”

“He no speak-y English; me no suspect.”

“Remember the CIA agent you killed five years ago with a car bomb?”

“You said he was onto us.”

“You took care of him and his wife. You neglected to take care of the daughter. She was taken in by another agent who's a buddy of the taxi owner, who's an ex-Navy Seal. They're now onto us.”

“Now what?”

Dirk leaned forward. “We need to know what they found out. They have contacts in high places.”

“I'll go ahead and waste them.”

“If you take them out it'll draw attention. We need to discredit them first.”

“How do we do that?”

Dirk grinned. “An agent from Homeland Security is bent out of shape from problems with the Navy’s new toy. He arrived on Air Force One and was to accompany the President to Beijing. I’ll kindly inform him I suspect my boy Nick is involved with criminal elements.”

“Will that sell?”

Dirk reached into his satchel and took out the envelope Nick had put his report in. He handed it to Eddy. “My guy’s fingerprints. Put them in another envelope. Juice it up with something incriminating and have someone deliver it to the President’s box of priorities.”

Eddy nodded. “How about anthrax and the Senator’s secretary?”

Dirk stared intently at Eddy. “She knows your man. He knows you. You know me. She could talk to someone before and after the delivery.”

Eddy leaned forward, grinning. “She’s due for another fix. Might as well up the stakes and reward her with enough to shut her up for good.”

“Damn liberal President anyway. Keep an eye on the waiter and those takeouts . . . Better yet, put your own message in one of them. We need to take out all the sneaks before this gets out of hand.”

“Won't dead bodies popping up all over the place draw attention?”

Dirk pointed his index finger at his forehead as he sneered at Eddy. “Plant some of that heroin and WMDs you found in your warehouse on some of your competitors. Have one of your guys tip off mine. It'll give them something to investigate. ”



Jay hooked his arm around one of the cables that kept the hummer from being blown off the deck of the Ronald Reagan. The stiff wind nearly blew him away, but he managed to open the envelope. As expected, the small bump inside the padding was the engagement ring he'd given Susie.

He sadly read her letter and closed his eyes—not his high school buddy.

At least he could now focus his effort more intently on his primary mission in life, to fly a marvelous machine to expose the enemy. It'd help find out what General Wong was up to.

Seeing Ken on deck back from the debriefing room, Jay walked up to him, handed him the Dear John letter and continued forward.

After tiring hours of physical examination, psychological evaluation and intensive interrogation following a test flight, Jay made his way to the debriefing room where he figured he was about to

be briefed on a special mission that would make all those tests worthwhile. He also expected to be informed about that hummingbird drone.

Jay, more eager than fearful to learn what awaited him, walked into the debriefing room and stopped eye to eye in front of Admiral Young. The four star admiral could've fried the nerves of a lesser seaman, but Jay calmly stood at attention and saluted. "Lieutenant Jay Plaey, Sir."

The Admiral returned the salute. "Take a seat."

The Admiral pointed at an empty chair in the middle of a long and narrow conference table. Sitting on the other side of the table was a man with blond hair and a reddish beard. He was dressed in a civilian suit and tie.

Jay sat, as instructed, while the Admiral seated himself at the far end of the table.

The man gazed at Jay. "I'm Scott Braidy from Homeland Security, here to find out what went wrong with the test flight."

"Yes sir. Anything you don't understand about my report, or what wasn't in it, I'm here to clarify."

"The hummer is some machine, but piloting it must challenge the nerves. We're no longer sure you're up to it."

"I'll take it to new heights, sir."

Scott didn't take his eyes off Jay for a second. "You're grounded until we come up with answers."

"I don't understand, sir."

Scott looked down at a typed report. "I was informed by Admiral Young the President wanted to shake your hand after a successful flight, but I doubt he still does. Your report isn't believable."

Jay sat upright, maintaining his posture. “It’d be an honor to shake the President’s hand, but it’s my duty to report what I see and hear, believable or not.”

Scott faced Admiral Young.

The Admiral gazed at Jay. “Lieutenant Plaey you can request legal counsel if you need to. I advise it.”

Jay stared back in bewilderment. “No sir. It won’t be necessary.” Why would he need a lawyer?

The Admiral nodded. “Continue, Mr. Braidy.”

Scott appeared grim. “It appears you could either be involved with a hoax or espionage. Tell your girlfriend about your marvelous mission in the Navy?”

“No sir. I didn’t.

“Sailor, I don’t think you believe you saw a

hummingbird move at twice the speed of sound or you talked with an alien from outer space, but you nearly crashed. I'm here to find out why."

"Yes sir."

"Your buddy believes it's possible to project holographic images onto a window to create a mirage. Do you think he's clever enough to do it himself?"

Jay raised his eyebrows. "All I know is Lieutenant Noble's a whiz with computers."

Scott leaned forward. "You know, I think you have something there. It'd be easy for him to slip in another program. He sits behind you, doesn't he?"

Jay thought about it. "He'd need a special projector to produce the holographic image. Besides, we took polygraphs. I know I didn't lie."

“I doubt a lie detector can match the creative ability of either one of you. You must’ve cooked this story up together.”

“Why would we want to kill ourselves to perpetrate a hoax?”

Scott rubbed his chin. “Creative minds get bored. Maybe you got carried away. A hummingbird outside an aircraft called the hummer is a little amusing, don’t you think?”

“You don’t get bored inside the hummer.”

Scott flicked his hand up and eyed the ceiling. “It’s practically an unmanned aircraft, isn’t it? Don’t you just sit and wait for another assignment?”

“I don’t think the Navy trained me to become a couch potato. If the computers on the Ronald Reagan and at Hickam take over, I’m sure the Navy has another challenge.”

Scott turned his head the Admiral’s way.

The Admiral faced Jay. “I don’t know about the handshake, but I don’t want confused heads inside my birds. You boys need time to recuperate. Take a couple weeks of convalescent leave on the island.”

Jay stood up and saluted. “Thank you, Sir.”

The Admiral returned the salute.

Jay casually walked out of the room trying to make sense of the interrogation.

Jay didn’t want to believe his superiors would ground him and the hummer because of a mishap that wasn’t his fault, but he knew the project was too expensive and critical for anyone to participate in if they had any issue whatsoever to contend with. The success of his career in the Navy now depended on whatever Scott’s investigation turned up.

When he found Ken back on deck he went to its edge and stared out at sea.

“Don’t jump,” Ken yelled.

“I’ve been jilted and grounded, and nearly killed, all in one day.”

“Yeah, but we now have time in the tropical sun to look forward to. Cheer up. You’ll find someone else.”

Jay continued his stare out at sea. “Yeah, but I don’t need another party girl. You think I can find someone on that island who’ll be faithful and true while I’m on a dangerous mission?”



When Nitay stepped out from the front passenger seat of Pete’s taxi onto the pavement, she noticed many of the cars in the parking lot were old and worn. That was okay with her. She needn’t celebrate her birthday at a fancy night club. Her purpose for the nightlife was only to take on a more

active role to expose Dirk for what he truly was, a rogue CIA boss in control of the farm. That should be possible now that she turned twenty-one, but only if Nick and Pete allowed it.

She looked for Nick's Cherokee jeep, but couldn't find it. "Where's Nick?" she asked Pete when he stepped out from the driver seat of his taxi.

"Should be here. Must still be at work."

She gazed at Pete in an attempt to make out what he looked like without the silly mustache and night vision shades he wore as part of his disguise. She knew he wore it not because he didn't want anyone to recognize him as a driver of his own taxi company, but because he and Nick didn't want her to be seen with them.

Toenehe had also gotten out of the taxi. He wore no disguise, but having a big Samoan as her bodyguard sure put a halt to any chance she had

for a romantic venture. Her younger years already passed her by in solitude.

Pete handed her a small, gift-wrapped box.
“Happy birthday.”

“Thanks.”

Toenehe handed her a larger present. “Hau’oli la hanau.”

“Mahalo nui loa,” she thanked him very much.

She opened Pete’s gift first, found ruby-red earrings and pinned them on her earlobes.

“They’re amplifiers,” Pete said. “Casually stroke your hair with your hand and move an earring up to your ear with your thumb.”

She smiled. “Thanks again, Pete.”

He winked.

She opened the big Samoan's gift. It was a disguise-kit, with glasses and dye to change the color of her hair. She preferred her hair its natural auburn, but she'd dye it purple and green and paint her face orange to find out more of what Dirk was up to. "Nice. Just what I need to help you guys investigate Dirk's shady activities."

Toenehe's face became one big smile.

She put the kit in the taxi and then followed Pete, with Toenehe right behind her, into a beer joint full of pool tables.

She stroked her hair with her hand and pushed an earring up to her ear. Knowing what the guys said about her might be somewhat gratifying.

"Did it just get hot in here or what?" she heard a guy seated on a stool at the bar ask.

She glanced the talker's way and took note of his okay appearance.

“I’m cool,” another gent said. “I’ll handle her.”

“Who’ll handle the big Samoan?” the next in line asked.

Along with their humorous comments was Toenehe’s no-mess-with-me stare to keep them at bay. All that attention to her presence amused her, but the security of Toenehe by her side allowed her to enjoy it more freely.

“I think she’s my soul mate,” a white-haired fellow said.

“I’ll move in with your ex after the divorce,” a younger fellow beside him replied.

She winked their way. The younger fellow stood up and took a step forward, but he quickly sat back down when Toenehe sneered at him.

Oh well.

Pete led her past pool tables to a vacant table at the far corner of the room. She sat between Toenehe on her left and Pete on her right. A much bigger chair would've fitted the big Samoan, but he managed not to break the one he was in.

“Sorry, honey,” Pete said. “Would like to take you to a more glamorous place on your birthday, but you know how it is.”

Yes, she did know how it was. She had signed onto the rules set forth by Agent Nick Kusiak for them to get Dirk Slubona. Nick made sure she was safer than a friendly ghost in cloud heaven, but it required her to become invisible, like never dating, especially in an evocative dress that'd draw attention. Well-to-do gentlemen had asked her out, but in concurrence with Nick's advice she declined their offers in fear she'd put their lives in danger along with hers.

Nick scrutinized all her contacts. He said it had to be the right situation for the right guy.

She noticed a couple guys had walked up to a nearby table. They stood next to the wall and rudely stared at the two guys already seated at the table.

After a nod from Pete, Toenehe drew his hand back close to his side in a ready position to grab his gun.

“This crowd’s harmless,” Pete said.

She shrugged.

“Want something to drink?”

She read a display of choices high on the wall behind the bar. “What’s good to drink on your twenty first birthday?”

“I see Nick with a pitcher of beer.”

Nick arrived with the pitcher and four empty glasses on a tray and sat down opposite her. She hardly recognized him with his blue eyes covered with night vision shades and a cap over his dark brown hair that had become gray around the ears.

Pete nodded towards the other table.

Nick nodded as he filled a glass with beer and handed it to her. "Sorry I'm late. I was held up at Dirk's office."

"Something I should know about?" Nitay asked, more than ready to be informed on anything about Dirk.

"Nope."

She let it go. Nick never discussed work.

He eyed Pete. "Our old buddy's in Kahuku."

Pete nodded. "Lay it on him. He'll help."

"Will I need to dress up?" Nitay asked.

Nick leaned towards her. “We’ll handle it.”

She faced him eye to eye. “I’d like to go. I need to learn all I can to be of more help.”

Pete placed his hand on her forearm. “You can pick up useful tips from casual chatter in a place like this. You’ll be too much in the public eye at Turtle Bay.”

“I’ll stay away from golfers.”

Toenehe shook his head. “A’ole hele oku.”

She tasted a sip of beer and moped. Toenehe would naturally agree with them, but ‘no go’ was neither what she wanted to hear nor what she’d accept. “I’m a big girl, aren’t I, now that I’m old enough to drink beer?”

Nick pointed his index finger up and fixed his eyes on her with a serious look about him. “Take one step at a time up the mountain, honey, and be aware of your surroundings. Climb hastily

and you'll bring everyone down with you.”

She looked away. If only Nick would allow her to lift a foot, she'd climb Mount Everest.

The Setup

Nitay woke with a hangover and to a buzz. She slipped on pants and a blouse and hurried to the front door to find out who rang the doorbell this early in the morning.

It was one of Pete's trusted drivers. He handed her the Honolulu Star Bulletin.

She stepped aside, letting him walk in.

“Anything newsworthy to report,” she asked.

He smiled. “A lady insists she saw a hummingbird keep pace outside the window

of a Boeing 747.”

“Not in flight near hear?” Nitay had to ask.

“Yep, I'm afraid so. I thought it preposterous, too, but another passenger swore he saw one of those birds hovering above a sandy beach.”

“Why would it be where there are no flowers?”

The driver shrugged his shoulders.

Nitay peeked at her small laptop on the dining room table. “I do need something to write about for this week's paper.”

“You making any money with that stuff we hand out to our riders?”

She nodded, “Articles inform. Stores want their share of the tourist trade. I advertise. They pay.”

“Have something ready for me to hand out?”

She shook her head no. “Yesterday was my birthday.”

“Happy birthday.”

“Thanks. How about a birthday present, like some information you usually give only to Pete?”

He turned away from her. “Pete appreciated it when I tipped him off about Charlie, but he became a little angry when I told you about it.”

She winked at him. “Come on. You can cough up a little harmless something for my birthday. We’ll keep it to ourselves this time.”

He stared at Honolulu Star Bulletin she still held in her hand. “Someone did mention something about restrictions being put in place at Kahuku.”

She glanced at the newspaper headlines. An article pertained to the President’s stopover. That must be it, Nick and Pete’s old buddy at the Turtle Bay Resort to set up security for the President.

It was time to spurge for a new outfit. She needed something to wear to a special occasion. She'd go naked if it'd help her find something on Dirk, but something more glamorous was in order to crash the President's party. She'd head for the stores right after she finished the article about the hummingbirds.



Dirk waited in a monitoring room for security to show up and brief him on where to position his men, but the temptation was too much to overcome. He turned on a monitor and noticed a tall, slim man with gray hair beside a short lady with a pudgy face. They were indeed the President and the First Lady.

He turned on the volume and heard the President's voice. *"How was the tour?"*

“The birds-eye view of the little island they call Chinaman’s Hat was nice. The Koolau Mountain Range is fabulous and the stopover at the Orchards of Taro was pleasant. How was golf?”

“Admiral Young and General Trump fared well.”

“I take it you didn’t?”

“It’s a tough course and I didn’t have my number one bodyguard to tell me how to handle the brutal breeze.”

“How’s Matt doing?”

“He’s alright. The powder he examined in that letter did turn out to be anthrax, but he’s been treated and is in the hospital for cautionary measure.”

Dirk grinned. Max’s illness was deserved; he didn’t even deserve to live. That bodyguard and former Navy SEAL had stuck up for a president that had blasted CIA tactics as illegal torture, only to render it harder for an agent to

protect his country.

To learn of Nick's fate Dirk continued to eavesdrop on the President's conversation with the First Lady.

"I'm to meet with my advisers to see if the ceremony at the restaurant is still on. If not, we'll continue on to Guam."

"You decided not to shake the hands of those two officers I heard were nearly killed yesterday?"

"I'll decide after I hear what Liz, George and the Admiral have to say about it."

"You think they perpetrated a hoax?"

"They came up with an unbelievable story, for sure, but perhaps as a distraction to throw us off on something else. It's possible they're involved with shady characters that'd want to sabotage a secret project and assassinate me."

Dirk had been pleased to find out Nick had become discredited, but someone might've attempted to either sabotage or steal a military aircraft. Its investigation could hinder his own hunt for Nick's cohorts.



Nick peeked at the clock while sitting in wait of the agent from Homeland Security to arrive. Nick had ideas as to why visual of the hummer disappeared from the monitor and then reappeared when the aircraft nearly plunged into the ocean. It was likely the agent already considered them, but that was okay with Nick. He expected no complications with his report.

The big blond with the reddish beard finally arrived. He walked through the open door straight to Nick's desk. "I'm Scott Braidy."

Nick stood up and offered his hand. “Nicolson Kusiatic.”

Scott ignored the gesture. “I figured to wrap this up in time to continue on with the President, but someone done did a no-no.”

Nick froze for a bit. “Sorry. Don’t have much to offer. I only know what appeared on the monitor. If that’s what the ones on the Ronald Reagan and Air Force One received, a bad satellite relay explains the loss of audio and visual, and it could’ve altered the electronic signals that controlled the aircraft.”

Nick sat back down. “Have a seat.”

Scott frowned leaning over the desk. “Couldn’t someone have tampered with the equipment?”

Nick hadn’t expected that question, but he should have. The President’s trip to China should be more important to Scott than an investigation of

a mishap, unless it was sabotage. “It’s unlikely.”

“I’ve been told you associate with suspicious characters, and yet you’re trusted in the operation of a top secret project by this same someone.”

Nick’s jaw dropped. “There’s something you should know about Dirk Slubona.”

“Really? I suppose he wants to destroy the hummer. Enlighten me if you will.”

“He’d succumb to anything.”

Nick leaned back and peeked here and there. He craved for open space, but the walls of the small room closed in on his psychic ever more. “How’s my old buddy Matt Townsend these days?”

Scott looked around the room. “Your buddy’s the President’s bodyguard? How impressive.”

“We go back a ways.”

Scott pulled a chair up to Nick's desk, sat down in it, leaned forward and grinned. "Matt's worried about an envelope you sent to the President."

Nick coughed. "I sent no letter to the President."

"Forget to wipe your prints?"

Nick opened his eyes wide enough for his eyeballs to fall out. "I left a report on Dirk's desk. He must've delivered it."

"You seem concerned about it."

"Sure am. He set me up."

Scott chuckled. "Come now, why would he?"

"Keep an eye on him and you'll find out."

Scott shook his head.

Nick realized he was framed and he feared not only for his own life. He knew his framer wouldn't want to be contested. Once Dirk found out Pete, Toenehe and Nitay were in on the investigation, they'd be eliminated as well.



How strange it felt to stand on solid ground. Jay had just followed Ken out of the osprey that had been provided them courtesy of the Air Force.

The airstrip at the Marine Corps Base Hawaii between the towns of Kilue and Kaneohe wasn't hula song and dance, but at least it was a step in the right direction. He'd soon welcome the sight of palm trees at a sunny beach where girls in bikinis lay all around him.

What greeted him instead was the salute of a freckled face redhead in a blue uniform with a silver bar on each collar. "I'm Lieutenant Peggy Banks. I

volunteered to escort you two to Turtle Bay.”

Her sturdy body had a somewhat peculiar appearance. Tacky earrings hung on her earlobes and he detected alcohol on her breath.

He returned Peggy’s salute. “You can relax. I’m Lieutenant Jay Plaey, Captain to you, I guess. Ken might, but I’d never pull rank on a volunteer as pretty as you.”

She smiled.

Ken grinned as he pointed at two bars on the collar of his white dress uniform. “I pull rank.”

She giggled. They ogled at each other.

Jay smiled. “Where to?”

Peggy nodded her head towards a non-military limousine. A chauffeur in civilian clothes waited beside it.

During their introduction to each other Airmen had unloaded small suitcases and duffel bags from the osprey. They then loaded them in the back of the limo, saluted Jay and Ken, and left after Jay and Ken saluted them back.

After they walked up to the side door, Peggy entered the limo at Ken's urging. As he sat down next to her, Jay stepped in and sat down opposite them and beside a young blond who wore earrings identical to those Peggy had on her ears.

The blond was slim and attractive, and reminded Jay of Susie, but she had to be only in her teens, and she eyed him with a disgruntled look on her face.

"This is Daisy," Peggy said, "She's Colonel Lipmon's daughter."

Jay leaned close to Daisy and smiled. "I'm pleased to meet you."

“You want my boyfriend to kill you?”

Jay rolled his eyes upward. “It won’t be necessary.”

Daisy was sexually attractive, but to become an obstacle between two young lovers wasn’t how Jay wanted to spend his vacation time. Besides, he wasn’t looking forward to being stuck with the colonel’s brat. He had to somehow bow out of this arrangement.



Ready to party with the President and perhaps meet a handsome gentleman, Nitay pirouetted to show off her slim figure in her new provocatively tight, white dress with the rainbow stripes that streaked down from her waist.

Nick shook his head with a look of dismay on his face. “It’s your neck. Don’t make it ours, too.”

“You’ve taught me a lot. Now all I need is a chance to show what I’ve learned.”

“I suppose you will sooner or later.”

“Anything from Charlie?”

He hesitated. “Something’s supposed to come in at Kaena Point after midnight. It could be what we need to put Dirk away.”

“I suppose you’ll take Toenehe along for backup.”

Nick flicked his hand at her. “With that dress you’ll need him more than ever. I’m good.”

“Why go it alone?”

“I’m watched closer than a stripper on a battleship. I was careful to sneak in here unseen, but we don’t see each other from now on until we get Dirk and make sure his thugs can do us no harm.”

That wasn't what she wanted to hear. Why couldn't she be part of the action?

She had her concerns as well. As much as Nick kept her under lock and key, she didn't feel it fair for him to wander into danger without backup. If something happened to him, what'd be the point to live in seclusion? Without him there for her, her life would be imperiled just the same.

Nick stared through the glass of the patio door. "You need to relocate. Pete has a nice place for you at Waimanalo."

"I've only been here a week."

"I don't like the looks of your neighbor."

Nitay walked over beside Nick and peeked outside. "He's cute."

"He's a motor-mouth, a braggart, trouble . . . he'll tell all his buddies about you. Can't take the chance."

Nitay sulked.

The Handshake

The President moseyed over to the open window in the presidential suite and took in the sound of gentle waves caressing the white sand. The sea at peace prepared him for the reports he was about to hear from George and Liz.

He closed the window. George and Liz stood while Admiral Young sat in a soft, cushioned chair. The CIA's top boss appeared his disgruntled self and the Admiral was reticent in his way, but exceptional nervousness showed from Liz's mannerism.

Liz had turned Homeland Security into what was expected of it and her ideas generally proved

right. Her choice of the hummer aircraft, with its name recommended in honor of the First Lady's interest in the little pollinators, had seemed prudent at the time, but the expense of the project didn't set well with opponents with a preference to fund the needy.

Admiral Young had lent his support, but the opposition included retired generals from the Air Force. They contended the spy plane was an unneeded luxury item. Their contention gained popularity among his own party, but he'd appear weak if he admitted to having made a wrongful decision.

The project would've been dropped without George's support. To obtain it the President ensured George that CIA would take control of the operation.

George laid his brief on the coffee table. "Mr. President, my Honolulu boss discovered a

rogue agent. He engages in suspicious activity and operates the monitor at Hickam's facility. Fingerprints inside the envelope with anthrax match those of the accused. We have him under tight surveillance and should know who his conspirators are before we leave the island."

Liz laid her brief on the table. "It makes no sense for a government agent to send a letter to the President along with anthrax and his own fingerprints."

George's face remained frozen in place for a bit. "Maybe he's on drugs and not thinking straight."

"He passed both a blood test and polygraph," Liz said.

George turned away from Liz and faced the President. "This guy's in a key position at the Hickam observatory. Who knows what he knows? We need to, for sure."

The President stared out the window down at a surfer riding out a wave. The wind had picked up. The waves were much larger. “Do you think the pilot or anyone else either in the hummer or on the Ronald Reagan is involved?”

George nodded. “This agent could've come onto the flight crew, bought them drinks, slipped them drugs and fed them propaganda.”

Liz seemed ready to tackle him, physically. “They were examined. Your claim isn't consistent with the evidence.”

“He still could've put them up to something.”

“They passed polygraphs,” Liz insisted.

“How reliable is a polygraph?” the President asked Liz.

“It's not definite, but we'll back it up. Since these Navy officers are on convalescent leave with orders not to leave the island, they can easily

be watched. I have already assigned someone to oversee the investigation.”

George sneered at her. “Wasn't your guy endorsed by Matt?”

Liz glared at George. “You don't trust Matt's judgment?”

George turned his back to her.

Her affair with Matt concerned the President, giving him cause to accept George as the more objective of the two, but Liz still sounded more reasonable. He'd still consider her advice until George had a more convincing case to present.

“What does the Admiral know that I should?” the President asked.

“Those officers have impressive records. They passed the most strenuous tests we could give them. They tested an experimental aircraft critical to our security and were nearly killed.

They passed psychological evaluations and lie detectors with ease. I can only conclude they reported what they saw and heard, even if it's too bizarre to believe."

"Couldn't they have been duped?" George asked.

The Admiral rose from his chair. "It's likely they were. Since the hummer takes precedence they're no longer in the equation." He walked up to the President. "I'll cancel the handshake."

George shook his head. "I set them up with a couple escorts who don't know their earrings are wired. The ceremony needs to take place for us to hear what loose lips have to reveal."



Nick climbed out of his Cherokee jeep, hurried through the parking lot to the hotel entrance,

continued on to the front desk and faced the desk clerk. "I'm Nick Kusiak. Need to speak with Matt Townsend. He's Security."

The desk clerk glanced towards Nick's left. Nick turned his head to see what caught the clerk's attention. It was Dirk flanked by two suits.

Dirk sneered. "What do you want with Matt?"

"I have something he'd like to hear."

Dirk closed in and looked up at Nick. "Sure. I'll give it to him."

"It's personal."

"Hand over your gun. You're under investigation."

Nick backed up and patted himself. "I'm not stupid."

"Why you here?"

“To see Matt, like I said.”

Dirk faced a suit. “He hopes the President’s bodyguard will bail him out. Not this time.”

Dirk rose up on his toes nose to nose with Nick. “How come Pete isn’t here? Doesn’t he want to see his old buddy?”

“He’s busy,” Nick replied, enduring Dirk’s bad breath.

“Take a seat.”

“I have things to do.”

“Take a seat.”

Nick strolled over to a cushioned chair and flopped down in it. At least he had time to think about why Dirk was all over him.

Charlie must’ve gotten caught. That’d explain it.

Nick needed to warn Nitay, Pete and Toenehe.

He noticed Lieutenant Peggy Banks when she came through the entrance door along with a young blond and two Navy officers in whites. The blond wandered off and met up with a young, muscular fellow.

Nick had an idea. Maybe one of those officers could be a way to keep Nitay's identity secret.

Nick reached nonchalantly just high enough with his hand to get Peggy's attention.

Peggy made her way over. "What's up?"

Those tacky earrings, unusual for an Air Force officer to wear, alarmed Nick. He knew he was watched, but he had to chance it. He winked at Peggy, shook his earlobe and reached out his hand.

She removed the earrings from her ears and handed them to Nick. "You want me to get you

some? One of your guys gave them to me to wear; said they were needed for special identification.”

Nick put the earrings inside a handkerchief and smothered them with his hands. “Just want to clean them for you. I have a young friend who’s eager to meet a sailor.”

Peggy laughed. “She should try Pearl Harbor.”

Nick smiled. “As a personal favor to me, would you introduce her to one of your handsome friends?”

“Well, I thought I wanted them for myself, but . . . okay.”

“Thanks. She’ll be in a white, provocative dress with rainbow stripes. Her name is Nitay Bennington and she’ll arrive with a couple older guys. Tell her it’s too crowded with them around.”

“Tell her yourself. They’re already here.”

Nick turned his head to the right and saw Nitay was ten feet in front of Pete and Toenehe.

Nick leaned sideways to hide behind Peggy. “Peggy, as strange as this may sound to you, she and I don’t speak to each other. It’s a long story.”

“It’s not only long; it’s weird. I don’t know about this.”

“It’s pertinent to national security.”

“Well . . . what should I put in my report?”

“Nothing.”

She grimaced.

He handed her his special credit card. “The drinks are on me.”

“Ooh wee. You’re on.”



Dirk flipped his wallet open flashing his ID as he continued his way into the Palm Terrace looking to find Agent Scott Braidy. He found Scott sitting at a table. Dirk was anxious to find out what Nick Kusiak had told this investigator from Homeland Security.

“You should try the Kampachi Fillet,” Scott said. “It’s delicious.”

Dirk sat down across from Scott. A waiter placed a glass of water on the table in front of Dirk and handed him a menu. “I’ll be back shortly for your order.”

“Wait.” Dirk looked over the menu, and then up at the buffet on display close by. “I’ll have a stack of waffles.”

“Sorry, sir, we don’t serve waffles for dinner.”

“Why not?”

After a long silence between them the waiter

finally said, “I’ll speak with management.”

“Your Braised Kona Lobster probably tastes like a waffle. I’ll have it.”

The waiter picked up the menu and hurried away.

Dirk stared at Scott. “I see you took my advice and didn’t lock Kusiak up. What’d he have to say about the breach?”

Scott shrugged. “Said he doesn’t know anything. What makes you think he does?”

“I have my sources. It’d be nice to compare notes.”

Scott grinned. “Show me yours and I’ll compare them.”

Scott was tight lipped, but Dirk expected as much. He’d break ground, win over Scott’s confidence and be ready to pick up on whatever

information he'd offer, whether it was intentional or inadvertent.

At least Dirk had been able to convince Scott that Nick locked up would interfere with Dirk's own surveillance of him. Eddy's men would now take care of him at Kaena Point.



Nitay had walked on into the lobby well ahead of Pete and Toenehe in order to pretend she wasn't with them. She placed some papers on a rack and surveyed the area.

She noticed Nick sat in a soft cushioned chair. Had he not pointed at a red head in a blue uniform, Nitay would've ignored him. Since he followed his pointed finger with a thumbs-up gesture, she pushed one of her earrings close to her ear to find out what he wanted her to do.

“Do what she asks,” she heard Nick whisper.

The redhead approached. “Hi. I’m Lieutenant Banks. Like to meet a couple Navy officers?”

Nitay nodded.

“Whoa, are you easy. Mr. Kusiak said lose the guys.”

Nitay flicked her hand up in the air as a signal for Pete and Toenehe to leave her be. She then winked at Peggy, who seemed puzzled.

Peggy led Nitay to the two Navy officers and pointed at one of them. “Lieutenant Ken Noble, he’s mine.” She pointed at the other officer. “Lieutenant Jay Plaey, he’s yours. Guys, this is Nitay something or the other.”

Jay’s eyes focused on Nitay as if he had something nice to say to her. “Jay and Nitay Plaey . . . I like the sound of that.”

Nitay rolled her eyes up. He was handsome, but why did Nick fix her up with a comedian?

He stepped forward. “Nitay, you in that dress is the loveliest thing I’ve ever seen. I’m honored to have you by my side when the President shakes my hand.”

“You’re here to shake the President’s hand?”

He smiled. “You didn’t know?”

She blushed.

He offered her his arm. “Would you like to accompany me to the Palm Terrace?”

Nitay was delighted about the invitation, but bothered by the perturbed look on a blonds' face. The way she had walked up to Jay and glared at him it seemed as though her territory had just been invaded.

“You should have your boyfriend join us later at the poolside bar,” Jay told her.

The blond sneered at Jay and walked away.

The blonds' intrusion bothered Nitay. This sailor seemed to take advantage of his good looks, but Nick had approved him for some reason or another. Maybe he was recruited by Nick to help with the investigation. Someone in the military loyal to a good cause could surely be helpful.



Dirk noticed a brunette in a white dress enter the restaurant with two Navy officers and a WAF. He only got a distant glance at the brunette's face before she turned her back to him and was seated by one of the officers, but those dark brown eyelashes, eyebrows and hair that highlighted her blues eyes seemed familiar. Even though her slim

body had filled out in a more mature manner, he suspected who she was.

Dirk stood up. "I'll be back."

Scott rolled his eyes Dirk's way. "If you don't make it, can I have your waffles?"

"Help yourself."

Dirk walked straight out of the restaurant, careful not to look Nitay's way, so as to not alarm her with his presence.

As the restaurant filled up with suits, he walked over to the desk clerk. "Notice a brunette with a couple Navy officers?"

The desk clerk pointed at a stand of free newspapers. "She made a delivery."

Dirk walked over to the newspaper stand and examined papers. He recognized the author's name on an article in one of the papers. He read

the article as George Kroft entered the restaurant right behind Elizabeth Black. Admiral Young and his wife finally entered. Dirk reckoned the President and the First Lady weren't far behind with their unannounced visit.

When Dirk went back into the restaurant the brunette turned away from him, but not before he had a good visual of her face.

He reseated himself beside Scott and noticed the stack of waffles in front of him. "What's this?"

"Complements of the chef."

Dirk leaned forward. "I know the girl over there in the white dress."

Scott gazed her way. "You know, I think she's with too much competition for an old fool like you."

Dirk examined the photo IDs in the small electronic device he had just taken out of his shirt pocket. "Daisy Lipmon and an Air Force Lieutenant

are supposed to be with the Navy Lieutenants. She's neither."

"Really? Maybe Daisy dyed her hair."

The funeral had been a few years back, but Dirk was sure he knew who she was. "I think she's with Kusiak. He uses her."

Scott smiled. "How can he do that when he's seated in the lobby?"

"They've been together before."

"So?"

"Doesn't her with those Navy officers and not him tell you something?"

Scott lifted the cell phone out from the pouch clipped to his belt. "I'll have security watch her."

"Bravo." Dirk handed Scott the newspaper he had taken from the rack. "Read this article on the hummingbirds. Not only is she not on the

guest list, she's a reporter. The identities of those officers could already be compromised."

"I'll have FBI tail both her and Nick. We'll find out what they're up to."

"He's slick. Your boys can work with mine."

Scott stared at Dirk. "When did you take over?"

Something else got Dirk's attention. The President and First Lady passed by tables to greet guests. When they passed by George and Liz, the President nodded. He nodded again when they passed by Admiral Young and his wife.

He stopped at the table where the two Navy officers sat. They stood up and, in turn, shook the President's hand.

It worried Dirk. How risky it would be to take out all of Nick's vigilantes if they included these Navy officers in tight with the President. To

the contrary, it was more likely Nick was using his attractive cohort to recruit high profile help. Dirk figured he only needed to counter the tactic.

The Trap

A handsome Navy officer sat beside her. An orange glow in the western sky begged for romance. Nitay even had Nick's approval to enjoy the moment for what it was, but that bothered her. Did he fix her up with someone to keep her out of the action?

She sat with Jay on her left, Peggy on her right and Ken on Peggy's right, and sipped mai tai at the poolside bar.

"What's there to do for a couple Navy guys?" Jay asked.

“There’re lots of single girls on the beaches,” she replied.

Jay groaned. “Who’ll introduce me to one?”

“Isn’t that Peggy’s job?”

“Peggy,” Jay said while he stared at Nitay with a wily look on his face, “Ken and I would like to check out one of those yacht clubs at Kaneohe. Do you know someone as nice as Nitay who’d like to sail with us?”

Peggy, already on her third mai tai, winked. “Sorry. It’s hard to find someone as nice as her.”

Ken pointed. “Isn’t that a hummingbird?”

Nitay marveled at the unusual sight.

Peggy cupped her hands around both her eyes. “By golly, you’re right, but they’re supposed to be indigenous only to the Americas.”

“Don’t tell anyone,” Jay grumbled. “They’ll think you’re as crazy as we are.”

Their conversation interested Nitay, but a repulsive sight concerned her more. Dirk Slubona headed their way.



The cushioned chair was comfortable, but Nick wanted to find out what was to occur at Kaena Point. Then again, he worried about Nitay. He'd be leaving her in a dangerous situation.

At least he wasn't ignored. Security never let him out of their sight. Even Scott found time to drop by.

“You can leave,” he said. “Go ahead and join your friends outside.”

“I came alone.”

“You work with a Lieutenant Banks, don’t you?”

“Yeah, but she’s with a couple Navy officers.”

“She’s also outside with a Nitay Bennington. Know her?”

“What does she look like?”

“Young, attractive brunette in a white dress.”

“I’ve known a few.”

Scott glanced back and forth between Nick and a photo. “I’m sure you have. You probably knew her mother.”

Nick grimaced. That was personal.



When Nitay edged closer to his side, Jay sensed the fear she had of the stout man with a bald head

that stared her down as he approached.

“Hello,” the intruder barked.

The sad look on Nitay’s face was enough to tell Jay she didn’t welcome this guy.

Jay stepped between them. “Who are you?”

The stranger flashed his ID.

This troubling presence was CIA. What was Nitay involved in? With all the bad luck he had of late, it was sure to get him into more trouble.

“Wouldn’t you be Nitay Bennington?” Dirk asked. “Your father used to work for me.”

She turned away and looked down at the bar.

A sudden jerk of Dirk’s head caught Jay’s attention.

Jay followed him to a secluded area by the pool. “What’s this about?”

“I need your help.”

“Really.”

“Yeah, really. Nice looking brunette. How long have you known her?”

“Just met her. Why?”

“She’s dangerous.”

Jay glanced Nitay’s way and noticed she toyed with one of her earrings. “She doesn’t look dangerous to me.”

“She’s a reporter and wrote this article on hummingbirds.”

“So?”

“How’d she find out about them? Someone must’ve tipped her off.”

Jay shrugged his shoulders. “We just saw one. Besides, the monitors only showed our near

plunge into the ocean.”

“You’re right, but her boyfriend’s CIA. He even monitored your flight with the hummer. He could’ve been tipped off about the hummingbirds.”

Jay, flustered by Dirk’s accusations, gazed at the sunset. “What do you want me to do about it?”

“Date her. Find out whatever you can. Report it directly to me and tell no one else.”

“I’m not a spy.”

“You fly a spy plane, don’t you?”

“It spies. I don’t.”

“You’re now a spy, sailor.”

As Dirk walked away, he said, “Be careful, sailor. She’s trouble.”

Dirk's accusation was troubling, but for all Jay knew Dirk had no authority over him. "I don't think I like that guy," he said to Nitay as he approached her. He really didn't know what to make of the situation.

Nitay bowed her head. "He's right. I'm trouble. That's why I can't sail with you. Just my presence puts your life at risk."

She seemed worth the risk, but how did she know Dirk had said she's trouble. He placed his hand on her shoulder. "Hold on. I look danger in the eye every day. I almost crashed yesterday. You have secrets, I have them. I don't need to know yours if you don't need to know mine, but I think you can use a few good friends to hang out with."

Jay considered she was part of the special assignment he'd be briefed on after his return to the Ronald Reagan. What else could it be? She knew CIA and must be part of a test. Why not just

do what Dirk had asked?



The rear view mirror showed headlights, but Nick drove with only Nitay's fate in mind. He feared he had left her defenseless against Dirk.

As with his trip to Kaena Point, Nick sensed a setup. He suspected Charlie hadn't put the message in the takeout. Dirk's criminals probably did. The car behind him could be why he wasn't still in custody if framed by Dirk, and a trap most likely awaited him if his rogue boss knew about Charlie's messages to Pete's taxi service.

Oh well. The road under his Cherokee was no longer paved. He was too close to the event for him to turn back now.

He parked beside a boulder, reached under his seat for his 44-magnum, got out of the jeep,

and circled on foot around the large rock he had parked beside.

The other car pulled up behind the jeep. After sneaking behind the car, Nick rushed up from underneath the back window and pointed his gun at the driver. "ID please."

The other guy reached over and flipped open a wallet with a FBI badge pinned inside it.

Nick lowered his gun. "Glad you could make it."

"Why's that?" the driver asked.

"I need backup."

"What for?"

"My boss is a rogue and part of what I'm onto. Something's supposed to come down after midnight. I came for an early seat."

"Let us handle it."

“Your flashlights will tip them off. My night vision goggles will lead the way.”

“What do you want us to do?”

“Your jobs. One of you can follow me from a safe distance while your other stays behind to cover our rear.”

“Sure. Let us have your gun.”

“Now you boys know better than that.”



Dirk pulled off the highway and parked beside a limousine with a side door already opened. Eddy sat inside the limo with a martini in one hand and a cell phone at his ear with the other.

“Did Kusiak take the bait?” Dirk asked.

Eddy closed his cell phone. “He approaches Kaena Point from the south trail as we speak.”

Dirk shook his head. “He should be history by now.”

Eddy grinned. “Either plan A or plan B will do the trick.”

Dirk frowned. “Why not just waste him like I said?”

“He’s followed by a suit.”

“Of course he is. What’s plan A?”

“We capture Nick, waste the suit with Nick’s gun. That way we squeeze information out of him and still do him in for murder.”

Dirk shook his head. “No good. That suit’s FBI. I don’t want them to poke their heads in my affairs.”

“Plan B it is.”

“Spit it out.”

“Three men wait in a cave alongside a narrow path with an eighty foot drop. Others wait offshore in a boat.”

“Where will they go after Nick corners them?”

“One of them is Tony Hermes.”

Dirk grinned. “I like it. Nick disappears inside a shark’s belly for Feds to believe he hid out somewhere.”

Eddy held his martini up, as to toast, and swallowed it. “I’d feel better if Charlie was also shut up for good.”

Dirk shook his head. “We need to know what he knows. Pass his contact information onto General Wong so he can take care of the contacts Charlie has in Taiwan. When Pete’s taxi driver shows up at your restaurant for a takeout, make sure Charlie’s contact information is in it. That way we set General Wong up to be contacted by

Nick's cohorts. We'll then be able to use General Wong to set them up."

"You sure he'll cooperate with us?"

Dirk nodded. "That's why we hold onto Charlie. Besides, we need to get in tight with Wong to find out more of what he's up to. This'll get us in."



After Dirk's untimely visit all Nitay could think about was the likelihood a trap had been set for Nick at Kaena Point.

Nitay wiggled her finger at Peggy and then led her to a secluded area away from the bar.

Peggy seemed a little tipsy. "What's up?"

"Can I borrow your cell?"

Peggy handed her cell phone to Nitay.

“This is private,” Nitay warned.

Peggy stood with her mouth wide open as Nitay took the cell phone, punched in Pete’s cell phone number, and walked away.

“Pete’s taxi service.”

“You guys are needed at Kaena Point. Something’s going down. I feel it.”

“How about you?”

“I’ll find my way home.”

She closed the cell, walked back to Peggy and handed it to her. “Sorry. I need to find a ride back to Honolulu.”

“How about a limo?”

“That’d be great, but I can’t sail with you guys.”

“Why not?”

“I wish I could. Those guys seem special.”

“They are, and could use our support. Don’t you think?”

“Sorry. Can’t help.” She did want to sail with them. Her sadness must’ve told Peggy as much.

“Mr. Kusiak wanted me to introduce you to a Navy Officer. I did. He’s nice, you’re nice. What’s the prob?”

“I’m trouble.”

Peggy shook her head vehemently. “Wow. Jay dies next week in a plane crash and you’re killed by some thug. Isn’t it a shame you didn’t enjoy life when you could’ve?”

Nitay looked away. She didn’t know what to do. It was Nick who had put her in this spot. It was Dirk who spooked her. Did Nick think she was ready to take Dirk head on?

“Jay needs no protection,” Peggy grumbled. “He needs someone to inspire him on.”

Nitay glanced at Jay. This was Nick's doing. There had to be a reason for it. “I'd like to if only I could. I need time to find out if it's okay. If you call Pete's taxi service and leave a message, I'll get back to you.”

The Alien

In a starlit night, night-vision goggles enabled Nick to see rusted remains of cars that had attempted to use the trail a long time back as a road. He stepped carefully along rugged terrain.

Nick glanced back and took notice of the light behind him. It had become dimmer. He outpaced the FBI agent.

A little bird hovered nearby. You'd think it'd want to protect its eggs or young ones, but it kept up with Nick along the trail.

After an hour or so on the trail he came to a narrow incline. The rope for support was missing, so he pointed his gun straight ahead and eased his way down the slope. When he reached its bottom he eased forward ready to unload his gun in case anyone hid in the nearby cave up ahead.

He caught sight of someone darting out of the cave, wearing a gas mask and tossing a gaspewing canister tumbling towards him. He fired his gun at the shadowy figure as he took a couple quick steps to his left and jumped to the edge of the cliff. Then, with all his might, he leaped as far as he could towards the ocean with the slight chance he'd land on either water or soft sand.

Something stopped his fall. He dropped his gun as a squishy tentacle wrapped around his

body and squeezed him tight.

A nasty odor, worse than a fermented outhouse, filled his nostrils. Maybe nerve gas would've been better. He emptied his stomach.

“Let me go,” Nick yelled in fear some giant creature had him for a juicy meal.

It stood him upright on the sand. “Hello Nick Kusiak. My name is Netone.”

It spoke. Nick gawked at something akin to a squid or octopus. “Let me go you freak.”

Its tentacle loosened, lifted up over his head and retracted to the ground. “I mean you no harm.”

“Why'd you grab me?” Nick asked while pinching his nose.

“I caught you in order to save your life.”

Nick noticed a light from above. “Someone's after me.”

“We are neither seen nor heard by anyone outside this area.”

“Where in the hell did you come from?”

“I did not come from hell. I came from Kiron. It is a planet nearly thirty eight light years from here.”

“That’d take more than a lifetime.”

“The journey took only forty years.”

“Why you here?”

“My spaceship received radio signals from Earth. They indicated you humans explore other galaxies and beam your molecules through space. I came to find out how you do it.”

“Welcome to Earth.”

“A boat comes our way.”

Nick searched by way of his night-vision goggles. “I don’t see it.”

A large hologram of a rubber raft with three life-like men in it appeared in front of a nearby egg-shape object that Nick hadn't noticed until then. One man in the raft steered an outboard motor and all of them wore dark clothes and clutched semiautomatic rifles.

“Does that thing move, like to get us out of here?”

“My spaceship moves, but you cannot survive with both of us inside it.”

Nick agreed inasmuch as the creature's stench, even outside in a salty breeze, was intolerable enough. He looked the spaceship over. “It's big enough for both of us. What's the problem?”

“You have been infected with my bacteria. You will die if they overcome your life-supporting bacteria.”

Light came from the spaceship. Nick lifted his arm and noticed his skin had turned slightly purplish.

He thought he might have to kill the creature and himself in hope the bacteria would also die. He'd need his gun if it came to that, but he was unable to locate it.

He sat down on a rock and looked up at the cliff. "We need to get away from here."

"Your enemies have left the area and the nerve gas has dispersed. Do you want me to toss you back up on the trail?"

"Yes!" What choice did he have? It was either be tossed back up onto the trail or be killed.

The creature wrapped a tentacle around Nick and flung him upward four feet above the trail. It was a rough landing, but Nick survived it, cushioning the fall on hard lava rock with his shoulder.

When he got up on his feet he noticed a body on the trail with a gas mask partly off his nose. It appeared to be the nerve gas that did him in after he fell from the gunshot wound.

Nick started back to warn the FBI agent of the danger.

Right after he made his way up the incline he spotted the FBI agent.

The agent went down to rest on one knee in a ready to fire position. "What's going on?"

Nick held his hands up over his head. "I'm infected with something. Notify your buddies. I'll follow you back and keep my distance."



Dirk gripped his steering wheel, glanced out his window and past the open door of the limo where he noticed Eddy held his cell phone to his ear.

Eddy lowered the phone. “The sharks must’ve had him for lunch. My men, what’s left of them, couldn’t find him on the rocks.”

Dirk’s own cell phone chimed. He answered it. “Dirk Slubona.”

“Scott Braidy. Kusiak stumbled onto something contagious at Kaena Point.”

“That’d be to shake the FBI off his tail.”

“Maybe. I’m on my way to check it out.”

Dirk pounded the dashboard with the side of his fist. “I’m almost there. Got you covered.”

Dirk stared Eddy down. “Did your boys use a biological weapon?”

Eddy nodded. “Nerve gas. Found it in the last delivery.”

“Kusiak put one on you. Feds will storm the area. Tell your boys to skedaddle. Have those on

the yacht toss their guns overboard and break out the brandy. It's party time, right?"

Eddy grimaced. "Right."

"Now get out of here before we're spotted together."

Eddy climbed out of the limo and hurried to get in the driver's seat. The limo's motor revved and its rear wheels tossed rocks.



Nick finally staggered to where he could be seen by the FBI agents, but the big egg appeared ten feet in front of him. Alongside it was a luminous, transparent image of the creature.

"Why you still here?" Nick asked.

"I need your help."

"Ask those other guys."

“I do not know what their intentions are.”

“Know mine? Aren’t you concerned they’ll spot you?”

“A cloaking shield surrounds us. No one outside it can see or hear what is inside it other than what was here before we arrived.”

“Wait here. I’ll ask my friends to join the party.”

The creature’s hologram disappeared as Nick started to walk towards the FBI agents, but he stopped in his tracks when he saw Dirk’s car pull up to the FBI’s.

**Nick turned around and smiled at the big egg.
“How can I help?”**

The creature’s image reappeared. “I do not have enough nuclear fuel to return to my planet. I will help you out of your precarious situation if you help me obtain the fuel I need.”

“Sounds easy. Have anything that’ll help?”

“I have drones disguised as hummingbirds. I have a replicator that can replicate animate life.”

Nick had an idea. “Can it replicate me?”

“It can.”

“How long will it take?”

“It will take only one half hour to replicate you.”

“That could be too late.”



Dirk walked up to the FBI agents and shouted, “What you boys find out?”

“I tailed Kusiak. He said he was infected with something. He did smell bad.”

Dirk grunted. “He faked you out. You must be a rookie.”

Another car pulled up. Scott stepped out of it.

Dirk sneered. “Kusiac’s too much for these boys. I’ll find him before he destroys evidence.”

Scott stroked his reddish beard. “Wait for backup. Before we do anything we’ll need protective clothing.”

Vehicles soon arrived, blocking the trail’s entrance. One of them was an ambulance. The other one was a truck with a cargo van.

When the driver of the truck got out of it, he went to the back and slid the door up. Dirk hurried over to be first in line. The driver handed him an orange suit with a white head.



Nick, feeling weak and defenseless, still needed to protect his own self as well as all humanity. He gazed at the creature's hologram. "They'll soon come our way. Better get out of here while you can. I'll have to hide in the rocks."

"I will slowly and quietly relocate my spaceship along the shoreline where it will not be noticed. You can follow right behind it."

Nick stood dumbfounded as he witnessed the spaceship lift up from the ground and slowly move away, defying the law of gravity, but he had nothing better to do than to follow it.

As it slowly moved forward along the shoreline Nick stumbled about on sand and rock, and glanced now and then at Dirk and them.

Soldiers had arrived. Pete and Toenehe were in the mix. They must've been taken into custody, as Dirk seemed to be all over them.

Nick noticed the supply truck had been left unattended, with protective suits at the rear end ready for the taking. “Sneak your spaceship over to the right of that truck.”

When they arrived at the truck, Nick picked up one of the suits and noticed a jeep had parked beside the supply truck. The keys were still in the ignition.

Something came out of the spaceship. It appeared to be a naked man.

Nick looked away. “He can have my shirt, pants and shoes, but I’ll keep my underwear.”

Neither of them responded.

“Is it real?”

“It is only a replica of you.”

Nick took off his outer garments and handed them to the replicator. As it dressed in Nick’s clothes,

Nick put on the orange suit.

Nick put his right hand on the replicator's shoulder and pointed his left one at Dirk. "Make your way over there if you can. Just flop down on the ground and play dead. I'll be able to drive out of here unnoticed if you capture their attention."

The replicator staggered Dirk way. When soldiers surrounded it, it fell on the ground and closed its eyes.

"Do not be fooled," Dirk hollered. "Arrest the fake."

The FBI agent pointed his flashlight at the replicator and sniffed. "He could be infected with something contagious. You arrest him."

Two orange suits lifted the replicator onto a stretcher.

"He must have smuggled something in such as nerve gas and he mishandled it," Dirk said. "The

consequence of that action serves him right.”

Nick had heard enough. “They’ll perform an autopsy on it,” he warned the creature.

“I do not want an autopsy performed on my replicator. The discovery of its identity could compromise our mission.”

“Sorry.”

Nick’s vision had become foggy. “I have to get away from here. I know a place to hide. I’ll have to pass through a guard station, but I don’t want to infect the guard.”

“My drones can inject a sedative into the guard to put it to sleep.”

Nick stared at the creature. “Better not harm any of us.”

Nick climbed into the jeep and drove slowly away out of the cloaking area. He didn’t turn on

the headlights until he was satisfied he was as far away as needed in order not to be noticed. Still, to drive in his condition up the hill wasn't easy, but he managed, even with blurry vision.

When he arrived at the Kaena Point Tracking Station he came upon a guard laid out on the ground beside a closed gate. Nick opened the door and got out of the jeep.

He walked over to and checked out the guard. The guard breathed.

Nick managed to stand up, stagger over to the gate and open it. He then staggered back to his jeep, got in and continued on his way.

Five minutes later he noticed a light appearing in the jeep's rear view mirror.

He pressed on the gas pedal to go faster. He passed over a ridge and continued along a narrow road where lemon gum eucalyptus trees

had grown into a small forest, where his next decision could affect the lives of all humans the world over. He turned right at an intersection where he'd be on private land, but also where he could start a worldwide epidemic.

A half mile up the road he stopped at a driveway leading up to a brown shack, which fit the description Pete gave of a place to hide if needed.

The headlights trailing him became brighter by the moment. He had no choice. He turned off his lights and drove slowly up the driveway. He parked. The spaceship landed in front of him. Hopefully it cloaked the area in time for the occupants in the other vehicle not to have located him.

He waited. Somebody had indeed followed him, as an army jeep full of soldiers stopped at the entrance and shined a spotlight his way.

After a bit they continued on their way up the road.

Nick got out of the jeep. He found a house key under the porch and went inside the house for water. Too weary to carry on any further he took off the suit, fell to the floor and closed his eyes to leave the fate of the world in the tentacles of a creature with deadly bacteria from another planet.

To Die to Live

Nick woke confused as to why he lay on a wooden floor showered by a bluish light from outside the window. His memory came back into focus. He realized he was inside Pete's shack. Had he dreamed of an alien creature?

He heard knocks. "Who's there?"

“I am Netone.”

“Go away. Go back where you came from before your bacteria kill all of us.”

“You verbally committed to me that you would help me acquire nuclear fuel, and I need you to help me retrieve my replicator.”

“I’m too ill to help anyone, thanks to you.”

“The spaceship produced a remedy for your illness. You will only need to bathe in light of a particular wavelength to regenerate your bacteria and protect them from my bacteria.”

“It’ll cure me for sure?”

“It will only cure you if you bathe in it long enough for it to succeed. If you begin treatment right away your expected recovery time is one month from now. The longer you wait the longer it will take you to recuperate from your illness.”

“Don’t my bacteria battle yours or are mine just wimps?” Nick figured he needed to find out the vulnerability of this creature.

“Your bacteria defend themselves, but the light rays from the spaceship will neutralize their attack on my bacteria.”

“Can it be done where there’s no one to infect?”

“It can be done in such a place, but only if I have help obtaining what I need. I will relocate to an uninhabited island after my replicator returns to me and if you ensure me you will keep your promise to help me obtain nuclear fuel.”

Nick rose up from the floor. The bluish light seemed to have given him energy. He walked to the front door and opened it. The sun was low in the eastern sky. He hadn’t had much more than a couple hours sleep.

He saw the spaceship. “Where are you?”

“My hologram is not visible in sunlight. To see it you need to go back inside the house with the device I put on the porch for you to use. It is a remote, communicator and a projector of videos and holographic images.”

Nick picked up the remote and went back into the house.

A luminous hologram of the creature appeared inside the house. It opened a mouth. “My replicator sneaked out of a room before your fellow humans could examine it. It acquired a disguise and it now sits on a bench in a park.”

Another hologram appeared before Nick. No one except the replicator was in it. Had it grown that long, white beard and gray hair down below its neck? Nick surmised it had acquired them.

Nick sat down on a wooden chair and gazed at the wall. “We need more help. Find Pete Townsend for me if you can.”

As he waited for a reply he heard the sound of a helicopter. It became louder. Nick peeked out the window. The chopper hovered nearby the house. Nick crossed his fingers. It finally continued on its way.

He figured it'd be back sooner or later. Him found and captured was one thing; for the creature with its bacteria to be discovered was another. He had to somehow send this thing on its way.



Air Force One neared Guam with the President troubled by the report in his hand of an agent with a disease. He laid it down on the table and waited to hear what Liz and George had to say

about it.

“Mr. President,” George said, “The dead body of the agent infected with something is missing. Liz’s guy didn’t secure the facility.”

The President stared at Liz. “What happened?”

She held her head up with her elbows on the table, her fingers locked together, and her thumbs pressed up against her chin. “Someone must not have wanted an autopsy performed on it. Once we figure out why, it’ll clue us in on who we’re dealing with.”

The President turned away from her and gazed out the window. What he had heard crushed his confidence in Liz’s judgment. She needed to have taken secure steps. An unknown contagious disease could be spreading among the populous. Proper authorities needed to be notified, but the information was too sensitive to disclose to the public.

He'd favor George's advice from now on. Better yet, he'd have CIA take charge of the investigation.



After a restless night's sleep it had taken Nitay only ten minutes to pack her belongings and carry her luggage outside to the taxi that'd relocate her to Waimanalo, one of Pete's many residences on the island. Her frequent relocations among them kept her nearly invisible.

The taxi parked next to her on the street she didn't recognize, but the long-haired Samoan that loaded her stuff in the trunk had to be Toenehe with a wig, and the guy behind the steering wheel wearing a straw hat and shades had to be Pete.

She seated herself in the front passenger seat. "Why the yellow cab?"

Pete patted the steering wheel gently a couple times with his hands. “It’s not on the Feds radar. We were questioned last night at Kaena Point.”

“What about Nick?”

Pete appeared dazed.

“What’s up?”

He removed his shades and showed her his weary eyes. “Nick could’ve come across biological weapons at Kaena Point. Medics wore protective suits and carried someone away.”

Her body tensed up. That Nick’s life could be at end was something she hadn’t prepared for, but she had suspected Dirk’s criminal links extended to smugglers from China. They’d set traps to make sure no one stumbled onto the smuggling.

She closed her eyes and bowed her head.

“Maybe Charlie knows something,” Pete said. “I’ll order a takeout. We can pick it up on our way to Waimanalo.”

Pete called in his order and then drove to the restaurant. He passed by it and parked on the street a half a block away. Toenehe stepped out of the taxi and went to pick up the takeout.

Ten minutes later Toenehe returned with the takeout, handed it through the window to Pete, and then stepped back into the taxi.

Pete found a message inside the takeout and started reading it, but his cell phone chimed. When he opened his cell, she leaned his way and noticed a text message appeared on the screen.

Pete put the takeout down between him and Nitay. He started up the motor and drove the taxi until he came to a park. Only a man with a long, white beard and long, gray was in it.

Pete's cell phone chimed. He opened it. "It's a text from a Peggy Banks. Two Navy men will be with her all week at the Kaneohe Yacht Club."

He handed Nitay the cell phone. "Call her."

Nitay sighed. "She fixed me up with a Navy officer. Nick put her up to it."

"Hold on." Pete squirmed in his seat. "Nick could've been in a tight spot. Think about it. This Navy guy isn't likely to realize someone would tail him to find you."

"He must be part of Nick's plan."

Pete looked here and there. He then got out of the taxi and walked over to the bench the man sat on.

Nitay picked up the takeout, opened it and took out the message. After she read it she used Pete's cell phone, punching numbers.

She managed to send a text just before Pete returned. He seated himself behind the wheel with a puzzled look on his face. He said nothing.

Nitay decided to break the silence. “I sent a text to Charlie’s contact in Taiwan.”

“Why?”

Pete’s stare shivered up her spine, but she’d answer him, “The message in the takeout. Charlie has to lay low for awhile and needs someone to cover him. I don’t have anything better to do.”

Pete’s puzzled look became one of scorn. “You don’t know what you’re doing. Someone could’ve come onto Charlie. That message from the previous takeout could’ve been to set Nick up. If the contacts were found out, Dirk could use them to find us.”

With a look of innocence, Nitay faced Pete. “They might also be our only chance to bring Dirk

down.”

Pete bowed his head and used his thumbs and fingers to rub his temples. “Be patient. We’ll get him if we work together. Let me find out what happened to Charlie before doing anything rash.”

She nodded and pointed at the guy on the bench. “What’d he have to say?”

“It’s Nick.”

Nitay perked up.

“He wants his body cremated this afternoon.”

“Alive?” Nitay opened her eyes wide and left her mouth open.

“He must want Dirk to think he’s dead.”

Nitay shook her head in protest. “How are you going to arrange all this in a few hours?”

“Money talks.”



Nick relaxed in his underwear while he bathed in the bluish light coming through the open window from the spaceship. Although the light made him feel better physically, he was still troubled by what the creature might really want from him.

The creature's transparent, holographic image reappeared. "Even if you rescue my replicator, I still need nuclear fuel for my journey home to succeed."

"Don't worry. There's plenty plutonium in our power plants."

"There is restrictive access to those facilities. I do not trust you have authorization to obtain nuclear waste from them."

"Of course I don't, but terrorists steal it. I catch them and get it back. What else bothers you?"

"I do not know the details of your plan."

Netone's skepticism bothered Nick. To fool the creature was risky, but everything said so far was within reason. He'd stretch the truth only where needed. "The plan is for the replicator to replicate someone who flies a spy plane. You can move to an uninhabited island in your spaceship. We'll then have a way to get nuclear fuel from the terrorists for you to have."

"Is this spy plane called the hummer?"

Nick nodded. "Yeah."

"To take it from your government without authorization will be difficult."

"It's a piece of cake."

"What do you mean by a piece of cake?"

"Cake is as eatable as my plan is doable."

"Earlier I contacted the crew of that aircraft. They did not believe I am an alien from another

planet. How will you persuade them to cooperate with us?”

“One of them is sweet on a girl I know. She’ll persuade them.”

“Is Nitay Bennington the name of this girl you speak of?”

Nick stared at Netone's hologram, wondering if this creature was using other humans. “You know something about her?”

“The spaceship computer analyzed yours and her DNA and determined they are nearly the same. Did you clone her?”

He suddenly found enough energy in him to rise up from his chair and parade about. “That’s something I’m both proud and shamed of, and I would appreciate it if you keep it to yourself.”

“I will comply with your request, but there is a more urgent matter for you to deal with.”

“What's that?”

“If I relocate before you recover from your illness, it will worsen, and you will eventually die from it.”

“I'm glad you care.”

Nick was prepared to accept his death for humanity's sake. He'd do all he could to bring Dirk down and then find a remote area where he and his bacteria could rest in peace.

He knew his plan was far-fetched. He only wanted the creature to go along with it enough to move to an uninhabited island. With less risk of the creature being discovered, as to infect someone else, it'd be safer for him to use the creature's advanced technology to investigate Dirk's criminal activities.

He'd need Nitay to set up the Navy pilot. Involving her in his plan risked her life evermore.

He had second thoughts about it, but needed all the help he could get. Besides, she could already be as good as dead if they didn't stop Dirk. It was time for her to step up to the task at hand.



The house in Waimanalo was nice, but Nitay knew she'd be relocated before becoming comfortable with the neighborhood.

Toenehe set her baggage down on the floor.

“See you in a couple hours,” Pete said.

She found her laptop and checked out emails.
“General Wong invites me to his Spratly Island.”

Toenehe groaned.

Pete coughed. “Don't be crazy. Ignore it.”

“You heard of him I take it.”

“Yeah! Don’t mess with him.”

From Creation to Cremation

After Dirk sat down at the table across from Eddy he flung his hand with a little wrist action towards the waitress. She stopped in her tracks, made an about face and walked away.

Dirk faced Eddy. “What’s up?”

“I have Charlie on my yacht.”

Dirk sneered at Eddy. “I was up all night. Why couldn’t this wait?”

“I’m anxious to feed him to the sharks.”

“Not yet. He could know stuff that'd interest my boss. Find out what he knows about General Wong and then hand him over to the general. That

way we get in tight with him and find out more of what he's up to.”

Eddy nodded.

“We also have something more pressing to deal with. Nick vanished during his autopsy. I doubt he’s really dead.”

Eddy grinned. “He’s about to be cremated.”

“How you know?”

“Pete showed up here and inquired about Charlie. I had my men follow him to the Mililani Mortuary. They found out he paid big time for hurry-up cremation service. It’s going down this afternoon. My boys are ready to crash the party.”

Dirk stood up from his chair and stared down at Eddy. “Pete will have his guys in place. A shootout will bring on an investigation. I’ll handle it.”

He stormed his way out of the restaurant to his car, hurried to seat himself behind the wheel, slammed the door shut, turned the ignition key, revved the motor and burned rubber. A half mile up the road he checked his rear view mirror and noticed a car at a reasonable distance away kept pace with him.



Nitay sat in the front passenger seat of one of Pete's taxis. When Toenehe opened the door for her, she led the way into the mortuary.

Nick appeared to lie in a raised position on top of stuffing inside the coffin. He seemed still. His stomach didn't even move. Why didn't Pete tell her he died?

As soon as she spotted Pete in the front row she sat down beside him on his left. Toenehe took the seat to her left.

A Samoan preacher walked up and stood in front of the coffin.

Nitay heard him say, “All living things of the material world pass on, but whatever we become in this life, beggar or president, only forgiveness for our transgressions matters, such that we may carry on in eternal life with our Savior.”

The crowd was small, as notification from Pete would only be given in need of reliable and trusted backup, but white, blue and red roses along with dashing daisies and lilies perfumed the air.

The preacher continued, “We take no material wealth with us. We own nothing of the material world except our personal experiences; yet, our presence here on Earth greatly affects those loved ones close to us.”

Nitay bowed her head. Nick had taken her in with loving care when the tragic death of her parents left her all alone, and he confessed his

belief Dirk was responsible. He initially refused to involve her in the investigation, but she insisted she'd end up as another one of Dirk's victims just the same. Now, for her cause, and her vengeance against an evil man, a loving and caring man lay dead in a coffin. She couldn't stop the tears that ran down her face.

The preacher continued, *"We mourn the losses of those dear to us. Death takes away lives here on Earth, but also testifies to the miracle of life itself."*

She needed to carry on in Nick's behalf for him not to have died in vain. He had passed his life purpose onto her.

The preacher concluded, "This material body formed from dust now returns to dust, but its departed spirit now rests in heavenly peace from the tribulations of this material life with forgiveness from our Lord and Savior in righteousness. He of the light now guides one of us in the light."

The preacher's words comforted her little. Nick could very well be in a better place, but she needed him here and now.

She was startled by Dirk's sudden presence, as he walked up to the coffin, picked up a hand and cut off a finger. He put the bloody finger in a plastic bag and then stared at her. "Somebody done stole a body. They should be arrested, but because I'm such a nice guy I'll just confiscate this finger for the autopsy."

The smirk on his face was too much to take. She got up and stormed up the aisle and out the door.

Toenehe had followed her, but the rage in her was too volatile for even him to control. Her determination to bring Dirk down became more firm than ever.

With Nick gone who'd help her?

She saw a hummingbird hover nearby. It reminded her of Jay. She could use his help, but would she be wise to trust him after he had been approached by Dirk? She knew not what else to do.

The departure of her mentor did indeed greatly affect her stay here on Earth. She dearly missed her friend and protector.



It pained Nick to see his daughter grieve.

She finally went back inside the mortuary.

Nick caught sight of Scott behind the wheel inside a parked car. That also bothered Nick. Scott would want the body brought back for the autopsy whereas Dirk would prefer its cremation instead.



The thirty minute viewing period ended. Nitay had nearly fainted at the sight of Nick with a cutoff finger, but she'd still stay for Pete and Toenehe to carry out the cremation.

Pete and Toenehe lifted the casket up onto a narrow, box-like cart with wheels. They pulled out the stuffing, carefully lower the body, close the lid, wheeled the cart over to the crematory, shoved the casket into it, closed the door and lit the fire.



The growl from Nick's stomach reminded him he needed food to survive. "Netone," he shouted.

Netone's hologram appeared inside the house. "What is your request?"

"I'm hungry, but I could be spotted from that helicopter that patrols the area if I leave in this suit to find food. If I wear something else I'll likely infect

nosy neighbors.”

“My spaceship is capable of replicating food. I recommend coconut. It is more stable to reproduce than are other earthly foods, as the fat in coconut breaks down at the same temperature at which water boils. The water content in coconut is also purer for human consumption.”

“Won’t you need a sample?”

“A hummingbird drone can record the coconut’s biochemical makeup.”

Nick preferred natural Earth food, like pizza and beer. He also wanted to know more about this creature.

He eyed the creature's hologram. “Your body seems unnatural for the development of spaceship technology. How’d you evolve?”

“My species evolved as octopods in a sea of water. One of my ancestors was taken from it

by a species with a life form similar to yours. Our DNA structure has been genetically engineered by them, as we have become clones.”

“How’d you become so intelligent that you ended up here with no fuel to return home?”

“The near human-like life forms used their technology to rearrange molecular structures of hydrocarbons in food in a way that it provides us with knowledge. We are now programmed by it to explore the cosmos. I was misinformed to come here by my spaceship detecting and deciphering radio transmissions from Earth. They indicated you humans are an advanced civilization with an adequate supply of nuclear fuel for me to have a successful journey home.”

Nick was only interested in his own options. If he searched for food he could be discovered by a pilot on patrol, or by a nosy neighbor, and he’d likely infect them with foreign bacteria. If he didn’t

search for food, then he could die of starvation or have his brain programmed by computerized food for thought.



Dirk gloated as he walked up to the car Scott sat in. “Nice of you to follow me.”

Dirked reached through the open car window and dropped the bloody finger on Scott’s lap. “Nick Kusiak’s finger for an autopsy. It’ll show the same traces of nerve gas they found up on the trail.”

Scott grimaced. “I guess you’re now the big boy in charge. Why’d you let them cremate the body?”

“I have a plan.”

“What you want me to do?”

“Stay out of my way.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, really. That sorry bunch will take their urn to a special place. My boys will follow them. Game over.”

“Just like that?”

Dirk grinned. “Just like that.”

“Won’t they resist?”

“I hope so.”



Nitay sat in the front passenger seat of the van and looked back at Toenehe, who sat on a long, narrow box. “I thought you said he didn’t really want to be cremated,” she said to Pete.

Pete took his hand off the steering wheel and placed it gently on her shoulder. “He’s in the box Toenehe sits on. The casket had a false bottom. A

pig was in the oven.”

“You said he was alive.”

“He must’ve been sick with something. I don’t understand what’s going on, but there must be a reason for him giving me his instructions.”

Nitay closed her eyes. “I knew he was set up. I should’ve talked him out of it.”

“I could never stop Nick from anything he had to do.”

She opened her eyes. “I’ll finish it for him.”

Pete faced her. “What you have in mind?”

She didn’t answer, knowing Pete wouldn’t go along with what she had in mind.

“I’d forget about that meeting with General Wong,” he said. “It’s surely a trap.”

She doubted it was a trap.

Pete glanced her way. “I swore to keep this a secret, but it’s time you found out about it.”

She waited for him to tell her his secret.

“Nick was your real father.”

“What?”

“That’s why he was so strict. He wanted to protect you. If you get killed, his effort will have been for naught.”

She only wanted to get Dirk for her mentor to have been proud of her. If she had to confront General Wong to do it, then so be it.

The Date

With the spaceship between him and the morning sun, Nick sat in front of the window to nourish his

body in the bluish light from the spaceship as he watched videos. In one of them the holographic images of cliffs towering 1,000 feet above majestic valleys along the Koolau Mountain Range came into view. The town of Waimanalo next appeared. The video finally showed the house Nitay had moved into.

It pleased Nick she had moved there. A nice lawn with a white, picket fence in front didn't obstruct the visibility of the wide street and the backyard provided a means of escape in case Dirk's hoodlums located her.

He saw Nitay in the backyard get on a three-wheeler. She had a brown purse strapped around her opposite shoulder as she drove between Palm and Ironwood trees on a short, sandy path to the beach. Whatever for, Nick didn't know.

Another video got Nick's attention. It showed Peggy sitting beside a swimming pool with the two

Navy officers that were with her at Turtle Bay, but what was of concern to Nick was Dirk in the background walking towards the pool.

Netone's hologram popped into view. "The replicator detects a periodic sound from the white, Ford van Pete Townsend drives our way."

Another video popped into view showing the van.

"It's Pete's. Dirk must've dropped a tracking device into the urn. Can the hummingbirds help?"

"If it is helpful to the situation for them to inject fluids into life-forms, or for them to relay radio transmissions, then they can help."

Nick paused for a second, rubbing his chin. "Can they intercept and rebroadcast the particular frequency of a radio transmission?"

It wasn't long before Nick heard a Hawaiian melody. "Intercept that station and use it to tell

Pete little frog wants him to lose the urn.”



Jay took notice of Daisy removing her robe and displaying her slim body in a bikini, but someone else concerned him more.

The last person Jay wanted to see was a CIA agent ready to spoil a nice day out on the big pond, but a short distance away Dirk waggled his finger.

Jay went over to find out what the guy wanted.

“What’s with the blond? You should be with Miss Bennington.”

Jay preferred to be with Nitay. Even if she had spied on him, she was mature for her age, with wits to match her good looks, and she had even made him forget about Suzy. “Sorry, sir, I’m just here to enjoy my vacation.”

“Is that so?”

The frown on Dirk’s face indicated he had something unpleasant to reveal. He handed Jay a paper.

Jay read it. It laid down the law. Dirk was now the investigator in charge of the hummer’s breach.

“If Miss Bennington shows her face, find out what she knows. Her boyfriend was killed. She’s now our only lead.”

**Jay rolled his eyes upward and bit his lip.
“Yes sir.”**

Jay would’ve welcomed her company; now he didn’t.



Hungry for breakfast and ready to learn what Peggy, Ken and Jay meant to Nick, Nitay left the three-wheeler behind to take a taxi to Kaneohe.

When she was dropped off at the yacht club she started up the walkway, but she soon stopped in her tracks, seeing Dirk walking towards her.

He eyed her with a smirk on his face when he came up close to her. Nothing was said, but his presence alone was enough to stir up the fire within her.

She continued on her way, suspicious of what he was up to. By the time she made it to the pool she had second thoughts about a date with Jay.

Besides Dirk having been here just before her, why was that young, tall and slim blond present?

“Nice outfit,” Jay commented.

“Better than the white dress?”

“It was nice, especially on you.”

“Thanks,” she said with a troubled mind.

She didn't feel out of place in Navy blue shirt-pants and a white blouse with yellow spots, but her outfit didn't match up with the blond's bikini. “I see you found someone else to sail with.”

“She's here to find her boyfriend.”

Jay winked at the blond. “Did you see a husky fellow with curly, black hair?”

The blond walked up to Jay and stared him in the face. “I think he's in the upstairs restaurant. Thanks for the help.”

Her temper seemed to flare up as she walked away.

The blond's angry manner told it all. Nitay didn't buy into Jay's ploy. She had a notion to ditch the two-timer.

Despite Pete's disapproval of Nitay's adventure with innocent bystanders at the least, Nitay had issues to resolve. She'd take on the two-timer for Nick's sake.

She walked over to a table where Peggy sat. "Thanks for the invite."

"Whoa. I figured you declined it since I got no reply."

Nitay grimaced. "Whoops. Sorry. I forgot."

Jay came up behind her. "No problem. Let's enjoy the day."

Jay escorted her in front of Ken and Peggy across the grassy shore to a dock where a couple kayaks rested between sailboats. A backpack lay inside one of two cockpits in each kayak.

Jay reached down, picked up a backpack and handed it to Ken. "Change of plan. How about a picnic on Chinaman's Hat?"

Ken nodded. After he seated Peggy he strapped on the other backpack and got into the other cockpit.

After Jay and Nitay boarded their kayak they led the way, paddling all the way to Chinaman's Hat, a big enough island for a road and vehicles, and for a picnic table in a grassy area along with palm trees. However, in no way did she feel secure without Pete and Toenehe's watchful presence.



With the orange suit back on, Nick spotted the white, Ford van up the road. The helicopter on patrol also appeared. Fortunately it continued on its way before the van pulled into the driveway.

When the van stopped before him, Nick stared into the barrel of a 44-magnum.

Nick put his hands up. "It's me, little frog."

Pete's jaw dropped. "Who's in the box?"

Nick made his way to the back of the van and opened the doors. "Replicator . . . it's okay to get out."

The replicator pushed the top of the box open and sat up.

"Sorry about the finger," Pete said.

"No problem," Nick replied. "It'll grow another."

Pete gazed at the spaceship, and then faced Nick. "Nitay plans to go to the Spratly Islands to check out General Wong. It's a trap for sure."

"Stop her."

"You know how determined she is to get Dirk."

Nick walked about. "Why'd she go to Kaneohe?"

“She received an invitation from a Peggy Banks to sail with her and a couple Navy officers. I probably shouldn’t have told her about it.”

“That’s okay. The spaceship will transform the replicator as a lookalike of one of those Navy guys. It’ll then need to catch a flight. Take it to the airstrip at Kaneohe. After you drop it off you can look after Nitay.”



The peaceful scenery was perfect for a picnic, but Nitay feared an assassin could be lurking nearby.

After they had a sandwich, along with some chips and dip, Peggy reached inside her purse for a pint of vodka. She held it up. “Swig, anyone?”

Ken sampled it. Nitay, along with Jay, declined the offer.

When Jay nodded his head while winking at Ken, Nitay figured she was about to be told how Jay connected with Nick and Dirk.

Ken reached for binoculars as he rose to his feet and looked down at Peggy. “Do you think those two will behave themselves while we climb the rock for a birds-eye view of the area?”

Peggy took a camera out of a bag and smiled. “Will you?”

After Ken and Peggy strolled off together, Jay moved closer to Nitay.

An eerie feeling came over her. She had trusted this Navy officer the other night, but she now wondered if he'd lead her into an ambush?

He edged closer to her side. “I hear you’re a reporter. I know something that’ll interest you.”

“Like what?”

“I’ll fill you in sometime this evening.”

She preferred to hear it now. “I’m off to Taiwan tonight, but might have a little time when I get back.”

He looked up at the sky. “You must be about to take on a dangerous assignment.”

“How would you know?”

“You seem nervous.”

Did he spy information for Dirk’s sake? That seemed a likely possibility, but she’d string along with him. “You’re right. I’m about to enter the lion’s den.”

He grinned. “The lion’s den? Don’t put me on.”

“A General Wong set up camp on one of the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea.”

Jay raised his eyebrows. “I was briefed on that hot spot. Better enjoy the good life while you can.”

“How do I do that?”

“With dinner and champagne, my treat.”

“You’re sweet.”

“I hope to be a lot more.”

The two-timer moved fast. As he pulled her to him, she rested her head on his chest, but she was cautious not to become lost in the moment. She expected him to behave himself and reveal something pertinent to her cause.

Hum – hum – hum.

She quickly sat up. “Isn’t that a hummingbird?”

She remembered Dirk saying Nick shouldn't have known about the hummingbirds. What was it with them? Could it be a secret military project that could help her?

“It’s more of a pest,” Jay replied.

“I should be getting back.”

He held her hand. “Do you have to go?”

“I have something important to do.”

“Need help?”

She closed her eyes in remembrance of Nick. He still had a special place in her heart. “I worked with someone special, but something happened to him. I shouldn’t be here. It’s dangerous for both of us.”

“Danger’s my occupation,” he said with a sincere sounding voice.

She might as well find out what he had to offer. “What would you do if you came onto information that could determine the destiny of millions of lives?”

Something else grabbed his attention. “That’s an Allen’s hummingbird. I’ve seen them in LA. See

the green back and forehead, and the iridescent red and orange throat.”

“How about my question?”

“I’d let my commanding officer know about it.”

She moaned. “What if you don’t have proof and you’re unable to convince your higher chain of command of what you know is true?”

“Why’s that my problem?”

“Because you know something they don’t,” she said loud and clear.

“Like what?”

“Like something that’ll cost countless lives.”

He let go of her hand and stood up on his feet. “Why can’t I just report what I know and trust them to take responsibility for it?”

“Say you’re convinced they’ll mishandle the information. Would you still tell them about it and walk away or take charge to save lives?”

“Nice way to put it. What else you have?”

She hesitated. He seemed too eager for other information than what she wanted him to know. Oh well, she’d test him. “I don’t want to involve you in something that could cost you your life unless I’m sure you know what it’s about.”

He rubbed her back. “My heart’s already involved, honey.”

She would’ve enjoyed the rub, but she had something important for him to hear. “Is that all it is to you?”

He stood up. “I’m serious about you and your cause. Honest.”

She stood up on her feet. “Okay, don’t say I didn’t warn you. It concerns organized crime,

China and rogues in our government.”

He grimaced. “That’s heavy. Isn’t our government already on it?”

Although he could be a liability to himself as well as to her, she still decided to chance it. “Beware of Dirk Slubona.”

He raised his eyebrows, as revealing surprise. “You don’t trust CIA?”

“Not when they’re involved with criminal activity.”

“Maybe it’s just undercover stuff.”

She was determined to put his skepticism to rest and to win him to her side. “Suppose you’re a CIA boss. Criminals inform you of terrorist plots. When your informants do illegal things, you look the other way. The more you’re involved with them the more they control your success. They become both a threat and a source. Other agents become

aware of it, but are powerless to stop it.”

He grunted. “I’d just contact a higher authority.”

She stared him in the face. “What good does that do when the higher authority trusts you to deal with your own informants? If other agents gather evidence against you, you just eliminate them with bogus assignments.”

Jay pointed at the iridescent pollinator. “You know, it’s odd for that hummingbird to hang around where there’re no flowers. The poor thing must be confused.”

She was finally convinced an ordinary hummingbird would be more helpful to her cause than would this guy. She now realized she should've trusted Pete's wisdom.

Lost in Flight

Nick sat leaning back against a wall as he watched a video of the Ford van. It parked at the Kaneohe Yacht Club alongside two Marines in a jeep.

“We are here for Lieutenant Plaey,” one Marine said. *“Do you know him?”*

Pete pointed to the rear of the van.

“Sit in the jeep,” Nick instructed the replicator.

It came out from the back of the van as the replica of Lieutenant Plaey and walked over to and sat down in the backseat of the jeep.

The jeep was driven to the Kaneohe airstrip. Nick watched as the replicator got out of it and boarded the osprey.

What Nick needed now for his plan to work was Lieutenant Noble sitting alongside the replica of Lieutenant Plaey, but another video indicated

that that plan was in jeopardy.

Nick grimaced at the sight of Jay and Nitay on their way to shore, well ahead of Ken and Peggy, who seemed too inebriated to paddle themselves forward.

“Need to sedate a pilot,” Nick yelled.

“A hummingbird drone will soon comply with your request.”

After a couple minutes Nick let out a sigh of relief. It hadn't taken the drone long to get there. Jay was already slumped down in the kayak with his eyes closed.

Nick expected Nitay to wait for help, but she didn't. She leaned one way, held her legs out on the other side, as for balance, and lowered them into the water in a way she was careful not to tip the kayak over. She then waded through hip deep water towards Jay.

After she checked him out she waded back to the other cockpit and managed to climb back into the kayak. As she paddled, Ken and Peggy nearly caught up with her, but she soon increased her lead.

Nick swatted the air with a clenched fist. Nitay sedated would risk her life along with Jay's. Ken, if sober enough, would likely switch places with Nitay, but the plan was doomed if the Marines identified Jay and the replicator both as Jay.

Another problem came into view. Someone excessively equipped with a scuba-diving suit and goggles for waist-deep water paddled a kayak straight towards Jay and Nitay's. Closer scrutiny revealed a gun lay beside the scuba diver.

“Need another sedative,” Nick yelled.

“The spaceship has no more sedatives prepared at this time.”

Nick could only watch and listen as the assassin closed in for the kill.

The assassin stopped paddling, reached for his gun and pointed it at Nitay, who had reached for her purse and held it in front of her chest.

Nick, knowing a purse wouldn't stop a bullet, closed his eyes and heard a pop. He was reluctant to open his eyes, feeling helpless, but even in fear of the worst he knew he had to sooner or later.

Surprise. Nitay still sat upright in the kayak. It was the assassin who floated in the water. Nitay must've shot him instead. She must've had a small gun in her purse.

Nick was pleased. She had learned more than he had given her credit for.

Another thought persuaded Nick to slap his forehead. Even though he was pleased that Nitay hadn't been killed, Jay first ashore still put a glitch

in Nick's plan. Marines were at shore in wait, and Nitay was still too far ahead of Ken and Peggy for them to catch up with her. It was too late for him and Netone to remedy the situation.

"He passed out," Nitay shouted, as Marines waded in the water towards the kayak.

When they reached Jay they examined him. *"He is okay,"* one of them said, *"I will make sure he reports to duty."*

Nick watched attentively as a big Marine lifted Jay out of the boat and carried him on a shoulder over to the backseat of the jeep.

Jay was transported to the same helicopter the replicator had been taken to. It took flight as soon as he was carried aboard and the area was cleared for takeoff.

Another video showed Peggy and Ken had made it to shore.

"A Marine took Jay to the airstrip," Nick heard Nitay say.

"Thanks," replied Ken. *"I will check it out."*

Nick jerked his fist in front of his face. His plan was sure to fall apart if Ken's inquiry reached all the way to the Ronald Reagan for the discovery of two Jays.

Nick had another worry. Nitay had gotten into a taxi. He feared she'd be on her way to the Spratly Islands.

"Send another radio message to Pete," he said to Netone.

"What message do you want me to send to him?"

"Warn him that Nitay has flown away from the nest. If he can't stop her he needs to inform Scott Braidy she'll arrive at the airport disguised with a blond wig and fake glasses."

To aid in her arrest was the only way Nick knew how to save her life.



Befuddled was Jay when he woke up and saw someone in a flight suit across from him with their head bent over and hidden inside a helmet, but he figured he had finally been called to carry out a secret mission.

It had to be Ken inside the other suit, still as could be. It bothered Jay. “Hey guy, I hope a birdie didn’t overdose you with a sedative.” Jay thought to reach over and find out, but the pilot spying him caught his attention.

“Boy do you two look alike,” the pilot said.

“What’s going on?”

“All I know is you two have been called to duty. Your flight suit’s on the floor beside you.”

Jay slipped his flight suit on over his casual attire as the chopper landed on the flight deck of the Ronald Reagan. He then hurried to the hummer. As he climbed the nylon ladder he looked back and saw the other fellow take his time, barely managing to climb aboard. Several seamen also approached, waving their hands frantically.

The dome suddenly closed over the cockpit as rotor blades hummed. The hummer soon lifted up into the sky. Whatever those other seamen wanted to know would have to wait. Someone else obviously controlled the jet.

Surely orders of his mission would be given to him while he was on his way to carry them out. As rotor blades retracted into their compartments and the hummer soared through the air, his mike remained silent.

Something familiar caught Jay's attention. That hummingbird thing again kept pace with the hummer.

Could it be caught up in a wind current? Not likely. Maybe Earth was visited. Na. It had to be a mirage, new technology, or something else other than a probe from an alien from another planet.

The hummer suddenly dove through clouds. A large body of sky blue water soon appeared in their place. As he headed towards it, closer and closer, the control stick wouldn't move. He never thought it'd happen. Had that hacker, that prankster gone too far? He yelled into the mike, "Mayday, mayday, mayday."

He flipped switches while in wait for a response. He heard nothing.

A red light flashed. Oh no! It indicated the hummer was armed with a nuclear missile.

Was this the secret mission he had expected to be assigned to? Why hadn't he been briefed on it?



Nick was finally able to take his eyes off the video and relax after the hummer leveled out to skip whitecaps. That was the second time it nearly plummeted into the ocean, but to fly low under radar made sense. That creature had more wits about it than Nick was inclined to give it credit for.

“I will now relocate to an uninhabited island,” the creature said by way of its hologram.

Nick watched as the spaceship lifted up and vanished out of sight within a second or two.

Nick had a remote for visual and audio to see and hear images sent by drones, but he no longer had a cloaking shield to hide his presence. He hurried to drive away the military jeep he had

taken to get to the house.

A helicopter appeared on his left when he pulled out onto the road to the right. He floored the pedal and created a cloud of dust that hid him from the chopper's birds-eye view.

He now needed to hide somewhere in open surroundings from a chopper. Not even a thicket of small pine trees would suffice. He stomped on the brake, ducked down and grabbed a hold of the bottom of the seat as the jeep slid off the road sideways into a slope and rolled over onto its top.

The chopper hovered for awhile. After it left, Nick crawled out from beneath the jeep and ran back to the house before a posse could discover his whereabouts.



The President stared out the window of Air Force One. One final view of Andersen Air Force Base was more pleasant than what he expected to hear from a solemn-face admiral sitting beside him.

Admiral Young lowered his cell phone from his ear. “The hummer took flight.”

“Wasn’t it grounded?”

“Someone sent fake orders in my name.”

The President quickly stood up on his feet and paced about. “Who took it?”

“Lieutenant Plaey and someone that looks like him. Apparently he has a double.”

The President stood staring down at the Admiral. “They just decided to take a joy ride?”

“They pulled off the caper of all capers.”

The President slumped back into his chair. How to explain to congress an aircraft critical to

security lost to China, Russia, or possibly even to terrorists wasn't something he looked forward to. His trip to Beijing had turned into a disaster for sure. "I wonder what China knows about it."

"You should abort."

"What about the media?"

"Your life takes priority. Whoever took the hummer could come after us. It has stealth capabilities and blackbird speed, and we don't have anything fast enough to stop it other than our missiles, and they're most likely ineffective."

"What do you suggest?"

"Fighters are on their way to escort us, but I doubt China will allow them inside its airspace."

The President gazed out the window at the ocean. "Especially if it has the hummer."

Taiwan would be a safe place to hold up if we could make it there in time.”

George barged into the room. “Mr. President, they didn’t just steal an aircraft; it’s armed with a nuclear warhead.”

The President rolled his eyes up. “More fake orders?”

George walked up to the President. “I presume Admiral Young has authorization to launch missiles. It needs to be taken out before it reaches China’s airspace.”

The President clamped his jaw tight. “I knew I shouldn’t have vetoed that last welfare bill.”

“This is serious,” George said. “They attacked with anthrax. They killed to steal a warhead. They’re determined to assassinate a president.”

Liz rushed into the room. “We've been notified by someone close to Miss Bennington that she is on

her way to the airport. They could be on our side.”

George leaned towards the President. “They must suspect we’re onto her and don’t want her followed. I’ll check with my man in Honolulu and let him decide how to handle it.”

The Admiral addressed the President. “Don’t worry. Those hills in Taiwan are well fortified. They’ll also provide sufficient accommodations.”



Dirk, in one of his better moods, took his usual seat across from Eddy.

“You seem pleased,” Eddy said. “I take it my man took out the babe.”

Dirk smirked as he shook his head. “He’s on his way to the morgue.”

“That pleases you?”

Dirk nodded. “Bugging the backpacks paid off. She’s headed for General Wong’s camp on one of the Spratly Islands.”

“She’s dead meat,” Eddy said with a tone of anger in his voice. “I’ll send Tony Hermes to make sure.”



Jay contemplated his options. He could eject near an island, but even if he managed to somehow bail out safely at this speed, who’d find him. Stranded and lost somewhere in the Pacific was the last place he preferred to be. His best chance of survival was to remain seated for the hummer to run out of fuel and glide on the ocean surface wherefore it’d stop and float. He’d then wait for his rescuers to find him, if they could.

He was aware the hummingbird still kept pace, but he couldn’t imagine how. It was unbelievable,

even in view of the rapid advance in technology of the new millennium.

“Little sister okay?”

He heard no reply from Ken. He pushed the released button to loosen the seat straps. He then pushed on the floor walking his seat backward. He reached to take hold of a hand and felt no pulse from it. He closed his eyes tight. Apparently Ken's body hadn't survived a sedative given to him.

Jay blamed himself for Ken's fate. He'd been warned by Dirk. It seemed obvious Nitay was their enemy. Was Peggy, too?”

Hours passed. It seemed the hummer would cruise forever, but an island suddenly appeared out of nowhere. What'd be on it so detrimental to security that it'd require a nuclear warhead to defend against? Had he become a sacrificial lamb on a failed mission?

A crash appeared imminent. He preferred the ejection button, even at this high speed and low altitude, but like everything else, it didn't work.

He covered his face with his arms to cushion the impact of a crash. What the heck? Everything mysteriously stopped. The whole world stopped.

He sat bewildered in his seat not knowing whether he was suspended in midair or on the ground. He waited for whatever force brought him here to come forth and justify itself. He waited and waited while watching the sun go down.

He finally tired of his wait, but he had no desire to explore in the dark. Fatigued by all his worry of the unknown, he unstrapped himself, made his way to the rear of the jet, grabbed two parachutes from the back of the seats, laid out one to lay on, and put the other one down for a pillow. He knew not what else

to do but to lie down and close his eyes to give way to irresistible sleep. He could only hope everything in the morning would be of a better light.

Alien Island

When Jay woke to the morning light he noticed the dome over the cockpit had opened up. He rose to his feet and gazed down at the lifeless figure behind the pilot seat. He didn't even want to make sure it was Ken in that flight suit.

Opting to explore the island before checking out the body, he pried open a long, narrow door on the floor and picked up a M16 and a clip of ammo from the compartment. He shoved the clip into the semiautomatic. He put his arm through the strap and hung the M16 on his shoulder. He then picked up a

flare gun and made his way to the front cockpit.

He pulled the nylon ladder from the floor and fed it over the edge to the ground. He then climbed down to the ground.

The hummer had landed on its belly. He could see only a few palm trees. The dry sand indicated the island at high tide was about three acres.

He hooked the flare gun onto the wing and turned to check out the island.

When he walked forward a few steps to find out what little he could of his surroundings, a giant metallic, silvery egg-shape object miraculously appeared before him. Beside it was a missile.

He heard a thump behind him. He turned around ready to fire his rifle. He gazed instead at a figure of a man in the other flight suit.

With the helmet off the head, the face was visible, but it wasn't Ken's. Jay recognized his

own image. Had he crashed after all? Could he be with his doppelganger on an island paradise between worlds?

Jay pointed his semiautomatic at his double, but it held no weapon and showed no aggressive mannerism whatsoever. Jay lowered his rifle and shouted, “Who are you?”

“I am the replica of Lieutenant Jay Plaey.”

“Come again.”

“I replicate life forms from DNA by way of adaptable synthetic organs, electrical fluids and organic computer chips. I am now the replica of you.”

“Just tell me something useful to my situation?”

“I can answer your questions if you ask me more specifically what you need to know useful to your situation.”

Jay pointed his weapon at the replicator.
“First question: You’re the spitting image of me,
but where’d you get that haircut?”

The replicator neither changed expression
nor position, nor did it alter its tone of voice. “I am
able to replicate animate life forms in their present
state of existence.”

That told Jay something, but was it useful?
“Second question: Can I call you Jayplicator?”

“It is permissible to call me whatever you
prefer.”

“Now we’re getting somewhere. Who you
with?”

“Besides myself there is the life-form
navigator in charge.”

“Where is it?”

“Netone waits inside the spaceship.”

“What the hell do you want with me?”

“We do not want any kind of hell from you. We need your assistance to help us acquire more fuel.”

Jay let his assault rifle dangle. “Take what you want. I don’t have much left.”

“What is the fuel you refer to that you tell me to take?”

“The fuel in my jet. What else?”

“We do not need jet fuel. We need more radioactive material than what was contained in the missile.”

“Call the US Navy. It’ll get you some.”

“The US Navy is a danger to our existence. I prefer to ask you to help us obtain the nuclear fuel from a particular place.”

Jay eyed the Jayplicator. “Where might that be?”

“There is plutonium west of us.”

Jay stood in a daze. “You want me to help you invade China?”

“We do not intend to invade China. We detect plutonium is present on one of the Spratly Islands.”

Nitay had said she planned to visit one of those islands. Why go there? Was she in cahoots with General Wong and terrorists? Had she used him? Jay now had interest in this alien’s request, no matter how bizarre it sounded.

Jay walked over to and laid his rifle up against a palm tree. “How can I help?”

“We need you to negotiate with the people on the Spratly Island and acquire from them the plutonium they now have.”

“I can’t go anywhere without jet fuel. You don’t use it, but my aircraft does.”

“Your fuel need was miscalculated by your fellow human. His plan could now fail because of human error.”

That information alerted Jay to the possibility of an invasion already in progress. This robot wasn't likely to reveal military strategy, but he had to try. “Before I help you I need the names of all of us you conspire with.”

“I am instructed not to divulge names of human allies.”

The Jayplicator hardly moved. Its inhuman mannerism remained evident. Even its eyes didn't follow Jay as he walked about. It did seem robotic, but Jay was determined to get useful information from it. “How do you propose I obtain this nuclear fuel for you?”

“We have advanced knowledge to offer in exchange for fulfilling our requests.”

Providing terrorists with advanced knowledge didn't set well with Jay. "Why don't you just take it from them?"

"We are not equipped for battle. We are not invasive. We are evasive."

"I don't buy that. You captured me. Why are you here?"

The Jayplicator remained silent.

Jay walked over to and stood beside the hummer. A wind could easily blow this light metal aircraft away. He needed to secure it.



When he had heard from the video of his fuel-miscalculation, so frustrated was Nick that he jerked his hand so hard that the remote slipped out of it and bounced off the floor. All videos disappeared.

How would he get Jay fuel to rescue Nitay? That task seemed hopeless, especially if he had just destroyed the remote.

That missile was another problem. It wasn't part of his plan. The creature must've improvised on its own behalf.

Since the creature was still here on Earth, and since the Jayplicator had asked for Jay's help, Nick reckoned the spaceship needed more nuclear fuel for its trip home.

Nick stared at the remote, hollering, "Netone."

Netone's hologram appeared before Nick. "Why do you say my name?"

"How long do you plan to stick around?"

"I do not plan to stick to anything around here."

“We made a bargain. Aren't you going to stay and honor it?”

“I would honor our agreement for you to help me obtain more nuclear fuel. Plutonium is scarce on Kiron. I prefer to have more of it. However, since you did not ensure the hummer aircraft had enough jet fuel for further venture, you are not able to help me obtain more plutonium. Since the warhead contained enough of it for the spaceship to transport me home, our agreement is no longer acceptable to me.”

The creature couldn't leave Earth at a more desperate time for Nick. He had to convince it to stay. “Hold on. The deal was I'd get you fuel if you get me out of my precarious situation. I'm still in a bind.”

“Why are you still in a bind?”

“I need to rescue my daughter before she's killed.”

“Can you not replace her with another daughter?”

“No! I’ll get the hummer fuel. You’ll get your plutonium.”

“The longer I stay here and consume fuel the less chance I have to return home. I will only extend our contract five more days.”

Nick grimaced. Only five days was hopeless.



One more tie-down to go. Jay pulled the last stake and cable from out of the wing. He stuck the stake into the ground. He picked up the sludge hammer and pounded on the stake. After it was two feet into the ground he placed a bar inside the round hole at the top of the stake. He then pounded on the bar to flange the bottom of the stake.

With the hummer secure, he gazed at the spaceship. Part of it opened down into a plank slightly tilted to the ground. A dark green creature came out through the door and propelled itself forward by way of eight springy tentacles. They moved in sequence smoother than that of a four legged animal, as four pushed forward and four landed in the manner of a spider.

Jay noticed tiny orange spots within the creature's skin. It smelled something like rotten eggs.

It stopped; the orange became yellowish; the putrid smell slowly changed to a pleasant perfume. It resembled an octopus or a squid.

Jay rushed to grab his rifle. He pointed it at the creature. He noticed it breathed through small vents plentiful on its body. As he circled it, one of two eyes closed while another one opened. It seemed to have peripheral vision, as its eyes

didn't turn to see. He counted eight eyes and eight mouths.

He backed up, but the creature followed. Its legs and tentacles easily moved in any direction without any need to turn its body.

"I'd shake your hand if you had one," Jay offered.

It reshaped the tip of one of its tentacles into the form of a fingerless hand. "Greetings, Lieutenant Jay Plaey. I am Netone. We can now touch each other without harm. Our bacteria have been neutralized so that mine will not overcome yours."

Jay passed on the handshake.

The creature didn't wear clothes, but neither did it reveal private parts. Jay suspected it could also be a computerized robot. "Don't you wear clothes where you come from?"

“Because my body is acclimated to its climate, I do not need to wear clothes on my home planet. Why do you wear them in weather that is relatively warm to you?”

“I’m just more comfortable with them, especially as a prisoner in front of a freak.”

“You are free to leave this island.”

Jay pointed his rifle at the creature. “That’s your story, bud. Prove it. Call for my rescue.”

“Your rescue is not beneficial to my interest.”

Jay grinned. “That’s what I thought. Is being filled with lead beneficial to your interest?”

“It is not.”

“How many freaks did you bring with you?”

“I brought only my replicator and small drones with me.”

Jay couldn't believe it'd travel such a long distance by itself. More likely it was a spy for a large evasion force. No telling how many humans could be replicated by now.

He leaned forward to see what was inside one of its mouths and noticed its teeth were small and roundish, not like those of a vicious meat-eating animal, but that was expected, as sharp teeth were the primary tools of survival for less intelligent animals. "What happens if you don't make it back to Kiron?"

"I will be replaced."

"How's that?"

"I am a clone. This is my four-hundredth and twentieth year of existence. Some of us are much older. We live more than seven thousand of your years if we do not hibernate. Hibernation further prolongs our life spans."

“It might if you let me go.”

“I do not imprison you.”

“How do you know so much about us? You speak good English, even if it’s a little too proper for the average Joe.”

“My spaceship computer deciphered radio signals from Earth to provide me with knowledge of your civilization.”

“Did you or someone else contact me days ago?”

“I contacted you when you were in your aircraft. Your fellow humans contacted you as well.”

That literally correct answer told Jay something. This creature had spied on him. Others of its kind could’ve as well. “How long have you been here?”

“I have been here on Earth since I arrived a week ago.”

“Nobody learns English that fast.”

“The spaceship computer deciphered it within one Earth day. I was, with the assistance of food for thought, able to master your language in one more day even though it is inconsistent and more difficult to learn than are most other languages.”

Jay lifted his eyebrows. “Why’s that?”

“Why, for instance, do you pronounce each letter e in the name Toenehe with the sound of the letter a, as in the word a, and in the names Jay and Nitay?”

“That’s Hawaiians for you. How would you do it?”

“As it sounds in name, I would spell my name with the letter e after the letter n, and I would not include a second, silent e at the end of my name.”

“Then you confuse tone with ton. What else you don’t like?”

“Why do you pronounce the letter ‘i’ in the names Nitay and Nick different than you do in the name Mike?”

Jay kicked up dirt. “Just do. Why’d you bring me here?”

“I brought you here to obtain your assistance.”

“I don’t assist the enemy.”

“I am not your enemy. What is your concern?”

“You’ll conquer us.”

“I am not programmed to conquer.”

Jay turned away to not reveal his smirk. “To bargain for nuclear fuel is ridiculous. You might as well let me go. I can’t help you.”

“You are free to leave if you are able to.”

Jay jerked his fist forward in front of his chest. “You got me there. You also got me here. Now what?”

“Would you like to know more about me?”

Jay’s eyes opened wide. “Bring it on.” He figured anything he learned of the enemy could be of strategic importance.

The creature propelled its body back to the spaceship. One of its tentacles stretched into the spaceship and brought out a container held in a newly formed hand. When the creature returned, it opened the container and showed it to Jay.

Jay examined it. He smelled it. “It looks like coconut.”

“It is a replica of coconut that is computerized with knowledge.”

“You eat it.”

The creature put several chunks of the substance in one of its mouths. As it chewed with that mouth, it said with another, “You should only consume a little of it at a time. If it replaces too much of your blood sugar it will cause you to become confused and weak.”

“You don’t seem to have any trouble with it.”

“My brains have more capacity to assimilate data than does your single one.”

The creature handed the rest of the coconut treat to Jay. He put it in his pocket and found his way back to the hummer.

He’d play it safe and pass on the coconut.

As a soldier trained to defend his country it was his duty to free himself and capture the creature, or even kill it.

Confronting the Enemy

Neither a spoken word of the people nor anything written on signs and buildings along the main street of Tainan did Nitay understand, but at least the flute-like music sung in the Chinese language sounded pleasantly different.

Chinese décor, too, was fabulous. Buddha dolls and paintings along with bamboo-framed paper lamps, fans and the like, decorated with Chinese writing, filled the multitude of shops.

Move-ability on foot was something else. Cars and scooters crowding the sidewalks along with food stalls made it nearly impossible to walk past them.

She bartered for a beaded necklace at a small shop open to the outside. She then made her way back to the hotel restaurant where she sat in one of

those smaller chairs at a table.

She sipped tea while waiting for someone to come. The wait seemed to last forever, but it'd be worth it to find out whatever she could of General Wong's involvement with Dirk.

“You wouldn't be Nitay Bennington, would yaw?” an unfamiliar voice bellowed.

Nitay turned her head to see who had spoken those words. They had come from a short, stocky man with a horrendous birthmark on his face.

“I'm Tony Hermes.”

She shrugged.

“I'm here to help you with your interview.”

She stared at him. “Why?”

He held up a camera. “I'm your other half. General Wong wants to show off his little island

in style.”

She had been told a Chinaman would escort her. There was no mention of a cameraman.

He stood leaning over the table and grinning. “Catch the word. A Navy pilot flew away with the Navy’s prize toy.”

“Would that happen to be Lieutenant Plaey?”

Tony straddled his legs to sit down in a chair turned backwards. He leaned forward and braced himself with his elbows on the table and his fists up against his chin. “Yeah.”

That news stunned her. “He’s missing? Are you sure?”

“The rumor is he defected to China.”

Her eyes opened wide.

“They also think you’re involved. I’m surprised you haven’t been arrested for murder, but you are

damn hard to find.”

Those words of choice from a cameraman puzzled her, but it was his allegation that put the grease on the fire within her. “If you mean the guy in the kayak, it was self-defense.”

Tony stared at her. “What you know about the pilot?”

“I just tried to find out what he knew or didn’t know about my affairs. I shouldn’t have involved him in them.”

Tony’s face nearly touched hers. “You must deal with dangerous people. Does that mean I’m in danger?”

She leaned back from him. “I’d leave while you still can.”

He sat up straight and grinned. “Na. Don’t like to be bored. That’s why I’m your cameraman.”

She spoke barely above a whisper, “My chance of survival is slimmer than none. Yours could be, too.”

A short, round middle-aged Chinaman in suit and tie approached them. “You Miss Bennington?”

“I am. Who are you?”

“I Cheng, take you to hotel where stay. You two guests until General Wong come from Beijing. I ask only one favor. Please no bring cell phone or device General Wong’s enemies can track and monitor. They no like his great service to China.”

“I left mine at home,” Nitay replied.

Tony handed his to Cheng.

“We go now.”

They followed Cheng outside to a limousine. She seated herself behind the driver and listened by way of her special earrings as Tony continued

on with Cheng around the limo to the passenger side.

“I’m here to make sure she doesn’t make it back,”
Tony said.

“Patience,” Cheng replied. “We use her.”

“Let me know when you’re done. I’ll complete my mission and be out of your way.”

“She here for us. No interfere.”

“Don’t worry. I’ll make sure your propaganda gets on the news before I do her in.”

“We control situation. Find computer with her text message. She no know we reply.”

When her door locked automatically she didn’t know what to do except to play along and escape at the first opportunity.



The long rest to think things out hadn't provided Jay with any solutions to his problems. He still remained trapped on an island with a strange creature from out of this world.

Jay clutched his assault rifle close to his chest after he climbed down the nylon ladder.

The creature sat outside the spaceship. Jay walked towards it. Inside the open door of the big egg appeared three-dimensional life-like holographic images of an old Looney Tune cartoon of the Coyote and Roadrunner.

He pointed his rifle, but didn't pull the trigger. He wanted to know why killing the creature seemed too easy.

He thought it odd the creature allowed him to keep his weapon. He decided to find out what he was up against. He approached with his rifle ready to fill the creature full of holes.

“I am baffled as to how these animals defy the laws of physics. How does the Roadrunner move at lightning speed and how does the Coyote remain alive after being smashed flat by a boulder and blown apart by dynamite?”

Jay stood beside himself. Did this creature just play dumb? “It’s only make-believe. Where’s your imagination?”

“We do not pretend on Kiron. Fiction could create confusion among us in a way it would lead us to chaos.”

Jay reckoned information could be vital to national security if he lived to pass it on.

With two of the creature's eyes pointed at Jay and two of its others watching cartoons, Jay took a moment to think of the best way of going about learning more of this creature’s capability. He reached through the gun’s strap and hung the gun on his shoulder. “How’d I not crash through

the window when my jet stopped so abruptly?”

“Our technology is more advanced than yours is.”

“Obviously. Explain it if you don’t have anything to hide?”

“Everything relates to light.”

Jay circled half way around the creature and noticed its eyes opened and closed for two of them to stay focused on him. “Enlighten me.”

“Your astronomer of the name Copernicus said you do not feel Earth move if all of its parts and you move uniformly together. The spaceship uses a laser to generate force fields to affect all parts of matter the same way. You did not feel any acceleration because you changed uniformly with your immediate environment.”

“I suppose the wonder of the stars kept you entertained during your long, lonesome journey.

“I only slept to preserve energy. I acquired knowledge while in my sleep, and it still seems as though I only left a short time ago.”

“Some nap. Miss much?”

“I dreamed the experience of my journey with the aid of my sensors transferring impulses of starlight to my brains. I now feel the sensation of the dream within myself.”

Jay only wanted to find out if this thing came here for a more devious purpose. “Aren’t you a long way from home?”

“I am according to your standard of measure. Thirty-eight light years is more than two-hundred trillion miles.”

“It must’ve taken you a long time to get here.”

“It took forty years to journey here from Kiron. The spaceship moved at ninety-five one-hundredth light speed.”

“Okay. Forty years here, forty years back. That’s a lifetime, isn’t it?”

“It is a lifetime for you humans. It is only a fraction of one for us.”

Jay rubbed his chin. “I still don’t understand why you venture so far from home by yourself. Isn’t that risky?”

“Long journeys to planets in other solar systems are risky adventures with or without the assistance of other astronauts, but our advanced technology minimizes the risk without any need of assistance from another Kironian.”

“If you’re so advanced, why do you need our plutonium?”

“I used too much of my fuel to move at near light speed and avoid obstacles in space.”

“Why don’t you have it?”

“Plutonium is a scarce commodity rationed among us.”

That bit of information interested Jay. They must’ve come to steal our nuclear waste. Maybe we could trade it to them for something of value. “Why take the risk?”

“The radio waves my spaceship received from Earth indicated human technology is more advanced than ours is, but the information turned out to be incorrect.”

“Why come at all?”

“Our security depends on our knowledge of the world around us. We search the cosmos to discover its nature.”

Jay noticed a jet trail advanced their way. Since it could be his only opportunity to escape, he hurried to grab the flare gun he had attached to a wing. He then ran to the shoreline and pulled the

trigger, but the flare gun didn't fire.

He still had his rifle. He slipped it off his shoulder, pointed it at the creature and pulled the trigger. It also failed to fire.

He tossed it aside. He had suspected right. The creature's advanced technology rendered his weapons useless.

He ran toward the creature and yelled, "Are your stringy tentacles strong enough to keep me from poking your eyes out?"

One tentacle stopped him. Another tentacle wrapped around him several times and together they lifted him up in the air where they rapidly contracted and stretched as they bobbed him up and down. After the shakeup they gently laid him on the ground.

"I can also change the odor of my body to discourage you, or have a drone inject a chemical

into your body to put you to sleep. You are also fortunate I have learned how to neutralize my life supporting bacteria for them not to overtake your life supporting bacteria.”

Jay rolled over pushing up on his knees and then to his feet. He went back to the hummer and climbed the nylon ladder on into the cockpit.

As he sat down in the pilot seat the cockpit dome closed by someone else's doing.

“Greetings Lieutenant Jay Plaey,” he heard. “I’m CIA agent Nick Kusiak. I work in the monitoring room at Hickam.”

Jay pivoted his seat and saw a small hologram of an unshaven man with uncombed gray hair. “You must be the conspirator in cahoots with this thing.”

“Hold on. Trust me. I’m on your side.”

“Like to sink in quicksand? Why was the hummer armed with a nuclear warhead?”

“Sorry. Got to be more careful. The creature used me.”

“Isn’t that the way it works with connivers?”

“We need this creature to save the day. Hope it keeps its word and stays put. That’s for you to find out.”

Jay pivoted his seat back around. He’d play along with his adversaries and find out what they were up to. After all, Dirk had said someone in the monitoring room at Hickam was killed. If Nick was the one referred to, he could be a traitor. He could’ve been replicated. The human population could be filled with replicas by now.



Cavemen never had it as much sumptuousness as was afforded the President’s stay inside a cave in the hills of Taiwan. He noticed Vita and Nature

Light florescent tubes lighted up the room as if it were outdoors. In other areas of the cave gardens flourished. In his private quarters the large, flat computer monitor showed images nearly as if you were there.

The President shook Kung Lu's hand. After the President of Taiwan left the conference room, the President joined Admiral Young, George and Liz at a table.

The President welcomed the expression on George's face. The CIA boss finally seemed upbeat about something. Maybe he finally had good news to report.

George stopped smirking as he opened his mouth and said. "Nitay Bennington was spotted in Tainan with Cheng and a Tony Hermes. She's the young girl that accompanied Lieutenant Plaey at Turtle Bay Resort. She also fled from Kaneohe after she killed someone just before Plaey took

the hummer.”

“Who’s Tony Hermes?”

“He’s been identified as a hit man.”

“Tainan isn’t far from here. Do you think they know about this place?”

“You’re safe in these rocks.”

“Who’s Cheng?”

“China’s good-will ambassador promoting economic relations with Taiwan. He’s also under the command of General Wong. The general uses him for another purpose, no doubt.”

Liz eyed George. “What purpose is that?”

“Kung Lu requests our help,” the President said. “He claims China has taken control of the Spratly Islands.”

The President handed the report to Admiral

Young.

The Admiral glanced at it. “If needed, we already have a battleship and an aircraft carrier outside the port of Kaohsiung.”

Liz shook her head. “I don’t understand Kung Lu’s concern. Oil is the only thing those islands have to offer. Taiwan has gone solar-electric. Didn’t you see all those solar panels on building tops all over the city?”

“Solar-electric won’t cut it,” George barked. “If China invades Taiwan, there’s no oil reserve to back it up.”

“George has a point,” the Admiral said. “China seeks a more favorable economic trade policy with Taiwan and General Wong did set up camp on the Spratly Islands. My guess is China wants to flex its muscle to bring Kung Lu in line.”

“There you have it,” George said. “After China

gets Taiwan it'll go for the Philippines, Hawaii and then us."

The President noticed Liz seemed to have a totally different perspective on the matter. In case she needed encouragement he sent her a wink as he pointed her way. "What say Liz?"

"I doubt China wants nuclear war with another superpower."

George eyed her. "The Chinese are restless. It'd keep them in line and China's alliance with al-Qaeda could give it an advantage."

She combed her hair back with her fingers. "You should back that up with evidence."

"We lost the hummer. The pilot defected to China or was captured. He dated the reporter who contacted Cheng. Cheng is under the command of General Wong. If the head of the communist party isn't involved, a coup could be in the works."

**The President stood up and paced about.
“Would it have enough support?”**

“George nodded. “With war imminent control of the military is up for grabs. With al-Qaeda along for the ride, General Wong could be in business.”

Contacting the President

The warm rays of sunlight penetrating through the window seemed to give Nick energy. He sat by the window to absorb them while watching videos, eating beef jerky and drinking the pineapple juice Pete and Toenehe had brought him.

Netone had assured Nick its alien bacteria wouldn't infect anyone more than two feet away from it. To be sure, Pete sat in a wooden chair on the far side of the room and watched the videos

with Nick while Toenehe stayed outside the house to intercept inquisitive neighbors.

Nick took notice of a particular video of men unloading a cargo truck parked at a warehouse. One of them dropped a box on the ground.

“Idiot,” another one said. *“That could be nerve gas.”*

“There’s something to report,” Nick said.

“To whom?” Pete asked.

Nick rubbed his forehead. “Nick to Netone.”

Netone’s hologram appeared five feet in front of Nick.

“I need to speak with the President?”

“Is there a particular president you want to speak with?”

“Yes,” Nick calmly replied, reminded that

Netone wasn't from around here. "The only one who can help us is the President of the United States of America."

Do you want my spaceship to connect you with your President by way of the telephone?"

"You bet."

"Why do you want me to gamble?"

Nick clapped his hands on the top of his head. "Just connect me with the President."



The First Lady slept on a cot. The President was already up and dressed. He read a message on the computer screen as his first agenda of the day. As soon as he'd return to the Oval Office he'd veto that new welfare bill just passed by the Congress and Senate. The military was now the budget's main priority.

The cordless phone on the desk beeped. The ID window was blank, but the President answered the phone. “This is the President.”

“Hello, Mr. President. I’m special agent Nicolsen Kusiak of the CIA.”

“Hold on. I have a call on another line.”

The President switched to line two, but heard no dial tone. “Hello.”

“I’m still here.”

The President tried line three and heard nothing. He pushed the button to alarm security.

Security rushed into the bedroom.

The First Lady had finally gotten out of bed, but she quickly jumped back into it and covered herself with a blanket.

**“We have a hacker,” the President said.
“Claims to be CIA.”**

Matt pointed his index finger up. “I’ll sound the alert and monitor the call. We’ll trace it if we have time.”

The President nodded. “I’ll make sure you do.” He released the hold. “Why’d you call me?”

“I need to report WMDs to someone who’ll believe me?”

“Why should I believe you?”

“Your bodyguard, Matt, he’ll vouch for me.”

“Okay, Agent Kusiak, I have ears. Let’s hear what you have to say.”

“I’m witness to nerve gas being unloaded at a warehouse in Honolulu. It’s owned by Eddy Moser, who conspires with my boss, Dirk Slubona.”

Matt returned. The President pushed the hold button.

“We could only trace it to a nearby antenna. The only other thing out of the ordinary we could find was a hummingbird.”

“That’s unusual,” the First Lady said.

“What dear?”

“Hummingbirds are indigenous to the American continents.”

“Maybe it’s lost.”

She eyed Matt. “What color is it?”

“Green with either a red or orange neck.”

“That’s a west coast hummingbird.”

The President chuckled. “It must’ve had too much of that California wine.”

The First Lady eyed the President. “Didn’t the flight crew on the hummer claim one kept pace with

them?”

The President faced Matt. “Do you know an Agent Kusiak?”

Matt frowned. “I did. He was cremated the other day.”



With bars on the window of the small room they put her in, and with the door locked and guarded, Nitay was only thankful she was still alive, but she didn't believe she would be for long if she didn't do something drastic.

The door opened. A Chinaman entered with a tray of food. “Here rice, soup, tea. You eat.”

“I need to go to the bathroom.”

“I ask guard.”

He laid the tray on a small table next to the

bed and then went out and closed the door.

She sat on the bed and ate her meal slowly until the door opened. The guard stood at one side of the door and waved her on by. As she entered the hallway, she flopped on the floor and squirmed in a display of agony. “You poisoned me. Get me to the hospital.”

The guard talked in Chinese on his cell phone. After a couple minutes he held her down while another Chinaman stuck a long needle into her upper arm.

It wasn't long until she became drowsy. Nearly passed out she let them reach under her armpits and lift her up. They guided her back to her room and laid her on the bed where she could at least dream of a better life.



As the President sat down at the conference table with Liz, Admiral Young and George, he expected them to make sense of the call. He leaned towards George. “The caller implicated your CIA boss in Honolulu.”

George shook his head. “Maybe he crossed the line to engage in some kind of covert activity. He shouldn’t expect us to bail him out.”

“I doubt we’ll have to. The caller claimed he was Agent Kusiak and knew Matt. Matt said he had been cremated.”

George nodded. “He was the agent infected with some kind of disease.”

“I think we should check this out,” Liz said.

“Why’s that?” George asked.

“An autopsy of Agent Kusiak’s finger revealed some substances that are unknown to science. The cremation could’ve been faked.”

“So what,” George barked. “Who knows what new drugs are on the market these days?”

After George finished staring Liz down, he faced the President. “Agent Slubona claims Agent Kusiak provided the information needed to steal the hummer. It’s armed with a warhead. His accomplices must know our location and want to draw us out with a crazy story.”

The President sneaked peeks at Liz, George and then the Admiral. “What do we know about them?”

“We know a young female shot someone in a kayak,” George offered. “That was just before she paddled an unconscious pilot to the Marines and before they boarded him onto the hummer. Maybe he was unconscious.”

Liz handed the President a report. “This young female to which he refers is Nitay Bennington. We believe the guy she killed was a hired assassin.

She's the daughter of a CIA agent killed five years ago. She became a journalist by way of a small, local paper."

"There you have it," George said.

Everyone stared at him.

"Her father's killed in the line of duty. She becomes a revengeful reporter and ties in with a loved-starved Navy pilot that'd been long at sea."

The President closed his eyes, not wanting to acknowledge what could result next. "And they have a nuclear warhead."

"We need to take that aircraft out before the other side attacks us with it," the Admiral said.

George pounded his fist on the table. "We know this reporter's in Tainan. After she's spotted and captured, let's have the Saudis get what we need out of her."

Liz leaned towards George. “This caller claims WMDs are stockpiled at a warehouse in Honolulu. Agent Kusiak could’ve been investigating a possible drop of them at Kaena Point.”

George turned away from her. “I’ll have my man check it out.”

“Why not have mine back him up?” Liz quickly responded.

Any help to improve the outcome of this precarious situation was okay with the President. A problem with more agents involved in the raid would be that anyone of them might come across sensitive information they might inadvertently leak to the press. George’s man would have to be the one in charge to make sure that didn’t happen.

The Raid

Dirk was usually late to work, but this time he had been troubled all night with the thought of Nitay escaping Wong Island unscathed. He grumbled to the secretary “Good morning.”

“George Kroft wants you to call him.”

Dirk flicked his hand at her as he hurried into his office, grabbed his phone and pushed buttons.

“George Kroft.”

George’s loud voice indicated something urgent was at stake.

“Mr. Kroft, this is Dirk Slubona.”

“Did you lose your pager?”

“Battery must be dead.”

“I have a direct order from the President.

You're to lead the FBI in a raid."

"Terrorists?"

"Why else would I call?"

"I'm already on it, Mr. Kroft."

As soon as Dirk hung up the phone he scanned over the search warrant. Troubled by it, he picked up the phone and punched numbers.

He soon heard a voice say, "Fifth Street Cleaners."

"This is Dirk Slubona. I left my shirt with you yesterday. I need to attend a special occasion. Is it ready?"

"Yes, it is ready."

Dirk passed by the secretary on his way out of the building. "Be back in about an hour."

"Agent Braidy wants to talk to you as soon as

possible.”

“Tell him to get it together.”



That bug Nick had placed in Dirk's phone finally paid dividends. “Get that,” he said to Netone.

“My drones will monitor outside activities in the area of FBI and CIA agents, and I will inform Lieutenant Jay Plaey of them.”



With the sun yet to show itself in the eastern sky, Jay circled the shoreline in hope the raid on the warehouse would verify Nick’s claim.

A video inside the open door of the spaceship caught his eye. He hurried over to check it out. It was of a warehouse surrounded by vehicles and armed

men.

Netone planted its tentacles to Jay's right.

"Hopefully this raid vindicates you and Nick," Jay said to the creature. "I should then be able to get fuel for the hummer and authorization to help rescue Nitay and get the nuclear fuel you need."

"Why is it necessary to save this human? Can you not replace her with another one?"

Jay's mind nearly blanked out of existence, disbelieving what he'd just heard. "How'd you like to be replaced?"

"I would not prefer to be replaced."

Jay leaned forward the creature's way. "Want to replace me?"

"To replace you would be inconvenient for my situation at this time."

"There you are."

“I am here.”

Jay kicked up some dirt. “The question is, why replace you or me?”

“My species will eventually replace me with another clone to sustain our population. If you do not provide the help I need to obtain fuel, then I will seek another human to replace you.”

Jay eyed Netone. “Wouldn’t you feel better about yourself if you just did something good for someone?”

“I do not know why I would feel better about myself if I did something for someone else without compensation for it.”

“Try it. Give and take adds nothing to the total outcome, but to help someone in need even though you know you’ll receive nothing for it in return is a different story. The joy you feel inside yourself for your good deed is its own reward.”

“Do you claim generosity does something for yourself?”

“You got it.”

As much as Jay wanted to believe in Nick and this creature, and to rescue Nitay, the more he learned of its ways the more disappointed he became. It seemed to care only for itself.



Dirk only tolerated Scott’s presence as they followed two FBI agents into the warehouse office. He tapped an agent on the shoulder. “Show us your stuff.”

The agent presented the clerk of Chinese descent with a search warrant. “We have orders to search the building. Would you like to make this easy or would you rather we demonstrate our authority?”

**“We have nothing to hide,” the clerk replied.
“What would you like to see?”**

“Everything in the warehouse for a start,” Dirk barked.

The clerk led them through a corridor to the back door. Outside the door was a metal-chain fence. The clerk unlocked the gate. An agent slid it open. Government vehicles entered from the side street and positioned themselves in the lot before two roll-up doors of the white, concrete building.

Take a couple men back inside to check out those offices upstairs,” Dirk said to Scott.

As Scott and two FBI agents went back through the corridor, the clerk pushed the button on his hand-held device and a metal door opened upward. The clerk pushed another button and the other door opened upward.

CIA agents rushed into the warehouse and pointed their rifles at workers, allowing FBI agents to go in and open containers.

When only stuffed animals and toys were found, merchandise was further examined with a scanner. Still, nothing out of the ordinary was detected.

Dirk gloated. "Sorry to inconvenience you."

"Sorry you no find right toy," the clerk replied.



After he had watched the video of the raid, Jay paced the shoreline to piece his thoughts together. Nothing disappointed him more than for the raid to come up empty.

He felt a gust of wind. He noticed sea waves

were high. Dark clouds gathered in the distance, but instead of taking shelter he just sat with his back against a palm tree.

Netone approached him. “Are you not happy?”

“What’s there to be happy about on this God forsaken island?”

“Why can you not choose to be happy in your present state of emotional existence?”

“Because I can’t accomplish what I want to.”

“Why do you equate happiness with accomplishment?”

“Because when I don’t succeed I get mad, and then get out of my way, victory’s for the taking.”

“Why do you need to be victorious to be happy?”

“Because winning is success. You either win or lose. Losers get to be miserable. Winners get to be happy.”

“After you win a battle and become happy, are you then content with the world?”

“One battle doesn’t win a war, but I’ll celebrate it.”

“Why do you not sustain your happiness?”

“Because I need to fight another battle, like to get married or something.”

“Will matrimony provide you with happiness?”

“It does for some of us. For others it’s a battle.”

“Do you have to win at marriage to become happy?”

“No. The fun’s the battle.”

“Your last answer contradicts your previous ones, but it is also more agreeable to the Kironian way of life.”

Jay grinned. “How’s that?”

“We Kironians merely choose to be happy. Our philosophy is to remain happy, delight in the pursuit of our goals, win or lose, so that our lives mean more than our accomplishments.”

“I think you just want me to stay put on this damn island.”

“You are incorrect. I want you to help me obtain nuclear fuel.”

“Why? Your life means nothing. Your fellow Kironians won’t miss you. They’ll just clone you.”

“What you say is correct.”

Jay reckoned the creature demeaned its own existence. Did it employ humility as psychological

warfare? “Hold on. You are you, not your clone. That’s precious in itself.”

“How is it precious?”

“For one thing, you’ve now become part of my world. Your clone won’t have any recollection of our interactions.”

“You can still interact with my clone.”

“Yeah, sure, but it still wouldn’t be you. Don’t you get it? The meaning of life is determined by however we relate to each other, and by the events we relate to.”

“How does how we relate to each other determine the meaning of life?”

“Our existence requires purpose. The harmony of our goals, even if we suffer together to obtain them, enhances our purpose. Conflict challenges it. Try to replace that with a clone.”

“What does our interaction have to do with the scheme of life in general?”

Jay rubbed the back of his neck as he took a little time to think. “I don’t really know for sure. If we mean well in this lifetime, then maybe there’s hope we’ll mean well in another.”



Smug and confident was Dirk when he reported on the phone to George. “Sorry to disappoint you, Mr. Kroft, but nothing turned up in the raid. One of the guys saw a hummingbird hover nearby, but other than that the place was business as usual. You must’ve gotten a bogus tip.”

“That’s okay. The president thought he had one. Someone in your area had gotten to him with a serious accusation.”

“It probably was this young female reporter we have under radar. She’d implicate me to save herself. I hope you read my report. She conspires with General Wong and probably al-Qaeda as well. You know how it is these days.”

“Yes, I know. Convincing Elisabeth Black of it is a little more difficult. Notify me on whatever comes up. I’ll back you up all the way.”

Dirk reached out with a thumbs-up.



When George entered the room the President set aside a stack of bills that had been faxed over from the Oval Office. He’d look them over later. What George had to report was all that mattered for now. “Yes, George, have good news for me this time?”

George dragged a chair over beside the desk and sat down. “The raid on the warehouse turned up empty. We even tailed my man and couldn’t find any wrong doing on his part.”

The President rubbed his forehead. “I didn’t really think you would. I just needed to be sure.”

“Some reports I’ve received indicate this Nitay Bennington really has it in for him.”

The President paced the floor. “I’m glad your man has been cleared. Just capture the traitors so we can get out of this cave before we’re at war without a clue as to what it’s all about.”

“Mr. Slubona has an operative in position to find out what Miss Bennington is up to.”

“Navy SEALs should be able to help. I’ll notify Admiral Young.”

“My man doesn’t want anyone to interfere with his operatives.”

“You have a lot of confidence in him.”

“No need to worry. He’s as reliable as they come. If he says he has a handle on it, rest assured he does.”

The President nodded. “The opposition does seem to want him out of the way.”

To Save a Chinaman

Dirk grunted after he sat down across from Eddy the table. “Have something that’ll enable me to sleep at night?”

“All the opium you can handle.”

“How about Nitay Bennington’s obituary?”

“General Wong's using her. We don’t want to piss off our main connection to the orient, do we?”

“What does he want with her?”

“Don’t know. Maybe his people took me seriously when I told them she made it big time with CNN. They mentioned something about a good use for publicity.”

“Let that maniac have his day in the hay, but make sure she ends up in a body bag.”

“She done dug her grave. How about Charlie?”

Dirk rolled his eyes up to the right and tapped his fingernails in rhythm on the table. “Won’t talk?”

Eddy shook his head. “He swallowed his tongue.”

“Feed him to the sharks.”



The natural light from the sun seemed to provide Nick with energy, but he sat outside the house with a

troubled mind. His own life was secondary. Most immediate was Nitay's, but his plan to rescue her seemed futile. Since he needed to get fuel to the hummer for it to help, he might as well go there himself. He'd be able to take charge and save his own life in the process.

Dust appeared up ahead. Neighbors must be on their way home. He got up off the edge of the porch and went back into the house.

He pressed on the remote.

Netone's image appeared. "How can I assist you?"

"Hack into military files, again. It's the only way I'll be able to get fuel to the hummer."

A hologram of words appeared one after another before Nick's eyes. He recognized codes. Whoops. The code words 'Top Mission' required a nuclear warhead to accompany the mission. He

shouldn't have had Netone transmit them to the Ronald Reagan.

“I need a helicopter that's called an osprey to standby at the Kaneohe airstrip. Send a Top Secret request to the Com Center at Hickam. Address it as from CIA to General Trump. Use code 'Mission Impossible', authorized by George Kroft. Make sure it states immediate action for emergency situation.”

“The spaceship computer has processed your request.”

“Thanks.”

One of the tiny lights on the remote flickered. He pushed on it with his thumb. A yacht appeared before him and enlarged when he concentrated on it. Four men came into view. One was Charlie. Two men held Charlie while the other pointed a gun at him.

“Charlie’s in trouble,” Nick yelled. “Send hummingbirds.”

Charlie stared to the right of the gunman. When the gunman turned his head to his left Charlie kicked the gunman's arm. The gun fired. When the guy on Charlie's right put his hands to his chest Charlie spun, ducking underneath the guy on his left and ending up behind the guy in using him for a shield.

Charlie, having his arms locked together with the other guy's arms, jumped high enough to press his feet on the railing to shove himself and the other guy forward hard enough to knock the gunman to the deck.

Charlie had somersaulted to have grabbed a hold of the gun hand. As he slid on the deck he karate chopped the gun arm.

The cabin door opened. Charlie picked up the gun and fired at the door. The door closed.

Nick heard the sound of a distant chopper. He looked out the window and estimated it was a couple minutes away. He squeezed the remote. "Send a hummingbird to sedate a helicopter pilot. Inform Pete he's needed at Kaena Point."

Nick put on the orange suit as fast as he could. He hurried to a convenient spot where the helicopter could more easily land, waved his arms about over his head to make sure of getting the pilot's attention, and then he stretched out on the ground.

He anticipated the chopper would land and shut down. It did, and he soon felt the presence of someone beside him. He looked up to see a fellow stagger about and fall to the ground.

Nick got up onto his feet and walked over to the chopper. It was a two-seater. He boarded it, turned the ignition key and reached down to his left to move the collective and control the pitch.

When the chopper rose in the air he pushed the throttle forward to follow a hummingbird drone to the yacht.

He turned on the radiophone. “This is CIA Agent Kusiak in pursuit of terrorists on a yacht at sea, straight north of Oahu. Need you to take into custody while I chase.”

After ten minutes of flight the yacht finally appeared. When the chopper hovered over it he lowered a nylon ladder. Looking down at Charlie, Nick reached out and flipped his hand upward a few times.

Charlie looked up, aiming the gun Nick's way.

“Pete,” Nick yelled as loud as he could while pointing at himself. He then reached down and jerked his arm up a few times.

Nick spotted helicopters approaching.

When Charlie climbed into the chopper he pointed his gun at Nick. Nick pushed the throttle forward and headed towards Kaena Point.

When Nick landed the chopper at the South Kaena Point Trail he noticed his Cherokee was still by the bolder where he had parked it, but someone in it wearing an orange suit would be spotted for sure. He'd wait instead for a white Ford van to show up.

Nick eyed Charlie. "I'm CIA. My boss happens to be Dirk Slubona, but I investigate him. Savvy?"

"Savvy," Charlie replied, still pointing his gun at Nick.

"You have contacts in Taiwan?"

He frowned. "Be now dead. No help."

Nick faced Charlie. "You now work with us. Can do?"

“Can do,” he replied, still pointing his gun.

Nick waited for the van to arrive. “Pete,” he said while pointing at the van.

The ordeal had taken its toll on Nick. He felt woozy. He stumbled about as he led Charlie to the van. After Nick opened the side door he fell to the ground and passed out.



A couple shots of whiskey and maybe one of those young China-girl dancers was all Dirk needed to help him sleep through the night. He sat down on a stool as the bartender opened a bottle of Jack Daniels and filled a shot glass.

When the bartender started to walk away with the bottle, Dirk barked, “Leave it. It’s been a rough day.”

Dirk glanced to his right and, to his surprise, saw Scott take the next stool. Dirk toasted, “Sweet dreams.”

Scott stared with a stern look on his face. “There’s new development.”

The only new development of interest to Dirk was one of those dancers. “What’s urgent enough it can’t wait till tomorrow?”

Scott motioned with his head and Dirk followed the big guy over to a secluded table by a wall where they seated themselves.

Scott locked his fingers together and laid them on the table. “A chopper was taken away from a pilot on scout patrol by someone in an orange suit.”

Dirk swallowed the whole swig of whiskey and refilled the shot glass. “I take it you have someone in custody.”

“He radioed from the chopper and claimed he was Kusiak after terrorists on a yacht at sea.”

It took Dirk only three seconds to connect the dots. He wanted Nick dead, not just caught. He expressed his ‘I told you so’ with a smirk. “Learn something?”

Scott shook his head. “I learned from test results of the finger you gave me at the Mililani Mortuary that Nick Kusiak is a complete mystery. The lab technician wasn’t able to identify all of the bone’s composition.”

Dirk nodded. “That’s what I’ve been trying to find out.”

“Those men on the yacht could know something.”

Dirk sneered. “Don’t move on anyone without my say so. I’m about to uncover a terrorist plot. You could compromise informants and waste years of

effort to set them up. Millions will die if you mess it up.”

Scott clenched his fists. “We could be about to find out something about it.”

Dirk frowned. “Get names. I’ll interrogate in the morning. Make sure the local police stay out of it.”



Nick woke, being uncomfortable in the orange suit enclosing his body. He also seemed to lie inside a moving van.

He rolled over to see what he could. Pete drove the van with its headlights on bright. Charlie sat in the front seat between Toenehe and Pete.

Pete glanced back at Nick. “Where to?”

“Pull over.”

The van slowed down. After a few rough bumps it stopped.

“You need to get out of that suit,” Pete said.

“Yes, and start an epidemic . . . I need to get to the spaceship. An osprey at Kaneohe should be ready for takeoff.”

“You’re in no shape to fly.”

“And you need to keep an eye on Dirk.”

Nick managed to sit up. He reached inside the pocket of the suit for the remote. He held it in his hand and said, “Need help.”

A small hologram of Netone appeared inside the van within a dim light. “What do you need help with?”

“For you to arrange a meeting.”

“With whom do you want me to arrange this meeting?”

“Have Lieutenants Peggy Banks and the Navy officer she was with meet early in the morning by the pool at Turtle Bay.”

“How do I persuade them to obey my request for them meet there?”

“Contact them by disguising your voice as Lieutenant Plaey’s. Tell them they’ll be needed to help prove his innocence.”

In Need of Help

Nick had gone back to sleep. It was daylight when he woke. He picked up the remote. A video of Turtle Bay appeared inside the van, showing Ken laying his back on a lounge chair beside the pool. The lieutenant was by himself until Peggy showed up.

She stared down at him, “Do you feel good about yourself for framing me?”

Ken stared with an angry face at her. “Did I frame you? Why did you accuse us and why did you use our conversations out of context?”

With her hands firmly placed above each hip Peggy raised her shoulders, bent over and looked down at Ken. “What did you say?”

“You spied on us. Dirk said you did.”

“He said that about you.”

“Call Peggy’s cell phone,” Nick said to the remote.

Ken sat up and placed his feet on the ground. He stared at Peggy. “He played us. I did not tell the dirt bag anything because I do not know anything.”

“Ditto.”

Peggy answered her cell phone when it chimed. “Hi.”

“This is Nick.”

“Whoa. You call from heaven? They cremated you.”

“They cremated a pig. I’m undercover. Dirk’s in cahoots with the mob, al-Qaeda and a general of the Chinese army, and wants to blame the hummer theft on you guys.”

“What about Jay and Nitay? I suppose they’re undercover, too.”

“Here’s the deal. She’s with me. He was put in an aircraft that flew him to an uninhabited island. I need a pilot to rescue him.”

Peggy stared down at Ken. “*You a pilot?*”

Ken shook his head.

“He must at least have a little flight training,”

Nick said. "If he wants to save his buddy he needs to be at Kaneohe ready to fly."

"You know where to," Nick said to Pete.



Jay woke before daylight to an empty stomach. He had become tired of his rations.

He got up, climbed down the nylon ladder, walked over to the spaceship and pounded his fist on it. "Have anything besides the coconut treats I won't eat?"

The spaceship's door opened downward and the creature came out of the spaceship. "Research by the spaceship computer indicates you humans consume more food than is needed for the amount of energy you use."

"Look bud. I'm your prisoner and you need to feed me. It's part of the Geneva rules of war.

Look it up.”

“You can consult with your fellow human.”

Inside the spaceship was a hologram of Nick in an orange suit. He sat in the doorway of a van, and he had a slice of pizza in one hand and a bottle of beer in the other.

Jay frowned. “It looks like you’re well off.”

Nick swallowed the bite of pizza he just chewed. “Hang in there, buddy. Supplies are on their way. In fact, you’ll be able to go back to the Ronald Reagan if that’s what you prefer. The Jayplicator can fly the hummer for us.”

“That bird isn’t to get out of my sight. It stays, I stay.”

Nick gave a thumbs-up before his hologram disappeared.

Jay decided to direct his anger at Netone. “I’m still not convinced you’re not here to conquer us. After you took over your own planet you must’ve wanted to take on the world.”

“My species did not conquer Kiron. Although some life forms on our planet feed on other life forms, the advanced ones I am a member of do not partake of it. We are vegetarians who avoid the aggressive nature of our less advanced intelligent life forms. We also absorb sunlight as energy to our bodies. We waste nothing.”

Jay considered the creature was programmed to serve a programmer. “You don’t kill for food?”

“We neither domesticate other forms of life nor adopt pets. We let nature take its course, as to let the little helpless orphans clinging to the land die. The species still survive without our help.”

“Why don’t you care about other life?”

“We are responsible only for our own fate. It is the law of natural survival.”

Jay pointed his finger at Netone. “That makes everyone else your enemy. Doesn’t it?”

“You are incorrect.”

“Come now. Wouldn’t you like to eliminate your enemies?”

“We respect all life.”

Jay shook his head no. “I see. You evolved as rational beings with little emotional concern for others.”

“We evolved from tiny bodies that crawled on the ocean floor. We survived by way of camouflage from the larger fish-like creatures preying on us, but we were taken from the water by creatures with human-like form. They modified our DNA and provided us with computerized food for intellectual thought. We then became astronauts.”

“You made Darwin proud.”

“Who is this Darwin to whom you refer?”

“He’s dead. You clones all look the same?”

“The sizes of our eyes, mouths, breathing vents and other features only distinguish us apart from one another.”

“How’s that?”

“We grow to five feet in a few years and gradually increase in height thereafter. I have grown one inch in three hundred years.

Jay nodded. How one of these creatures related to another would clue him in on what they wanted. “You must have confrontation among different cloned identities. How about cultural differences, religious beliefs? Don’t you have anything worth battling for?”

“We strive for common goals promoted by truth and reason. We compete by way of intellectual debate for truth of knowledge.”

Knowledge is one way to a more harmonious coexistence, but it can also be used as a source of power. For that possibility, and because Jay still believed this creature hijacked a Naval aircraft with a nuclear warhead, he still suspected it was here to learn how to conquer us with least resistance. He'd stay alert in case the opportunity ever came about to overtake his captor, even though he really preferred to believe in it and to rescue Nitay.



The yacht tied up at the dock was no surprise to Dirk, but Eddy there standing beside Scott was reason for concern. Dirk didn't want it to be known that he even knew Eddy.

As much as Dirk wanted Charlie locked up again, and as much as he wanted to find out if the person in the orange suit was really Nick, Dirk couldn't let Scott dig into anything incriminating.

“How was lunch?” Scott scowled, indicating his contempt for Dirk's lack of effort to show up on time.

“Is this the captain?” Dirk asked in pretense.

“I'm Eddy Moser, the owner. These guys work for me.”

“There was a fatality,” Scott said.

Dirk eyed Scott. “I'll handle it . . . I'll have a private talk with the owner.” He flicked his hand forward and led Eddy to a secluded area.

“What's up?” Eddy asked.

“What's the latest story on our babe in Taiwan?”

“She’ll soon be ten feet under.”

“Make sure of it.”

“My man dogs her every step.”

Dirk nodded, “What went down last night?”

Charlie got loose and plugged one of my guys. He then got rescued by a chopper.”

“No need to worry. I got it covered.”

Dirk walked back over to Scott. “The guy on the boat that got killed was an informant. The guy that killed him spied for General Wong and he was rescued by Agent Nick Kusiak. Does that tell you anything?”



The sun just rose above the horizon. Jay had had a restless night's sleep. He worried that Netone, Nick and Nitay told the truth after all. She could be killed

because he hadn't believed her.

If she did enter the lion's den, as she had said she would, and her life became imperiled for it, he never knew anyone more brave and daring.

He couldn't live with himself if something happened to her because of him. What to do? He approached Netone. "My friend's in trouble. Can you help?"

"My capabilities are limited. My presence is likely to be discovered if I plot against someone. I would then be more vulnerable to an attack from an enemy. Even the Jayplicator would be at risk. It could lose essential fluid and become disabled by way of a puncture wound."

"How do you things survive the elements?"

"We fellow Kironians avoid confrontation with enemies. They will only evolve and become more of a threat. By means of camouflage and

deception we avoid the proliferation of conflict.”

“I see. You’re invincible if you’re invisible. I guess that’s why you’re hesitant to expose yourself to the ruling authority.”

“Your guess is correct. I prefer to avoid human aggression.”

“We still need to arm ourselves.”

“It is forbidden by my code of ethics to fight and kill any animate life other than bacteria and other micro organisms. I must avoid conflict with enemies. I cannot retaliate against them.”

Great. If this thing told the truth, Jay could be about to go to war with a pacifist.

For a Load of Supplies

Unnerved by three more buzzes in succession that interrupted his leaned back position in a chair, Dirk raised his feet from their comfortable position on his desk and sat up to speak on the intercom. “What now?”

“Scott Braidy’s here with a Lieutenant Noble, sir.”

“Do they have an appointment?”

“No sir, they don’t.”

Dirk hesitated for a few seconds. “I guess I have a little time to spare. Send them in.”

Ken, in his Navy blues, led the way in, with Scott right behind in casual Hawaiian attire.

Dirk stared at Ken. “Come to confess?”

Ken remained silent.

“Lieutenant Noble was asked to help take supplies to Lieutenant Plaey,” Scott said.

“By whom?” Dirk barked.

Scott nudged his shoulder against Ken’s.

Ken stopped his peaking about. “A Nick Kusiak called Lieutenant Peggy Banks. He told her he knows things that’ll clear us of any crime.”

“You lie. Kusiak was cremated.”

“All I know, sir, is what I was told.”

Dirk had suspected Nick faked his illness and cremation. His reach to the military by way of Nitay and Navy officers now seemed obvious. It needed to be countered. “Who else knows about this?”

Scott nodded with a grin on his face as he stepped up to the desk. “I notified Liz. She said she’ll consult with the President.”

Dirk fixed his eyes on Scott. “I’m sure the President’s pleased to hear what we’ve come up with, but if this sailor boy had come to me right away I would’ve had the culprits in custody by now. I doubt you have a clue as to what they’re up to.”

Scott leaned over the desk and stared down at Dirk. “I think Liz wants to use them to find Plaey. I wouldn’t interfere with her plan if I were you.”

Dirk pounded the desk with the side of his fist. “Get out of here you two. George and I know how to handle these situations. Liz will only screw it up. You guys already have.”



The President followed the First Lady up the aisle in the dim light between damp, rock walls of the cave. He pointed down at the water. It was a large

aquarium. Imported fish included the Mekong Giant Catfish, and the Siamese Giant Carp. “Nice fish. See one you’d like for dinner?”

“They’re exotic. Have you learned anything more about those hummingbirds?”

“We believe the opposition used sophisticated decoys to divert us away from their true intent, but George just informed me of new development.”

“I hope so. Your photos with the Taiwan President won’t fool the press much longer.”

“We now have a promising lead. One of the conspirators faked his cremation and is likely on his way to furnish Plaey with supplies. We could be out of this cave in no time.”



Nick woke. “Where are we?”

“On the beach near the airstrip,” he heard Pete’s voice say. “It doesn’t appear your Navy pilot is going to show.”

Nick picked up the remote from the floor.
“Netone.”

Netone’s hologram appeared inside the van.
“What is your request?”

“Need to check out today’s activities. Connect to that special, secure website where conversations are recorded from the listening device I planted in Dirk’s phone.”

Voices soon came from the remote. They were a conversation between Dirk and George Kroft about a visit to Dirk from Scott Braidy and Lieutenant Noble. They had confided with the rogue, something Nick hadn’t anticipated.

Nick’s plan to supply the hummer with jet fuel had been compromised, but he still had to try.

“Charlie needs to learn how to fly an osprey,” he said to Pete. “I’ll have to instruct him on the fly.”

The van suddenly moved forward, leaving palm trees behind. Concrete soon replaced sand. It wasn’t long before an osprey appeared outside the open door of the van.

The van stopped. Pete talked with a Marine, but without official orders Pete was unable to talk his way onto the osprey.

“He’s passed out on the ground,” Pete said.

Nick heard a door open and shut. He opened his eyes and soon saw Toenehe beside the side door. The Samoan picked Nick up and carried him into the osprey and laid him on the floor.

Pete and Charlie also boarded the chopper. Pete sat in the pilot seat.

“You crazy,” Nick said.

“Nope. Just overdue for a vacation. Why stay here when I can be with friends on a little island.”

“You’ll lose everything.”

“So what. I’ll save the world.”

Nick closed his eyes. If Pete was willing to sacrifice his fortune, so be it. Nitay was still Nick’s most urgent concern, along with whatever Dirk’s involvement with General Wong and a crime boss was about.



As the President entered the conference room, never more anxious was he to hear what George Kroft had to report.

George stood alone in front of the table. “Fake orders were received by the military to have a transport helicopter stand by. It’s an osprey with enough tanks to fly here and back to Honolulu.

We've tagged it with a homing signal."

"What if they have something ready for us in their arsenal?"

"No problem. We have an aircraft carrier on its way from Taiwan. The Air Force will have a tanker in the air in case our tomcats and hornets need to refuel."

News of the battle would surely leak out to the press and the President couldn't imagine how he'd explain the Navy's destruction of its own, over budgeted, secret aircraft. But he'd accept the responsibility for it and come up with something. It's why he had run for office.



Perturbed by Eddy's lack of response is why Dirk picked up a bowl of soup and dropped it on the floor. "I said it was Nick Kusiak who rescued

Charlie.”

Eddy reared back in his chair. “He was cooked into ashes.”

Dirk shook his head. “It was faked. We know he rescued Charlie. They’re now on their way to rescue a Navy officer. The Feds know about it. They want to use them. Once they’re caught, they’ll sing a merry tune. They have nothing on me that’ll stick, but you’ll go down for sure. Can’t lose my primary source to find terrorists when they’re about to hit us big time.”

“What you want me to do.”

“They’re headed for Guam to pick up supplies.”

“I don’t know anyone on Guam.”

“Get word to General Wong and make it sound good enough for him to get someone there in time to sneak some C4 into their chopper.”

“If you had let me take care of Charlie in the first place we wouldn’t be in this mess.”

“Just make sure the general cleans it up.”



The wind kicked up huge waves as water poured down from dark clouds. Rain from the monsoon poured into Jay’s helmet. At least he had water to drink.

He sat disgruntled, uncomfortable with Nick’s unauthorized tactics with an alien alliance instead of him cooperating with our government. Netone could return home after obtaining nuclear fuel, only to leave Earth in turmoil.

The alien also had just informed Jay of the action taken on Nick’s request to falsify orders for a trip to Guam.

“Two wrongs don’t make a right,” Jay said.

“By his testimony that I have recorded, Nick has accepted full responsibility for all actions taken under his command.”

“It’ll just get us into deeper dodo.”

“I do not understand what you say.”

“Eventually we’ll need help from the armed forces of my government, but I’ll be on record as having broken the law. We’ll have lost whatever trust we might otherwise have been afforded.”

“I now understand what you say. Your fellow human tends to err. How should we now rectify the situation?”

“Can’t turn the clock backwards. We’ll have to minimize the damage. If Nick goes down, too bad. If we’re discovered, you’re on your own. I’ll try to pick up the pieces to convince my superiors of our rightful intentions. Maybe you’ll get your nuclear fuel. Hopefully Nitay gets rescued.”

Jay's gut feeling was that sooner or later they'd have to come out of their protected shell to face a monstrous storm.

He still had the coconut treat. It was time to find out what it had to offer. Besides, why not let the spaceship fix up something more appetizing for his hungry stomach to digest.



It wasn't Nick's first time on Guam, but instead of the Big Eye airport, he had instructed Pete to land on the north side of the island where they'd spend the rest of the night at Ritidian Beach. It was visited only on occasion to bathe in the sun.

Netone had called for a taxi. Everyone except Nick had left the area to gather supplies.

At sunrise a light on the remote flickered. Nick pushed his thumb on it. A video of Jay appeared. He

was on his feet, leaning against a palm tree.

Resting on its tentacles was the creature nearby Jay. “Chuck ne.”

“Mess cue,” Jay answered.

“You now know how to speak the Kironian language.”

“What did I say?”

“You tell me what you said. The coconut provides you with knowledge. You need only trust your intuition and your mind will automatically translate the meaning. The translation then becomes embedded in your brain as memory”

Nick smiled. The pilot had finally eaten the coconut treat. Maybe he had come around to save Nitay. Nick only hoped as much as he continued to focus his attention on the video.

Jay's left eye and cheek cringed and his head leaned sideways. *"Okay, here is my answer. You said good morning; I said yes it is."*

"You answered correctly. Use your intuition when you converse in the Kironian language and you will learn what your mind has downloaded from the coconut treat."

"I am not a computer, but maybe I will get the hang of it."

"How do you get the hang of it?"

"You just use your intuition to pick up our slang."

The yellowish spots on Netone's dark green skin brightened. *"You imply I am not efficient in your ways. The computer still differentiates information. I will get the hang of it before it becomes pertinent to our mission."*

Their conversation on how the coconut influenced the mind lit up Nick's. He hollered

at the remote. “Nick to Netone in private.”

Netone made its way into the spaceship. After the door closed, Netone’s hologram soon appeared inside the osprey.

“Can you read the DNA of General Wong?”
Nick asked.

“Do you request it or do you only test your intuition?”

“It’s a little of both. How difficult will it be to transform the Jayplicator into a Wongplicator?”

“All that is needed for the transformation is a sample of General Wong’s DNA. A drone can read it and bring it back to the spaceship. The difficulty of the situation is to locate General Wong for the reading and then to master the Chinese language.”

“You learned English easier than we do.”

“I still have difficulty with many connotations. Besides, there are many strange figures of speech the spaceship computer has yet to assimilate. Many slang and curse words remain non-definable. Their various usages are also difficult for the spaceship computer to decipher.”

Nick grinned. “Don’t worry. They relate to the personality of the person using them. The computer only need program in the demeanor of a ruthless tyrant and Chinese general. That way he keeps Cheng and the rest of his subordinates on the defense.”

“I anticipate difficulties. What happens if the Wongplicator errs? Will not General Wong’s subordinates suspect the Wongplicator could be an impostor?”

“No need to worry. For them, Wong is right.”

“Does that mean he is right because he is a general?”

Nick chuckled. "You got it. The general's generally right."

"You confuse me and the spaceship computer with your dialog. The spaceship computer processes your information with extreme difficulty. It will be easier to understand your intent if you speak proper English."

"You and your computer need to get on with it. Lying and deception figure into the equation. If you want to get your plutonium you'll need to trust your intuition a little more to better understand connotations and insinuations."

"I will try to do what you say, but I will not forsake what the spaceship computer can provide for me. It continually researches data of human behavior for better interpretation."

Nick smiled. "We'll make an earthling out of you, yet."

“What you just said I interpret to mean you will teach me to think the way a human does.”

“Right on, dude.”

Closing In

Nick only had to wait less than two hours for Pete to return and fly the osprey to the Big Eye airport. Pete opened the cargo door and waited inside the chopper as Toenehe and Charlie carried supplies to the doorway for Pete to finish loading.

Nick lay close to the door and kept an eye out for possible danger. He thought it suspicious that someone stood nearby the extra fuel tanks that hadn't yet been loaded. Something about that stalker, something Nick couldn't put his finger on, troubled him.

“Nice stuff,” Nick said to Pete. “Sleeping bags, tents, all the comforts of home.”

Charlie handed Pete a small package. Pete seemed puzzled as he looked at the package.

“What’s that?” Nick asked Pete.

Pete shrugged.

Nick glanced out the door. The stalker held a cell phone in his hand. With no strength left to do anything else but to warn of an IED, Nick yelled out as loud as he could, “Bomb.”

“Down,” Pete yelled as he tossed the small package out the door and then ducked away from the shock waves of the blast.

A peek out the door revealed a bloody stalker laying motionless in a pool of blood, and Toenehe and Charlie rising up from the ground apparently unscathed, fortunate to have been beneath the blast that carried upward from being lighter than

air.

They boarded the osprey, which Nick hoped had absorbed the blast with minimum damage.

Nick was soon in the air on his way to Alien Island, but without the extra fuel tanks, whatever was left of them, he reckoned his effort was now in vain. It'd be too risky to go back for more fuel. Authorities would have swarmed the area by now.



Relieved of her hotel confinement, but terrified to sit in the backseat next to the man hired to kill her, Nitay kept a watchful eye on her surroundings.

After the driver sneaked a peep at the rear view mirror he sped up the limo while zigzagging and honking his way past a swarm of motorbikes. One driver was a lady with an infant on her back. A toddler sat on the handlebars alongside a bag

of groceries.

The limo passed between two buses and sped up even more to outdistance the rear traffic. After it rounded a sharp turn and caught up to a look-alike limo it suddenly screeched to a halt and pulled over out of sight to the rear traffic.

After a string of traffic had passed, it made its way back on the main road and continued to where it turned off and followed a narrow one to a two-story building.

The driver pointed his finger at a door. Nitay followed Tony inside the building where a short and slim Chinese girl, who seemed no older than her late teens, stood.

“I am Su-yin. Come. General Wong came all the way from Beijing. He waits for you.”

Nitay followed Su-yin up a stairs and down a hall to a suite. The first-time visual of General

Wong to go along with what Nitay had heard about him made her quiver. He sat at a desk beside a window while two guards flanked her.

The general's stare pierced her nerves. "I hope your visit is pleasant," he finally said.

She stood tall with her chin up. "Why was I locked up?"

"Unfortunately it was required to protect you from my enemies. They target all my visitors along with me."

She looked around and noticed large portraits of him hung on every wall in the room.

"How can I help you?" General Wong asked.

"I have a few questions."

"Ask."

"When do you expect to take over China?"

The general grunted. “Where do you get such ideas?”

“I have reliable sources.”

“You are misinformed. I only serve China’s best interest. If the need to become its leader ever arises, I will only accept the position as my duty to fulfill the ultimate purpose of our people.”

“It’s rumored you receive financial support from terrorists.”

“Only devoted Muslims of noble faith join our cause to improve the well-being of mankind. It is unfortunate our effort has to be burdened with unfounded criticism.”

Nitay remained silent.

He stared for a bit. “One of our achievements is an island we have turned into a prosperous and peaceful paradise. Would you like to visit it?”

She nodded. It'd at least delay her fatal outcome with Tony.

“Excellent,” he said with a sly grin. “Cheng is China’s liaison officer for economic trade and public relations. He will escort you there in the morning. Su-yin is my most trusted servant. She knows it well. She will be your interpreter and ensure you of adequate accommodations. She will now take you to your room.”

“Thanks.”

Nitay followed Su-yin. Even though Nitay was relieved of the general’s presence, the sad look on Su-yin’s face hinted at a tragic fate yet to come.



Nick lay inside the osprey and examined videos. One of them showing a FC-10A tanker in the sky

gave him an idea. It just might work.

At the moment he saw another video of a bobcat in flight. It became the crucial part of his plan.

“Record the voice of the jet pilot on his way to refuel,” Nick yelled loudly into the remote to ensure Netone heard him.

“I will do as you say, but Lieutenant Plaey has informed me that he will not participate in our alliance without the approval of his superiors.”

“Well, goody for him. We don’t need him. I’m in charge and will take full responsibility for whatever happens. We have a Jayplicator and the aircraft can be piloted electronically.”

“Your statement has been recorded by the spaceship computer. It could become available to Lieutenant Plaey’s superior officers.”

“Good. Lieutenant Plaey can now proceed without risk.”

“The voice of the pilot is now recorded and uploaded into the hummer’s computer.”



A jet trail marking its way towards the island had given Jay hope, until someone or something in a flight suit came out of the spaceship and walked over to the hummer and boarded it.

The jets fired. The cables recoiled into the wings.

Jay wasn’t about to let it take off without him. He ran to the hummer, jumped up on a wing and climbed up and over into the cockpit. As he hurried to put on his flight suit, the hummer's dome closed and the hummer lifted up high in the air. In a couple more minutes Jay was in the pilot seat.

The hummer's fuel gage read empty. If only he could make it to the tanker in time to refuel.

As the hummer aircraft caught up with the tanker, Jay heard a voice from inside the hummer say, *"Bobcat needs fuel in belly."*

"Roger. Line is on its way out."

The jet engines sputtered as the hummer neared the refueling line. It coasted at a slower and slower speed to barely miss the hookup.

"Slow down tanker," Jay hollered. "I'm out of fuel."

The tanker's flaps lifted. When it slowed and descended, Jay adjusted the hummer's wings and the aircraft dived to pick up speed. It bumped the fuel line out of the way. It tried again and failed to hook up.

Jay figured the hummer might have enough fuel for another attempt, maybe not. While both it

and the tanker descended, it managed to hook up.

They continued to descend as the hummer refueled. “Got enough?” Jay heard.

“Not yet,” Jay replied as the ocean surface closed in. “I’ll disconnect and then fire up my jets to reconnect.”

As the hummer refueled after it disconnected and reconnected, Jay heard, “Your tank should be full by now.”

That Jay didn’t want to hear. The hummer’s fuel gage indicated it hadn’t obtained a full tank. “This is not a bobcat. I’m in a classified aircraft.”

“We’re not authorized to supply fuel to an unknown aircraft.”

“I’m on your side.”

“I need authorization.”

“Try Admiral Young with code words little brother to big bird in sky.”

After awhile Jay heard, “Little brother is ordered to land on water and wait for rescue.”

The gage read full and he disconnected the hummer from the hose.

The controls worked and the hummingbird drone was nowhere in sight. Was it possible he now had freedom to go wherever? It was unlikely the replicator would be aboard if he was had free reign to go wherever.

It was time to make a critical decision, as to either go along with Nick and rescue Nitay or land as ordered and do nothing.

What if his decision of non action caused Nick and Netone to fail? The lecture Nitay had given him at Chinaman's Hat had come back to haunt his conscience. He could be responsible

for disastrous results if he left good Samaritans behind to defend what he should.

He had been given an order. Not that he ever would, but it was too late to disobey it.

A tomcat flew towards him as the hummer gradually descended.

A garbled noise came from the hummer's radio. Jay suspected something wasn't right. Oh, of course, without a drone to intercept broadcasts before they became scrambled, all communication between him and the bobcat was garbled.

It was too late to bypass the scrambler, as a missile had locked onto the hummer's position. The hummer headed straight towards it. He was about to be blown into oblivion.

Heading in the direction of the oncoming missile could've been somewhat of an advantage if the hummer was able to change course just at

the right time. That meant he needed to relinquish control to the computer.

The butterfly hop was Jay's only chance even at this low altitude. He switched to automatic escape mode. As the missile neared, the hummer dived sharply towards the ocean. The missile, as expected, redirected downward towards him, but the hummer bounced off the ocean surface high enough over the incoming missile.

The jolt, even despite the stretch straps to cushion it, had nearly knocked him unconscious, but he hung on while the hummer nearly reached mach three to escape out of sight from the bobcat or any other jet on his tail.

With no place in mind to go to, Jay let the hummer remain on autopilot while he grappled with the pain that throbbed in his ribs, shoulders and neck. When the hurt became too unbearable to take, he passed out.

To The Rescue

The President entered the conference room with two failed missions fueling his anger.

George rose from his seat at the table. “We spotted Nitay Bennington in Taiwan.”

“Was she captured?”

“Not yet.”

The President proceeded towards the table. “Please explain.”

“She made a miraculous disappearance after she left Cheng’s diplomatic stronghold. It confirms our worst nightmare. She’s obviously backed by a proficient organization. It could be organized crime, al-Qaeda or even China.”

The President eased his way into a chair, determined to maintain his composure. “If the situation is too much for your guys to handle on their own, they’ll have to work with the Taiwanese authorities.”

George sat back down in his chair. “It won’t be necessary. Our operatives can play these cat and mouse games. It’s just a matter of time before they bring her in.”

Liz leaned towards the President. “She’s a reporter.”

The President sneaked a wink at George. “She’s right. We won’t maintain secrecy with the press on our heels. Just bring her in as a person of interest and try to get her cooperation. If we have to, put her on the payroll so she can work for us with an oath of secrecy.”

George nodded. “Good idea. We’ll give her immunity and convict her on something else if we

have to.”

Liz closed her eyes.

George cleared his throat. “There’s more bad news.”

The President grinned. “Yes, make my tomorrow.”

“The osprey led us to the hummer, but we weren’t able to take it.”

The President grimaced as he stood up on his feet. “Apparently it has more capability than we bargained for.” He walked about.

“It refueled from our tanker.”

The President leaned over the table to look George straight in the face. “What happened to the osprey? Did it refuel from us, too?”

George scanned his copy of the report. “It dropped out of sight. Must’ve crashed and gone

down in the ocean. We lost the tracking signal.”

Never did the President feel as powerless as he did at that moment.



Impressed was Nitay of the man-made paradise that stood out as a flourishing oasis among the barren islands that surrounded it. Wong Island was lavished with plush tropical flowers and fruit. Vegetable gardens along with plenty of wild rice grew abundantly. Such livestock as hogs, goats and chickens provided food aplenty.

She had expected a hostile military camp with guards holding guns, but to her surprise, young Chinese girls greeted them with hospitality while young Chinese boys carried baggage and guided their guests to separate rooms. They took care of her as if she was royalty.

Nitay didn't accept it completely. The island was guarded. The guards wore not uniforms but dressed like sheiks with the look of terrorists with headbands, long hair and bushy beards. She also saw what looked like young bar girls dressed in tight, sexy dresses. She dreaded the implication of them being used to entertain the guards, as would be needed to keep them on a small island for a considerable amount of time.

Something else grabbed her attention. An iridescent pollinator hovered near the window of her room.

“They follow me everywhere,” she said to Su-yin. “One of them even attacked a Navy officer.”

“It has been here for days,” a young Chinese girl said to her.

“They must have migrated to China,” Su-yin replied.

The island indeed resembled a man-made paradise, a remarkable sight as well kept as any park in the orient.

Besides lavish gardens there were buildings of eloquent Chinese décor. One of them appeared to be a schoolhouse. School children, as cute and innocently looking as they were, wore uniforms of black skirts and white blouses for the girls, and black shorts and white shirts for the boys.

The children played on bars and swings, flew kites, and did chores.

With the aid of her interpreter, Su-yin, Nitay questioned the elders while Tony recorded it with a digital camera. Nowhere did Nitay find indication of oppression. The hospitality was second to none.

The stories seemed genuine, but Tony and Cheng's previous conversation still haunted her every thought. In no way did she believe General Wong didn't use the island to mask a wicked plan.



The President braced himself. Whatever he was about to hear he was sure it'd require a decision on his part. The gloomy look on the Admiral's face, as he listened to his cell phone, indicated something drastic had occurred.

The Admiral closed his cell phone. "We have our SEALs back. "Wong Island's well-fortified and a Geiger reading detected a nuke on a seaplane."

"We have to take that island off the map," George said.

"And kill everyone on the island?" Liz asked.

"If they don't surrender, it's them or us."

The Admiral had his phone back to his ear. "One of my SEALs spotted Nitay Bennington."

“We do need information from her,” Liz said. “Better get her before you take out the big guns.”

“That’s a bad idea,” George barked. “My man in Honolulu has someone already in place. He’s likely paid with anonymous sources. Let him handle the raid to avoid any bad publicity with the arrest of a reporter.”

The President had taken it all in and favored George’s attack-before-attacked strategy over the Admiral’s chancy one of get-what-we-can-in-case-we-can. Liz’s wait-and-see approach didn’t merit any consideration at all.

“Good news,” the Admiral said. “We spotted the hummer afloat about a mile from the island. It’s vulnerable.”



When Jay woke he reckoned the sun's position was at high noon. How many days he'd been out he didn't know, but his ribs still hurt, as did his neck and nearly his whole body.

The hummer bobbed up and down on the ocean surface. Land could barely be seen. He'd try to make it there after he found out who or what was in the seat behind him.

After he slowly pivoted his seat half way around, whoever the replicator had replicated handed Jay a tiny blob with the color of his own skin.

“This blob is a gel that is compatible with human tissue. It contains special elements. If you smear it around your earlobes, it will remain attached to them unless they encounter the same amount of friction the hummingbird probes do in flight. With this gel other languages spoken to you can be transmitted to the spaceship computer for

it to translate them within a fraction of a second to immediately transmit back to you in English.”

Jay smeared the gel onto his earlobes. “What now?”

“You need to strap yourself tighter to your seat and brace yourself for rapid acceleration.”

As Jay tightened his stretchable straps he spotted choppers low over the horizon. He was a sitting duck who had relinquished control of the hummer to the computer.

The jets fired. The hummer planed on water, fleeing from the choppers. When it neared land its rotors activated for it to leap into the air and slowly descend to land slightly away from a crowd of people.

Jay noticed the choppers hovering high above water at striking distance. Would they fire on him?

They retreated.

When Jay, still in pain, climbed down the nylon ladder, gunmen pointed their rifles at him.

“Arrest him,” Jay heard in English.

When the replicator stood beside Jay, after it had climbed down the ladder, it lifted the pilot helmet off its head to a startling revelation. Jay recognized it as the replica of General Wong. The replicator had become a Wongplicator.

The gunmen backed away.

The Wongplicator pointed at a well-dressed Chinaman. “He is Cheng.”

Cheng walked up close to the Wongplicator and stood in wait.

“Do not let the non-military people know who I am,” the Wongplicator whispered to him.

“What is the problem?” Cheng blurted loud enough for everyone in the crowd to hear.

The Wongplicator gazed at Cheng. *“Fool. Spies are on the island. They must be found out.”*

Cheng frowned. *“Who is this American with you? Can we trust him?”*

“He brought us a great weapon to prove his worthiness.”



Nitay had spotted Jay beside an aircraft when she came to find out what the commotion was about. Although she was pleased to know Jay was still alive, she was startled to see him stand beside General Wong.

To add to her suspicion, one of the Chinese girls said to her, “He is a wonderful man. He brought us a great weapon to help our cause.”

Nitay couldn't believe her own eyes and ears as she gave Jay a cold stare. He didn't look

back at her, but she continued to stare him down just the same.

She finally turned away from him to slowly walk to her cabin where she could hide her tears. Once she was inside the cabin she slammed the door shut and hurried to flop down on her bed.

Standoffish was she when she heard knocks. She managed to lift herself off the bed to go to the door and open it.

It was the traitor.

“Let’s talk,” Jay said. “It’s urgent.”

He seemed desperate

She might as well find out what he was up to. “Yes, you have a lot to explain. Wait here. I’ll get my recorder.”

He limped slightly as he walked about. “I need to warn you. The guy you came with was

sent to kill you.”

How dare this smooth talker try to fool her again? She’d have none of it. “I’m not surprised. You were a sneaky two-timer the first time I laid eyes on you. Who else you work with?”

He stared at her. “Do you really think I’d defect and work with guys like that?”

Her anger remained intact. She turned away from him, with her arms folded tightly against her chest. “You sure fooled me.”

“There’s no way they’d let me come here in that aircraft without a plan.”

“You mean you’re not just clever enough to take it.”

“I’m undercover. Trust me. I came to save you.”

He wouldn't give up, but she'd show him. "Why discuss things so openly? Don't you know they bug these places?"

He smiled. "A little birdie told me. It also watches our back and takes care of the bugs."

Why would he joke at a time like this? She turned around and gazed at his face. "I see. You're a comedian."

"It's true. Would you like to meet the little fellow?"

She couldn't believe a hummingbird hovered outside the doorway. She looked at it, then at Jay, and then again at it.

"It's new technology. Would you like to be in the loop?"

"Maybe. What can I do to help?" she asked in a more friendly tone of voice. Her fiery spirit had now become optimistic. She would even be

included in the loop. What an about face.

He reached into his pocket, took something out of it and handed it to her. “Here’s a coconut treat. Will you make sure Tony eats it?”

“Another secret development?”

“It contains tiny computer chips for the brain. It’s how we get the hummingbirds to cooperate with us. Keep your recorder on. You’ll have a lot to take back with you.”

She didn’t know what to say. Everything seemed surreal. But there was still the matter of General Wong. Could Jay still be on the wrong side? Was this loop thing just a trick to appease her?



With lawn chairs, tents, sleeping bags and food rations galore, Nick was on Alien Island with

Charlie, Pete and Toenehe. They sat in lawn chairs on a warm, sunny day.

Nick didn't understand what Jay had to complain about. Nick would've conjured up some hula girls on one of those three dimensional, life-like videos inside one of the tents if he had not more urgent matters to attend to.

He was now in full control of the situation. He had Jay in position on Wong Island ready to rescue Nitay, a supply helicopter to move about, and assistants on standby.

His focus at the moment, of course, was on the interrogation at Wong Island. He could both transmit and receive by way of the Wongplicator, as relayed through the spaceship whereby the spaceship computer translated in the appropriate language, or not, and he watched through the eyes of the Wongplicator as it treated Cheng to a coconut treat while servants set up the hypnotic

disk.

A half hour later the Wongplicator, by way of Nick's direction, commanded, "Sit. We must test this out before we try it on our subjects."

Cheng obeyed the Wongplicator's command. He sat still and stared ahead as if he was indeed under the power of suggestion.

"Hu shesh wah wah shesh hu," The Wongplicator said by way of Netone.

"Ka weet kunna luppy," Cheng responded.

Although the coconut treat allowed Cheng to know the meaning of the Kironian words in an intuitive sort of way, Nick knew Cheng's mind could only absorb them at a different level of consciousness. He'd answer voluntarily to reveal General Wong's devious plot to sacrifice everyone left on the island.

Not far into the interrogation Nick learned of General Wong's plan to dupe American forces to believe the island is an al-Qaeda training camp and a storage place for weapons of mass destruction. American forces would likely detect the plutonium and eagerly invade, but the plutonium was rigged to explode by means of C4. Hidden cameras were strategically placed to record incriminating events. If successful, General Wong and al-Qaeda would achieve a great propaganda victory.

Even more shocking was the revelation three nukes had been smuggled from North Korea. Their targets were Beijing, Taipei and Honolulu. The nuclear destruction of those cities was to instigate a nuclear war between China and the US.

After finishing the interrogation of Cheng, the Wongplicator interrogated Chinese soldiers and key personnel one by one while Cheng, still in his trance, stood by and watched.

After interrogating thirty people on the island Nick understood General Wong's devious plan. The Chinese guards knew nothing of it, but they along with other islanders did disclose other matters of interest.

Su-yin, apparently, worked undercover with an underground organization of Chinese citizens with the intent to keep an eye on General Wong and his deceitful activities that involved an alliance with al-Qaeda.

Nick also learned more about the organization with which Charlie was involved. They were indeed the good guys.

As with regard to the Filipino guards, Al-Qaeda recruited them for a suicide mission. They guarded a seaplane where the Wongplicator had already detected the presence of plutonium. There was no doubt they had been duped, as convinced by zealots to believe they'd obtain further reward

in heaven for their jihad. A financial reward had also been promised to their families.

Revising the Plan

Knowing that Jay had become an ally to her cause allowed Nitay to rest peacefully in sleep. Tony and General Wong she dreaded no more.

She suddenly woke to a gag forced in her mouth. She tried to move, but someone flipped her over on her stomach. With her arms held behind her, she was lifted up onto a shoulder and carried out of the cabin.



Jay woke in the grasp of two men overpowering him. They gagged and dragged him outside the

cabin, but hummingbirds must've intervened, for his abductors fell motionless to the ground.

To make sure another abductor wasn't nearby he peeked about. He saw Nitay sitting on the ground beside a man, who appeared passed out.

She rose to her feet and slowly walked his way. "Why did these guys try to take us?" she asked. "What happened to them?"

"I believe they're Navy SEALs. A hummingbird must've injected them with sedatives."

"Why would it do that to Navy SEALs? Maybe they came to rescue us."

"I don't know what they were up to, but they're not in the loop. Don't worry. We'll lock them up."

She turned away. "How can I sleep now that Navy SEALs tried to take us, with the Navy SEALs sedated by hummingbirds, and you conniving with General Wong?"

Jay wanted to keep her on his side, but no way this late at night would he convince her of the truth. It'd only confuse her more. "Don't worry. We'll release the SEALs later. If we let them go now, they'll mess up the plan."

"What plan?"

"Right now, to get you out of here and find out what General Wong intends to do with the nuke over there in the seaplane."

That revelation didn't seem to comfort her any. She cocked her head and sneered at him.



Nitay lay in bed but couldn't sleep. The attempted abduction and word of a bomb on the island nagged her through the night.

As dreary eyed as she became, Nitay was up and about with Su-yin by her side before a

rooster crowed. She had concerns with regard to the role of the Navy SEALs, but she had a mission to complete. Even if Jay was on the wrong side, a possibility she now reconsidered, she'd still carry out his request for her to feed the coconut treat to Tony. She'd find out what it was about.

When she saw a young Chinese girl carry a large plate of rice and fish along with a bowl of soup towards Tony's cabin, Nitay turned to Su-yin. "It's important I talk to him right now. Can she come back later?"

When Su-yin left with the young girl, Nitay went over to Tony's cabin, knocked on the door and peeked through a crack.

Tony lay on his bed as he reached for his gun. "What you want?"

She calmed herself. "It's Nitay. Please let me in. There's something you need to know."

He put the gun back. She waited for him to dress and open the door. He reached his arm out to guide her in.

She walked in. “There’re spies on the island. General Wong and Cheng seek them out. I’m sure everything will be okay.”

“I’m hungry. Where’s the food?”

“I brought a coconut treat. It’s very good. Try it.”

Tony put it in his mouth and chewed. “It good. Have more?”

“Sorry. I made a pig of myself.”

“Thanks.”

“Feel free to join us for breakfast.”



To eat and relax in an aura of calm and serenity, and also to find out if the coconut treat had affected Tony in a peculiar way, Jay joined Nitay and Tony at an outdoor table for a healthy combination of baked fish, brown rice and coconut milk, along with a warm salty breeze.

“Have a nice sleep?” Jay asked Tony.

“I feel drowsy,” Tony said, appearing zombie like. “What the hell was in that coconut?”

Nitay shrugged.

To signal the Wongplicator that Tony was prepared for a deep state of hypnotic trance Jay raised his hand.

The Wongplicator walked up to Tony. “*Cuz shay na dulong?*”

“*Yup fin cunalong,*” Tony replied.

“It’s an ancient language only a few of us

brothers know how to speak,” Jay explained.
“Would you like to know more?”

“Sure.”

“Go now with General Wong.”

They rose to their feet. Tony followed the Wongplicator and Jay followed Tony to the cabin. There they'd interrogate Tony with the hypnotic disc. It soon put him into a much deeper state of hypnotic sleep for him to more willingly disclose anything he knew about anything.

“Hu shesh wah shesh hu,” the Wongplicator asked.

“Ka weet kunna luppy,” Tony replied.

Tony confessed his purpose was to kill Nitay after he found out who she worked with. If he didn't find out anything, he was to take her back as a prisoner for Dirk and Eddy to use her as leverage against her cohorts.

He also revealed what he knew of General Wong's plan to explode a dirty bomb on the island. The general's intent was to blame tragic deaths on American Marines after they invaded the island.

Tony was aware that American intelligence tracked Nitay. He also knew General Wong intended to use her and the nuclear material in the seaplane to provoke a military response. She was nothing more than bait to help set up what would be a perilous propaganda trap. She had swallowed the hook, line and sinker.

Jay preferred to believe the spaceship had blocked enough communication to and from the island to have thwarted the plot, but he knew it was more likely the Navy fleet was on its way.

He walked out the door and continued on to scout the area for how it was set up for combat.

“Very young, pretty girls,” a young pimp said when he neared the bar where young girls sat outside it.

Jay felt disgust for what stood before his eyes, girls that could be no more than twelve years old. He reckoned they were orphan slaves used by General Wong for publicity against US soldiers.

He went inside to check for hidden cameras. He had reckoned right. Peep holes were evident in the walls. Not to let on he had spotted them, he looked elsewhere and then left to find out more of General Wong’s plan.

He walked about and carefully searched the island for clues. He couldn’t believe his eyes. Antiaircraft gunnery pointed toward the sea. It was well hidden except from the direction toward which it pointed. What an unimaginable horror General Wong had arranged to occur sometime

soon. It caused Jay to grieve with unbearable sadness.

The island was fortified with large gunnery and the islanders could put up a strong fight, but behind the guns was the school and playground where little children played.

The discovery of more hidden cameras only convinced him a devious plot too dreadful to think about was indeed about to take place. He walked about thinking of a way to prevent it.

He approached the Wongplicator. Using it as a mediator he discussed strategy with Nick and Netone.

When the Wongplicator left to go back to the office where Cheng was, Jay went to the seaplane to confront the Filipino guards. He somehow had to create chaos. The Wongplicator could then take charge with more authority.

“Everyone’s going to die a horrible death,” Jay shouted. “What for?”

“It is the will of Allah,” one of the Filipino guards shouted back. “We will join Allah for our sacrifice.”

“I see children at play. Why must they die?”

“It is their duty to sacrifice for Allah.”

“They don’t know they’ll be killed. What choice do they have? You sure your spiritual leaders aren’t using you for their own selfish glory?”

The guard pointed his rifle at Jay. “Shut up you infidel. You do not know the will of Allah.”

Jay noticed another seaplane in the sky. He figured it was on its way to pick up Cheng, Tony and Su-yin. He felt the urgency of the situation more than ever and ignored the guard. “What about the bomb on the plane?”

“Bomb?” an elderly Chinaman asked.

“That’s right. Check it out.”

“Why bomb?”

“The Muslim militants plan to blow up the island and all of us on it. Go over to the plane and see for yourself.”

The elder first stared at the plane and then at Jay. “No one is supposed to open the door.”

“Take a peek through the window.”

Three young Chinese boys rushed to the plane and looked through the pilot window before the guards could persuade them to leave. They confided with the Chinese male elder, who went over to the plane and stared through the window. His eyes opened wide.

Word of a bomb was sure to spread among the islanders.

Jay saw that Nitay stood by and observed. He went to her. “You need to get off the island. I have information our Marines are on their way to invade. General Wong set a trap and you’re the bait.”

“How’s that?”

“General Wong used you for our forces to track you here. That seaplane contains a dirty bomb. Once our forces detect it and confront the big guns on the island, they’ll inadvertently kill innocent people. It’ll create bad publicity.”

“That’s horrible, but what’s with you and General Wong? You must’ve drugged him, but if you did, why not have him surrender?”

“You ask too many questions. I’ll answer them when I have time to explain. Right now you need to escape. Critical information of General Wong’s plan has been uploaded into your recorder.”

“How can I escape with soldiers everywhere?”

She was nearly impossible to convince, but what choice did she have?

“You and General Wong board the jet. I’ll take care of the bomb.”

“Are you crazy? Even if you did drug him, I’m not about to be alone with that maniac.”

“It’s not the real General Wong. Trust me. Here’s some coconut. Eat only a little at a time and know who you can trust.”

“You want me drugged, too, and still expect me to trust you?”

Jay hugged her tight. “It’s no drug. It’s educational. Hurry, no time to waste.”

“Who should I contact in the loop?”

“Mention it only to the President.”



Pete, Toenehe and Charlie sat as spectators in their lawn chairs as Nick fed information to the Wongplicator.

When Cheng came into view along with Jay and two Chinese guards, the spaceship translated Cheng's Chinese into proper English for Nick, and Nick's English into Chinese for Cheng.

"This American is your spy," Cheng said.

"If he is a spy, why did he bring us a great weapon?"

"You came with him. He now has the whole island in an uproar. He spoiled the plan."

"Good work, Cheng," Nick improvised by way of the Wongplicator. "He must be part of a trap. Lock him up on the seaplane."

“He could fly it away.”

“He will be an escaped prisoner flying a bomb to the Americans.”

Cheng frowned. “We will be killed if we stay and defend the island”

“The American reporter and I will go on the jet. The seaplane has arrived to take you and Su-yin to Beijing. Officer Li and his men will defend the island once they learn the bomb is not for them. You go and inform him. I will take care of the other matter.”

Cheng hurried out the door.

Nick, figuring that Jay must've understood what had been said, counted on him to be taken to the seaplane where he could alert the fleet to General Wong's devious plan. He'd also fly back to Alien Island with the plutonium. It was needed to satisfy Netone, who could help thwart the rest

of the general's plan.

Nick's plan would also allow Su-yin to leave with Cheng in order not to expose her cover, since she conspired against the same enemy Nick and his cohorts did, and since she might later be of assistance in its defeat.



The President, bracing himself for Admiral Young's report, knew better than to expect good news.

“We lost three SEALs. Two came back with alarming finds. Lieutenant Plaey landed the hummer with General Wong aboard. That island is well fortified. We expect to have casualties. You'll need to notify Congress and the Senate.”

Any request for emergency action from the Congress and the Senate topped the President's worst nightmare.

Warning the Fleet

While Nitay sat inside the hummer she couldn't understand why the situation wasn't manageable if General Wong had been fed the coconut treat. Couldn't Jay have him diffuse the bomb?

She stood up and peaked out the window. She noticed Tony climbing the nylon ladder.

She searched for a way to close the dome over the cockpit, but couldn't find any.

Tony reached over the window and pointed his gun at her. "Sorry babe. Life's not fair, but if you don't tell me everyone you work with, I'll have to get a little pleasure before I do you in. I know you'll enjoy it."

She heard something shouted in Chinese. When Tony looked down she leaned close to the window and saw Chinese guards pointing rifles at him.

He fell off the ladder and landed on a guard. As they tumbled to the ground, Tony hooked an arm around a neck, rolling sideways away from the other guards, and then using the one as a shield.

The guard had dropped his rifle, but Tony still had his handgun. "Get," he yelled, pointing his gun at the other guards.

When they ran away he allowed the other guard to run with them.

Tony got up. A hummingbird pointed its beak straight at his forehead and then darted away.

Again Tony climbed the nylon ladder, but only half way up, as again he fell off it. The guards came back. This time they dragged him away.

She caught sight of General Wong on his way towards her. He climbed the ladder. She shivered at his presence and closed her eyes.

“You are now safe,” she heard. “I will rescue Jay and then come back to fly you away from here.”

She still feared him.



Jay was indeed in trouble. Two Chinese guards had taken him to the seaplane. The Filipino guards pointed their rifles at him. He turned, as to walk away, but twirled all the way around, closing in on a Filipino, tackling him to the ground and holding him in a headlock.

The other Filipino reached back with his assault rifle and swung at Jay's head. Jay twisted and pushed with all his might, barely managing to duck the rifle in time.

“Arrest the Filipinos,” he heard the Wongplicator say.

The Chinese guards pointed their rifles at the Filipinos, but didn't fire at them. Meanwhile the Filipino Jay had a hold of slugged Jay in the head and got the upper hand.

During the struggle hummingbird drones spit sedatives into the Filipinos' arms. One Filipino held Jay's arms back while the other attempted to strike a damaging blow, but they passed out instead.

A bruised and sluggish Jay heard the Wongplicator say, *“If you are now able to fly the seaplane I will fly the hummer to Alien Island.”*

Dazed but not out, Jay stood on his feet and shook his head. *“Let the spaceship pilot it. You're needed here. Our Marines could arrest you, but you can save lives if you surrender and make sure no one fires those big guns. It's risky, your choice.”*

“I will comply with your request.”

“Thanks. I’ll come back for you.”

As Jay boarded the seaplane and started the engines, he wondered why the Wongplicator had been granted permission to stay and help humans. Netone must’ve felt something special contrary to its way of life. It was as though it asked why this human cared about its plight. Did it feel obligated to respond in a mutual sort of way? Jay was hopeful.

As the seaplane took flight Jay found a pair of binoculars. When he peered through them he spotted the invasion force on its way. A platoon of boats full of marines raced ahead of a battleship having large gunnery on deck in position to fire. To the left of the battleship was a carrier with Jets armed with missiles taking flight from the deck. Two of them appeared to be heading towards the hummer. He feared for Nitay’s life.

As helpless as he was in a hopeless situation he still had to contact someone in time to prevent the tragic devastation of innocent people and the death of a dear friend. “Mayday, mayday, come in please,” he yelled into the mike.

There was no reply.

He tried again. “Mayday, mayday, come in please.”

He saw a hummingbird drone in front of the seaplane and he finally heard a voice on his radio: “This is Netone.”

“Connect me with the invasion force.”

He waited an eternity for Netone to reply.

“You can now communicate with the invasion force.”

“Mayday, mayday, this is Lieutenant Plaey of the US Navy.”

“Stand by, Lieutenant Plaey.”

**He waited another eternity before he heard,
“This is Admiral Young. Where're you taking that
nuke?”**

“It's a dirty one, Sir, set to go off soon.”

“Explain.”

**Jay saw a Navy jet close in on him, but the
fate of the islanders was his first concern. “Wong
Island's a setup. General Wong wanted to explode
the bomb on the people when you invaded.”**

“Why would he?”

**“To blame and embarrass us for all the
destruction you'll cause. The bomb was their
insurance to make it happen.”**

“Why would he murder his own people?”

**“General Wong wants propaganda for his
cause.”**

“Confirm it.”

“You’ll have to. It’ll be a tragedy if you don’t.”

“Where are the bad guys? What happened to my SEALs?”

“They’re safe with the bad guys wrapped for delivery. Nothing’s left for you to fight except innocent people. The one running the show is a General Wong impostor. He’s on our side.”

“Sure he is. Where’s the hummer headed?”

“Honolulu, Sir,” Jay just decided. It could ruin a convenient setup if it was followed to Alien Island.

“We cannot let that happen.”

Jay peeked at the Navy jet as it neared in a ready to fire position. “It goes home with only an innocent passenger on board,” he pleaded.

“It will have to surrender. You need to surrender or you will be shot down. Good luck

on your decision.”

Jay had pleaded his case. There was nothing more he could do.



The President stood by in case he was needed to intercede in the battles fought here in a cave between Liz and George.

The Admiral held his phone close to his mouth. “Keep our jets on the tails of the seaplane and the hummer just in case. CIA believes a bomb is targeted for Honolulu.”

George nodded. “If they don’t head for one of our refueling stations, we’ll have to shoot them down. We can’t let the Lieutenant get away with the bomb and we can’t let the enemy have the hummer. I don’t care who’s in it.”

The Admiral lowered his cell. “The hummer’s on course for Honolulu.”

“What’ll it be?” the President asked.

“We have to take it out,” George replied.

“Are you sure that’s necessary?” Liz asked.

“Weigh in, Admiral,” the President ordered.

“I’m with Liz on this one.”

“Really?” George asked.

“The hummer can’t have enough fuel to make it beyond Honolulu. As long as it’s not headed to China or somewhere else, let it land on the ocean. It’ll then be helpless and we’ll have it surrounded.”

“What if it outruns us and then turns around?” George asked.

“Our hornets have kept up so far,” Liz said. “It’d move slower if it wants to conserve enough

fuel to make Honolulu.”

“What if it’s on a suicide mission,” George barked.

“Take it out if you can,” the President decided, even though the total destruction of the hummer and the death of anyone in it didn’t make the President feel proud.

The Admiral put his cell phone to his mouth. “Launch missiles.”

After a minute the Admiral lowered his cell phone. “Mission accomplished.”

The President bowed his head and shut his eyes.



Nick’s had his attention focused on a video of the Marines’ landing on Wong Island. As instructed by

Jay, the Wongplicator had ordered a surrender of weapons. It then ordered the soldiers to shove Tony and the Filipinos forward with their hands tied behind their backs. It also ordered the release of the Navy SEALs.

A Marine Lieutenant spoke on his radiophone.
“This place is well fortified, but there is no one in position to fire those big guns. SEALs are alive and well.”

The Lieutenant stood by with his radiophone to his ear. He lowered the phone and said, *“Take the officer in command into custody and get his story. He is supposed to be a General Wong impostor on our side. Admiral Young wants confirmation.”*

A Marine Sergeant pointed his rifle at the Wongplicator. *“Move.”*

“Fall to the ground,” Nick shouted from afar.

The Wongplicator fell limp to the ground.

The Sergeant checked for a pulse. *“He is dead, sir. Whoever he was, he must have committed suicide.”*

“Put him on a stretcher,” the officer said. “A helicopter is on its way. It will have to take a corpse.”

“Netone,” Nick hollered.

Netone appeared inside the open door of the spaceship. **“Do you need my assistance?”**

“Shouldn’t the Wongplicator have been flying the hummer?”

“Lieutenant Plaey asked me permission for it to stay and help save lives. I obliged his request.”

“Won’t you need it?”

“I will be able to obtain another one when I return to Kiron.”

Nick realized the creature would go back to Kiron once it had its nuclear fuel, but perhaps it’d stay for more fuel if the replicator was rescued to

render the task more feasible.

“Pete flew the osprey to Taiwan to refill its tanks,” Nick said. “He and Toenehe should be on their way back by now.”

“The osprey now approaches Wong Island.”

Nick clutched his fist tight, straight up and thrust it upward. “Aren’t the Marines expecting a chopper to pick up a dead body?”

“The other helicopter also approaches Wong Island.”

“Breach communications. Duplicate the voice from its last order and tell the pilot to abort mission and return to base.”



George handed the President the report. The President read it, but he didn't know what to

make of it.

“Our medical team can do an autopsy,” said Admiral Young.

Liz tapped on the table with her fingers. “Why would General Wong be so desperate he’d commit suicide in order for him to not give away information? It doesn’t make sense.”

George leaned towards her. “Because he’s only a look-alike who was brainwashed to believe he’d go to heaven if he kept the big secret they don’t want us to know about.”

“Lieutenant Plaey claimed the general was an impostor,” the Admiral said. “An autopsy should be able to confirm it.”

“I bet one of the prisoners knows something,” Liz replied.

George leaned towards the President. “My guy in Honolulu wants to get his operative before

he's compromised.”

The President had other concerns in mind. Although he no longer had to explain the needless slaughter of civilians to the Congress and the Senate, the hummer had been destroyed and the seaplane with a nuke in it was still out there.



With a bomb behind his back ready to explode Jay didn't need a Navy jet on his tail.

“Lieutenant Clark to Lieutenant Plaey.”

“Roger, Lieutenant Clark.”

“What do you plan to do with that bomb?”

“Take it out to sea. The detonator activated. There's only a few minutes left on the timer.”

“Can you bail in time?”

“Don’t know. Better keep your distance.”

“Roger. I’ll keep a safe distance and spot you for rescue, but be warned, you need to land, bail or be terminated, your choice.”

With the flaps set to slow the seaplane down, as for it to glide close to the ocean’s surface and skip across it, Jay turned on the autopilot. He then stepped back towards the bomb to check out the setup.

C4 was tied to the plutonium.

Jay slid the cargo door open and then, all in one motion, yanked the C4 loose from the plutonium and heaved it out the door.

A second or two later his ears ached from a thunderous noise and the seaplane jerked from under his feet and his head and shoulders banged against a wall. Pain followed with wooziness as he drifted out of consciousness.



After he had decided the fate of Nitay Bennington's life, the President awaited to hear the results of his other decision.

"The bomb on the seaplane exploded," the Admiral said. "A rescue team will need to prepare for radiation fallout and I doubt it can get there in time to save Plaey if he somehow survived the blast."

"Another suicide," George replied. "It looks like they're determined to protect their secrets at any cost. Whatever they are, something big, mean and disastrous for sure is about to happen."

The President bowed his head in respect of a fallen soldier that he had shaken hands with. He wasn't thrilled about the latest result.

Welcome Home

Nitay woke startled to see someone in an Air Force uniform staring down at her. “Who are you? Where are we?”

“I’m Sergeant Haugett. You’re at Honolulu International inside a Navy aircraft.”

“Can you call me a taxi?”

“I’ll take you to see General Trump.”

What for she wondered. She recalled the loop thing Jay had mentioned. Had he already informed someone she had become its new member?



Besides passing over Honolulu on their way back to the White House, the President had something

else to perk up the First Lady. “Guess what?”

“What, dear?”

He pointed at a monitor showing the hummer on the Ronald Reagan. “It wasn’t shot down after all. Someone duplicated the voice of one of our pilots.”

“That’s nice, dear. It’s been a nice vacation. I’ve always wanted to visit a cave; just didn’t care to live in one.”



Nitay sat in a wooden chair by a wall across the room from General Trump. With a phone to his ear he paid her no mind, but she reckoned he was in the loop.

He hung up the phone. “Are you okay, Miss Bennington?”

“Have you heard from Lieutenant Plaey?”

“I’m afraid I have bad news.”

She cleared her throat of saliva and braced herself.

“He flew a bomb out to sea where it exploded. It was spotted, but the rescue team didn’t get there in time to find a body.”

**She didn’t want to believe the General.
“Couldn’t he have bailed out?”**

“It’s possible, but even if he did there’s little chance he’d survive this long in the ocean. That aircraft had radioactive material in it, and it was a powerful explosion at that.”

She nearly cried, but she managed to maintain her composure. Even though she had felt a special bond for her savior, she needed to fend for herself.

She hoped the secret organization Jay had worked with knew of her just as well as he did, but confined to the company of military people she

hardly knew, her status was more likely unknown to them. “Am I under arrest?”

“Hell no. To the contrary, I’ve received orders from Homeland Security to put you in protective custody and give you all the courtesy and respect of a five star general. If there’s anything at all I can do for you, just let me know.”

She had a sliver of hope. General Trump’s response indicated he was in the loop. If not, then Jay must’ve informed this top-secret agency of her status. He sacrificed himself for her sake and made sure she was under the umbrella of the top authority.

She still needed friendly allies she could identify with. “I’d like to speak to Lieutenant Peggy Banks. Do you know her?”

He tapped his fingers on his desk. After a bit, he faced her again. “I do, but it’s not a good idea to bring her into this. We want to keep your

stay here as quiet as possible.”

Nitay brushed her hair back with her hand. “Don’t worry. I won’t tell her anything she doesn’t need to know. She can pick up clothes and stuff for me.”

General Trump remained silent.

She waited.

As if somewhat sympathetic toward her plight, he replied, “I guess I wouldn’t deny that request to a five star general.”

“I’m off to Washington?”

“Apparently you know something of interest. You can now be of service to your country.”

She nodded. “Do I have a choice?”

“You do at the moment.”

She reckoned the General was just cautious

not to admit Peggy was in the loop. "I'm in."

He picked up the phone and called someone. He introduced himself and then mentioned she was ready for Washington. Shortly after that he said, "You leave in one hour."



Nick stood gazing down at Jay. The Lieutenant was in a comma barely alive. He bathed in healing light from the spaceship, but his body needed complete cleansing of the radiation from the explosion for it to fully recover. Netone hadn't offered a guarantee that he would recover.

A hand rested on Nick's shoulder. He turned to hear what Pete had to say.

"Good thing I flew the osprey his way. Sharks nearly had him for lunch."

Nick looked back down at Jay. “There’s nothing more we can do for him. Right now we have something more urgent to attend to.”

“What’s that?”

“The creature might leave us now that it has enough nuclear fuel to make it back to its home planet. We need to convince it to stay and help.”

“If anyone can persuade it, you can.”

Netone approached them.

As Pete walked away, Nick addressed Netone. “I suppose you’ll leave us now that you have your plutonium?”

“I can now return home at a faster speed.”

“Sure could use your help.”

“I have no more reason to help you.”

“Just to help our cause will enlighten your soul.”

“I do not comprehend how my help with your cause will enlighten my soul.”

“You reap what you sew. When you help someone they become part of your world. The more you help the more you care, and the more precious your world becomes because of it. We’re now part of your world memory. Help it prosper and feel better about yourself or forsake it and let it haunt you forever.”

“I will deliberate on what you have told me.”

Nick waited for a reply.

“I will stay ten more days to help your cause if you help me obtain more plutonium.”

“If we succeed, it’ll be good for both of us.”

“I understand why your cohorts rescued the Wongplicator. It can help you achieve your goals. I do not understand why they bothered to save Jay Plaey. He no longer appears to be useful to your cause.”

“Haven’t you learned anything by now? We don’t leave a good man behind, no matter what. I aim to save as many lives as I can.”

The creature shut the two eyes it had pointed Nick’s way. It then headed back to the spaceship.

Pete walked up to Nick. “Do any good?”

“I bought us ten days, but that’s only if the nukes don’t go off sooner.”



The waiting room, with guards at the door, had no telephone and Nitay hadn’t even a cell phone to call out on. She wondered where Peggy was. Had

General Trump lied?

Peggy suddenly showed up in the doorway with a disgruntle look on her face. “I don’t know whether to thank you or kill you.” She dragged a couple suitcases into the room. “I should kill you for all the trouble you and Nick brought on, but it appears you did get me out of here for a nice trip to Washington, for whatever that entails.”

Nitay moped. She had hoped for moral support. “Sorry. I don’t know who else to turn to.”

“Why not ask Nick?”

Nitay bowed her head. “He was cremated.”

“I heard. I also talked with him the other day.”

Nitay stared at Peggy. “You some spiritual psychic or something?”

Peggy reared back her shoulders. “You don’t know he’s still alive?”

“Did you see him?”

“No, but I talked to him on the phone. I know it was him.”

Nitay nodded. After all, she had been rescued by a hummingbird. What couldn’t she now believe? “He must be part of the loop. I’m now included in it. You must be, too.”

“I hope not.”

Nitay thought Peggy might only be denying that she was in the loop. It’d be foolhardy to trust anyone without confirmation of their status.

Two Airmen entered the room and saluted. Peggy saluted. “Ease it. We’ll follow you.”

One of them picked up Peggy’s suitcases. The other grabbed Nitay’s recorder before she was able

to secure it.

Nitay frowned and Peggy grumbled while they followed the Airmen out the door.



How Nick would use the replicator depended on when Jay would come out of his coma, if he ever did.

Netone planted its tentacles in front of Nick. “I detect you are not happy. Have you not sewn a good crop to harvest?”

“Are you happy, light years away from your home planet?”

“I choose to dwell in a mental state of happiness.”

“Just like that?”

“What would be better than for the mind to dwell in a state of bliss?”

“Bigger bananas. That way you don’t have to eat two of them.”

“To prefer one bigger banana over two smaller ones is trivial. If you just choose to be happy, you will no longer have the urge for a bigger banana.”

Nick shook his head. “Sometimes it’s difficult.”

“It appears difficult for you humans. You seem to want to destroy each other and yourselves. You smoke cigarettes, have sex and live the good-life as if it is happiness. Then you war for it in your lust, and you party, but it does not help. You do not need to party to be happy. You just need to be content with whatever you do at the moment.”

“I tried that once, but it’s difficult when others around you want you to become as miserable as they are.”

“You can still choose happiness.”

“Not when unfortunate ones with a life of poverty become zealous of your success and want to challenge you for your wealth.”

“You can still choose to be either zealous or happy.”

“Would you be happy if I punched out your eyes or destroyed your planet?”

“Even though it would degrade me, I would suppress the pain of losing my eyes and accept the loss of my home. Kironians avoid suffering in favor of happiness. Earthlings sometimes choose happiness and sometimes you prefer to suffer.”

“Yeah, we love to battle for a good cause. How about the warm feeling a helpless child has

in your arms knowing you'll care for it?"

"We prepare our little ones for excellent replacements."

Nick's eyes opened wide. "Replacements. Wow."

He shook his head in disbelief. He didn't even want to believe he heard what he did. "You're alienated aliens. That's what you are. How much more bizarre can your way of life get? Maybe you're aliens of the world, not just our planet."

"I do not understand what you mean. I am of this world."

Nick turned his eyes to the left and rubbed the bottom of his chin. "You missed the point. You know what you know. You don't know what you don't know."

"What do you mean?"

“You need to experience motherly love to know what I mean.”

“How is motherly love experienced?”

“It’s the memory I have of my mother before she passed away. She worked hard to bring home the bacon and one day I wanted toy guns I saw at a store. I begged her to buy them for me. She gave me the money. I lost it on the way to the store. I cried. She gave me more money. I now cherish the memory of my mother’s love.”

“You should have been more careful with your money.”

“You don’t get it.”

“What do I not understand?”

“It’s hard to explain.”

“Why is it difficult for you to explain?”

Nick looked up at the sky. “You can only know what the color blue looks like if you’ve actually seen it. You only know the meaning of motherly love if you’ve experienced it.”

Netone waved a tentacle. “Blue is a particular wavelength of light creating a sensation on the brain by way of nerves from the eye.”

Nick shook his head. “That's abstract. How do we get blue, yellow, red and the different colors from simple waves?”

“It is complex. Different waves penetrate into our brains with different energies. Our brains, in turn, interpret different sensations according to different color. The understanding of this principle in intricate detail is how knowledge of the natural world has become more advanced on Kiron than it is on Earth.”

Nick grimaced, squinting one eye. “Yeah, but isn't blue still a newly created sensation?”

“How is blue a new creation?”

“A cake is the sum of its ingredients, but its taste differs from any particular one of them. It’s a taste created anew. Life is likewise forever created anew. Try to figure out how it’s put together and you’ll miss out on its splendor. Just delight in the experience of its wonder. Smell the flowers. Don’t analyze their sensation.”

That was easier said than done. Nick couldn’t just smell the flowers with his goals confronted with all the difficult obstacles he still had to overcome.

Some goals you could become slave to, to endure misery. That Nick did. Ten days to find three nukes asked too much of him. He couldn’t accomplish his goal without Netone’s help.

On to Washington

Nitay gazed out the window at a sea of white fluffy clouds reaching beyond the horizon. She imagined them as mountain ranges. Oh how she wanted to remain above them and the fray of daily life and not sank back down into those troubled times below.

Was that a hummingbird? No, it couldn't be out there at this altitude and speed. Her imagination must've played a trick on her. She must still have Nick and Jay on her mind. She had brought the ruckus of the world along with her.

Feeling a push from Peggy's elbow she turned to see a tall, slim Afro-American in suit in the aisle. Nitay had taken note of him when he seated himself three rows back to the right of this military jet. He had glanced her way now and then.

"I'm Agent Marvin Willeet, FBI. Here're your belongings, Miss Bennington. I hope we haven't

inconvenienced you.”

“I trust you didn’t copy my recorder?” Nitay asked as if she didn’t already know the answer. Maybe he was in the loop.

“We’re concerned about people in charge who act on their own behalf at the risk of security. If they stumble onto things they shouldn’t, it could get in the way of our operations.”

“Who in charge are you concerned about?”

“Lieutenant Plaey did save the day. It’s obvious someone helped him. We need to know the identities of everyone he worked with and what they’re up to.”

“You don’t know about the hummingbirds and the coconut?”

“Hummingbirds and coconut?”

She ignored him. He finally left.

“You’d think the bozo would be more sensitive,” Peggy said.

Nitay gazed again at white fluffy clouds. “That’s okay. I thought he’d be someone in the know. He’s obviously not in the loop.”

Peggy winced. “What’s this loop thing?”

Nitay shrugged. “I wouldn’t look out the window if you don’t know. It’ll blow your mind to smithereens.”

Peggy stared out the window with her mouth open.



The President sat in the Oval Office with heads of state and listened to a copy of Nitay’s recordings. Was this information reliable? It’d change everything if it was.

He recalled when his security team spotted a hummingbird outside the cave. It was the only unusual thing present when security attempted to trace the call from someone claiming to be Agent Kusiak.

The recording ended with a few moments of silence.

“Hummingbirds, coconuts,” John Hammond, the Secretary of Defense, said. “This young lady seems out of touch with reality. Maybe she’s been influenced. She could be a convenient shield for the real culprits.”

“Does she have a lovely bunch of coconuts?” George asked.

The President wasn't amused by the comment. He looked away from George and at the guy he had put in charge of the FBI.

“Let’s concentrate on what we do know,” Del Driskel said. “She claims Lieutenant Plaey landed the hummer on Wong Island. He claimed a Chinese general on the island impersonated General Wong. We know General Wong was in Tainan at the time. We know she ended up at Honolulu in the hummer. Because we have identified the voice on Lieutenant Clark’s flight recorder as that of Plaey’s we can be certain he piloted the seaplane. All of this means someone else must be involved. She could only be a shield.”

That wasn’t what the President wanted to hear. A shield would less likely have strategic information to reveal to interrogators.

“She lies,” George said loud and clear.

“If the information on her recorder is right,” Del replied, “then that island was just a trigger for something bigger to come.”

“So what,” George said. “She’s a spy. My boy was onto General Wong. Kusiak found out about it and told her. She’s just trying to upstage what we’ve suspected all along.”

“What if she’s right about your boy?” Del asked. “We have no record of his knowledge of General Wong’s plan to nuke three cities.”

That interested the President. Maybe she knew something even if she was only a shield.

“She lies,” George barked.

“Let’s not jump to conclusions,” Liz said.

George edged closer to the President. “I’m aware of my boy’s use of questionable sources. Mr. Slubona came up from the ranks of Special Forces. He’s of the old school and one of the best. The kind of covert activity he uses can make him look guilty.”

“You don’t think he’d abuse his position of authority?” Liz asked.

George gawked at her. “It could appear as though he does and it might seem he has gotten too far out of control, but it has also helped him serve his country well. Besides, Miss Bennington didn’t just volunteer her information. We took it from her. Who knows what she really intended to do with it? Who knows what she and Plaey had planned before our forces got into position?”

Liz shook her head. “What do you suggest?”

“Break her down. She’s an enemy combatant.”

“How do you know?”

“Don’t bicker over the obvious. We know someone infiltrated our security. If we don’t find out who the real enemy is, what more it actually has, and what it intends to do, then the President might have to push the button.”

The horror of that idea caused the President to squirm in his seat. Maybe he should hear Liz out. “What says Homeland Security?”

“This is no time to panic. If she plays us, we should go along with it and play her as well.”

George sneered. “Of course she plays us. If we patsy around with this doll, we’ll lose out on any chance we have of decisive action before we become overwhelmed by a threat we know nearly nothing about. The stakes are too high. We need to break her down anyway we can.”

“All we have is your agent’s word against hers,” Liz countered. “That would’ve been a tragic mistake if we bombed that island. Thank god she and Plaey prevented it.”

“Why do you think that is,” the President asked.

“Maybe whoever's behind this was drugged. They could've found their way back to our side just in time.”

“Anymore ideas?” the President asked.

“We need a show of force,” George replied. “Let China get a good look at our warships armed with missiles ready to launch.”

The President wasn't eager to push a button.

“What about al-Qaeda?” Liz asked. “A conflict between us and China is to their interest. Our best strategy is to leave all options on the table. Let Miss Bennington take a polygraph. We should cover all bases and give George's boy one as well.”

George shook his head. “Dirk's too skilled. He trained to lie with the best of them. Our best hope is to go after this babe. We need to break her down before it's too late.”

Liz addressed the President. “This young lady’s a law abiding citizen for all we know. I have a plan that’ll get her cooperation.”

The President still couldn’t get hummingbirds out of his mind. Maybe he should listen more to the First Lady.

After the conference was over he went back to his desk in the Oval Office. The phone rang. No name and no address were given on the caller ID. He answered it anyway.

It was the same voice from the unauthorized call he had received inside the cave, but this time he decided to listen with more interest in what the caller had to say.



With the feel of warmth on his face, Jay opened his eyes to a bluish light from the spaceship. He then

rolled over on his side to discover where he was at, but his neck and shoulder throbbed with pain. It didn't help to put his hand on a sore spot on his head and feel a bump. Becoming woozy he laid back down on his back.

When he looked up, something blocked his view of the stars. It was the face of a Chinaman.

“Hello, I, Nick, friends.”

All that said to Jay was that Nick might know a commie.

Nick's face appeared two feet above Jay's. “Our situation has improved. I just talked with the President. I'm sure I swayed him this time.”

Jay closed his eyes, too weak to talk or even stay awake.



The President decided to consult in private with Liz. “Guess what?” he asked when she entered the Oval Office.

“Yes, Mr. President.”

“I received another call from this Agent who was supposed to have been cremated.”

“How can I help?”

“He claims he investigated Dirk Slubona’s traitorous activities. He got caught and was set up, but was saved by an alien creature he allied with to commandeer the hummer and its innocent pilot. I’d like to get your take on it before I discuss it with George.”

“You should check with Matt. He has a history with both Kusiak and Slubona.”

“Thanks. I’ll do that. I’d also like to know if it’s possible for these little birds to do what they seem to. Isn’t that the stuff of science fiction?”

Liz's eyes sparkled. "I asked a physicist. He believes it's possible by way of advanced laser technology along with cold fusion and a diamond alloy."

"Sounds complicated, but I'm all ears."

"Laser light of a particular frequency can penetrate atomic barriers to release stored energy in similar manner of a chain reaction occurring in a nuclear explosion. If the process is controllable, then the energy could be used to provide a force field for objects to maneuver by."

"Sounds promising. How do the hummingbirds come into play?"

"Diamonds can form from nanodiamonds. If mixed with boron, then they conduct a charge in the same way silicon chips in computers do, but the diamond structure is much stronger and far more stable."

“How do they become hummingbirds?”

“If they’re small enough and arranged in a unique manner, Dr. Brenner believes they could resonate particular frequencies of laser light that taps into the stored energy of atoms. It generates a string of energy fields conducive to all atoms.”

“I see. They’re self-propelled little computer-drones having a long range of capability. Has your physicist come up with anything significant?”

“He requested funds for a research facility. I heard it was earmarked into a bill that had been passed by both the Congress and Senate.”

The President grimaced. He had vetoed that bill for too much pork, but it'd be easier to swallow if military possibilities were included. “That stored energy seems free for the taking.”

“He cautioned it wouldn’t be totally free. If you tap into it, it changes the composition of matter.”

“I guess we’re damned no matter what we do, but we are anyway if China has already developed the technology.”

“That’s why we should go forward with my plan to let Miss Bennington show us the way.”

Liz sounded reasonable, but for the President to go along with her recommendation he’d have to weigh it against George’s.

The Interrogation

When in early morning the jet arrived at the airport in Washington DC, Nitay was taken into custody by a group of suits. They took her to a small, crowded room where she spent excruciating hours answering the same questions over and over in the heat of a bright light, but she refused to divulge information

about the loop, including hummingbirds and the coconut treat. She insisted she'd only answer to the President.

They escorted her to another small room and sat her down in a chair at a booth. After they placed wires on her head, a male voice from an intercom asked her questions. She suspected it obscured the new age lie detector that analyzed voice patterns and images of the brain.

One of the most difficult questions for her to answer pertained to loyalty: “Would you report what you know about Lieutenant Plaey to your superiors even if you knew it would compromise his position?”

What'd it matter? She remained silent.

“Answer the question.”

Nitay shook her head. “I don't know. It depends on what's in the best interest of security.”

“Answer the question.”

“Sorry, cannot.”

After a long pause her interrogator asked, “If for the good of our national interest, as you are aware of, would you fail to report what you know of Lieutenant Plaey?”

Had he not been killed after all? “Yes,” she answered without hesitation.

“If for the good of national interest, as you are still aware of, would you report everything you know of Lieutenant Plaey even if it compromises his position?”

“Yes,” she replied. After all, she didn’t know anything other than he had been in some kind of loop thing.



The President sat in the Oval Office eager to hear what Liz had to say about the test results. He expected them to show lie after lie, as to vindicate George's disapproval of Liz's plan, but that'd be okay as long as they revealed something pertinent that'd help resolve the precarious situation the nation was in.

Liz, with that 'I told you so' look on her face, smiled. "I thoroughly examined the test results on Nitay Bennington. I couldn't find any indication of wrongdoing on her part."

"Does she work with Plaey or anyone else we should know about?"

Liz nodded. "An analysis of her DNA shows Agent Kusiak's her real father. He's also her mentor. He set her up with Lieutenant Plaey, who included her in the loop."

"What does she know about it?"

“She doesn’t seem to know anymore than what she already revealed to us, but we’ve found traces of some mysterious elements in her blood. A new drug could’ve been developed. Whoever’s behind this could’ve drugged her and Lieutenant Plaey. He probably overcame it when he did that heroic act for his country.”

“What’s your take on this substance?”

“The molecules are aligned in various patterns.”

The President remembered Nitay’s report of hummingbirds and coconut. “Could this modified coconut be some kind of computerization of food for though? We could be in trouble if the Chinese or terrorists developed it.”

“There’s been research done with miniature computer chips in the blood. They’re supposed to restore health to the body, but maybe we should expand the research to include intelligence.”

The President nodded. “Give it high priority.”

“I will, and I won’t completely rule out the possibility we’re visited by an alien from another planet.”

“God help us if we are and they’re not on our side. We got our hands full as is. Do you think that drug could have any effect on the results of Miss Bennington’s polygraph?”

“It’s a possibility and we’ll watch her closely.”

Liz didn’t seem as reassuring as the President had hoped she would be. For all she said, an alien from outer space could explain all that had occurred of late. Maybe an alien was here on our side; maybe one and others were here to establish a foothold to slowly take over. Whatever else this mystery could be all about he needed to adhere to caution.



After the long day of interrogation and medical examinations, right after subsequent flights from Wong Island and Honolulu, Nitay was in need of rest. At least she was provided a room at a hotel.

She heard a knock at the door.

She wearily strolled over and opened it. Peggy stood beside the guard. She held up a pint of vodka.

Nitay didn't care to drink alcohol, but she didn't mind the company. She stepped aside and motioned with her head for Peggy to come in.

Nitay sat at the desk while Peggy eased her way to the window.

“Is your room as nice as mine?” Peggy asked.

“Just don't say or do anything embarrassing.”

Peggy's eyes opened wide. “You mean we're bugged?”

“There’s probably hidden cameras in the bathrooms.”

“Would they mind if I called my parents?”

“I’m sure they want us to use the phone, but I wouldn’t. The FBI will trace the call and be all over your parents.”

Peggy screwed the lid off the pint of vodka and looked out to the Potomac River. “Hey, not bad duty, huh.”

Nitay was barely managing to keep her eyelids open. “Wait until they get desperate and we can’t tell them anything because we don’t know anything.”

Peggy approached Nitay. “What’ll they do?”

“Hopefully just keep us under surveillance.”

“We could take a lie detector, couldn’t we?”

“That’ll come. Once they find out how useless we are, the party’s over.”

Peggy frowned as she swallowed a swig of vodka.

Nitay let the tears flow from her eyes. “I’m sorry. You need to know this is serious. Think of it as casualties of friendly fire. It could be a lot worse. I’m sorry I got you involved. I’m very good at it.”

She had hoped for a better reception, but apparently the President didn’t recognize her as a member of the loop. Jay must’ve died before he informed anyone of it. That must be it.

Peggy gently put her arm around Nitay’s back and shoulder. “I’m honored you brought me along. Really. I’m grateful you chose me. What a privilege it is just to be by your side.”

Nitay wiped the tears from her eyes. “Let’s go down for a late snack. My treat. The sky’s the limit.”

“How about the sky? I haven’t had that yet.”

“You mean the pie in the sky, don’t you? You had that for desert on the plane. Remember?”

As tired as Nitay was, she still had Jay on her mind. His noble sacrifice was sure to trouble her through the night.



What more could Jay ask for now that he was out of a comma and surrounded by strangers? He could go back to the Ronald Reagan, but Nick must’ve had something else in mind. Anyhow that’s what Jay suspected when he saw the Jayplicator come out of the spaceship dressed in casual attire.

Nick rose to his feet. “Listen up, everybody. Here’s the deal. We have nine days left at most to locate three nukes.”

Nick pointed at Charlie. “How would you like to go back to China?”

Charlie shook his head.

Nick pointed down at Jay. “If he goes back he’ll probably get caught and risk the lives of everyone in a noble movement. I already expected as much. I can’t go. I’ll spread deadly bacteria. Pete transports. Toenehe has other duties. You’re too banged up to help, so that leaves us with the Jayplicator.”

Jay rolled over on his stomach and managed to push up to rest on his knees. “I’ll be fine.” He attempted to stand, but half way up he felt dizzy and weak. He stumbled about only to fall down flat on the ground.

“Careful buddy.”

Jay looked up at Nick. “Why the Jayplicator?”

“I can communicate with Nitay with it, and we could use it to bring your buddy Ken on board.”

Jay managed to sit upright. “If you think that thing will pass for me, think again.”

“Good point, but you’re not well enough to travel and we have to go with what we have.”

Nick walked over to Charlie. “You know a Chun Lee?”

“Teach Kun Fu in Taipei.”

“Does he still participate at Beijing?”

“Soon.”

“That’s what I wanted to hear. Pete will take you to Taipei. Find Chun Lee and convince him you discovered a promising new student who can win at Beijing.”

Meeting the President

Nitay woke to a pounding at the door. She rose up from bed and slipped on a dress. When she went to the door and opened it, one of two men said, “Get ready. You’re expected at the White House in ten minutes.

It actually took twenty minutes to get her to the White House. She was surprised to see the First Lady sitting in a soft cushion chair beside an empty one and a coffee table.

The First Lady smiled, pleasant like. “Please join me for coffee. I hear you’re a reporter.”

Nitay sat down in the chair next to the First Lady. “Yes, I came to meet with the President.”

“He’s at the Press Conference. Why aren’t you there?”

“Sorry, I must’ve missed him. If you don’t mind, I’ll wait here until he gets back.”

“It’s rumored you know a lot.”

Nitay looked away. “Yes, about everything of nothing.”

“Have you heard from Lieutenant Plaey?”

Nitay eyed the First Lady. Wasn’t the tragic fate of a Navy pilot newsworthy enough to get her attention? “He died because of me. I should never have involved him with my situation.”

“He’s not dead. An Agent Kusiak called the President and informed him the lieutenant survived the plane crash.”

Nitay perked up. That was the second claim someone had talked with Nick. “Are you positive the President talked with Kusiak? Someone cut off one of his fingers as he lay still in his coffin.”

The First Lady shrugged.

“How can Lieutenant Plaey still be alive? They say nobody could’ve survived that big of an explosion in the middle of the ocean.”

“All I’m sure of is the President wanted me to let you know the pilot did survive it.”

How could Nitay not believe the First Lady?
“You know, I think I should attend the conference after all. Do you mind?”

“No dear. Do you have a pass?”

“No.” Nitay looked away. “I left it back at my room.”

“I’ll call over and see what I can do. I’ll also have security escort you.”

“Thanks.”

Nitay had renewed hope. She believed they must’ve accepted her in the loop. She was even to

be escorted to the Press Conference. Things were looking up.

When she arrived at the Press Conference, “Press only,” the clerk at the registration desk informed her.

“I forgot it.”

“The First Lady had me bring her,” her escort said.

A security guard standing by the desk rubbed his chin. “I’ll check with Matt.”

The guard left, checked with another, came back and said, “Matt checked with the First Lady. It’s okay.”

The clerk pointed at the door.



The President had just finished with his speech and stood by ready to answer questions from the press, but he shut his eyes tight when he saw Nitay walk towards him. He wasn't the only one taken aback. His advisers had stunned faces, as if to see the press a blink of an eye from everything.

To turn her away wouldn't stop the press' inquisitiveness. He pointed at her. "Do you have a question, young lady?"

She stopped. "What can you tell me about a CIA agent and a Navy pilot?"

The President nearly had a heart attack. He gave her a thumbs-up. "Is that all young lady?"

"Yes. Thank you, Mr. President."

Voices sounded. Reporters held their hands up high. As she hurried away, followed by security guards, he tried to think of something to smooth the situation over, but he didn't come up with

anything significant. “Sorry, there’ll be no reply to any question that pertains to that young lady. It’s classified and sensitive to national defense.”



Nitay felt a forceful hand push her into the limousine where she sat down next to the First Lady.

The First Lady glanced at Nitay for a second and then stared ahead.

Nitay realized she had let her emotions get the best of her. “Hello Mary,” she said with an apologetic voice.

“What you just did wasn’t wise, dear.”

Nitay covered her eyes with a hand. “You’re right. I’m sorry. I did a stupid after I told Peggy to stay cool.”

The First Lady took Nitay's other hand. "Oh well, I should've known better as well. It's my fault. I misread my husband's intentions."

Nitay blushed. She hadn't expected such sympathy from the First Lady. "I became a little upset. I hope I didn't compromise a top secret operation."

The First Lady stared at Nitay. "Don't tell me if I shouldn't ask, but to what top secret operation do you refer?"

Nitay reckoned a hint or two would be okay. "It has something to do with hummingbirds and coconut treats."

"What could be secret about them?"

Nitay was cautious not to reveal too much. "That's all I know. It's way over my head. Maybe I'll understand it better when they bring me into the loop."



After the President met privately with Nitay and listened to what she had to say, he was ready to enjoy his lunch with the First Lady.

She sat opposite him at the small, square table that brought them closer together. “You know, dear, she seems sincere. She might be a little confused, but I think she tells the truth for the most part.”

The President had his doubts. “I sure hope so.”

“I probably shouldn’t ask. Is there a top secret operation with coconut treats and hummingbirds?”

The President shook his head no.

“I didn’t think so. Well, then, I’ll have to say she’s a lot more than a little confused. It’s obvious someone played havoc with her mind. It’s sad.

She's too young and sweet. Who'd do such a thing to her?"

The President leaned back in his chair. "No matter how ridiculous her story seems, at least it's consistent. She gives both sound, detailed information and unimaginable accounts at the same time. Her game could be to throw us off or maybe she was drugged and brainwashed. Don't you think?"

He really was relying on the First Lady's feminine insight.

"I don't know, dear. Those hummingbirds pop up everywhere."

The President nodded. "Yeah, they do, but I don't know what to make of it. Miss Bennington seemed as confused about it as we are."

"Have you asked Liz? Her advice is usually helpful."

“Liz has a bold plan. It entails a risk no one else wants to take, but I don’t know what else to do. In order to get on top of things we need Miss Bennington to lead us to Plaey or this agent that was supposed to have been cremated.”



Nitay stood before Elizabeth Black sitting behind a desk. George Kroft and Del Driskel sat in chairs on each side of it.

Nitay counted on her look of innocence for obtaining some forgiveness for her theatrical at the press conference. “I’m very sorry about this morning. I couldn’t control myself after I heard Jay was still alive.”

Liz smiled. “Don’t worry. It’ll give reporters something to fish for. It’ll lead them away from more sensitive issues.”

George grunted. “Yes. The President will use it a lot now that it’s rumored a war with China is imminent.”

“Why am I here?”

Liz’s piercing stare embodied the seriousness of the moment. “We’re prepared to make a generous offer to you.”

Nitay raised her eyebrows and pretended to be puzzled. Within her coy pretense of calm she could hardly wait for them to include her in the loop.

“We need your reporter skills to gather information of terrorist activity,” Liz said.

Nitay shrugged. “Sounds good, but I’m not a spy. Who’ll train me?”

George stood up in front of his chair. “We’ll cover your back, young lady, if you’re worthy of it. You’ve already crossed the line a little, haven’t

you?”

Nitay stood tall. “I haven’t done anything illegal as of yet and I’m sure I’ll be subject to more strict rules of engagement as a government employee. I’ll probably have to waive certain protected rights of the constitution so you can more easily prosecute me for disobeying orders. A reporter restricted to secrecy seems contrary. I don’t see how it’s practical.”

George turned red in the face.

Liz nodded. “Because of the gravity of the situation we’ll offer you diplomatic immunity. Any information you come by on your own not critical to our security will be yours to use without any legal obligation to us, within reason, of course.”

“It’s a generous offer, but I don’t want to go it alone.”

“Our agents will stay in touch.”

Nitay fixed her eyes on George. “I’d rather be with someone like Peggy I feel comfortable talking with.”

“She can be your assistant,” Liz said.

“Agent Kusiak and Lieutenant Plaey might contact either of you,” Del said. “Do you know of anyone else they work with?”

That question puzzled Nitay. It must be a test. She suspected they wanted to know if she’d divulge confidential information, such as what she knew about the hummingbirds and coconut. She’d play along with them. “I don’t have any evidence to back me up, but I think they’re extraterrestrial.”

Del chuckled. “You could be right. We almost came to that conclusion ourselves.”

“There’s a problem,” Nitay warned.

“What kind of a problem?” George asked.

“I can’t and won’t work with Dirk Slubona.”

George clamped his jaws tight, spreading his cheeks. “Don’t worry about him. Just show us results and you’ll be fine.”

“Actually you’re directly under the President’s directive,” Liz said. “He has taken a personal interest in this operation.”

Nitay gleamed with surprise. “You mean I report directly to him?”

“Get real,” George barked.

“We want you to go back to Honolulu and wait for a possible contact with Lieutenant Plaey,” Del Driskel said. “You’ll work directly with agents Marvin Willeet of the FBI and Scott Braidy of Homeland Security, but don’t consider yourself to be under any obligation to take orders from either of them.”

George leaned his sulky face forward. “We do have one specific request you need to abide by.”

Nitay waited.

“We’d like to have the address of where you live in Honolulu. You gave us your address here in Washington.”

Nitay shrugged. “That’s where I live at the moment.”

George stared intently at her. “Where’s your permanent address?”

“I don’t have one. I live here and there.”

“Where’re your things?”

“They’re packed away in a taxi. The company will deliver them for me.”

Liz smiled. “We’ll give you temporary officer status and fix you up in a place at Bellows for your own safety and other obvious reasons.”

Nitay didn't know what obvious reasons Liz referred to, but she believed she finally had become part of the loop.

Back in Honolulu

Although Nitay was back in familiar surroundings, helpless she felt in the backseat of a sedan with Marvin Willeet behind the wheel and Scott Braidy on the passenger side. She only hoped someone in the loop would protect her, but it was obvious these guys in the front seat didn't have a clue as to what Dirk was capable of.

She focused her eyes on the rear view mirror.
“Notice anything?”

Marvin glanced at the rear view mirror.
“Somebody you know?”

“Nope.”

Marvin tilted his head Scott’s way. “It’s a tan sedan.”

Scott punched numbers on his cell phone. “A tan sedan is on our tail.”

Two minutes later they sped past a police car. Nitay looked back through the rear window and saw two police cars boxing in and pulling over the sedan. She had a little more confidence in her escorts.

“Where’s your old residence?” Scott asked.

“Why?”

“We’ll help you transfer your belongings to Bellows,” Scott said.

“They’re stored in a taxi. It’ll deliver them.”

Scott looked back at her. “We’re taking you to a secret location.”

She knew better. “So Lieutenant Plaey can’t find me?”

“Who’s your delivery man?” Marvin asked.

“One of Pete’s trusted drivers.”

“We can’t protect you if we don’t know all your contacts.”

“You mean well, I’m sure.”

“You can trust us.”

At least Marvin had been aware of the car behind them, but she’d never compromise the locations Pete set her up in.



With Jay resting, and with Pete transporting Charlie and the Jayplicator to Taiwan, Nick wanted to know what else this creature had to help prevent a nuclear holocaust.

“How do you do this invisible act with the cloaking shield?” Nick asked for a starter.

“The spaceship projects holographic images in place of whatever exists. The area absorbs light energy from the outside and retransmits it to the outside as the prerecorded images of the area. The transmission is similar to but more real appearing than are movies.”

“That simple?”

“I left out intricate details in order to explain the general principle in the simplest of terms.”

“I just want to find out what’d be effective against our enemies. I don’t expect to go to war with a pacifist; just need to know how to take advantage of your advanced technology.”

“Details of the spaceship’s technology are supplied in the coconut treat. If you apply enough effort, you will be able to assimilate the data with

the knowledge you already have acquired of how things work.”

Nick couldn't spare the time to assimilate all that data. Somehow he had to get Netone to do it.

Nick rubbed his chin. The idea he now had in mind was risky, but what else could he do? “How would you like to visit China?”

“If my visit to China will help us accomplish our goals in the next seven days, I will agree to it.”

“Good. That's the only way we'll accomplish them.”

“Why is a visit to China necessary?”

“That's where we'll find the nukes.”

“Do you have a workable plan to find them or is your plan full of human error?”

“It's not just me. We'll need help from over there to pull it off.”

“Who over there will help us?”

“Chinese favorable to our cause, like those Charlie knew.”

“Why would Chinese citizens help our cause if we have nothing to offer them in return?”

“It’s human nature. Care about Joe and Joe’s likely to care about you. Care about the world and it’ll care for you.”

“Do not your enemies care about the world?”

Nick gazed in a daze. “They want to conquer it.”



Nitay shivered at the sight of her new bungalow. Nick’s protective zone it was not. She could only hope a nearby member of the loop looked after her.

“Stay in touch.” Nitay said to her escorts while on her way to find out what awaited her inside the little shack.

Marines guarded it. One stood at the front door while another patrolled the back area.

She showed her newly acquired ID to the guard at the front door as she entered through it. She then took inventory of the inside. It came furnished with a TV and even a telephone, but one without a private line, no doubt.

As she scrutinized her new quarters she noticed the cupboards were bare. She figured that was her new employer’s plan. It’d want her to call someone to bring home the groceries. The government would then be all over them.

Someone knocked on the door already.

“Come in.”

When the door opened and the guard moved aside, Peggy stood with a bag of groceries in each arm.

“Is this out of sight or what? I have a friend or two if you need help with your belongings.”

“I’m covered.”

“Would you like to join me and my friends for a luau?”

“Will they be my friends, too?”

“Forever if you feed them.”

That offer Nitay could accept. She doubted Peggy’s friends were spies.



Dirk put the report aside. The guy with the black hair and a mustache that had been picked up and booked as a stalker had to be the guy Eddy put on Nitay’s

tail. The FBI would shake him down, but he wouldn't talk. He'd be released. The only concern Dirk had of the incident was Nitay. Her whereabouts still remained a mystery to him.

As Scott and Marvin made their way into his office, Dirk reckoned he'd find out from them what he wanted to know.

“Got a moment?” Marvin asked.

“Sure. What's up?”

“Miss Bennington gave us something to chew on and we'd like to hear what you have to say about it.”

Dirk pounded the desk with the side of his fist. “She lies to save herself.”

Marvin walked up to the desk. “That's for us to decide.”

Dirk leaned back in his chair. “She’s got it all wrong. I’ve set up informants to track terrorist activity. Her meddling could mess things up.”

Marvin’s stare seemed a cold one. “Do you think you’re the Lone Ranger? Keep everything to yourself and you’ll end up with no help when you need it the most. Cooperate with us. Let us know what you’re up to and we’ll help each other. It’d make for a more complete team, don’t you think?”

“I’ll do anything for the sake of our country. . . even stick my neck out and sacrifice my career . . . even my life.”

Marvin stepped forward with a mean sneer. “Didn’t you get caught using torture on suspects that were later proven innocent?”

Dirk figured Marvin was too much tied with red tape to even prevent a misdemeanor. “Some liberal thought so. Ask George Kroft.”

“I’m concerned about your informants. Maybe they don’t just smuggle heroin. Maybe they bring in WMDs, like even a nuclear bomb. If we don’t watch your back, it could be our necks as well as yours.”

Dirk had already suspected terrorists had planned to smuggle a nuke into Honolulu. A special casing had been invented to cloak the Geiger reading. He'd been hoping Eddy would've found out about it before incompetent agents took over the investigation.

The more he crossed the line the more he needed to protect his own interests. It was risky business, but somebody had to do it and who was better qualified than him. “I’ve suspected as much, but no one would take me serious unless I came up with something concrete to report. To get it I needed to convince my informants they can trust me. That’s why I’ve been mum.”

“It’d help to know who we can bring over to our side.”

“Listen to me. I’m not about to turn my turf over to you guys. You’ll screw it up for sure.”

Scott stepped up to and leaned over the desk. “We need you to stay away from Miss Bennington.”

Dirk jerked his head back and stared at Scott. “Why’s that?”

“She’s strictly off limits to you or anyone else under your command. Get it?”

Dirk glared at Scott. “We’re supposed to be a team. You’ll never find the nuke if you cut me out.”

Scott turned around and followed Marvin out the door.

Dirk walked out of his office to his car and drove it to his house. Knowing he was watched, he went inside his house, changed clothes, went

back outside to his car, drove it to a restaurant, went all the way inside to the men's room, turned his shirt and pants inside out (such that they were of different color) put on a wig and false beard, made his way through the kitchen to the back door, grabbed a bicycle, rode it along a bike path to the back of Eddy's restaurant, entered the back door, and made his way to their private meeting place.

“Your smugglers slipped you a nuke,” Dirk said as soon as he seated himself at Eddy's table.

Eddy grinned. “How'd they conceal it?”

“A nuclear physicist came up with a thin shield. Big problem.”

Eddy frowned. “I don't have it. My inventory's checked day and night.”

“If they used your operation as a cover and stashed it somewhere else, we'll still be victims.”

“What you want me to do about it?”

“Get Wong to tell us when it’ll be detonated.”

“Just like that?”

“Win his trust. Sacrifice a few lambs as scapegoats. Let him know they informed our government about his plan and a team of secret agents are on the way to crash the party.”

“Wouldn’t you want our government to find the bomb?”

“Those damn liberals in charge don’t have a clue as how to go about it. We need to save ourselves. We’re not only our nation’s best line of defense; we’re its only hope.”



With Marine escorts as newly acquired friends, Nitay and Peggy listened to Hawaiian music and

sipped wine at the luau.

Nitay expected Dirk already knew where her new residence was, but maybe that hummingbird hovering nearby had already informed the loop of her situation.

As she sat next to Peggy she looked about here and there.

“How goes it?” Peggy asked.

Nitay winked. “Notice the hummingbird?”

“Sure do. Seen Ken? I sure miss that guy.”

“The hummingbird probably tells him where we’re at.”

Nitay noticed the Marine escorts sitting behind her stared as if they thought she was in a fantasy world. She didn’t mind. Their expressions assured her they weren't in the loop.

Peggy sipped her wine. “You know, I’ll die if Ken doesn’t make it back soon.”

Nitay figured Ken must be in the loop even if Peggy wasn’t. “He’ll soon be back. He’s probably on assignment.”

Peggy stopped. “Yeah, but the President only heard from Jay. Why didn’t Jay mention something about Ken to him?”

Nitay put her arm around Peggy's back and shoulder. “I wouldn’t make anything out of it. The President wouldn’t want the press to know about Ken and he wouldn’t tell me anything that’s not important for me to know.”

“He’s sure important to me.”



Nitay and Peggy’s conversation had given Nick something else to think about.

With less than seven full days to find the nukes before Netone left to go back to Kiron, he needed all the help he could get, but if he couldn't find them in time, he at least preferred to have Nitay safe on Alien Island.

To get her to Alien Island was another task in itself. Pete only flew the osprey in a populated area at night for it not to be spotted in daylight. To use it more often the hummingbird drones would need to scout out the areas it would fly to.

The blue healing light from the spaceship had renewed some of Nick's strength. He glanced at the tent that Jay lay asleep in. Perhaps the light had shortened his recovery time as well.

Nick stepped inside a tent. A video showed Charlie inside a taxi hopefully for him to contact Chun Lee in Taipei.

Another one showed the Jayplicator getting into one of Pete's taxis at Honolulu International.

It'd be taken into custody if it was identified as Jay, but that was part of Nick's plan. It'd then be able to communicate with Scott Braidy and Marvin Willeet as well as with Nitay.

That the government might discover the Jayplicator's true identity, or just lock it up as Jay, could hamper Nick's plan to bring Nitay to the island, but he had to risk it, as he knew no other way to prevent a nuclear war.

Making Contact

Nitay had enjoyed the luau. She now relaxed with Peggy in lawn chairs in front of her new home. Having someone around for company, someone easy to talk with, was something she had lacked the last few years of her life.

It wasn't long before a taxi showed up. She couldn't believe it. Was that Jay inside it?

When he stepped out of the taxi and walked up to her, she stood ready for a hug.

He didn't seem to respond. He appeared tepid, cold and strange instead.

She backed away. "What's the matter? Are you okay?"

"I am okay."

Nitay stared, bewildered as to why he didn't seem to reply with any emotional feeling. Had he become a zombie?

"There is no need for you to worry. Everything is fine."

She suspected he had been drugged.



Nick turned away from the video to face Netone. “Can’t these things show a little emotion? It needs to get across to her.”

“The Jayplicator is not yet able to integrate human responses to emotional situations. It will be able to respond more naturally with updates. I will instruct the spaceship computer to research more data on the subject matter. ”

“Thanks! That might help if it’s not already too late.”

“It will take time. Information in Earth literature about human emotions is difficult for the computer to decipher.”

Nick refocused his attention on the video.

Marines approached the Jayplicator. “Come with us, sir,” one said. “Your presence is requested by top officials of the government.”

The Jayplicator promptly walked away with the Marines. That result was what Nick had hoped for. It was now up to the Jayplicator to adequately perform for his plan to succeed.



Jay's no show of emotion compelled Nitay to warn Peggy of side effects. "He must've eaten too much coconut. It affected his mind."

Peggy's jaw dropped. "Coconut puts you out of it?"

"It's a special kind of coconut. Don't eat it if you don't have to."

"You okay?" Peggy asked with a concerning look about her.

Nitay just needed Jay to still have his wits about him.



As the Jayplicator sat wired to a polygraph, Nick anticipated he'd be able to supply it answers that would acquire Scott and Marvin's cooperation.

"This thing is not working," one interrogator said. "There is no electrical impulse."

Willing to beg if he had to, Nick stuck his head out the tent and hollered at Netone. "How do I get the Jayplicator to influence the lie detector?"

"Say Nick to Jayplicator and then order it to do what you want it to do."

"Nick to Jayplicator. Reply to questions with an electrical stimulus that influences the lie detector in the same way human emotions do."

Jay didn't have his happy face on when he rolled over from his stomach to lie on his back. "I need to be there," he yelled loud enough for Nick

to hear.

Nick stuck his head back out the tent. “You’re too banged up. Let those wounds heal.”

“We have something now,” the interrogator said. *“There must have been a loose wire.”*

“Is your name Jay Plaey?” the other interrogator asked.

“I am not Jay Plaey,” Nick replied by way of the Jayplicator.

The first interrogator turned and faced Marvin Willeet. *“The marker indicates he tells the truth.”*

Nick grimaced. An opportunity to persuade Marvin to join the cause could’ve been lost. The Jayplicator should’ve faked an emotional response that indicated a lie. The computer’s rephrasing of words hadn’t helped much, either.

Marvin closed in, as indicated by his upper body occupying most of the video. “You seem to have acquired some special abilities of late, as to be impervious to a lie detector. Please explain?”

“I am unaware of any special abilities I have, sir.”

“You also do not seem to be your normal self. Are you under some kind of mind influencing drug?”

“I only respond verbally to what I am asked by however I have been programmed and according to the person that controls my verbal output.”

Marvin had a look of dismay about him. “Who do you work with?”

“I presently cooperate with Agent Nicolsen Kusiak.”

“How can we get in touch with him?”

“You can only contact him through me.”

Marvin paused with a stern look on his face. “How convenient that is. I suppose we will have to play along.”

Scott Braidy entered the video. “With the cooperation of Dirk Slubona’s informants we could unravel this terrorist threat in no time. Just tell us what you know.”

“My contacts have the means to obtain the information you seek from me. You do not need to obtain it from Dirk and his hoodlums.”

“Come now, we have the best technology in the world. How can they get what we cannot?”

“The hummingbirds will help.”

Marvin and Scott stepped back in the video a ways and faced each other.

“He is wacky,” Marvin said. “We will not get anything from him until he is deprogrammed.”

Scott shook his head. *“He might need detoxified as well. Time is running out. We should let him do his thing, track him, and see where he leads us.”*

Marvin shook his head no.

Scott reappeared up close in the video. **“We will cooperate with you if you show us you will deliver.”**

“I could come up with something in China for you.”

Scott grinned. **“Sure, you can go to China as long as we are assured you will not get lost and we know you can deliver something vital to security.”**

“Forget it,” Marvin yelled. **“Have them show us something here.”**

Another video caught Nick’s eye. **A familiar yacht pulled up alongside a large size fishing boat.** **Containers on the deck were identical to those that**

had been unloaded at Eddy's warehouse. Nick had no doubt of what was in them.

“The hummingbirds have new information,” he said to Marvin and Scott by way of the Jayplicator.

“How could you know they have acquired new information?” Marvin asked.

“My contacts have advanced technology to communicate with me. They are telling me WMDs are now being transferred from a fishing boat to a yacht at sea. Coordinates will be given to your helicopter pilots if you want to track the delivery of the cargo.”

Scott nodded and walked over to a phone.

Marvin turned back to where his face was straight in line with the eyes of the Jayplicator. Only it alone occupied the video. “By the way, you need to get a physical as soon as possible. I will set you up with an appointment.”

Nick grimaced. “Could you hold off on doing that for now? I need to take care of urgent matters.”

“It is an order.”

“Please trust me that I have a matter of greater priority that first needs to be taken care of.”

“Why should we believe you? Nothing you say makes sense.”

Nick frowned. He was sure the Jayplicator wouldn't pass a physical. Jay had been right. He needed to be there. “Hop on board the osprey when it gets back, sailor. You got your wish.”

Nick only hoped Jay could be in Honolulu early enough the next day to make the switch in time to save the plan.



The President expected the midnight news Elisabeth Black had brought him was worthy enough to get out of bed for.

He put on his robe and met her face to face in the guest room. He waited for her to say something.

“Mr. President. We have Lieutenant Plaey in custody. He tipped us off on something smuggled into Honolulu from boats out at sea. We should know in an hour or two if it’s significant.”

“Are you sure he’s on our side?”

“He claims he has contacts in China and wants to go there to use them. FBI requested he show us what he could do for us here.”

The President rubbed his hand across his forehead. “He could know a lot and only tell us what’s convenient for us to know. You don’t think he takes us for fools?”

“His contacts could be reliable, extraterrestrial or not. Agent Braidy suspects they could be a group of intellectuals with their own agenda. Even if they’re not from outer space, and are only clever enough to convince the Lieutenant they are, then it’s likely they have advanced technology of some kind or another we need to know about.”

The President paced about. “Are you certain he isn’t just trying to weave himself into position? Being the hero on that island could’ve been his way in? Whether he’s controlled by someone else or not, he might be setting us up.”

“That’s one possibility, but this group just might be comprised of some of the brightest minds of our time. According to Lieutenant Plaey they have no military capability and need our help just as much as we need theirs.”

The President stood still. “What if Plaey’s under the influence of drugs? What has been

found in his blood?”

“Sorry. We haven’t yet acquired a sample, but we should shortly.”

The President paced. “Your plan’s risky. I need assurances. If we allow the Lieutenant into China we could lose our primary lead.”

“We have no other leads and we could be nearly out of time.”

The President rubbed his forehead. “Maybe I should presume you’re right until proven wrong. We don’t have much to work with. If they’re not terrorists, haven’t broken any laws and are on our side, we’d indeed be foolish not to work with them. Do you really think they can help us in China if they’re on the up and up?”

“What we’ve obtained from Lieutenant Plaey indicates they have some kind of high-tech probes to gather information. I think we should give him a

little rope to play with for us to see what he can do with it.”

The President paused for a bit. “Maybe he’ll escape with it. Are you sure we can keep tabs on him?”

“We’ll have enough operatives in place. He’ll never get out of our sight.”

With all that has happened so far, the President found that hard to believe.

Another Raid

Nick watched the late night raid from videos sent back by hummingbird drones and the Jayplicator.

With the warehouse surrounded by a squad of FBI agents, Marvin, Scott and the Jayplicator went in and served the warrant.

The Chinese clerk eyed the warrant. “This is ludicrous harassment. You have already searched before and found nothing.”

“We need to look again,” Marvin replied.

Nick, keeping himself focused on the video transmitted back from the eyes of the Jayplicator, caught a glimpse of the clerk’s right hand on a button. Nick also heard an alarm and someone in the background shout, “Boys, listen up. Get ready. Code red, we got pigs on their way in.”

“Hold it,” warned the Jayplicator. “People in the warehouse are in positioned for an ambush.”

Marvin stared at the Jayplicator. “How you know?”

“I saw the clerk set off the alarm. I heard someone say get into position.”

Marvin shook his head. “You have canine ears?”

“What do you propose?” Scott asked.”

As agents took the clerk into custody, the Jayplicator led Scott and Marvin through the corridor to the back lot.

The gate for the side street entrance was locked. Scott turned around. “I will get the key.”

Nick was uncertain of what to do next. A gun battle would draw attention, hummingbird drones didn't receive a strong enough signal to be able to function inside an enclosure, the Jayplicator could be done in by bullets, and Netone none of it would be allowed by Netone anyway.

“What do we do now?” Marvin asked.

“I need a little more time for something to develop.”

“The Jayplicator has detected the activation of a cell phone from inside the warehouse,” Netone said to Nick.

“Redirect it to Marvin’s cell phone,” Nick replied. “Make it a conference call.”

When he heard Marvin’s cell phone chime, Nick instructed the Jayplicator to cover its ear with one hand and to point upright in front of its lips with its other hand.

“Eddy.”

“Eddy. This is Tony. We have been surrounded by federal agents.”

“Stall them and do not call here again, stupid.”

“I have a much better idea, Eddy,” Marvin said. “Surrender your guys to us and I will cut a deal that will save your neck.”

“Surrender, boys. It is time to negotiate.”

After Scott unlocked and slid the metal gate open, Government vehicles flooded the area. The warehouse doors then raised open and men came

out with their hands held up above their heads.

After the men had been taken into custody the Jayplicator led Marvin and Scott to various containers. It detected odors better than a canine could. “This container has anthrax in it.”

Marvin shook his head. *“Okay boys, put on your protective gear. This seaman turned detective knows everything.”*

“I don’t know how you do it,” Marvin said after anthrax and nerve gas were found, “but you have my full attention. I will have my guys pick up Eddy Moser.”

“They should also arrest Dirk Slubona.”

“Do not worry. We will check out his story.”



Even though the raid hadn't come up with a nuke, the President was encouraged by the stockpile of WMDs that had been found. Plaey was at least right about a terrorist plot in the works. Then again, that meant the President now had a critical decision to make.

He had just listened to both Liz and George. Liz, of course, was all for Plaey's plan, but to allow him and Miss Bennington to wander off to China was a risk George strongly objected to.

The President wasn't sure which way to decide. He might prevent a cataclysm if Plaey told the truth, or a traitor could escape to China.

He remained mum as George and Liz stood side by side before him in wait of his decision.

"What choice do we have?" Liz finally came forward to ask. "We need them to lead us to the culprits. It's our only chance."

George shook his head. “They could be all smiles while we’re left with a mess to clean up.”

“He was right about the warehouse,” Liz replied.

George frowned. “Something about that raid isn’t right. He couldn’t have pulled off what he did without inside help. Maybe he gave something to get something. With Dirk’s informants out of the way, something bigger could be in the works.”

“The inside help could also be on our side,” Liz countered.

George didn’t let up. “It doesn’t add up. It’s not good strategy to send our prime lead to China. Whatever he’s up to, we could be victim to it.”

Liz stroked her blond hair. “It’s risky, but we’ll watch him from every peep hole in China. We’ll have him covered better than ducks above a swarm of crocodiles.”

The President doubted the crocodiles could handle this duck. It was three in the morning. He'd be able to make a better decision after a couple hours sleep.



Nick listened from afar as Marvin and Scott discussed matters with the Jayplicator.

“I am impressed,” Marvin said. “I have to admit you gave a pretty good demonstration of what you are capable of, but I cannot figure out how you know what you do without inside help.”

“I do not know how my contacts do it,” the Jayplicator replied. “I am just their messenger.”

Marvin came face to face with the Jayplicator. “Whatever it is, it is the results that count. So far we only have low-level thugs in custody who seem to not know very much.”

“Tony Hermes could know something.”

“We released him.”

“Why did you release him?”

“We figured he was your inside guy.”

“There was no inside guy.”

Marvin rubbed the back of his neck. “We did not just release Tony. We found out that Eddy is Dirk’s informant. We now have their cooperation. They will help us intercept the nuke when it comes in.”

In no way would Nick let the fate of Honolulu depend on those guys. “You should keep an eye on Dirk Slubona and let me go to China.” he said to Marvin by way of the Jayplicator.

Scott closed his cell phone. “Liz believes the President will agree to your request. We have no official assignment we can send you on. You

will be on your own, but you will also be accompanied by operatives on an official visit to the embassy. They will make sure you stay out of trouble.”

Nick feared what could occur with unknown agents unaware that they were in the presence of a replicator. They'd restrict it capabilities for sure. “A team of too many members is not acceptable with my contacts. They inform me I can only travel with Nitay, Peggy and one other team member.”

“Nitay is under our protection here,” Marvin replied. “Who will protect her over there? Who will protect you?”

“Our enemies are here. They are not over there.”

“They can still put out a hit.”

“I do not believe they will know she is over there. Besides, my contacts can keep a closer eye

on her than you can.”

“What connections do you have in China?”

“We know a Kun Fu instructor in Taipei who will enter us in a Kun Fu tournament in Beijing.”

Scott laughed. “You and Miss Bennington know Kun Fu?”

“Agent Kusiak taught her.”

Marvin appeared unmoved. “You still need Washington’s approval. You and her both over there is not likely to happen.”



As he had hoped for, Dirk found Scott all alone in his office. Those lips would be much looser without Marvin’s presence.

Scott raised his chin as if he were now the big chief in charge. “Need something?”

Dirk pulled up a chair, sat down in it and leaned over the desk. “One of my informants tipped me off about WMDs on their way in.”

Scott rubbed the top of his head. “I know. Guess where the drop landed.”

“Eddy Moser’s warehouse,” Dirk let out his angry voice. “I had this set up. It was the evidence I needed to go forward.”

Scott shook his head slowly, obviously not believing a word Dirk had said. “Honolulu could be obliterated. I don’t care what you had set up.”

Dirk feared his setup with Eddy could be exposed. “You boys bark up the wrong tree and it’s liable to fall on your heads.”

“Just be careful it doesn’t fall on yours.”

Dirk worried it already had. It was nearly midnight, but he had to make sure he had Eddy’s loyal cooperation.

He stormed back to his office and called his boss. After George clued him in on the situation, Dirk pitched George on how his informant was the only one who could get to General Wong. He then headed for Eddy's restaurant.

When Dirk arrived at the restaurant he knew it was no longer a private place to meet. He sat down at the table and winked at Eddy. "It's okay. I know you were set up by the untrustworthy people you have to deal with. We still need your help. Your cooperation has up until now been a great asset to me, but now I'm on the hook if we don't produce. To get me and yourself off it you need to prove your worth to those ignorant of your fine loyalty to your country."

Eddy appeared dumbfounded. "Sure. What you need?"

"We need help making sure a party of four does what they're supposed to do. I understand

your contacts in China have put together a sophisticated spy network. Just have them report back to you and you can report it to me.”

“The only one I have who can do the job is Tony. Unfortunately he’s restricted to Honolulu along with the rest of us.”

“No problem. I’m sure my boss understands how valuable your man can be to us in China. We need an eagle scout to watch those turkeys.”

Off to China

It was early morning when Nitay answered the knock at the door. It appeared to be Jay. She had an idea for the reason of his aloofness. Instead of him drugged by the coconut treat, maybe it was trauma. After all, he barely survived a bomb and a

plane crash. What more could she expect of him?

She stepped aside and put her index finger to her lips to tip him off the place could be bugged.

He walked around, peeked about the small room, first at the cot she used for a bed and a couch, then at the portable cooler, and at lamps and so on. “It is now okay. The listening devices and cameras have been disabled.”

She could only believe this strange behavior before her eyes was from an impostor. The situation seemed too bizarre even for a top-secret government operation. “Who are you? What have you done with Jay? Is he alive or not?”

“Jay is alive but somewhere else.”

“Who are you?”

“I am a replicator of animate life forms. I was the Wongplicator on Wong Island and now I am a Jayplicator. You should talk with me as if I am Jay

in your presence.”

“Peggy said she talked with Nick Kusiak. Was she right?”

“She did talk with me. I talk to you now by way of the Jayplicator.”

That bit of news excited her a bit, but she remained skeptical. “You don’t talk like Nick. Prove you’re him.”

“Pete cremated a pig, did he not?”

She wasn’t convinced. Someone could’ve found that out. “Talk like Nick if you’re really him.”

“I talk like I normally do, but a spaceship computer translates my words into proper English.”

“Prove it.”

“I taught you well. By the way, how are those special earrings Pete gave you for your birthday?”

Someone could've gotten that information out of Nick, but she threw caution aside with her yearning to believe it was really him. "I'm in the loop. They want me to persuade Jay to become a team player."

"To what loop do you refer?"

She grimaced, realizing Jay hadn't been straightforward with her. "The secret one with the hummingbirds and coconuts. Thanks!"

"I am sorry about your disappointment, but Jay had not enough time to explain the situation in a manner you would understand it. I am sure he will make amends for the discomfort you have suffered because of it."

She cocked her head, smiling as she looked up towards the ceiling. "I'll hold him to it. Should I cooperate with you or the government agents that watch over me?"

“We need them as much as they need us. Although we are unable to accomplish our goals by ourselves we need to be cautious. We need to know who we can trust.”

“What you want me to do?”

“For the moment help keep the Jayplicator out of trouble. It has already skipped out on a medical examination. You can be its motive for doing it.”

“Jayplicator?” She eyed it, unsure of what to think.

“It could become a Nitayplicator.”

“No thanks. Is Ken okay? Peggy’s worried.”

“He is confined to the Ronald Reagan. We can use his help. Ask Marvin and Scott to authorize him more convalescent leave.”



As Jay sat behind the wheel of one of Pete's taxis he peered into the rear view mirror. What he saw didn't ensure him his fake beard and a long-hair wig disguised his identity enough to fool anyone familiar with his natural look.

He waited. When the Jayplicator came out of CIA headquarters it was flanked by Scott and Marvin. The three of them proceeded all the way to a sedan where Scott sat down in the backseat while the Jayplicator took the front passenger seat beside Marvin.

Jay could hear a motor turn over, but it failed to start. After a few more tries Marvin stepped out of the sedan and approached the taxi. Scott and the Jayplicator followed him.

"This taxi taken?" Marvin asked.

"I'm here to pick up Mr. Slubona," Jay said.

“He canceled. Take us to the dispensary at Hickam.”

“He didn’t notify me,” Jay said to continue his ploy.

The Jayplicator fell limp to the sidewalk.

Scott hurried over to it and took hold of its wrist. “He has an erotic pulse. Forget Slubona. Get this guy to a hospital.”

The Jayplicator slowly stood up on its feet and Scott helped it in the front passenger seat. When Scott closed the door Jay floored the pedal before either Scott or Marvin could get to a back door. With direction from the mouth of the Jayplicator it didn’t take long for them to find their way to a restroom at the nearest hospital.

Jay and the Jayplicator exchanged attire, including the fake beard and wig. The Jayplicator then went on its way out the other end of the

hospital while Jay went to the emergency room to sit and wait for Scott and Marvin.

They shortly arrived.

“Where’d you get that bruise on your head?” Scott asked.

“Must’ve been when I fell . . . I’m alright.”

“Good,” Scott said. “Where’s the taxi driver.”

Jay shrugged.

They escorted him outside the hospital where all of them boarded another taxi that drove them to Hickam.

Right after Jay had his physical he sneaked out of the dispensary to find Nitay. One of Pete’s taxis stopped to pick him up. “Follow that little birdie,” he told the driver.



Nitay figured outdoors would be more trustworthy of a place to discuss matters of utmost secrecy with Peggy. The lawn chairs beside the Palm trees had been removed, but a stroll up the beach would exercise the legs.

They walked together on soft, white sand.

Peggy waved at a couple guys that were waist deep in the water. “This place off limits to the press?” she asked Nitay.

“Of course. That’s one reason they put me here.”

“Why am I here?”

“I talked with Nick. He’s on some island. We need your help and also Ken’s. I called Liz. Game?”

“Do I get to kill somebody?”

“Na. Just hang loose until needed.”

They circled back to the shack. Peggy waved goodbye and left.

Nitay was confined to do no more than to go back into her bungalow, sit on a sofa and watch TV, but to become a coach potato wasn't her style.

When she heard the knock at the door she rushed over to it, opened it a little ways and peeked through the crack.

She figured it was that Jayplicator thing that stood beside the guard at the door, so she opened it.

“How'd you like to go to China with me?”

She wondered why it didn't talk the same way it did before. It must've been educated on human behavior. “Do you mean you or this thing?”

The guard seemed puzzled.

He or it, whatever it was, pointed at himself or itself. “I'm the real me right here.”

Nitay wasn't sure of what to believe. The guard seemed to be even more confused. "What's up, whoever you are and wherever you're at."

"It's a matter of unfinished business, and I'm the real Jay."

She waited for more assurance.

He backed up, waved come-to-me with his hand and then waited, as for her to join him in a discussion. She obliged.

"Nick has a plan. You two will be together in a safe, cozy hideout while your Nitayplicator goes with me to China. We'll have Ken join us at Guam. That should persuade Peggy to come along."

What'd he mean by cozy hideout? Didn't he ask her to go to China? Why must they confuse her? "I won't agree to anything until you level with me."

"What would you like to know, sugarplum?"

She wasn't about to be sweet talked into anything. "Tell me how you plan to pull this off. I want to know everything, right now."

"This alien has this spaceship that does all sorts of things . . . It cloaks itself . . . It has a replicator that replicates whomever . . . drones disguised as hummingbirds. . . and you already know about the coconut."

"How'd you connect with it?"

"It commandeered me. It needs nuclear fuel to return home. Nick made a deal with it. It helped me rescue you and I helped it get the plutonium from Wong Island."

"The alien's an 'it'? Why's the 'it' still here?"

"It needs more fuel. Besides, it'll learn more about Earth to inform its fellow Kironians about it."

"Are you sure these Kironians don't want to take over Earth?"

“This one just seems willing to help us save the day. Isn’t that what you want?”

“Are you sure?”

“I’m sure. It’s your call.”

She turned away, looking up with her hands on her hips. “What do you mean by a cozy little hideout?” she asked, not wanting to be left out of the action. “Do you want me to go to China with you or not?”

“What Nick wants is for the Jayplicator to go to China in your place as a Nitayplicator. That way you’ll be safe in a cozy little hideout with a full view of what your other self is up to.”

“That way I’ll be in two places at the same time.”

“You got it.”

“I have a better idea.”

“What’s better than away from danger in view of the action?”

She smiled. “Being part of the action. I’ll go to China with you and the Pegplicator. That way Ken and Peggy can be together.”

“You don’t really need to go. The Nitayplicator can be your eyes and ears.”

“But I want to be with you.”

“Can’t argue with that.”



As much as Nick regretted to arrange Nitay’s trip to China he also realized Alien Island wasn’t big enough to hold her. No doubt about it, she had outgrown the nest to take on the world. If he said no, she’d buy her own ticket.

Nick wasn't about to leave anything to chance. There was only six days left before the alien left for Kiron. He stared at Netone. "Make sure you check everything, including anything recorded from the phone and fax machine in Dirk's office." Nick had bugged everything he could in that office.

A tentacle lifted the flap of a tent door.

Nick stepped inside the tent. Data appeared in a video. He scrutinized every bit of it. A fax from the pentagon, signed by George Kroft caught his eye. It was the flight schedule.

Dirk knew everything, but since Nick now knew what Dirk did, he could do something about it. He hoped he could, anyway, but the Jayplicator was already on a separate flight to Guam. It'd be no help from Honolulu to there.

A video captured his attention. Scott opened the front passenger door of a sedan and got half way

out. *“Hurry up. You two have a flight to catch.”*

Nick realized the trip to China had been approved, but he feared what might happen along the way.

“We need Lieutenant Ken Noble,” Jay said as he seated himself beside Nitay inside the taxi. “He is a black belt in karate.”

The open windows allowed Nick to listen in.

“A noble one, I bet,” Scott remarked. “I am a black belt. You have me.”

Marvin drove them to the officer’s barracks at Hickam. Nitay got out and walked away.

“I do not understand your plan,” Marvin said to Jay. “What can Nitay do over there you, Scott and Peggy cannot do?”

“She wants to go,” Jay replied.

Marvin shook his head. *“She is my responsibility and I should not let her out of my sight. I would hop on that plane with you if Elisabeth Black had not trumped my request.”*

“Do not worry,” **said Scott.** *“I will be there.”*



Peggy’s residence at Hickam seemed cozy and safe, but if she refused to go to some unknown island in the Pacific on a last minute notice, Nitay would’ve understood why.

Peggy breathed out alcohol. “Who let you out?”

“We’re now on assignment.”

“Woo, something at last. What’s up?”

Maybe the booze would help Peggy take in what Nitay was about to tell her. “The guy you saw

earlier wasn't Jay. It was something from another planet."

"Uh, really, Lieutenant Plaey's an alien? You put me on, right?"

"Jay's no alien. This thing personates him. It's sometimes him and sometimes someone else. We want it to be you. It, she, he or whatever it is, will then come with me, as you, to China, so you'll be with Ken. Get it?"

"Far out. Sorry, don't get it, but I'm sure things can't get any crazier." She grinned. "What about Ken. Is he an alien?"

"He has orders to meet us at Guam. You now have orders. Let's go. No time to pack. Everything we need will be provided where we'll be."

"Oh well, why not? I'll go nuts if I don't get out of here."

Nitay felt much the same way.



Although Netone had been programmed not to participate in physical conflict, Nick needed to convince the creature of not acting to prevent violence allows it to prevail. The programmers must've been looking out for themselves.

Netone opened two eyes pointed Nick's way. "I do not comprehend the real reason why humans kill other humans."

"Me neither. Innocent people become victims even when the cause is noble. Children get killed or maimed for life, all because some people want to will their convictions on everyone else."

"Kironians do not will their convictions on other Kironians."

"Some people decide; others pull the trigger. It's only abstract to those removed from its sight,

but those of us close to a personal tragedy bear the grief.”

“I have also been emotionally affected by human events. The more grief I witness through personal experience the more does other tragedy bother me. Inquiry of human nature has become unpleasant for me. I do not belong here.”

Nick was sympathetic of Netone’s concern, but he needed to persuade the alien to stay. “To escape pain and suffering for the denial of true feelings is a fate in itself worse than death. The essence of life involves love. To care enough to sacrifice for others is true love. It enhances when the loved ones you care for care for you in turn, but just to care is its own true reward.”

“What you say sounds reasonable to me, but it is difficult for me to apply it to the real world. Why must we care for others who are careless with their life and with the lives of others?

Nick leaned against a palm tree. “You need to come out of your shell.”

“What do you mean?”

“We humans are an imperfect lot. We explore life and stumble. Even success sometimes results in loneliness, but retreat into a shell and you’ll only trap yourself into a realm of gloom.”

“Do you claim it matters how you achieve success as well as to achieve it?”

“You got it.”

“I do not fully comprehend the meaning of your words, but I will discuss them with fellow Kironians.”

“What I'm saying is that sometimes you need to battle for your own existence and the things you believe in.



When they arrived at Honolulu International Nitay felt uncomfortable with two suits staring at her as they approached Scott.

One of them showed Scott ID. “Lieutenant Plaey needs another physical.”

“We have a plane to catch,” Scott replied.

The suit handed Scott an envelope. “Orders from George Kroft. Come along for the ride if you want. One of us will look after the girls.”

“Make sure you get us back on time,” Scott replied. “This is a commercial flight. It won’t wait.”

Nitay eyed Scott with the dreaded realization he'd leave her and Peggy with someone he didn't know?”

“You know these guys?” Jay asked.

Scott grimaced.

“I'll call a taxi and we can all go,” Nitay said.

“We already have one,” the suit replied.

**Nitay took her cell phone out of her purse.
“We do, too.”**

“We’re in a hurry,” the suit snarled.

“So are we. That’s why we’ll go in mine. It even knows its way back.”

“Unacceptable. Cooperate with us here or take your physical at Guam.”

With that hurdle crossed, Nitay's only worry was about whatever awaited them at Andersen Air Force Base on the island of Guam.

The Kung Fu Master

The flight to Andersen went without incident, but Nitay became alarmed when Scott found out no

request for Jay's physical had been sent.

After an early breakfast at the Magellan Inn Dining Facility, the four of them took a taxi to Guam International Airport. While standing in line at the ticket counter she overheard the teller say first class seats to Taipei had been sold out. Fortunately their tickets had already been bought.

When Jay returned from the ticket counter he led her away from Scott and Peggy and whispered in her ear, "Take Peggy to the lady's room while I check baggage."

Nitay winked at Peggy and nodded towards the restroom.

When they entered into the restroom Nitay witnessed a Peggy lookalike remove sunglasses and a blond wig from its eyes and head.

"Whoa," Peggy said. "Who . . . are . . . you?"

“She’s you, your Pegplicator,” Nitay said. “Put on the disguise and find Ken. He should be on his way. You two are supposed to take a taxi to the Big Eye.”

The Pegplicator handed Peggy a blob. “If you smear this substance around your earlobes, you will be able to communicate with Agent Kusiak.

Peggy stood still, appearing dumbfounded.



Nick picked up the communicator. One hologram showed Pete had landed the osprey safely at the Big Eye, but another one showed Charlie outside a building where he sat on a bench and stared at the ground.

“Everything set to go?” Nick asked Charlie from afar by way of the alien listening substance smeared on Charlie's earlobes and a computer that

translated one language into another.

Charlie shook his head. “I told Chun Lee of your request. He flies to Beijing tonight. He will not take anyone else with him other than his students.”

“Let him know about the nukes.”

“Because I am not anymore a member of the movement he belongs to, he neither trust me nor anyone else I associate with.”



As the jet took flight, Jay sat beside Nitay and felt the man in charge. He also sat behind Scott and the Pegplicator.

“Are you okay?” Scott asked the Pegplicator.

Jay leaned forward. “She meditates a lot.”

Scott eyed Jay. “I suspected you’d be involved in something like that. Might as well fill me in on the

loop thing.”

Nitay leaned up close to them. “I heard the clerk say first class was sold out. Why is no one else in it except that Chinaman dressed in cheap clothes?”

Jay edged himself towards the Pegplicator and whispered, “Scan that guy up there.”

“I detect the presence of C4.”

“How about a more exact location?”

“It is close to the Chinaman’s feet.”

“Shoe bomb,” Jay whispered to Scott.

“Come on,” Scott replied. “Enough’s enough.”

“This is no put on. Let’s get him before he sets it off.”

Scott shook his head. “I’ll watch him.”

As soon as the jet leveled at high altitude, the Chinaman up front on the other side of the aisle stood up, stepped out into the aisle and walked back towards Jay and them.

Jay sprung out of his seat, tackled the Chinaman, drove him to the floor and quickly turned him over on his stomach for him not to slam the bottom of a foot on the floor.

Jay soon felt a hand on his back. He looked up to see Scott.

“You serious?”

“Get his shoes.”

As Scott pulled on a shoe the heel came off and something plastic fell on the floor.

He yanked the shoes off the Chinaman's feet. He picked the plastic up off the floor. “Could be C4.”

As the stewardess and one of the pilots had already arrived on the scene, Scott flipped open his wallet and showed them his ID.

“Got anything to contain him with?” the pilot asked.

“Me.”

Scott helped the Chinaman up into a seat over by the window and took the next seat for himself.

The ruckus wasn't without consequence, as Jay, not fully recovered from his concussion, had acquired a headache.

He also suspected a leak. He sat down next to Scott. “Who in such short notice knew we'd be on this flight?”

“Nitay and Peggy went right to the restroom when we arrived at the airport. How well do you know those gals?”

“Why would they want to go down with us?”

Scott stared at the stewardess. She was of oriental descent. “I’ll have a talk with Washington. General Wong must have people positioned in the airlines. Don’t worry; we’ll get them.”

“Good luck,” Jay said, disgustedly, as he went back to sit beside Nitay.



Nick heard a meow. In the video, right beside the chopper at the Big Eye, was a little kitten, white with large, black spots. It reminded Nick what Netone had said about the little helpless ones on Kiron. They let them die; it is the law.

Ken and Peggy approached the osprey. Nick figured Netone was due for a lesson in humanity.

***“Animal Control missed this one,”* an attendant at the airport said.**

Ken picked up the kitten and handed it to Peggy.

“Why should cute little you have to starve?” she asked.

“Bring it with you,” Nick said.

“Who said that?” Peggy asked.

“I heard it, too,” Ken said.

“It’s me, Nick Kusiak. Glad to know the stuff you put on your ears works.”

Peggy boarded the chopper with the kitten in her arms. *“Wow! I did not think things could get any weirder.”*

The chopper soon took flight, and Nick could do no more than to wait for it to arrive. When it finally did arrive, Peggy was first to walk down the plank. As she turned and faced the spaceship and Netone, she gawked. *“Wow. That’s some freak.”*

She slowly walked towards the creature and showed it the kitten. Although she seemed to have found a strange new world of disbelief, she handed the kitten over to Netone. “The poor thing starves. Got something for it?”

“Kittens are not on your endangered species list. Why does it need taken care of? I am not a caretaker.”

Nick set a box of supplies on the ground. “Maybe you’ll feel different after you feed it some coconut milk.”

A tentacle stretched into the spaceship and brought out coconut milk, and set it down for the kitten to drink.

The kitten drank some milk and then licked a tentacle.

“It likes you,” Peggy said. “Stroke its back and you’ll have a friend for life.”

As Netone used a tentacle to stroke the kitten, Nick crossed his fingers. With only five days left to find the nukes, maybe Peggy had the touch to turn this creature into a humanitarian.



When they arrived at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport, Jay had no idea where to go or what to do. Fortunately he recognized Charlie standing beside a taxi.

During the twenty five mile taxi rides to Taipei, Charlie sat in the front passenger seat of the lead taxi, Jay and Nitay sat in the backseat, and Scott and the Pegplicator sat in the backseat of the taxi that followed them. What Charlie had to say along the way wasn't what Jay wanted to hear.

When they arrived at the Kung Fu training facility, Jay motioned with his arms and hands for

them to gather close to him.

“A chartered flight to Beijing is scheduled to fly in about an hour,” he told them when they stood before him. “I’ve been told we’re not going. That’ll have to change.”

Scott walked about in somewhat of a rage as Charlie led the rest of them to the front door of the building.

“Please remove shoes,” Charlie said.

As soon as they removed their shoes they entered the building to find Chinamen sparing in pairs. They came to an elderly Chinaman that sat alone on the floor in the classical yoga position.

“These are my Americans friends,” Charlie said in Chinese to the elder Chinaman. *“Their Kun Fu is Excellent. They pay you money to go to Beijing.”*

The elder eyed Jay. “I Chun Lee. Sorry. You too late. Plane leave one hour. No room.”

“You afraid we’ll show you up?”

Chun Lee smiled. “You out-of-work comedian?”

“You chicken?”

Chun Lee frowned. “I not chicken. You foolish man, need taught lesson.”

“If one of us beats your best, then we go. Okay?”

Chun Lee nodded. “Okay. You win, you go. If killed, too bad.”

Now all Jay had to do was pick someone to defeat Chun Lee’s best. Scott had said he was a black belt, but Jay regarded him as too much of a braggart. Nick probably trained Nitay, but she’d be rusty at best.

“You know anything about martial arts?” Jay asked the Pegplicator.

“Get real,” Scott hollered.

**“I received information about it from movies,”
the Pegplicator answered by way of the computer.**

“Will you use it?”

**“I will only engage in combat if I do no
physical harm to my opponent.”**

**“It’s only a friendly contest. Don’t hurt
anyone.”**

“I’ll do it,” Scott yelled.

“Sorry. My call.”

**By the expression on Scott’s face, as he
walked jerkily about, you’d think the world was
about to come to an end.**



Nick doubted a computerized replicator had the ability to perform combat in a way it would appear natural to spectators. “How’ll it respond to all the various moves that occur so quickly in combat?” he asked Netone. “It wasn’t long ago that it barely knew how to walk.”

“It adjusts sensitive receptors consistent with the DNA put into its many fluids. The fluids transmit electrical signals. By computerization the system responds to incoming signals in the same manner you respond to various stimuli.”

“Does it feel pain?”

“Although it is sensitive to stimuli, even on the emotional level, it does not actually become emotional or feel pain in the way you and I do.”

“Do you feel pain?” Peggy asked.

“I do, but my body also produces a narcotic similar to morphine, which animals on Earth

produce in their bodies to numb them of the pain they occur from their injuries. We then rest in peace with the world.”

“What then?” Peggy asked.

“We dream a lot.”

“Are you sure you’re not in a dream at this very moment?” Ken asked.

Netone closed two eyes and opened two more pointed Ken's way. “Hmmm – What do you think? Are you only a part of my dream?”

“Life is only a dream,” Ken philosophized in the manner of the great philosopher, Rene Descartes. “If I’m deceived by it to think I exist, then I must at least be the dreamer.”

“You are only partly correct. You are you in a world around you as an integral part of existence, but our existences could be individual dreams of the one true dreamer.”

Ken smiled. "I reckon you're a philosopher."

"We Kironians believe in a supreme being."

"Looks like we dudes have something in common," Peggy said.

"What do we have in common?" Netone asked.

"Your God is our God."

"You are partly correct. Knowledge of God's infinite persona is by us finite and incomplete. Your relation with God therefore differs from mine."

"Sounds like room for disagreement," Peggy replied. "Can't we unite in what we do agree on?"

"You humans tend to demand all humans think alike. You who smoke cigarettes tend to associate with other smokers. We Kironians just live as part of God's essence."

Peggy opened her eyes wide. "Some of us care. We're not all selfish, war mongrels."

“Some of you have good intent, but then you care so much for others that you war over your convictions of how to live according to God’s will.”

“You’re probably right,” Ken said. “Warriors of thought become zealots. They use peaceful doctrines to enforce their ideas on people vulnerable to misinterpretation. Radical doctrines become the instruments of war, to kill and maim lives in the name of peace.”

“Relations with God are personal and private. Each is to his own god. Since we all connect as part of one essence it makes no sense for one tentacle to destroy another tentacle.”

“Wouldn’t you like your tentacle to stay and serve a good cause in the name of peace?” Nick asked.

“The spaceship computer has no answer to your question.”



Shun Lee had provided the Pegplicator with tights. After he gave it a long, inquisitive look, he turned to Jay. “No mercy. Be wise. Back out.”

“Stall any longer and you’ll miss your plane.”

Chun Lee sat in the yoga position and appeared confident.

Jay crossed his fingers. He suspected the Pegplicator felt no pain. He was hopeful it’d react to electrical stimuli and perform to perfection everything it learned from watching movies.

It was matched against Wu Chan, a male teenager comparable in size to that of the Pegplicator. He was muscular and seemed very quick, as he put on an impressive demonstration bouncing straight up in the air while he flexed his muscles, as to discourage his opponent.

Scott leaned toward Jay. "This is crazy."

"We'll soon find out."

Wu Chan did his courtesy bow.

"Bow," Jay yelled out to the Pegplicator.

The Pegplicator bowed and the match began.

Wu Chan was quick, as one move to the next was always at a balanced position for him to strike or defend quickly with a powerful counter punch. Still the Pegplicator equaled his quickness, and countered his every move.

"Why she not attack?" Chun Lee asked.

"I told her not to hurt him," Jay replied.

Chun Lee stared at Wu Chan and yelled out in Chinese, "*Get serious.*"

Wu Chan flexed his muscles and followed with more forceful strikes that still missed their

intended target.

After one failed maneuver after another, Wu Chan appeared to tire. He stood tall for what seemed one final maneuver. He lunged forward and spun full circle with a spin kick. It seemed blazing fast, but the Pegplicator ducked in time and Wu Chan only fell one more time to the mat.

“Enough,” Chun Lee hollered. “We go plane. They go Beijing.”

Abandoned in Beijing

During the flight to Beijing Jay noticed the cold stare Chun Lee gave him on occasion. When they arrived at the airport in Beijing and went through customs, Chun Lee and his students passed quickly through customs and soon left the airport, leaving Jay, Nitay,

Scott and the Pegplicator stranded.

Scott's frowning stare pressed Jay into taking some kind of action.

“Got any ideas?” Jay asked the Pegplicator.

After a couple of minutes the Pegplicator replied, “The US embassy in Beijing is notified of our situation.”

“How does she know that?” Scott asked.

“She's communicating,” Jay replied.

“How?”

“Just is.”

“Okay,” Scott said. “We have new identities. I'm John Barner, participant. You're my trainer, Bob Appleby. Peggy is Mary Feld, participant. Nitay is Susan Joy, trainer. Got it?”

“Got it.”



Nitay had another issue to worry about. She thought she spotted a familiar face twenty feet away walking up to a couple Chinamen. When they pointed at her, he turned her way and stared, said something, and then started back the way he came in.

She walked over to cut off his path. When he came near to her he grinned. It was Tony Hermes.

She walked back to be stranded with Jay and them in the airport lobby.

Twenty minutes later a middle aged man with suit and tie showed up with a Chinaman. He walked up to Scott and said, " I'm Paul Howell from the US embassy. I brought along a representative to assist your entry into the tournament. He will also arrange accommodations for you."

They followed the representative to a staff car. Nitay joined Jay in the back seat, Scott and the Pegplicator sat together in the middle seat, and the representative sat next to the driver.

Along the way into the city Nitay noticed a car following. She also became aware of a second car following the first one.

After they arrived at a hotel and signed in for different rooms, their representative escorted them to the hotel restaurant.

The waitress held a small paper in her hand. “Jay?”

Jay reached out with an open hand. He looked at the paper when she gave it to him. “Good news. We already have a contact. Someone wants me to go outside and take a walk, alone.”

“I saw Tony Hermes at the airport,” Nitay warned. “We were followed.”

**“Hold up on that until we can set up backup,”
Scott said.**

**Jay stood up on his feet. “No time for that.
After four days we lose the help we need to get this
done.”**

He walked away.

**Nitay stared at the Pegplicator as her only
hope for a miracle.**



**Finding no one of concern to talk to outside the
hotel Jay walked down the street about a block and
a half until someone wearing a mask rushed out
from the corner of a building and pointed
something sharp to his back.**

**A taxi pulled by the curb. The back door
opened. The man behind Jay shoved Jay's
shoulder towards the car. Jay got in and sat**

between his abductors.

One more mask man drove the taxi. The other man in the front seat was blindfolded. He must've been the driver before the taxi was hijacked.

When the blindfold finally came off, Jay was nudged forward by the sharp object in his back. It appeared he was in an alley.

They came to an unmarked building with a door. Jay opened it and walked inside. The door closed behind him.

Chun Lee sat in a chair at a table. "Sit. Have tea."

"Why come?" The angry look on Chun Lee's face could've scared King Kong away.

Jay sat down in a small chair across from him. "Have big problem."

"Tell me. Maybe help."

“We came to prevent a nuclear war.”

“Who start war?”

“General Wong conspires with terrorists.”

“How know?”

“Reliable sources informed us he acquired nukes from North Korea.”

“Why General Wong use nukes?”

“Why would anyone? General Wong’s General Wong.”

“What he gain?”

“We figure he and al-Qaeda want to instigate a war between China and us. General Wong must want control of China. Al-Qaeda wants to control the world. A very convenient alliance wouldn’t you say?”

“This Peggy different. Where she learn Kun Fu?”

What the heck? Why not just tell him the truth? “You’re right. She’s different. She’s really neither she nor he. She’s a computerized robot from the planet Kiron.”

Jay prepared himself for skepticism, but Chun Lee seemed agreeable.

“I believe. Aura not human. Tell more. Your government know?”

“We tried to tell the President. He didn’t believe us.”

“What want from me?”

“Help us infiltrate General Wong’s operation.”

Chun Lee shook his head. “Dangerous. We truly loyal to people not trust own people.”

“Just get us in.”



Nitay didn't care about the Kun Fu tournament. She was only concerned with what Jay had learned from Chun Lee or from whoever they had contacted last night. She expected it would be revealed to her after the matches were over.

She watched as Scott went down in defeat. Whether he had lost by his own choice or by a better competitor, he put on a good show.

While Scott went to the dressing room, she followed Jay down to where the girls competed. It was nearly time for the Pegplicator to enter the ring. Her opponent would be Mai-ling.

Mai-ling did warm-up exercises whereas the Pegplicator just waited. The well-mannered crowd didn't boo the Pegplicator's apparent display of arrogance, but its disapproval was expressed by glaring eyes.

The previous match in ring three had ended and the referee called for the next in line to enter.

“Keep it close and put on a good show,” Jay instructed the Pegplicator, or whoever controlled it.

They entered the ring and soon engaged in combat. Mai-ling had very good technique, but the Pegplicator countered her every move.

After battling five minutes Mai-ling appeared too tired to continue, but the Pegplicator remained robust. Mai-ling took in a few deep breaths and then attacked with a succession of quick spin kicks, but still to no avail.

Mai-ling appeared defeated. The Pegplicator didn't even sweat.

“Finish it,” Jay shouted.

The Pegplicator's non-aggressive style had given its opponent time to rest. She jumped high enough to twirl in the air and kick the Pegplicator

in the head. It somersaulted backward and landed flat on its back. It slowly rose to its feet, but only to stumble about in a display of disarray until it fell seemingly unconscious to the mat.

They were now free to prevent a nuclear holocaust.



Jay waited outside the dressing room with Nitay and Scott. As soon as the Pegplicator was ready he'd show Chun Lee that he was worthy of his help.

The Pegplicator came out of the dressing room and kept on walking. Jay raised his arm and waved his hand forward. They followed the Pegplicator outside the coliseum to two taxis.

Jay sat with Nitay in the backseat of one taxi while Scott sat in the backseat of the taxi in the lead. As according to plan the Pegplicator instructed the

driver to drive here and there, as down alleys and through busy streets until it was assured no other vehicle still followed.

The taxis finally pulled over and stopped. They got out of them and walked through alleys until they came to the place where Jay had been taken to last night.

Jay pounded on the door. When it opened a little ways, he shoved it all the way open and led the way in.

Chun Lee had guests. He sat beside a table with a young girl. It was Mai-ling.

“Sit,” Chun Lee said.

The young man that had opened the door carried more chairs to the table.

Everyone sat.

“You find place.” Chun Lee said.

“Yes,” Jay replied, “and no one followed us here.”

“This daughter, Chun Mai-ling with boyfriend. He Wang Chang. They students at university.”

“Did your father teach you Kung Fu?” Nitay asked Mai-ling.

“Yes,” Mai-ling replied, “but not enough. The competition is very good. I nearly got beat today in first round.”

Mai-ling leaned towards the Pegplicator. “Your Kung Fu is superb. From whom did you learn?”

Chun Lee chuckled. “She beginner; start with you.”

“Oh! She fast learner.”

“She okay. Not why come to China. Come to expose General Wong and al-Qaeda.”

Mai-ling glanced around the table. “You are very brave to go after al-Qaeda, but it will be difficult. Their popularity has risen among the poor. They have given plenty for the support of our people.”

“What would you think of them after they bombed Beijing and Taipei with nukes?” Nitay asked.

Mai-ling’s eyes opened wide. “Why would they kill the people they have given their support to?”

Scott raised his chin. “Their generosity isn't free. It's selfish motive. Millions will die for it.”

“It will be heartbreaking to lose support and it will be tragic for everyone to die. What can we do?”

“We only want to prevent their devious plots,” Nitay said. “We don’t want to get rid of them.”

“Loyalties differ among our people,” Mai-ling warned.

“We’ll take the risks and be grateful for any help anyone can give us,” Jay said.

“You wise. I tell people you have honorable intentions.”

“We also give dragon symbol,” offered Wang Chang.

“Yes,” said Chun Lee. “Get little dragon on right forearm. We no use symbol; could expose us, but use tattoo. It secret symbol. Most trusted members for the democratization of China know it. Can help.”

“We’re very grateful,” said Nitay.

“We can also use something else,” said Jay.

“What you want?” Chun Lee asked.

“We need a place to relocate a spaceship.”

Scott stared up at the ceiling.

“You have spaceship?” asked Mai-ling.

Scott stared at Jay.

“We’re assisted by an alien from another planet. Your opponent wasn’t really a girl. What you see before you is a replica of the real Peggy Banks.”

Mai-ling laughed. “How else she compete against me?”

“How big spaceship?” asked Chun Lee.

“You believe him?” asked Mai-ling.

“Yes,” answered Chun Lee. “I believe.”

“It’s small and invisible to anyone outside a certain area,” Jay said. “We just need to put it somewhere someone won’t stumble onto it.”

“My father has two acre farm,” offered Wang Chang. “Seeds not planted yet. Plenty of room, but no cover.”

“It can hide itself along with one of our aircrafts,” Jay replied.

Scott grinned. “Good luck if you think either our government or China will let the hummer come here.”

“I could go to the US Embassy, Nitay said. “I’m directly under the President's command.”

“I’ll contact Elizabeth Black,” Scott said. “She’s the only one who’ll believe this and be able to convince the President, who’ll have to persuade China.”



Now that Jay called the shots, was he out of his mind? Nick was inclined to think so. He had listened in by way of the Pegplicator and had heard everything Jay had said, but in no way did Nick believe the hummer could get permission to

fly into China. It'd be shot down for sure.

Nick had another problem to think about. With only three days left to find the nukes the spaceship's relocation to Beijing was critical, but, without the healing light to protect Ken and Peggy from his foreign bacteria, they needed to leave Alien Island.

Nick noticed two of Netone's eight eyes were fixed on Ken and Peggy. The couple had cuddled up by a campfire fueled with driftwood. As to fuel themselves, they held in their hands paper cups of coconut milk spiced with Vodka.

"I have noticed how you care for each other," Netone said.

"Don't Kironians?" Peggy asked while Ken sipped his drink.

"Kironians just choose to be happy," Nick said. "They don't need each other. They aren't just alien from us; they're alienated from the world."

Peggy faced Netone. “I don’t believe that. Why did you come here if not to please other Kironians?”

“I came here for my own interest.”

“You’re out of it, freak. Your fellow Kironians won’t be happy with you for that.”

“We have no cause except to serve our own interests. If each one of us chooses to be happy, then that is what we all become. Our interests only reflect our happiness.”

“What if other Kironians aren’t pleased with what you bring back from Earth?” Peggy asked.

“I do as pleases me no matter if my fellow Kironians approve of it or not.”

Peggy rolled her eyes up. “You wouldn’t feel like you’re a loser for disappointing them?”

“If they choose to be disappointed, then so be it.”

“Maybe you miss out on something more rewarding,” Ken said. “Maybe caring brings us all together for happiness to be shared and multiplied by every one of us.”

“Your philosophy is commendable. I will consider it.”

“You should just have a friendly drink with us,” Peggy said.

“I do not comprehend how a drink can be friendly. I also question why you consume a liquid that is hazardous to your body.”

“I just like it. What’s wrong with that?”

“There are better ways to be happy.”

Peggy grabbed a hold of Ken’s arm. “You know, we should all watch a movie. What interests

you?”

Ken pointed at Netone. “What’d you like to watch?”

“I have already learned about the dolphins, the killer whales and the animal kingdom, and the history and prehistory of your civilization.”

Peggy shook her head, disgustingly. “That’s about as good as a hog’s ass. Let’s find a good old fashion love story.”

Listings appeared from the dark.

“How about *Pure Country* with George Strait?” Ken suggested. “It should be dramatic enough to get the point across.”

“*Sleepless in Seattle* with Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan would be better,” Peggy replied. “It’ll wind up those tentacles.”

As Netone seemed to focus on the movie, Ken and Peggy retired into their tent, supposedly to demonstrate their own passion with each other.

The kitten came up to Netone and meowed, and Netone stroked its back with a tentacle.

Nick wondered if Netone had finally come around to care for others. If it had, then maybe they could persuade it to stay longer than the three days left of its promise.

Tattooed

Jay could've stayed to explain how the success of their mission depended on the presence of a space alien, but he preferred to ride in the passenger van with Wang Chang and the Pegplicator.

When they arrived at the small farmhouse where Wang Chang's parents stood outside at the front door, Jay looked the area over. The small farm was impressive, with cultivated land ready to plant tomatoes, broccoli, corn, you name it. Those crops would help fill the small fruit and vegetable stands on the city streets of Beijing.

Jay was prepared to negotiate in the Chinese language he had learned by way of the coconut treat. He also had that special hearing gel on his earlobes, and he had the Pegplicator come along in case it'd be needed to relay signals.

When they stepped out from the van that had parked in front of the porch, Wang Chang said to his father, *"These are my American friends. His name is Jay. The other one is Peggy."*

"Hello," Jay said in Chinese with a Mandarin accent.

"Hello," the Pegplicator repeated.

“Nice to meet you,” Wang Chang’s father, Wang Lu, replied to them in English.

He then addressed Wang Chang in Chinese, which was heard in English by Jay with a slight delay for transmission time. *“Yes, son. What do we owe you for this rare visit? Where is this wild girl of yours who has no manner? Why do you not bring her?”*

Wang Chang’s mother, Wang Fu-may, tugged the back of her husband’s shirt and smiled. *“Bring them inside. I have tea.”*

***“Yes, come inside,”* Wang Lu said.**

“You are a very good host,” Jay said. “We are very grateful.”

“Oh, you do speak Mandarin and are of manner. Please come in. We talk.”

Wang Fu-may poured them tea in cups as they sat down in small chairs at a small, round table.

“You have done very well with your farm for your son to be able to attend college,” Jay said to Wang Lu.

“We have not always been farmers,” replied Wang Lu. “I gave up my job in the city when Wang Chang was able to care for himself. We now live a better life on the farm.”

Jay nodded. “Yes! Life on the farm is good, but it is hard work. You have done well. I need to ask you a favor with regard to your mighty fine field.”

“Do you want to plant a garden?”

“My friends and I need a place to land a flying machine.”

Wang Lu stared, as in disbelief. “You ask a lot. There is no cover. We could get into trouble.”

“It is very urgent,” said Wang Chang. “It will save many lives. It could even save our lives.”

“It’s invisible,” Jay added. “No one will know it’s there.”

“It is invisible? How can it be?”

“If it lands in the field and you don’t see it, will you then allow it to stay?”

“No can see? This I need to see.”

Jay nodded. “Thank you very much for your permission. I’m sure you will not regret it. It could indeed save your life.”

Wang Lu didn’t seem convinced. “Even if it lands and cannot be seen, fields are inspected by government agents. It will not be without risk.”

The next morning at breakfast Jay decided to avoid an onslaught of questions from Scott. “We need to hurry up and get those tattoos.”

“You know where it is?”

“Peggy has the coordinates.”

They located the tattoo shot, got their tattoos and were ready for the next step.

“Take them with you back to the hotel while I look the city over,” Jay said to Scott.

Scott frowned. “Hold on there, partner. We’re in this together.”

Nitay gazed at Jay. “Aren’t we?”

“Sure,” Jay said. “Go ahead. I’ll be okay.”

Scott eyeballed Jay. “What you up to?”

“Now that we have our tattoos we can let them find us. They’ll more likely contact me if I wander off alone.”

“You’re crazy?”

“Don’t worry. A little birdie will keep an eye on me. How else will we penetrate General Wong’s operation?”

Nitay seemed angrier than ever, as far as he'd known her. "When you say 'we', doesn't that mean us?"

Jay nodded. "Okay. Here's the deal. I get captured. Because my captors don't know I speak their language, they're apt to clue me in on the nukes."

"I don't like it," Scott said.

"Me neither," said Nitay. "You're fishing in a storm for little of nothing. Even if you do learn something, how'll you get free to tell it?"

"I don't have to. I have my communicating gel. What I say gets relayed to the Pegplicator. It informs you guys. Scott goes to the embassy and reports to Liz. Hopefully she sends the cavalry and I'm rescued."

"You know," said Nitay, "come to think of it, I'd very much like to visit the Forbidden City."

“It’s forbidden,” Jay joshed.

“Seriously,” Nitay replied. “You can get caught as we visit the Temple of Heaven in Tian Tan Park.”

“You’ll pray for me at the temple, I take it.”

“I’ll hold the thought.”



When they arrived at Tiananmen Square, Jay slipped away from them, as planned, but being left out of the action wasn’t why Nitay had come to China. She was ready and eager to do her part.

Along with Scott and the Pegplicator she took in all the wonders of the Forbidden City. When the three of them arrived on foot at the Museum of China’s History and Revolution, she graciously showed the Pegplicator the revolutionary history of China. Later, they went to see firsthand the

splendor décor of red walls with gold detail at The Altar of Heaven.

Nitay enjoyed every moment and suspected the eyes of the Pegplicator gathered impressive Earth history, but it also seemed to her that eyes were also upon them everywhere they went. It wasn't just that they were foreigners to China. She believed someone followed them.

They made it all the way back to Tienanmen Square and waited for Jay.

He seemed peevish when he finally showed up.

“Guess you're just too good to get caught,” Nitay jibed. “Maybe you better lay off the coconut.”

Jay looked about here and there. “Let's move. I think we're watched.”

They followed him down a street to find a taxi, but they didn't spot one anywhere. If that wasn't

precarious enough, Nitay soon realized he had led them somewhere out of the tourist area.

“Nice vacation?” Scott remarked. “We’re running out of time. Have plan B?”

Jay shrugged. He then pointed at two taxis. They even pulled over and stopped when he stuck out his hand.

He and Nitay seated themselves in the back seat of one taxi while the Pegplicator and Scott did likewise in another.

“To the coliseum,” Jay instructed the driver.

Along the way Nitay felt uneasy. “This is not the way back to the hotel,” she said to Jay.

“Sorry. Looks like we all got caught.”

A line of military trucks followed behind the taxis. The taxis pulled into a dead end alley and the trucks stopped right behind them.

Among well-armed Chinese soldiers that gathered around the taxis was Tony Hermes. He walked up to where Nitay sat, stared at her and grinned. “Nice seeing you in no position to do no more harm. Good luck escaping this army.”

Nitay, Jay, Scott and the Pegplicator were all dragged out of the taxis, hit with batons and shoved into a van. A caravan of military trucks then escorted them out of the city into the hills to a small base.

Even with the pain they had endured, Nitay realized calm and hope were all they had for the situation they were now in. “Looks like we get to check out the mountains after all.”

“Most definitely,” Jay replied. “I knew how much you wanted to see the Pandas in the wild.”

“Right,” Scott scowled.

“Pandas only live in the mountains of Southwest China,” the Pegplicator informed.

“Nice to know,” Scott rebuked.

Nitay’s hope faced defeat when they reached their final destination. It was inside a military camp where soldiers marched them to a small building. They were locked up inside it with no furniture and no heat. At this mountainous altitude they’d surely freeze as soon as the sun went down. Rats were everywhere.

“I hope the President has better security,” Scott griped.

“I’m sure Jay has a plan,” offered Nitay. “We’d like to hear it,” she said more urgently to Jay.

“We need to get the Pegplicator out of here, for sure. If it gets to the spaceship it can transform back into a General Wong look alike.”

“Can it get back in time to help us?” Nitay asked.

Jay shrugged.

Scott moseyed over to the window. He peeked through the bars. “This place is well guarded. Have any tricks we don’t know about?”

Jay gazed at Nitay; at the Pegplicator; then back at Scott. “We need to find out if we have any contacts here we can use. We won’t gain anything if we just escape.”

Nitay believed Jay really did have a plan. “I think we should reveal our little dragons.”

As they rolled up their sleeves and ripped off their bandages, the door flung open and armed soldiers rushed in.

The soldiers advanced forward with rifles pointed at all four of them.

As they backed up against the wall, an unarmed soldier walked up to Jay. “I Officer Ming. You stay all night. If survive cold, Cheng question you. What you tell now help. If do, provide heat.”

“What would you like to hear?” asked Nitay.

Officer Ming stared at the little dragon engraved on Nitay’s tender flesh. He then inspected the others for tattoos. He seemed to have seen them before. “Why here?”

“To prevent a nuclear holocaust,” Jay replied.

Officer Ming addressed Jay with assuring eye contact and curious facial expression. “Need help?”

“We’ll manage.”

Officer Ming shook his head. “Say now. I off duty in two hours. Be in Beijing. Officer Jiong in charge. He mean, get what want.”

Nitay had wanted to be included in on the

action. She hadn't expected to freeze to death.



Well aware of Nitay's plight, Nick also had other issues to address.

As Peggy approached the creature, Nick felt the moment was coming for one of those emotional farewells.

“I'd like you to know I drink to ease the pain of my bad memory,” he heard Peggy say to Netone.

“How is your memory painful to you?”

“I loved my niece and watched her like a hawk. She got into everything, like my peanuts. She had an allergic reaction and died.”

“How does alcohol help remedy painful memory?”

“It's easier to take than guilt.”

“You knew what you knew. You did not know what you did not know. In our eyes the world is not perfect. You should not punish yourself because you cannot make it perfect.”

“Thanks. I appreciate your wisdom and I’ll always hold you dear to my heart.”

“I will always hold you dear to my heart, too.”

Ken and Peggy boarded the chopper. Pete was to take them and Toenehe to Taiwan in order for them not to become infected with foreign bacteria after the spaceship left.

Netone boarded the spaceship with extra thrust from its tentacles. One of them carried the little kitten.

Still not cured of his illness, Nick was alone on Alien Island after the spaceship left. Without the healing rays it provided, Alien Island would most likely be his final place of rest.



As Officer Ming asked question after question while he examined everyone's tattoo, Jay felt the need to find out if the officer was an ally or foe. "Offer your confession," Jay whispered into the ear of the Pegplicator.

"I want to confess," said the Pegplicator.

Jay quickly gave the Pegplicator a karate chop to the neck, grabbed its head, twisted its neck and whispered again into its ear, "Play dead."

The Pegplicator went limp and Jay dropped it on the floor.

A guard rushed to its side. He bent over and held its wrist. "*She is dead,*" he yelled in Chinese. "*He killed her.*"

Officer Ming appeared astonished. He walked up to and stared at Jay. "Fool. Now you tortured

before die. Tell everything.”

“We’d appreciate it very much if you lay the body outside to be buried. We’ll dig her grave in the morning.”

Officer Ming flung his hand towards Jay. “You carry body where bury.” He then walked out the door.

Jay lifted the Pegplicator up onto his shoulder and led two guards outside the door. He noticed Officer Ming seated in the back of a staff car with a disgruntled look on his face.

The Pegplicator seemed to weigh a ton, but Jay managed to carry it to a strategic place close to the prison. After he laid it on the ground he was escorted back to the prison.

Scott and Nitay’s faces seemed to beg for an explanation.

Jay shook his head. “It seemed to me Officer Ming knew something about the dragon symbol, but we don’t know for sure if we can trust him. If he’s on our side we could expose his cover. Either way, we shouldn’t risk it.”



The President had been notified by Liz of Agent Scott Braidy’s request. At least this time someone had asked permission to take the hummer, but for it to fly to China was out of the question.

Liz appeared determined. “Lieutenant Plaey established contact with an underground movement that can help us. He told them he had acquired the assistance of a space alien. I don’t know if it’s true, or if it’s what he used to persuade those in the Chinese movement of his capability, but the fate of the world could be at stake. Could the future of the hummer mean more to us than what it might do for

us right now?”

The President considered it too risky. China could capture it, or it could provoke war, but what if Liz was right?

The Escape

Nitay, Scott and Jay sat close together beneath the window with their backs to the wall. It was the only way they could share their body heat and fend off rats at the same time.

How the Pegplicator would respond in the cold was something else to worry about.

As rats roamed the floor, Jay stood up and peeked out the window. Hummingbird drones had done their jobs. Soldiers lay on the ground.

The Pegplicator was still where he had laid it. He now relied on the alien gel on his earlobes. “Jay to Pegplicator, get up and come back to us as soon as you can.”

It slowly rose to its feet, lingered forward, but, as he had feared, it barely managed to make its way to the jail house. It slowly picked up the keys from the unconscious guard near the door before it fell down to also lay still on the ground.

Scott stood up, looked out the window, and then went over and kicked at a crack in the metal door. He widened the crack, but he fell backward doing it. He grimaced after the big thump of his back against the floor.

Two rats attacked Scott. Jay hurried to kick them away.

Jay then went down on his knees and reached through the crack, but he only felt the cold sting of the metal door, not the keys. He pulled his arm back

out.

Nitay came over to the door and tried to reach through the crack as far as she could with her thinner arm.

While Scott fended off rats Jay watched from the window to offer Nitay guidance.

The tip of her middle finger nearly touched the keys.

“A little farther,” Jay said.

She stretched and barely touched a key. With a little more stretch she managed to drag it a little ways, a little more, and finally all the way in.

The door still needed to be unlocked from the outside. Nitay reached to put the key in the keyhole. She grimaced, stopped for a bit, and then grunted as she shoved her arm up enough that the crack of the door must've pinched into her shoulder, as the grunt became louder.

Jay finally heard a click.

Nitay pulled her arm back through the crack and then rested on her back while Jay pushed the door open.

Jay picked up a rifle and led the way forward as Scott carried the Pegplicator and Nitay followed from the rear.

When they came to the van that had brought them to the camp, Jay tried to open the driver's door, but it was locked. He tried all the doors, with the same result. He could break a window, but he preferred not to if there was another way.

As Scott laid the Pegplicator on the ground, Jay nodded his head towards the only building that he could notice light from inside a window.

Jay left Nitay to shiver in the cold while he and Scott rushed over to the building. He barged through the door and found Officer Jiong alone at a

desk.

Jay pointed the rifle right at Officer Jiong's face. "Where are the keys to the van?"

"I have no keys."

Jay winked at Scott and nodded his head towards Officer Jiong. Scott demonstrated his muscle as he shoved the desk and pinned Officer Jiong tight against the wall with it. Jay then put the rifle to Jiong's chest.

Scott opened a desk drawer and picked out a small box of keys. He scattered them on the desk and picked out the keys to the van.

Jay waved the barrel of the rifle towards the door. "You'll have to come with us. You know too much."

When Officer Jiong stepped outside the office he frowned, displeased, no doubt, to see soldiers on the ground, but a rifle barrel pressing

hard on his back persuaded him to step forward to the van and inside it.

While Jay guarded Officer Jiong, Scott unlocked doors, opened the side one in the back, picked up the Pegplicator and set it down on the floor. Scott sat down in the driver's seat and started the van while the others seated themselves in the back.

“You kill us,” Officer Jiong scolded. “You kill own people. You not escape own foolishness.”

As the van sped forward Jay closed the side door and fell backward to his seat. “We didn’t kill anyone. We just gave them sedatives.”

“What you do with me?”

“Would you like us to drop you off somewhere?”

“I better dead.”

“I suppose Cheng and General Wong will think you helped us escape. You could be stripped of your rank at the very least. Will you still be loyal to General Wong?”

“General Wong great leader. Return from dead.”

“You were misinformed. General Wong didn’t die. An impostor of him went to Wong Island with me and faked his death. Feel the pulse of the girl on the floor. She’s now dead, but she’ll soon return to life.”

Officer Jiong reached down and touched the Pegplicator’s wrist. “She dead. Read report.”

Jay only hoped the heater would revive the Pegplicator from its frozen state. It took awhile, but after a couple miles on the road the van eventually warmed to give new life to a seemingly dead girl.

The Pegplicator suddenly opened its eyes, slowly moved its arms and legs, rolled over, got up and sat on a seat. Jiong's eyes opened wide and his face gleamed with surprise.

Jay figured Jiong feared harsh punishment for neglect of duty. "General Wong's an evil man. He intends to take over China, to use nuclear bombs, one on Beijing, and then thinks he can rule the world with terror. I'd go on into Beijing and hide out for awhile. When the time's right, you can warn the authorities of his plan and be a hero instead of a disgrace."

Whether Officer Jiong took Jay's suggestion to heart, they still dropped him off before they reached Beijing. They then followed a hummingbird drone to a tea shop.

Jay led the way to it. As he eased his way through the door he spotted Officer Ming with Su-yin at a table. He still had his modified earlobes.

He'd take his time getting to the table so that he could listen in on what they had to say.

"What bothers you?" he heard Su-yin ask
Officer Ming.

"Americans! We arrested four of them and took them to camp. All of them had little dragons on their forearms. I would have helped them escape, but they did not want my help. An American girl among them attempted to speak, but they killed her. They will probably kill a lot of soldiers if they try to escape on their own."

"We received a late call from the camp. They escaped with Officer Jiong. They killed no one except the girl."

"Officer Jiong helped them escape? Why would he?"

"I do not know. They must have taken him by surprise, but the guards were drugged. Someone had

to have aided the prisoners. You are also a suspect.”

“It is good they took Officer Jiong with them. If they had left him there, he will most likely be punished for neglect of duty. Even if he proves his innocence he is . . .”

Officer Ming had hushed up and appeared as though he didn't believe his eyes. Su-yin turned her head and stared.

Nitay walked up to Su-yin. “Glad to see you again.”

Officer Ming stared at the Pegplicator. “She not dead.”

“Just a trick,” Jay replied.

“How find me?”

“We have eyes in the sky. Nice to find you two together.”

Officer Ming didn't take his eyes off Jay, not even for a blink of the eye. "You here, dangerous for us."

"We'll be on our way. I want you to recapture me and take me back to camp."

"Why escape? Why Officer Jiong help?"

"He didn't. We captured him and dropped him off along the way into town."

"You want me capture you now?"

Jay rubbed his chin. "Tomorrow. Pick me up here. I'll have lunch with your new informant. We have something that needs done tonight and will have more surprises later on. Right now, we need Su-yin to fill us in on General Wong's itinerary."

Jay faced Su-yin. "We have a coconut treat for General Wong."

Nitay smiled. "Remember the coconut treat?"

"It was very good, but it gave me strange thoughts."

"It provides information to the subconscious. Jay used it to learn your language."

"Soldiers are coming our way," the Pegplicator warned. "They are now only about a mile away from here."

"Go," Officer Ming said.

Jay still needed General Wong's plans.

Su-yin reached inside her purse, took out a paper with Chinese writing on it, and handed it to Jay in exchange of a coconut treat.

He then gave her a small box. "Special tools. Eyes and ears for you to put in General Wong's house for us to know what he's up to. Give some to Ming for him to place in his office. Smear the gel

on your earlobes.”

Su-yin nodded.

Officer Ming nodded.

Jay turned to leave. “Much obliged. We’ll be in touch.”

Jay listened on his way out. “*They are strange,*” he heard Ming say.

“There is something even stranger about them. The two who spoke to me stayed on Wong Island. General Wong wanted to blame the Americans for bombing it, but these two prevented the bombing. An impostor of General Wong helped them. We received information from the camp of General Wong's death, but the impostor had committed suicide.”

“So that is how General Wong became deified. It has increased his popularity with the army.”

“Unfortunately true, but it also made him suspect with the Communist Party.”

Jay closed the door and tapped the Pegplicator on the shoulder. “Where’s the spaceship.”

“The spaceship is now located on the farm you chose for it to go to.”

When they returned to the van, Scott got back behind the wheel and followed a hummingbird drone to Chun Lee's hideout. When they entered the door, Jay spotted Chun Lee, Mai-line and Wang Chang sitting at a table.

Chun Lee stood up. “How do?”

“We were captured and we escaped. Now we need to go back to the farm for the spaceship to transform the Pegplicator into the Wongplicator.”

“Oh good,” interrupted Mai-ling. “I want to see spaceship.”

“No,” Chun Lee replied. “You rest. Have tough match.”

“How rest my mind with spaceship in it?”

“You right. Need clear head to concentrate. You come.”

“Thanks wise papa.”

“We can’t go there in a stolen van,” Jay said, “especially one that belongs to the Chinese army.”

“We can all go in my van,” Wang Chang said.

They followed Wang Chang to his van and he drove them to the farm.

Wang Chang’s father stood in front of the house as they came up the driveway. He smiled and pointed in a particular direction, as to show them something spectacular was in the field.

Wang Chang nodded as the van continued toward the middle of the field until a spaceship

suddenly appeared before them.

“You tell truth,” Mai-ling cried out as she opened the door and stepped down from the front passenger seat.

When Netone came out of the spaceship she quickly turned around, facing her father with her eyes and mouth wide open.

The rest of them got out of the van and walked up to Netone, with Chun Lee hugging Mai-ling all the way. While they grouped together for conversation, the Pegplicator went into the spaceship to transform itself back into the Wongplicator.

Netone handed the little kitten to Mai-ling. “This kitten is my little pet. I am very fond of it.”

Mai-ling petted the kitten. It seemed to relax her. “It is very cute.”

Jay nudged his shoulder against Scott’s. “Look after Nitay while I revisit the rats.”

Scott grunted. “I should go. Those nukes are my responsibility.”

“We’ll need you later for more important tasks. Right now I have a feel for the situation.”

“Can I help?” asked Mai-ling.

“I’m sure Nitay and Scott would appreciate it,” Jay replied.

“I do look forward to your help,” added Nitay. “It’ll also be nice to get more acquainted with you.”

“We take turns,” added Chun Lee. “We know what do to help if know what go on.”

Jay took note of a video in the dark of Nick saying, “I have to inform you of bad news. Netone intends to leave us in less than two days.”

Disclosure

When the President gathered with his advisers at the White House, Liz handed him photos. They puzzled him. “What’s this?”

“It’s no trick,” Liz answered. “They were taken by satellite. That’s a small farm outside of Beijing.”

“How does a van disappear and reappear in and out of nowhere?”

“We have a bigger worry,” George grumbled. “The hummer took flight again.”

“It’s a new exercise,” the President explained. “Admiral Young wants to find out if it can handle itself on its own and not become taken over by some unidentified hacker.”

George eyeballed the President.

The President ignored it.

Del Driskel seemed troubled about something. “Did you know Navy Lieutenant Noble and Air Force Lieutenant Banks were spotted in Taipei?” he asked the President.

George flung his hands in the air. “Lieutenant Banks is supposed to be in Beijing.”

The President, uncomfortable with George's tantrum, eyeballed him.

George looked away from the President.

“She is according to Scott Braidy,” Liz replied. “He reported it in from our Embassy in Beijing when they arrived.”

The President paced the floor and rubbed his chin. He stopped in front of Liz. “How can people disappear, reappear and be in two places at the same time?”

“We should be able to get some answers from those officers in Taipei,” George said.

The President paced. “Let it go, George. What seems more urgent to our situation is that we could have allies from somewhere besides Earth.”

“It sure looks that way,” said Liz.

George seemed disgusted. “We need more expertise from our top scientists. In case we are confronted by space invaders, I’ll notify Secret Service.”

“Hold up on that for now,” the President replied. “Time could be critical. We should put our money on Lieutenant Plaey and get everyone ready for an emergency conference. We need our heads together for contingency plans.”

“What about the Navy and Air Force officers in Taipei?” George asked.

“What would you like to do with them? You want to sack the operation before it has a chance to get off the ground?”

“I just think we should be more cautious. We’ve stuck our necks out with unprecedented privileges to these people we know little about. We’re now on unchartered territory to which we’re vulnerable.”

“The buck stops here. Right now we need to provide support. They most likely have already done all the damage they could if they’re against us. Our best option for now is to play ball.”



Jay sat inside a small tent and watched a video sent by way of the special transmitters Su-yin had placed in General Wong’s mansion. She stood in wait as the general entered the room.

“Where is my breakfast?” General Wong bellowed.

“The clock stopped,” Su-yin replied. “The cook is a half hour late.”

General Wong looked on with a scowling face.
“That is no excuse. If it happens again, somebody will be punished.”

He eyed the coconut treat and put his hands on his stomach. *“What is this on the table?”*

“It is a coconut treat someone at a restaurant gave me last night. I will eat it later.”

“Can you get more?”

“Maybe.”

“Good! Then you need not mind if I have it. I will skip my regular breakfast. A very serious matter needs my urgent attention. Lack of discipline has somehow occurred under my command. I need to go to camp and find out how our prisoners escaped. Cheng will be here at nine o’clock.”

“Yes, General Wong, I will call the base and let them know you are on your way.”

“Tell them nothing. A surprise visit will wake those idiots.”

Another video grabbed Jay’s attention. Officer Ming was in a jeep at the gate of the army camp.

“The Americans escaped last night,” Jay heard the guard say.

“Who helped them escape?” Officer Ming asked. “Was anyone killed?”

“The guards passed out and nearly froze. One of them was bitten by a rat and was taken to the hospital. Officer Jiong is missing. We suspect he helped the prisoners.”

“General Wong will be furious. The guards need to come to the office and help me fill out a report.”

Officer Ming drove up to his office, parked, got out of his car, and hurried to open the office door, as to answer the phone Jay head ringing.

With the spaceship computer tapped into the phone line, Jay soon heard. *“This is Officer Ming.”*

“This is Su-yin. General Wong and Cheng plan to be at the base by ten o’clock, but General Wong is napping on the sofa. Cheng will soon be here.”

“Tell General Wong I hope he feels better.”

Jay sighed. So far everything had gone according to plan.

Jay focused his attention on another video. In it Mai-ling and the Wongplicator sat inside a parked car about a block from General Wong’s mansion.

Jay stuck his head out of the tent. “Time to make hay,” he said to the Wongplicator.

“Why is it time to make hay?”

“It’s just an expression. We’re ready and willing if you are.”

“I am ready to make hay.”

“Good. We need to make this happen before Cheng shows up with his troops.”

Jay watched Mai-ling and the Wongplicator step out of the car and hurry up the street. They came up to an ambulance parked by the walkway in front of the mansion. They went up to the front door of the mansion and Mai-ling pounded on it.

Su-yin opened the door.

*“We came here to take General Wong off your hands,” **Mai-ling said.** “This impostor you see with me has come down from the stars to help us. He is an extraordinary person with special capabilities.”*

*“I understand what you say,” **replied Su-yin.** “I have seen him in action. General Wong sleeps on the sofa. Do what you must do. ”*

“Medics are outside with a stretcher. Can we notify them to come in or will this get you into trouble with General Wong’s servants?”

“I am in charge of hiring the servants. They are not a problem. I will go out and tell the medics to come in.”

Su-yin hurried to the ambulance that was parked on the street in front of the house. Wang Chang sat in the driver’s seat and Chun Lee sat beside him. They dressed as medics.

“It is okay,” she said to them. “They are inside the house waiting for you to come in.”

They went to the back of the van and pulled out a stretcher. Su-yin led them into the house where the Wongplicator stood dressed in General Wong’s uniform. They set the stretcher down on the floor, covered the half-naked General Wong with a sheet, lifted him onto the stretcher, and carried him out towards the ambulance.

“Cheng will soon arrive to take General Wong to camp.” **Su-yin warned Mai-ling.**

“Will you also make a note in the logbook?” **Mai-ling asked.** *“It will fool Cheng.”*

“I will comply with your request. It will say a guest of General Wong became ill. He passed out and medics then took him to the hospital. It will be okay.”

Jay saw a limousine and two trucks of soldiers pull up and park by the ambulance as Wang Chang and Chun Lee carried General Wong to it.

Cheng stepped out of the limousine and stared at them. *“Check out those medics.”*

Guards approached the van.

Jay could see his plan was in jeopardy. **“Wongplicator, hurry; your presence is urgently required outside.”**

As one of the guards was ready to uncover General Wong's body the Wongplicator came out of the mansion with Mai-line and shouted. "Help those medics."

The guard turned away from General Wong's body and then hurried over and opened the back door of the ambulance.

Cheng stared at Mai-ling. "I see you have a new assistant," he said to the Wongplicator.

"She is an expert technician here to help us bypass a secret code."

Cheng appeared puzzled. "There was no mention of a secret code."

"Never mind that issue for now. I will fill you in on it later."

Cheng gazed at Mai-ling as she walked away up the street. "To where does she go?"

“She is in the Kung Fu tournament.”

Cheng continued to stare at Mai-ling. “Why compete?”

“Her special talents provide her cover.”

“Who did they put in the ambulance?”

“It was her escort. She drugged him in order for him not to know she came to see me.”

Cheng walked towards the ambulance as the Wongplicator stepped inside the limousine.

The ambulance was driven away as Cheng reached to open its back door.

After the ambulance took General Wong to the farm he was placed in a hypnotic trance outside the spaceship where he stood in front of Jay.

Jay was optimistic he no longer needed to be taken into custody if the general revealed what was needed to know for them to thwart his wicket plan.

“Where’re the nukes?”

“They will arrive anytime at their destinations. They could have already arrived at them by now.”

“Where are they supposed to arrive?”

“They will arrive at secret locations in Beijing, Honolulu and Taipei. Their exact whereabouts in the cities are only known to al-Qaeda.”

“When and how will they detonate?”

“Technicians will activate each bomb by way of an electronic signal. The bombs will detonate five hours later.”

“How can we disable them?”

“They are sealed in casing that will activate them immediately if they are tampered with. There is no way to deactivate them once they have been activated.”

“What will they destroy?”

“A small one in Beijing will kill the president and party leaders as they gather to give a speech before the people. The one in Taipei is similar to the size and purpose of the one in Beijing. The one in Honolulu is big enough to destroy the city.”

“When and where will the speech be made?”

“I do not know when and where the speech occurs. Only al-Qaeda leaders know such details.”

Jay grimaced. That al-Qaeda kept vital details secret disappointed him. He’d have to be recaptured after all. “What do you expect to accomplish?”

“I expect to take over the governments of China and Taiwan. I expect to fight a war with al-Qaeda against the Americans. I expect China to become the dominant power of the world.”

Jay turned around to face Netone. “Can this information be given to the Chinese and American intelligences?”

“Yes it can. The spaceship computer records it visually as well as in sound, and now it transmits it according to your request.”

“I think you from the bottom of my heart.”

Jay turned back around and stared at General Wong. “Chuck nah,” he hollered.

General Wong remained silent.

Jay rubbed his chin. He might as well use this hypnotism for a tactic maneuver in case something unexpected came up. “Say lussa cue ash when you hear that again.”

Jay next turned to Scott. “Keep an eye on him. We’re in big trouble if he escapes.”

“We’re not already? Where’re those nukes?”

“You might have to beat it out of him.”

Recaptured

With Jay gone, Nitay found herself in charge of videos. She listened to translated voices as she watched a scene unfold inside of Officer Ming's office. Two guards with rifles had barged through the door with Cheng and the Wongplicator behind them.

"Give me your report," Cheng hollered.

Officer Ming quickly handed Cheng a paper.

Cheng looked it over. *"Where were you last night?"*

"I went into Beijing and met with an informant. He told me where one of the Americans will be. He just contacted me again on the phone. He and the American are in Beijing at a tea shop. I was about to send soldiers."

Cheng faced the Wongplicator. “I will leave right now with soldiers.”

“He will run if he sees our soldiers,” replied Nitay by way of the Wongplicator. “They could shoot him. Take Officer Ming with you. We need this one alive to tell us where to find the others.”



While he waited with Wang Chang for Officer Ming to arrive and make the arrest, Jay was startled by a brigade of soldiers rushing in, surrounding the table and pointing their riffles at him.

Not a word came out of Cheng’s mouth as he followed Officer Ming to the table and sneered at Jay. By the anger evident in Cheng’s face he no doubt remembered what Jay had accomplished on Wong Island.

Cheng pointed at Wang Chang. “Is he your informant?”

“Yes,” Officer Ming said. “He is sympathetic to General Wong’s cause. He will help us find the other Americans.”

“Bring him with us. We need to find out if he is trustworthy.”

So far so good, but Jay was aware of his previous confrontation with Cheng on Wong Island. To fool Cheng a second time he needed a perfect performance by whoever took command of the Wongplicator.



Nitay felt a chill up her spine. She had brought back from the house a bowl of rice soup for General Wong to eat, but he was no longer tied to the post. She couldn’t find him anywhere. He

had somehow escaped.

She rushed over to where Scott sat on a wooden stool. “General Wong escaped. He’ll go to the base and spoil the plan.”

Scott flung his arms in the air.

Netone came out of the spaceship.

Nitay gazed at the creature. “Do something. We’re in a lot of trouble if Wong makes it back to the camp.”

Netone pointed a tentacle at the tent.

Nitay went back inside the tent where she saw a video showing General Wong walking barefoot on a desolate, unpaved farm road. Beijing appeared in the background no more than a mile away.

Nitay realized he had gone too far for them to recapture him. She stuck her head outside the tent. “Can you send a hummingbird to sedate him?”

“A drone is on its way.”

A cloud of dust filled the area after Officer Jiong pulled up in an old Volkswagen alongside General Wong. When the dust finally cleared, the general was covered with it from head to toe.

“General Wong, why are you here?”

General Wong appeared dazed, as with a blank stare, but he got into the car and shouted, “Take me to camp.”

“Yes sir. If we stop at my house, I can lend you clothes?”

“Hurry you idiot.”

Although a drone followed and relayed their conversation, it was unable to stop them. Nitay could warn the Wongplicator, but she wasn't even sure if it'd be able to help Jay.



Jay remained calm, aware of the guards behind him, as he stood in front of the desk where Cheng sat and stared back.

The Wongplicator sat off at a distance in a chair by the wall. Rather than risk the chance of compromising its position by using it to trick Cheng, Jay figured it was best to let someone back at the spaceship control its behavior.

“Why have you come to China?” Cheng asked.

“I figured I’d stop you before you bombed your own people as you tried to do on your own island.”

“You make desperate accusation, but it does you no good. Cooperate with us and avoid a death sentence.”

“Sure. What would you like to know?”

“Tell us your intentions and where your comrades are.”

“What’s in it for me?”

“You will be executed as a spy if you do not cooperate with us. Confess and tell us what we want to know and we will offer you leniency.”

“Can I have a little time to think about it?”

“Guards,” *Cheng yelled.* “Lock him up. He is more valuable to the rats than to us.”

As the guards escorted Jay to the door, it opened. General Wong in old clothes entered the office behind Officer Jiong in uniform.

Cheng glanced back and forth at one look-alike after the other until pointed at the Wongplicator. “Impostor,” he shouted.

“Chuck nah?” Jay hollered.

“Lussa cue ash,” General Wong answered.

Jay, knowing General Wong had simply said 'no, it is not', dashed over to the general and said in English, "General Wong, help me."



Nitay had caught on to Jay's ploy. "He is an impostor," she yelled, confident what she had said was repeated by the Wongplicator in the proper language. "Arrest him."



Cheng pointed at the real General Wong. "*Arrest the impostor.*" He next pointed at Officer Jiong. "*Arrest him, too. He is a traitor.*"

Jay breathed a sigh of relief. His action in haste had achieved success, for the moment at least.

Two guards tried to grab General Wong's arms, but the general resisted, as to easily shove them aside. He seemed too strong-willed for them, but Wang Chang grabbed a rifle from one of the guards and jabbed its butt against the general's head, causing him to stagger about and fall to the floor.

"Was that necessary for you to do?" asked the Wongplicator. "We need information from him. Take them to the prison and do them no more harm."

Encouraged by pointed rifles, Jay walked alongside Officer Jiong to the prison. General Wong was dragged on his back by two guards, each holding a foot.

Although Jay wasn't thrilled about getting locked up with General Wong, he was at least encouraged by how well somebody back at the spaceship had covered his back.



Nitay watched the image of Cheng answering his phone. “*Cheng here,*” she heard in English what he must’ve said in his native tongue.

After a pause, Cheng said, “*I see. Yes, I will take care of it.*”

Cheng hung up the phone and looked over at the Wongplicator. “The Administration of Security has learned of your plot. He put out an order for your arrest. Agent Yang Po is on his way here with many soldiers.”

“We hand the impostor over to him,” said the Wongplicator. “I will hide and let the prisoners take the blame. Everything will be okay.”

The phone rang again. “*Cheng here . . .*” He faced the Wongplicator. “There is a Chun Lee at the gate. He asked to see you.”

“He informed me of the impostor and he has a place for us to hide if we need one. Right now, he is here to pick up Wang Chang. They will catch the other Americans.”

“Tell him where to go,” Cheng said on the telephone. He then hung the phone up and faced the Wongplicator. “We seem to have gained a lot of informants of late.”

“The people are aware of our noble cause. I trust our mission is on schedule.”

“A special package arrived today from North Korea. It will be a great success.”

Nitay perked up when she heard what she took to mean the Beijing nuke had arrived. “Yes, Cheng,” she replied in behalf of the Wongplicator. She now understood Jay’s plan. “Mai-ling has been sent to us as an expert technician. She’ll reset the detonator.”

“Al-Qaeda said they set everything up for us.”

“Someone secretly changed the code. *Mai-ling* knows how to bypass it. We must give her assistance.”

“To what code do you refer? Al-Qaeda mentioned no code to us.”

“It was a late addition. The Koreans informed me of it because they were not able to get in touch with al-Qaeda.”

“Do the other bombs need a bypass, too?”

“*Mai-ling* needs to go to Honolulu and Taipei in order to bypass them, but she does not know where they are located. Only al-Qaeda terrorists know where they are located. We must contact one of them.”

“Our telephones lines are not secure.”

“Our plans have been compromised. Our top priority is now the bombs.”

“You are always right. I will call right away.”

Nitay listened as the spaceship computer tapped into the phone line.

“Mar haba,” someone answered.

“English, please,” Nitay said to Netone.

“This is Cheng,” she heard Cheng say.

Nitay put her communicator to her mouth to send a direct message to the Wongplicator. “Action is needed. Take the phone from Cheng.”

The Wongplicator grabbed the phone away from Cheng. “This is General Wong,” she said, confident her English was changed to Arabic.

“Why have you called?” the Arab at the other end of the line asked. “Don’t you know better?”

“It is an emergency situation. The Koreans informed us of a secret detonation code for the bombs. It needs to be bypassed.”

“We informed you we would detonate it by way of an electronic signal? How did you find out who our Korean contacts are?”

“They found us.”

“How did they find you and why would they want to?”

“They did not know secret codes had been added for the detonation of the bombs. When they found out about it, they found out about us.”

“What do you want us to do about it?”

“Special technicians are on their way to Beijing, Taipei and Honolulu to disable the codes. They need to know where the secret locations are in those cities.”

“Okay. I will find out what I can do for you.”

Nitay waited for a hummingbird drone to tap into the next call.

“Hello,” she finally heard someone say.

“This is the coordinator.”

“Why have you called me?”

“General Wong called me. He told me the bombs have a detonation code. He wants to send a technician to disable them, but he has not been informed of their locations.”

“Switch to me,” Nitay told Netone.

“Do nothing for now,” said the other one on the line to her. “I will call our contacts in Korea and find out what is going on.”

“Good idea,” she replied. “I’ll wait for your reply.”

“Switch again,” she said to Netone.

“Yes,” she said to the coordinator. “Call the locations immediately. It’s now top priority. We’ll fail if you don’t respond with urgency.”

Phones disconnected, but the telephone line of the coordinator remained tapped into with the help of hummingbird drones.

The coordinator immediately called someone in Beijing, and someone called in Taipei and then someone in Honolulu. The spaceship traced every call to obtain phone numbers.



George remained silent in his chair while the President listened to Liz’s report. She had told him of the acquisition of phone numbers and that Special Forces were already in position to capture operatives.

“Make sure we locate the bombs before we go after operatives, the President said. “We don’t want to compromise our primary objective with a side attraction.”

“Yes, Mr. President.”

George grunted.

The President ignored it. “What happens if we’re unable to deactivate them? Do we have a contingency plan?”

Liz nodded. “We’ll notify the governor of Hawaii to prepare for a mass evacuation. After that I suggest we either transport the nukes in Taipei and Honolulu out to sea and drop them into the ocean or let the spaceship have them. China will have to deal with its own problem, of course.”

The President was more concerned with the possible outcome of nuclear explosions. “Let the spaceship have them.”

George stood up from his chair. “That seems a safer bet to avoid an immediate catastrophe, but it could leave us with future problems. We know nothing about these aliens. Secret Service has already begun an investigation.”

“They’re anonymous for now. Agent Kusiak said the alien needs nuclear fuel to return home. What’s the harm in that?”

“We need to know what’s out there. Those aliens could use those nukes against us.”

The President nodded. “I know we shouldn’t pass up opportunity to find out what we can while we can, but don’t let your investigation get in the way of finding the bombs. They’re top priority.”



Dirk Slubona nervously waited at a table in Eddy’s restaurant. Eddy had assured him the bugs had

been found and disabled.

Eddy finally came into the room and sat down across from Dirk. “My man came back from Beijing. He got the word. It’s time for a vacation?”

“I need to wrap up loose ends. How much time do we have?”

“Not much.”

If Dirk left too soon before the big explosion he’d be questioned about it, and he wanted to stick around in case Nick and Nitay somehow were able to show their faces. They were thorns in his side, trouble down the road, pests that needed to be swatted out of existence.

Unless the nuke went off nearly on top of the government building he was in, the shelter below it would withstand the blast. He’d set up residence on the Big Island and commute back and forth to work.

Carrying Out the Strategy

The video of a car and three trucks of armed soldiers caught Nitay's attention. The caravan entered the army camp and stopped in front of the office. Cheng had come out of the office and he now stood next to the car.

"It is nice to see you, Yang Po," she heard Cheng say. "We have General Wong and two of his accomplices in the brigade."

"Are the other prisoners conspirators with General Wong?"

"Yes! One is an American."

"The American is a conspirator? Are you sure?"

"Yes. We caught him pleading General Wong for help."

“This is new development, but good to hear. We will take the prisoners. You will also be questioned.”

Cheng bowed his head. *“Please be patient. I need time to take care of important matters.”*

“I expect it will not take you long.”

Cheng raised his head. *“It will take me no more than two days.”*

“What is so important that it will take you two days to accomplish a simple task?”

“I suspected General Wong is a traitor and I found out he has more collaborators. I will soon expose them if you allow me time to proceed in good faith. I guarantee you they will not get away from us.”

“Send me a report by tomorrow morning.”

When the staff car and three trucks of soldiers continued toward the prison, Nitay feared Jay would also be taken into custody as one of General Wong's

conspirators.



Jay, peeking through the bars, saw a well-dressed Chinaman hand papers to the guard at the door.

“We have come for the prisoners.”

The guard stepped aside. The agent followed armed soldiers into the jail house.

General Wong walked up to the agent. “I am General Wong. Release me at once.”

“You are under arrest for treason.”

“This is a big mistake. You will be severely punished.”

“You have made the mistake, been caught, and you will now pay for it.”

The agent faced Jay and asked in English.
“Who are you? Why have you come to China?”

“I’m Lieutenant Jay Plaey of the US Navy, on vacation, sir.”

“You are Lieutenant Plaey?”

“I am.”

“Cheng said you are part of the conspiracy.”

“He was misinformed.”

“I have instructions to assist you. Who is this officer of our army?”

“Don’t know, but I think he could provide you with valuable information of General Wong’s plans. You should take care of him before other culprits do him in.”

“Who are these other culprits?”

Jay shrugged.

Armed soldiers escorted Jay, General Wong and Officer Jiong outside. Jiong and the general were directed to different military vehicles. The agent nodded his head away from Jay and at an open door to the backseat of a staff car. Jay got in and sat down alongside a well-dressed Chinaman.

“I am Yang Po.”

“I’m Lieutenant Jay Plaey. May I ask what you intend to do with me?”

“We have been informed of General Wong’s plot. We want to know all you know about it.”



When Nitay saw Jay taken away she feared he had gotten into a situation the alien technology couldn’t get him out of.

“What now?” Scott asked.

“I don’t like it.”

“The Chinese should be able to take care of their problems. We need to get out of here. I’m sorry about Jay, but we’ll have to negotiate for his release. Right now we need to take care of the home front. According to your dad the alien leaves us after midnight . . . of an earlier time zone even.”

Nitay didn’t want to leave a good man behind. “It’s not that simple.”

“Maybe not, but they know as much as we do, don’t they?”

Nitay glared at Scott. “Not quite. They don’t know about Netone. I’m afraid they’ll try to take charge to only get in the way. I’m not sure they’ll find the nukes, not even with the information we provided them. Al-Qaeda covers its tracks too well. It’ll have bogus addresses for sure. Even Cheng probably doesn’t know enough to help.”

The nearly discovered nuke locations had her excited until reality sunk in. She then realized al-Qaeda would've learned from its past mistakes to become more elusive. Those nukes wouldn't be as easy to find as she had initially thought they would be, not even with alien technology.

Scott stood with a troubled look on his face. "What can we do? We still have Taipei and Honolulu to save."

Nitay approached Netone. "Connect me with Su-yin at General Wong's residence. I'm afraid she'll be taken into custody by Chinese Intelligence. She knows too much and she might reveal names. Tell the Wongplicator to pick her up at the restaurant and bring her here."

"We should just take care of the home front," Scott persisted.

"We will, and we'll rescue Jay in the process."

It wasn't long before Nitay's suspicion was confirmed, as she peeked inside the tent to see a video showing a caravan of army vehicles on their way towards General Wong's mansion. They were nearly there. "Call General Wong's mansion," she said to Netone.

"Hello," Nitay heard.

"Hurry. Leave. Soldiers are on their way to arrest you."

The warning Nitay gave on the phone didn't come a second too soon. Su-yin appeared outside the back of the house just as soldiers burst open the front door. She barely ran away in time.

She took notice of another video popping into view. It showed Officer Ming stepping out of a limousine and hurrying to the tea shop where he and Su-yin were at the night before.

From the eyes and ears of the Wongplicator inside the limo, Cheng came into view. Apparently the Wongplicator had been operating according to its programming, and not very convincingly, as Cheng eyed it with a suspicious look on his face.

“This is where we arrested the American,” Cheng said.

“Su-yin waits for us here,” the Wongplicator replied. “We cannot have her taken into custody.”

“Of course we cannot, but if she is a liability, we should silence her.”

“It has not yet become necessary to take that action.”

“You seem to have gotten soft.”

Nitay feared Cheng doubted it was General Wong before him. “I have had her watched closely,” Nitay replied in behalf of the Wongplicator for it to sound more authoritative. “Knowing what she is up

to has given me a tactical advantage. When I found out she informed Yang Po, I knew what to do about it. We still need to find out more of what she knows. Instead of killing her we pick her up and take her to a farm where we can interrogate her.”

Nitay's tactical response worked. Cheng and the limousine driver soon sat beside the spaceship, each in a hypnotic trance.

Nitay questioned only Cheng. She'd use the driver only if it was convenient to follow up on some of Cheng's answers, which Scott did now and then.

They interrogated for two hours, but neither Cheng nor the driver revealed any information about the whereabouts of the nukes.

They stopped the interrogation when Wang Chang's van drove up the driveway and parked beside the spaceship.

“Please continue,” said Chun Lee, as Wang Chang, Mai-ling and him got out of the van. “No let us stop you.”

“That’s okay,” Nitay replied. “We've been at it for hours and haven't been able to get anything out of him. How’s your day been?”

“It well. Mai-ling undefeated, in final, next night. President watch.”

Nitay stared into space. It suddenly dawned on her. “That’s it. That’s where and when Beijing gets nuked.”

Mai-ling gasped. “Everyone will be killed.”

Chun Lee seemed stunned. “You forfeit; be sick.”

“No, it would cause suspicion and it would not be honorable of me. I would not live with myself if I do not warn all those who could die.”

Chun Lee bowed his head. “I proud, sad father.”

“Let’s not panic,” Nitay cautioned. “The terrorists don’t know we’re onto them. We might still find the bomb.”

“Will you be able to detect it?” Nitay asked Netone.

“The spaceship has not been able to detect its radiation.”

“That’s not what I want to hear. Notify Chinese intelligence we’ll need Lieutenant Plaey to drop the bomb out at sea if we're unable deactivate it. ”

“Do you think they’ll buy that?” asked Scott.

“I hope they prefer not to risk transporting it themselves.”

“How about those nukes in Taipei and Honolulu? Who’ll find them?”

“Netone has the drones. We’ll just need someone familiar with Taipei to help us out.”

“I know Taipei,” Su-yin said. “With General Wong arrested, there is no reason for me to stay here.”

“I relocate,” Officer Ming said. “Chinese authorities investigate, find me out.”

“I’m sure Jay will give all the credit to Officer Jiong,” Nitay replied.

“We will still be involved in the investigation,” Su-yin said. “We will have to pass a lie detector after we are arrested.”

Nitay figured Jay had already taken one.

“Hit the ground,” Scott yelled while pointing somewhere up in the sky.

Nitay glanced up to notice an aircraft nearly on top her from its descent. She lunged forward to the

ground as quickly as she could and shut her eyes. Hearing nothing, feeling nothing, she opened an eye after a bit and saw an aircraft all intact right before her.

She didn't know how it managed to land as miraculously as it did without making a sound, but she recognized it. It was the hummer.

“I need to explain a few more things to you,” offered Netone.

“Never mind,” she replied. “We need to get on with it.”

After Scott lay still for a couple minutes, he finally rose up to his knees. “You know, if those nukes are activated by a signal, they’re probably already in place. The drones should be able to find them. If they find one of them, we should be able to determine the activation signal and be able to jam the others.”



Once again Jay found himself in an uncomfortable situation. This time he was wired to a polygraph.

“Who are the other conspirators involved in the coup?” the interrogator asked.

“All we know so far is that it's been General Wong, Cheng and al-Qaeda. We now have Cheng under surveillance. Hopefully he'll lead us to more conspirators and the bombs.”

“Very interesting. What do you know about Su-yin?”

“She helped us expose General Wong. You should reward her.”

“How come she did not inform us?”

“She needed proof to avoid retaliation by General Wong.”

“Why did you come to China?”

“To stop General Wong.”

**“How did you get involved with this operation?
Doesn't it exceed the duty of a pilot?”**

**“If you really need to know, an alien from
another planet commandeered me.”**

“Why?”

“It offered information for nuclear fuel.”

“Did you meet an alien from another planet?”

“I did.”

**The interrogator walked over to where Yang
Po stood. With the alien gel still on his earlobes,
Jay was able to listen in on their conversation.**

*“He must think he tells the truth,” the interrogator
said. “He must have been duped to believe what he
does or he has a special skill to pass a lie detector.”*

“I received information from intelligence,” Yang Po replied. “He might help us locate the bomb. The Americans want him to fly it out to sea. It appears they want to get rid of him. Maybe he has a valuable secret they don’t want us to know about.”

“Our government will not let him take the bomb, but maybe he can find it for us before it explodes. If we release him and let him find the bomb, we can recapture him along with his secret.”

“You could be right, but we must be careful this does not leak out. If it does, someone might let him escape with the bomb.”

The interrogator chuckled. *“He would then take a valuable secret with him to his grave.”*

That Jay was willing to do for his country.

A New Plan

Nitay watched the video of Wang Chang's van on its way to Beijing. It stopped a ways from the farm. Cheng and the limo driver came out of it and walked along the road.

Nitay held her breath when a truck of soldiers stopped alongside Cheng and the driver. She hadn't expected them to arrive this soon after being tipped off.

“Did you see an airplane crash?” the driver of the truck asked.

The sun had been down for two hours and Cheng seemed blinded by a spotlight shined on him. *“I am Cheng, a government diplomat. Take me to Beijing.”*

Four soldiers jumped out of the truck and pointed their rifles at Cheng. *“You are under arrest,”* one of them said. *“Tell us where you have*

been.”

“I, I, I cannot remember.”

The soldiers pointed their rifles at the limo driver. *“Where did you come from?”* the one soldier asked.

The limo driver shrugged his shoulders.

Nitay breathed a sigh of relief, but although Cheng and the driver were unaware of where they had been, Nitay had been told Netone planned to go back to Kiron at days-end.

With Jay's absence, Nitay had become the one in the know, with regard to alien technology, that is. Netone had told her the spaceship could escort the hummer and its passengers to Honolulu and Taipei by means of the spaceship's force field at near light speed.

Everyone at the spaceship gathered around Nitay as she told them how they'd make use of

only the few hours left of alien help. Her plan was for Scott and her to go back to Honolulu, and for Officer Ming and Su-yin to relocate to Taipei. The replicator was to stay and help the rest of them locate the bomb at the coliseum.

Chun Lee and Mai-ling would stay in Beijing, hopefully for Mai-ling to win the championship, but Wang Chang would come back to the farm. He and the Replicator, whomever it replicated at the time, would standby to act in case Chinese Security released Jay. The spaceship would return with the hummer to the farm to help in that regard.

After she revealed her plan, Netone provided all of them with the hearing gel, and Chun Lee told Nitay he would alert everyone he could to assure Jay's rescue.



At seven A.M. the President hoped George Kroft had something more positive to say instead of his usual annoyance of late. Why was he here at the White House? What else did he have to criticize?

He sneered. “Mr. President, we’ve received word Lieutenant Plaey was taken into custody by the Chinese Secret Service.”

“Didn’t they say they’d work with us?”

“They could have interior motive. We received information the hummer disappeared from our sight just outside of Beijing. What a clever plan to take our most advanced aircraft away from us that easy. I’m prepared to implement urgent action.”

“What urgent action?”

“We have people over there in grave danger if this Lieutenant speaks his mind. We should take command of this operation and keep our losses to a minimum.”

“To swim halfway across the river gets us nowhere. Let’s not panic. We need a backup plan if this one doesn’t work, but let’s stay out of the way for now to see what develops.”

“I hope your backup plan works. Plan A could be a disaster.”

After George stormed out of the Oval Office, Liz soon entered in his place. The President was thankful for that.

“Good morning, Mr. President.”

“What’s with our China operation?”

“Whatever Lieutenant Plaey’s plan is, I believe it has produced results. The hummer disappeared completely before our cameras. Chinese authorities arrested General Wong. The Lieutenant is in their custody. We have word from an inside source they plan to release and follow him.”

“No need to panic?”

“I wouldn’t panic, but I’d cross my fingers.”



Nick peeked at his watch when he heard Netone turn down Nitay's request. It was midnight. Surely the creature wouldn’t leave them now. “Netone,” Nick hollered at the remote. “We need your help.”

“It is time for me to return to Kiron.”

Nick slapped his forehead. “What’s your hurry? We located a nuke.”

“There is no evidence a nuke has been located.”

The kitten meowed. Netone rubbed behind its ears with a finger formed from a tentacle. “Who will take care of this kitten?”

“What difference does it make? It’ll probably die from nuclear fallout. I’m too sick to care for it.”

Two of Netone's eyes stayed pointed at the kitten. "I will consider postponing my departure from Earth for twenty-four more hours."

"How about forty-eight?"

Netone stroked the kittens back. "I will consider it."

Ten minutes later Nick, in wait to find out what Netone had decided, had visual of the area. Was that an indication that Netone decided to stay and help? Seeing Nitay and Scott aboard the hummer meant the hummingbird drones were still operational.

Five more minutes into the wait the spaceship finally lifted up from the ground. Nick sighed as the hummer took flight with the spaceship. The fate of human civilization had become depended on the creature's love for a kitten.



With the hummer suspended four feet above sea water, after its force field had carried the hummer to Honolulu, Nitay closed her eyes to more fully take in the salty breeze. She could've used a swimsuit when she and Scott jumped into the water at a beach in Honolulu, but the water was only knee deep.

When the spaceship left with the hummer, they suddenly became visible to whoever looked their way, but no one of any real concern seemed to take notice in the early morning darkness. She and Scott hurried up the beach to a hotel, through its lobby and to the street at its front entrance.

Two of Pete's taxis awaited them.

Scott used his cell phone to call Dirk, who happened to be at his office. Scott got into one of Pete's taxis while she took the other one to meet up with Ken and Peggy.



Before Dirk left town he wanted to find out what Scott knew about the nuke. “You made it back just in time.”

Scott stood silent.

“How was China?”

“I learned a few things.”

“Accomplish anything useful?”

Scott pointed at suitcases on the floor beside Dirk’s desk. “I see you’re packed.”

“I have a lead on a terrorist plot.”

“I guess you don’t get to do that very often.”

“You’re right about that. I miss those glory days.”

“Miss Bennington tells me she has a lead. She wants to meet up with me in a secluded area.”

“I’ll set up a backup team and notify Washington.”

“Don’t bother. It’s probably a dead end.”

“I know what you mean. She’s spun me in circles. I’ll stick around just in case.”

“Thanks.”

Dirk nodded. Nuke or no nuke, he’d take this opportunity to take care of Nitay and anyone else he could.

Dirk watched Scott stroll into Nick’s old office. As soon as the indicator light came on, Dirk plugged the listening device into his ear in anticipation Scott would use his cell phone.

“Who do you think is leaving town?” Dirk heard Scott say. “I fed him a line and I’m sure he took the

bait. . . We need to meet somewhere in private. How about Chinaman's Hat . . . It'll be okay. I'll have us covered."

Dirk grinned.



Nitay suspected Dirk could be onto whatever Scott had set up. She feared Chinaman's Hat wasn't secure enough. At least she'd have Toenehe along for support. She could also save two lives if she directed Ken and Peggy south for them to avoid the full force of a nuclear blast.

“What's coming down?” Ken asked.

“Got to run. Would you two do me a favor?”

“Sure,” Ken replied.

“How far out a favor?” Peggy asked.

“The spaceship's relocating to the Big Island.

Jay needs assistance.”

“Are you sure everything’s okay?” Peggy asked. “You plan to boogie out of here and let us miss out on the excitement?”

“I’ll call you when things heat up.”

Nitay could’ve told them the truth and let them all be in this together, but, true to her concern, she opted to keep them safe instead.



Left all alone on Alien Island, Nick didn’t stay there to die. He had used the remote to keep up on events. As soon as he had learned of Nitay’s plan he called Pete, put on the orange and white suit, and had Pete transport him to Taipei.

As sick as he was he could still lend a hand. After that, Pete could fly him back to Alien Island where he could lay in peace.

He had been dropped off where Charlie had set up residence, and where Ming and Su-yin just arrived.

After they jumped down from the hummer onto a rooftop in Taipei, and climbed into the loft of the apartment, Nick led them down a street to a building.

Inside it they approached a male receptionist dressed in a United States Air Force uniform.

Nick's orange suit did draw attention.

"We have an urgent matter to report," Su-yin said to the clerk.

"Okay. Give me your names. I will take your message and report it to Colonel Siemens."

"I am Su-yin, a personal assistant to General Wong of the Chinese army and this is Officer Ming of the Chinese army."

“Do you seek political asylum?” the receptionist asked.

“What do you mean by political asylum?”

“Did you defect from China?”

“We defected, but we have something more important to tell you.”

“Okay. I’ll call in your request for an appointment.”

“Bomb,” Ming shouted so loud that it alerted everyone in the lobby.

A loud siren sounded. Men with guns surrounded Su-yin, Ming and Nick.

The receptionist picked up the phone. “This is an Emergency. Get Colonel Siemens to the phone.”

After a long pause, the receptionist covered his ears from the noise and put his phone close to his mouth. “Sorry to disturb you, but I have a Su-

yin and an Officer Ming of the Chinese army. They claim to have an urgent matter, something about a bomb. They're surrounded."

As the loud sound of a siren echoed through the building, the receptionist shouted, "Take them to the compound."

American and Taiwanese personnel hurried them and Nick out of the building down the street to another building where US Air Police stared at them, and particularly at the orange and white suit Nick still had on.

"Did they have explosives?" one of them asked another.

"Just this strange device. It could be a detonator."

"Please hear me out," Su-yin pleaded. "We have no bomb. We came here to report someone else plans to bomb the city."

An Air Force Colonel walked up to Nick. “I’m Colonel Siemens. What’s with the suit?”

“I have a disease.”

“You need to see a doctor. What’s this about a bomb?”

“There’s a nuclear bomb somewhere here in Taipei. General Wong plans to bomb the city to kill the Taiwanese president.”

“That’s some story. Can you confirm it?”

Nick pointed at the remote.

“Is it dangerous?” Colonel Siemens asked an Airman.

The Airman shook his head. “I doubt it's a detonator. All personnel left the building and no explosives were found. Even if something was planted somewhere, you wouldn’t need anything this sophisticated to detonate it.”

Colonel Siemens nodded and pointed at Nick.

An Airman took the remote to him.

“Nick to Netone, I need someone to convince a colonel I’m who I say I am. If you can, connect me with the President of the United States of America, and turn up the volume.”

Nick waited with the communicator at his ear. “This is the President,” he heard. “Who is this?”

“Agent Nick Kusiak. I need you to convince a Colonel Siemens in Taipei I’m who I say I am. Will you accept a call from him?”

“I will okay it.”

Colonel Siemens grinned as he went to the desk and picked up a phone. “Connect me with the White House? . . . A, Mr. President, I’m Colonel Siemens at the embassy in Taipei . . . I’m very sorry to disturb you, but someone here claims there’s a terrorist plot to nuke the city. One of

them says he called you with a special phone . . . They don't have any ID, but two of them claim they're from China. One calls himself Officer Ming and says he's an officer in General Wong's army. The other one calls herself Su-yin and says she's an assistant to General Wong. The other says he's Nick Kusiak of the CIA. He wears an orange suit and claims to have a disease . . . Okay, Mr. President; I'll take care of it."

The Colonel clicked to summon the operator. "This is Colonel Siemens. Connect me with General Porter for an emergency session. I just talked with the President . . . Yes, I mean ours. We now have an urgent situation I need to discuss with the President of Taiwan."

A New Escape

Jay suddenly woke with the recollection he had been placed inside a car. In it was the most sleep he had gotten in some time.

“You get out here; okay?” the driver asked.

“Sure. I’ll just check out the city and find my friends.”

“Okay, you find contacts.”

“Sure, no problem, see you.”

Jay got out of the car and took notice of tall buildings. He decided to head for the coliseum. He suspected Chinese security followed him and he didn’t want to compromise the identity of his friends, but the coliseum made sense. He knew where to go inside for Chun Lee and the others to easily spot him in the crowd. Hopefully they’d rescue him from his tight surveillance.

When he arrived at the coliseum he walked up to the ticket booth with an American twenty-dollar bill in his hand. The teller was a young girl who gave him back change in Chinese currency. He looked at it and then made a happy friend, as he gave it to a small boy who sat on the street curb nearby. After his good deed, he walked on through the doors into a crowded arena.

He walked straight down the aisle to the front row of the arena where he'd likely become noticed by Chun Lee. He continued down the first row, but there were no empty seats. He sat on the steps.

When an usher shook his head and pointed at seats, Jay got up from the stairs and pretended to find a vacant seat to sit in.

He saw Wu Chan walk along the front row, reach an aisle, pause and then climb the stairs.

Not one empty seat available in the area was reason enough for Jay to leave the building and follow Wu Chan from an inconspicuous distance. That Jay did all the way to a mall.

When he got inside the mall, he found Wu Chan nowhere in sight.

Jay believed something had to be in the works. He stopped at a counter and looked at small trinkets. After twenty seconds a Chinaman came up to the counter on his left and reached with the right hand to pick up a trinket. The Chinaman pointed at the little dragon on Jay's right forearm and nodded.

The Chinaman looked over different trinkets, bought one, and then left, walking over to a room nearby and entering it.

Jay looked over the trinkets carefully in order not to cast suspicion on the Chinaman.

When the Chinaman came out of the room he tugged on his trousers, as to indicate he had come out of a restroom. He then went on his way.

Jay decided to check out the restroom.

He purchased a trinket to avoid suspicion. He then entered the restroom, locked the door, and turned to see the look of a man with his hair strung back and tied into a ponytail. He also wore thick glasses and a Chinese dress-like robe, but when the disguise came off, Jay found himself face to face with the Jayplicator dressed the same as him.

Jay handed the trinket to the Jayplicator and put on the disguise. The Jayplicator then left and Jay kept the door a little ways open to see the trinket tossed into a wastebasket.

A Chinaman searched the wastebasket while another one kept up behind the Jayplicator.

Confident Chinese authorities would pay him no mind in his disguise, Jay walked all the way out of the mall to the front entrance. When he spotted Wang Chang's van nearby, he got into it through the side door.

He discarded his disguise. "What's up?"

Chun Lee looked back from the front passenger seat. "Scott, Nitay go to Honolulu. Officer Ming, Su-yin go Taipei. Mai-ling rest. We figure bomb in coliseum. Little bird look for outside. We wait with gel on earlobes. All can do is talk to each other."

Troubled by the thought of all the people in Honolulu, Taipei and Beijing could be bombed into oblivion, Jay didn't care to just sit and wait.



Even with a big Samoan in the backseat, Nitay felt helplessly alone in Pete's taxi. She dreaded the place Scott chose for them to meet in the dark of night. It was an ideal place for an ambush?

To help maintain her calm she took in the scenery of the coast on her right, but she became panicky when they reached Kaneohe where only a single seat kayak was at the dock.

She got into the kayak and paddled her way to Chinaman's Hat.

At Chinaman's Hat she spotted Scott at the picnic table and approached him. Before either said a word, gunmen sprung up from beneath canvasses and surrounded them. Dirk was among them.

Dirk walked up to her and shoved her head against the table top with his right hand, and he pointed his gun at Scott with the left one. "What a nice, dark place to plan something. You two

are under arrest.”

Scott snapped. “You don’t have any authority to arrest us.”

“This piece in my hand is my authority. You conspired with her to nuke Honolulu. Too bad, you got caught.”

“Can you with good conscience allow the senseless killing of millions of innocent people?” Nitay asked.

Dirk shrugged. “It’s all the same. You kill a few. After a few more and it doesn’t matter how many more go down; especially when it’s to save the nation. That’s the big one, and it’s the only one that counts.”

Nitay felt pain in her neck when Dirk pressed hard against it, but her heart ached more for the killing of innocent lives. “You need to draw the line somewhere.”

“What line? You try to be a team player, but you kill the innocent in friendly fire. You watch your buddies die in battle. What do you get for it? Nothing but bowing down to the rich and greedy looking out for themselves. Eventually you wise up and look out for yourself.”

“I wouldn’t be too hasty. You’ve been heard. Scott and I are wired.”

“You foolish bitch. Do you think your FBI friends can help you?”

Nitay heard footsteps.

Dirk locked her neck between his forearm and muscle to pull her up to his chest.

Marvin Willeet and several more agents came forward from out of the dark, but they were unarmed, and Eddy Moser and four of his men followed with semiautomatics.

Scott lowered his chin to his chest and looked down at the ground with a look of dismay. His voice sounded weak. Nitay was barely able to hear him say, “Sorry. I set a trap. I guess it didn’t work.”

Nitay barely heard herself say, “You should’ve been more cautious.”

“Sorry. I guess I don’t have what it takes to be that special agent.”

Nitay’s only hope was to stall. “Why do you associate with criminals?” she asked Dirk.

“It’s part of the territory. Would you like to have it now, young lady, or do you prefer to tell me what you know about the nuke.”

Nitay noticed a hummingbird drone hovered nearby. Maybe it came to intervene with sedatives, but Tony Hermes lunged from out of the dark and grabbed it. He twirled with it and fell to the ground.

After he smashed it with a rock he stood up and put his foot on top of it and squashed it into the ground. As he did, he yelled, “Bye, bye birdie.”

Nitay closed her eyes in wait. She heard something and opened her eyes to a better sight. Toenehe tackled Tony. Ken and Peggy stood by and watched. They must’ve brought the Marines that surrounded Eddie and his men.

They had gotten Dirk’s attention, but when he pointed his handgun at a Marine, Scott sprang forward and blindsided the scoundrel. They both tumbled to the ground, but the tackle was hard enough to knock the gun loose.

Dirk recovered first and put a headlock on Scott, but to no avail. Nitay quickly picked up the gun and pointed it at Dirk’s head. She was ready and willing to pull the trigger to put one through his brain. “I’d finish you right here, but you have too much to tell.”

Dirk let go of Scott and stared at Nitay. “I underestimated you.”

She peeked up at Ken and Peggy. “You underestimated true friends. That’s what makes a good team, not some egotistic vigilante.”

Dirk displayed the anguish of defeat with a sad face, bowing his head as FBI agents handcuffed him.



In late evening, still in his protective suit, Nick sat inside a limo with Colonel Siemens and the Taiwan President’s top adviser. “It’s a small nuke to take out your top leaders. To find it we’ll need to know the schedules of the President and all other top leaders.”

The Adviser frowned. “That is privileged information. What will you do with it?”

“We need to go to the locations. We have special drones to detect the bomb. If it has already been activated, no one can deactivate it. We need to take it to the beach where a special ship will come and take it away.”

“He has a direct line with our President,” Colonel Siemens assured.

“I will consult with Kung Lu.”



Jay didn't care to listen to Wang Chang's snore anymore. “I can't sleep,” he said to Chun Lee. “Can you?”

Chun Lee, with weary, bloodshot eyes, shook his head. “No me. Wait until locate bomb.”

“Maybe the Wongplicator should be at General Wong's mansion. The detonator might've attempted to contact him there by now.”

“Could also contact Cheng.”

“That’s a possibility. About all we can do is tap into his phone line and hope for the best. Know his phone number?”

Chun Lee shook his head.

“How about the phone in his limousine?” Jay asked.

“Limousine at farm by spaceship. Security all around area. Look for crashed jet. Get Cheng last night where we drop off. If we go to farm, authorities find spaceship. No know what else to do.”

The limo was a possible lead; the only one Jay could come up with. “I need to get in touch with Su-yin. Is there some way I can reach her?”

“Say name.”

“Su-yin.”

A few seconds later Jay heard a clear and distinct voice. “This is Su-yin.”

“Jay here. I need info on Cheng’s limousine.”

“It belongs to the President. He has many of them and would not miss it.”

“Where were General Wong and Cheng supposed to have been tonight?”

“They were to attend the tournament together for a brief appearance.”

Jay showed Chun Lee a thumbs-up. “Netone, you there?”

“Netone is where I am.”

“Check out the limo.”

“There is a strange reading on my instrument. There is something in the limousine that can shield radiation.”

Jay jerked his fist forward. "We found it. It's supposed to be here at the coliseum in the limo."

"What do?" Chun Lee asked.

"We need to go after it, secure it and bring the limo here to set a trap to catch the one who's supposed to activate it."

Wang Chang opened his eyes. "Soldiers search for plane around farm. We could expose my father and mother if we go there."

"Would want live nuke on farm?" asked Chun Lee.

"What we can do," Jay explained, "is have the spaceship transport the hummer and the limo to a secluded spot just outside General Wong's base. The Jayplicator gets a vehicle and goes for the spaceship, which transforms the Jayplicator into a Yangpoplicator. The Yangpoplicator drives the limo to the coliseum. Netone takes care of the

bomb and leaves the shield in the trunk of the limo in case the one who's supposed to activate the bomb tries to detect its presence."

"We need off road vehicle," Chun Lee said.

"I know someone with fast motorbike," offered Wang Chang.

Finding the Bombs

Nitay sat with Scott and Marvin as they tried to figure out how to locate the nuke in Honolulu.

Marvin hung up the phone. "Honolulu's being evacuated in an hour from now if we don't come up with something."

"I'm sure Dirk would tell us where the bomb is if he knew," Scott said. "He's now stuck here with the rest of us."

Nitay heard a faint sound by way of the gel she had around her earlobes. “Say again.”

She smiled. “They found the one at Beijing. It's in the trunk of a limousine. They still need to figure out the activation signal. Once they find it, then all they need to do is separate the shield and take it out of its casing. They'll set a trap for the one who's supposed to activate the signal.”

“How'll that help us?” Marvin asked.

“Do you have a file on Dirk?”

Marvin nodded.

Nitay followed Marvin to a computer. She anticipated the FBI had Dirk under surveillance. When Marvin opened up a file on Dirk's activities, she sat down and scrutinized it.

She skipped over ancient history to focus on more recent activity. She found something of interest. “You had surveillance on Dirk before you

raided Eddy Moser's warehouse. Come up with anything?"

"The first raid came up empty. Everything Dirk did between it and a call from George Kroft is in the report."

"I'll check with Nick. Nitay to Nick."

"Nick here."

"I need information on Dirk during a raid."

"Go to dirky smirky dot com."

She went to the website, seeking a clue. "He phoned a cleaner. It's downtown center."

Marvin led the way as they rushed out the door.



Nick soaked in his own sweat while wearing the orange as he sat in the limo with Colonel Siemens and Chun Lu's top adviser, but he welcomed the good news he just heard from Nitay. "The bomb could be either in the trunk of a vehicle or in a small shop."

The adviser examined the President of Taiwan's itinerary. "Top officials of government from all major cities of Taiwan come today to Taipei to gather outdoors with President Kung Lu for a special luncheon."

"How about a catering truck?" Colonel Siemens asked.

Nick put his brain to work. "Wouldn't it arrive early to make sure it had a place to park?"

The adviser nodded. "The most likely parking place is straight ahead, not far from here."

Nick squeezed the remote. "Netone, get that?"

In less than a minute Netone replied, “Drones in the area have detected the presence of a shield. You need only follow a drone in front of you to locate the bomb.”

When they arrived at the parking area, Nick resisted the temptation to tell the driver to follow a little birdie. He just pointed his finger.

“New technology?” asked Colonel Siemens.

Nick nodded.

The hummingbird drone hovered over a catering truck.

He pointed at it. “Bomb’s over there.”

“How do you know?” the Colonel asked.

“That little birdie told me.”

They waited inside the limo for Air Force and Taiwanese police to arrive. When they came and found the nuke inside the catering truck they

transferred it to an armored vehicle. Nick then advised the Colonel they should take it out of the city to a beach while plain-clothes-police stay behind to catch the activator in action.



Chun Lee had gotten out of the van to rejoin his Kung Fu team inside the coliseum. Jay remained inside the van as Wang Chang drove it to where the Jayplicator hid from Chinese authorities.

After they picked up the Jayplicator, Wang Chang drove a long ways to a farmhouse, got out and talked with a Chinaman who held onto a motorbike.

When Wang Chang and the Jayplicator got out of the van, Wang Chang's friend revved the bike's motor.

“Let him try it,” Wang Chang shouted in Chinese.

Wang Chang’s friend got off the bike and the Jayplicator slowly got on it, revved the motor a couple times, turned up the gas and sped off.

“Call police,” Wang Chang yelled. “I chase.”

Wang Chang quickly climbed back into the van. He floored the pedal and chased after the motorbike, but he soon turned away and headed towards the coliseum. Jay noticed other cars took to the chase. Chinese security would, of course, follow the Jayplicator.



Nick managed to wander off to a secluded spot when they arrived at the beach on Taiwan close to where they had relocated the nuke. He was ready to be taken back to Alien Island where he’d be left

to die.

It'd be awhile before Pete arrived. Nick used the remote to check with Netone.

Netone updated him on recent events. He learned the spaceship had relocated the hummer, limousine and itself to a remote, mountainous area accessible only by foot or motorbike. The spaceship then had transferred the nuke onto the spaceship by way of its force field.

As with other development, the spaceship computer had intercepted an email message with the President of China's itinerary. He was to appear at the coliseum during the tournament's final matches.

Everyone in the coliseum was destined for incineration if the plot to nuke Beijing hadn't been foiled, but since the nuke was secured, all that was left to do was to set a trap to capture the activator.

A video appeared between large rocks. In it the Jayplicator rode the motorbike at full speed to a small isolated forest of spruce trees. The bike then slowed and veered off the paved road onto a trail that led up a hill through the trees.

The terrain was too narrow and rugged for government vehicles, but the Yamaha, following a hummingbird drone, managed to wind its way around boulders, trees and logs until it finally came to the spaceship.

The Jayplicator got off the motorbike and went into the spaceship. It came out a half hour later after it had transformed into a Yangpoplicator and got behind the wheel of the limousine. The spaceship then used its force field to lift and carry the limo to the road.

The Yangpoplicator then got into the limo and drove it. Along the way towards Beijing it stopped nearby government vehicles. "I have the bomb," the

Yangpoplicator said to a security agent.

“Is it deactivated?”

**“Yes. I will use it to set a trap at the coliseum.
Meet me there.”**

When they arrived at the coliseum the Yangpoplicator waited until a middle-aged man of Middle East decent appeared. He opened the trunk, looked at the shield and appeared to be sending a signal to activate the nuke.

Chinese policemen surrounded him.

The plan to nuke the coliseum was spoiled at last. Nick watched with great satisfaction as the Yangpoplicator led Chinese security agents and police to the activator. They surrounded and arrested him in nearly no time at all.

Whoops. An image from the eyes of the Yangpoplicator suddenly alerted Nick to another problem. He saw the real Yang Po staring back.

Apparently he had communicated with agents to become alert to all the confusion and decided to arrive at the scene to discover the situation.

“Replicator, get out of there or be captured,” Nick warned.

Policemen surrounded the Yangpoplicator, but it back-flipped over them and continued its attempted escape with quick back-wheels into the on-looking crowd. When policemen rushed it and the crowd dispersed, it ran. It nearly escaped, but a bullet found its mark.

The Yangpoplicator stumbled while it leaked red fluid and fell to the ground. When policemen arrived, it lay still.

A policeman examined the Yangpoplicator’s pulse. *“He is dead.”*

“Fools!” shouted Yang Po. *“We needed him alive.”*

Nick knew not what to do.



The Jayplicator's outcome was also witnessed by Jay from inside the van, but he was helpless to do anything about it.

"I get help," offered Wang Chang.

Jay had no other recourse than to wait while Wang Chang took a small cell phone out of his shirt pocket and made a call. An ambulance drove up and stopped in less than two minutes. A Chinaman in it wore a medical uniform.

"Come," Wang Chang said to Jay. "Good to have emergency backup when we need it."

They quickly got into the ambulance and the driver then drove it to where it parked beside the Yangpoplicator. Wang Chang and the driver got out and rushed over to the Yangpoplicator

while police secured the crime scene.

“He is barely alive,” Wang Chang shouted in Chinese. “We need to get him to the hospital right away.”

Wang Chang and the driver ran to the back of the ambulance. They quickly got out the stretcher and lifted the Yangpoplicator onto it. They then lifted and shoved the stretcher and the Yangpoplicator into the ambulance.

Jay only watched as Wang Chang and the driver hurried to get back into the ambulance.

The ambulance’s emergency lights flashed as it headed for the spaceship.

“The Chinese police are not far behind,” Jay hear Nick say. “They will catch up with you in less than five minutes.”

Jay tapped the driver’s shoulder and pointed to his right. “Hide him in the brush.”

The driver looked at Wang Chang. Wang Chang nodded.

The ambulance pulled over. Wang Chang and the driver quickly carried the Yangpoplicator out and hid it in the brush. While they did, Jay transferred to the driver's seat and floored the pedal. No way was he about to let China discover a replicator and alien technology.

The ambulance picked up speed, but Chinese police cars caught up and forced it off the road. Jay felt he could do little more than become a diversion. "You need to pick up the Yangpoplicator and then go for the other nukes," Jay instructed Netone from afar.

Netone must've picked up the Yangpoplicator, but apparently the alien didn't care to leave a good man behind. As Chinese police vehicles surrounded the ambulance, soldiers filled the ambulance with bullet holes, but in a blink of an eye Jay inside the

van was high in the sky below the spaceship.

Not all was hunky dory. Jay's side soaked with blood. He must've caught some ricochets.

The spaceship carried the van at low altitude to the hummer. When it arrived Jay slowly climbed out of the van, staggered into the hummer and laid down to soak in his own blood.

The spaceship's force field carried the hummer out of China.

“Is Lieutenant Jay Plaey okay?” Netone asked.

“I'm okay. Get the bombs.”

The spaceship and hummer soon hovered over the bomb on the shore at Taiwan. A force field guided the nuke into the spaceship. The spaceship door closed and they zipped away at lightning like speed.

Jay lay in agony, and in a pool of blood.

A few seconds later Netone said, “You are now at Honolulu International Airport. I reported your condition to the tower. Medics are on their way to take you to their ambulance.”

He heard a siren just before he closed his eyes to irresistible sleep.



The spaceship suddenly appeared before Nitay’s eyes. It had landed next to the bomb that was secured to the ground with attaching cables.

Netone came out of the spaceship. Marines surrounded the alien, pointing their rifles at it.

“You need to unfasten those cables in order to enable the force field to load the nuclear bomb onto the spaceship,” **Netone said.**

The Marines closed in.

“I think it’s been had,” said Scott.

Nitay wanted no part of the double cross.

Ken and Peggy just stared with frowns on their faces.

Nitay grinned. The American President, as it appeared, had come out of the spaceship. She knew it wasn’t really him, not even in the well-dressed suit. Netone had come prepared.

“Hold your fire,” the Marine in charge commanded.

“Soldier,” the Presidentplicator commanded, *“unfasten those cables. If you use those guns on this creature it will infect us with alien bacteria.”*

“Unfasten those cables!” the Marine in charge shouted.

Two Marines nearby the cables laid their guns on the ground and hastily complied with the

order. A force field soon lifted the bomb into the spaceship.

Netone and the Presidentplicator went back into the spaceship. After the door closed, the spaceship shot up and quickly disappeared in the sky.

Nitay was all smiles, as was Ken and Peggy.

“Why is the President with the alien?” Marvin asked.

“Are you sure it’s the President?” Scott asked.

Nitay just smiled.

Return to Alien Island

A month had passed before Jay fully recovered from his wounds, but he was delighted to be back on Alien Island for the reunion, as where Nick had finally been cured of his illness, as the spaceship had graciously returned with its healing light.

Alien Island never had as many people on it. Besides Nick and Jay, there was Nitay, Pete, Toenehe, Ken and Peggy, and even Scott, Mai-ling, Ming and Su-yin.

It was a sunny day, calm and peaceful. The warmth of the sun rays never felt as good.

Peggy had given up booze and Ken had popped the question to her. Ming and Su-yin had already gotten married. Scott had his eye on Mai-ling, and had signed up for Kung Fu lessons.

Mai-ling had won all her matches. She was now champion of her class.

As for other development, George Kroft had resigned, and his position had been given to Matt. Nick had taken Dirk's position. The hummer was now an UAV. Jay flew it, with Ken's help, from the monitoring facility at Hickam. Nitay had become Jay's primary interest in life, even though she had become both a secret agent and a freelance reporter with CNN.

Nick, by all indications, had resigned himself as Nitay's secret, over protecting father. Hopefully he finally winged her from the nest for him to enjoy life with friends and family, which Jay was now determined to become a permanent member of.

Netone was about to board the spaceship and depart to Kiron.

The creature held the little kitten in one of its tentacles and handed it to Peggy. "Please take care of this kitten for me. If I take it with me it will be all alone while I hibernate and it will die during

the forty year trip to Kiron. When I get there, those little helpless ones my fellow Kironians let die, I will take care of them.”