THE HUMMINGBIRDS

WILL HELP

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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 aircraft had converted from a chopper into an airplane, it thrust forward to 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.

Jay's primary mission in life had finally taken flight. This Navy pilot was ready to show his Commander in Chief what the nation had gotten for its money. This special spy plane named the hummer had all the tools needed to uncover an imminent threat to national security. It'd help find out what a Chinese general was up to.

As the hummer neared Air Force One, Jay pulled back on the control stick. As the hummer's nose lifted, its stealth-like frame climbed higher and higher for a dive at greater speed.

It leveled off, 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 rotated his shock-absorbing 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. The jet shot forward. Down, down, down it dived, faster and faster to mach three as the ocean closed in and something like a seagull or pelican went splat before him, and his seatbelt grabbed his body tight, as the jet flipped this way and that before the world suddenly spun about him. When it came to a stop he had never appreciated stillness as much as he did at that brief moment.

Although the thrill outweighed the pain the jerks and gyrations 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?” asked the controller on the Ronald Reagan.

“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 the 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

just to hold her gorgeous body tight. He couldn't wait to feel her in his arms and taste her sweet lips after he slipped the 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.

Jay noticed something tiny keeping pace slightly ahead 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? . . . Does little sister receive anyone?"

The only response came from behind him. “Little sister receives only you.”

“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.”

“Someone’s playing with us.”

“Some joke – a hummingbird alongside the hummer.”

“We should abort.”

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

He 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.

"Do something," Jay hollered to Ken.

"Switching to backup computer."

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, stood by it and looked back across the room at the President. "Monitors are also out on the Ronald Reagan and at Hickam."

“Total blackout?”

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

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

George, sitting by a window three feet to the President’s right, lowered his binoculars. “Something’s wrong. It’s circling downward.”

The President turned to Elisabeth Black, who sat three feet to his left. Maybe the tall blond he put in charge of Homeland Security would 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.”

“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.

Her question received the President’s undivided attention. He couldn’t decide 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 turned to hear George's response, but the head of CIA had his binoculars up to his eyes and pointed at the window.

"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 a breach by way of new technology. Was it ours or the enemy's? "Identify yourself and state your business."

"My name is Netone. I came to your

planet to learn its ways."

Jay pivoted his seat half circle and faced Ken. He grinned. "We have 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 turned back around, not wanting to believe what he heard. Maybe the culprit was CIA playing its own games.

With the hummer not far from a plunge into the ocean Jay was about to lose his calm. "What you want?" he asked the intruder.

“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 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."

Jay 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 Kusiac 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, in no way did he believe it wasn't damaged beyond repair. Even though flight suits were well-padded and multiple rings allowed free spin of seats in any direction, he still couldn't imagine how those thumps wouldn't cripple the crew for life, or even kill 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. But with satellite imaging and computers to guide the hummer, nothing except Air Force One should've been within ten miles of it. Either the equipment failed or human error was at fault. 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 forward. 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, slid his report inside it and handed it to Dirk.

"Nice of you to show up," Dirk said. "Cover me while I take care of business."

"I'm late for a special occasion."

Dirk, on his way out, passed by Nick. "Sorry. Have to be at the airport when Air Force One arrives."

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