

Survival and recovery. The world recovers from Islamic terrorists nuclear attack.

## **Ark and Covenant**

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# 1

## October 15

She had been in labor for over six hours. She had no hospital. No doctors or nurses. There were no painkillers. She didn't have a husband or even a partner to tell her how and when to breathe.

Some very concerned observers wanted nothing more than to help her in any way they could.

First Officer, Vinnie Vincent, thought he had done as much as he could to make Val comfortable considering she was in heavy labor. No man can ever understand the pain of giving birth or the glory associated with the act.

Donna and Marie had been through the Trans Universal Airlines training programs for in-flight delivery. They were about as helpful as Vinnie; after all, he had been through the same training program.

Vinnie had asked Donna and Marie to canvas the Ark survivors for a doctor or nurse even though he knew there were none. After all, they had been together for almost nine months.

Vinnie had asked for some medical assistance after their first air drop of supplies. The short-range radio that had been dropped with

*Jess Claypool*

the supplies enabled them to have their first contact with the outside world since their arrival on the island.

The pilots of the supply aircraft would have preferred to land and evacuate the survivors. There was general agreement finally that there was no chance of that happening as long as the incapacitated Boeing 757 had the runway blocked. The landing of any large transport aircraft was impossible until it could be moved and it couldn't be moved until it was repaired.

Vinnie had given them his wish list for repair parts for the Boeing and pleaded for some help with the actual work when the parts would be delivered.

**.....Three months earlier.....July 15<sup>th</sup>**

Jason wasn't really back to any semblance of normality until they were nearly to Groton. He would fall into a deep sleep that would be filled with detailed visions of the horrors of the last few months. In his dreams he would be fighting for his life with that crazy rapist sheriff or the Cuban pirates. His dream would then change and he would be making love to Val. He would then seem to awaken and it would be Amanda he was holding in his arms. It was all one dream. He had not really awakened. During his periods of lucidity he would feel a terrible hollowness. He was empty.

Jack Miller was in far worse shape, initially, but his condition had improved dramatically with rest and what medical treatment was available from the crew of the Valdosta.

Commander Zack Peabody and the crew of the nuclear missile submarine Valdosta had performed their duties flawlessly after the attack. Their missiles had taken out several major Russian and Chinese targets. The Valdosta's targets were based on the assumption that since the original attack had been launched from Russia it was understandable that the retaliation should come down upon them. It did, with a vengeance! The Chinese entry had come when they launched missiles against Taiwan and Japan. Their three

*Jess Claypool*

intercontinental missiles that had been launched at the United States had failed completely.

Commander Peabody had set up the debriefing of Jason and Jack as soon as the two men had recovered enough to endure an extended question and answer session without hampering their continuing recovery.

Zack Peabody arose from his chair as the two survivors were ushered into his ward room. He had only fleeting glimpses of the two men while they were under the care of the medical personnel. But now, as they took their places before him, he got an idea of their ages and general physical appearance. What he saw in Captain Caldwell was a tall, lean, and strikingly handsome man; probably in his late forties. Jack Miller was much the same in appearance, just a little smaller. Where Jason was slightly over six feet in height, Jack Miller was probably a little less." I haven't really welcomed you gentlemen to the Valdosta properly." Grinning broadly, he extended his hand in a welcoming handshake. He continued, "Captain Jason Caldwell, Mr. Jack Miller, welcome aboard!"

"Please call me Jason. You're the only Captain around here; my command is sitting on Osborne's Island with flat tires and a few bullet holes in the fuselage."

"That's fine with me, Jason, but I would really like to know a few things." He smiled warmly at the two men and then continued. "For instance, I'm very curious about how in the hell an air line

captain and a vice president of a large American corporation ended up on a big old Morgan sailing yacht in the middle of a hurricane? That's got to be some story! By the way, who are Val and Amanda?"

Jason and Jack looked at each other as if they were trying to find a way or a place to start. Finally, Jack shrugged and said, "I'll start off, Jason, you can come in on the story when I run out of breath."

"Fine with me, Jack- you start."

Jack paused for a moment gathering his thoughts: "We, the eighty seven passengers and the crew of eight departed Kennedy en route to New Orleans on Trans Universal Airlines flight 65. We'd just reached our cruising altitude when Captain Caldwell, Jason, came on the cabin PA and told us that we were at war. We didn't really believe that there was a nuclear war until massive turbulence from the Atlanta blast damned near did us in!" He paused, looked over at Jason, smiled and continued, "We were just God damned lucky to have had Jason as the Captain of this flight!"

Jason returned his compliment with a slight nod and a small smile of acknowledgement.

Jack was warming to his narrative, "For the next three or four hours Jason and his crew fought every imaginable in-flight problem from a high altitude stall and recovery to setting up a jury-rigged navigational approach to get us safely on the ground at Gainesville, Florida."

*Jess Claypool*

“It’s a pretty unbelievable story. We, mostly Jason, had to fight rapists, and crazed students from the university. He had to convince us that our best chance for survival was to stay together and follow his plans.”

Jack paused, thought for a second, and then continued.

“I’m not sure yet how we got safely out of Gainesville, but we did. From time to time you’ll hear us refer to the *Ark*. That comes from the nickname we gave the Boeing. Another passenger, Father Murphy, a Catholic priest and I... Well, he and I got pretty drunk and we were feeling very philosophical.

Zack noticed that Jack was getting slightly misty-eyed and was having more than a little trouble telling this part of the story. Finally, getting his emotions under control, he was able to continue.

“Father Murphy said that being on that aircraft, at that time, was like being on an ark that was taking us to safety. Well, we found some red paint, a brush, and we painted *Jason’s Ark* in huge red letters over the forward loading door. At that time we became the *Ark* passengers and the *Ark* crew and the name *Jason’s Ark* became our badge of honor!”

“Well, we got down to Cancun, where we had another problem. The local constabulary wanted to intern us. They would have, too, if an old guy by the name of Jacob Stein hadn’t saved our asses!”

“Jason remembered this island on the fringe of the Bahamas that had a runway and some buildings we could use to sit out the shooting part of the war.”

Zack smiled at this and nodded in agreement as he remembered sitting on the bottom of the Atlantic waiting for further orders. He motioned for Jack to continue.

“Well, we arrived at Osborne’s Island with high hopes and enough fuel to sit it out there for as much as three or four months and then return to the mainland.”

Jack paused and then continued. “This was not to be.”

Once again looking at Jason, he smiled almost to himself, and went on with his narrative.

“Our plans turned to crap when some really nasty visitors showed up in that Morgan you asked us about. These guys were real pirates, well armed, and talk about ruthless? These guys wrote the book!

“I’ll shorten this story by just saying we had our own little war, right there on the island. Obviously we won. We ended up with their boat, and they died.

“In the course of the battle we lost two of our group, one of our flight crew and Jacob Stein!

“We also lost our Boeing 757 as Jason mentioned earlier.

“Jason and I had the most sailing experience, so we decided to take the Morgan and go for help. We didn’t count on a hurricane!

*Jess Claypool*

“That’s about it as far as our story goes unless Jason has something.”

Jason just shrugged, and held up his hands, “I have nothing to add to what Jack has told you, but there is one hell of a lot more to our story.”

Zack was amazed. “That’s not just a story, that’s a saga, and it’s still unfolding isn’t it?”

Jason’s mind had been trying to formulate a plea for his passengers and crew. He thought of Val and his passion for her. He loved her completely but there was a huge emptiness in his heart when he thought of Amanda and their family who were probably dead, or at the very least, in great peril back home in Connecticut.

He continued.” There are still 87 people, 82 passengers and 5 crew members, stranded on that island with no communication with the rest of the world!

“You asked about Amanda and Val. Well, Val is the senior flight attendant on our flight and Amanda is my wife, or was my wife. She was in Brookfield Connecticut and I assume she’s dead. Val and the others are still alive! We’ve got to get them off that island!”

Then he looked at Zack and said with passion, “Thank God you and your crew were there when we needed you! They, the people still on the island need you now!”

Zack nodded in resigned understanding, “Not much we can do right now, but we’ll take it up with Atlantic Fleet Command, I’m sure they’ll try to get a surface vessel to them as soon as possible.”

### 3

Rear Admiral Gerald Wilcox met the Valdosta when it arrived at its berth at the sub base. He was a tall, thin, no nonsense man of about fifty, who still found it possible to greet the captain and crew of the Valdosta with warmth and consideration.

After the formalities of reporting back to their home base were completed and the crew was released to the base in general, Zack brought his two unusual passengers up to be introduced to the Admiral.

The Admiral was smiling broadly as he surveyed the trio. “Got yourself a couple of hitchhikers, didn’t you Zack?”

“That’s right, Admiral. We found these two down in the Bahamas floating around in the wake of a Hurricane in a derelict old Morgan Out Island. They’d lost their mast and mainsail and were a real menace to navigation.”

“We finally convinced this one,” indicating Jason, “that we were not a danger to him or his vessel. Not an easy task, considering he was only semi-conscious. Jack was not a problem at all; he was totally out of it.”

“Commander Peabody, Mrs. Wilcox and I would like to have you, your wife, and these gentlemen join us for a little welcome home dinner tonight. I know you probably have some other ideas about homecoming so we’ll excuse the Peabody’s early. Turning to Jason

and Jack, he continued, "I'll have some appropriate clothes sent over to you at the bachelors officers quarters guest house. You guys look to be about my size."

Katie had Bob. It was just as it had always been. She had Lamaze. She had a doctor and a hospital. There still wasn't any electricity; they would start the emergency generator only when an absolutely critical situation presented itself.

Katie's pregnancy was going just the way she liked-naturally. She only had three months to go. She would be due on October 15<sup>th</sup>.

There had been a few formalities that needed caring for. One of these was the fact that the parents to be weren't married. To solve this problem, Amanda had herself named a Justice of the Peace by the remnants of the Republican town committee. She performed the ceremony in the living room of the Brookfield house with the girls and a few neighbors attending. They were now Mr. and Mrs. Robert Caldwell.

Bob was Jason's grown son by his first marriage. He was trying to reestablish a semblance of civilization in their area of Connecticut. They still didn't have electricity. The Northeast power grid was still not in operation. The loss of the major cities had made the reorganization and activation of the grid somewhat more complicated. They had no communication other than battery powered two-way radios. Without power, cell phones too were just a memory.

The good news was that radiation levels had not been a serious problem from the day of the attack; the levels were holding only slightly higher than normal. There had to be other areas of the country that weren't so lucky.

Bob had assembled a group of engineers early on who were trying to address the electrical power problem. Another group was trying to find as many portable generators as possible for back up power for emergency operations. They had been successful in keeping some vehicles running by tightly controlling the use of what little gasoline or diesel fuel remained. Eventually the storage tanks would be depleted and another supply would have to be found.

Bob's scouts came back with interesting information on the bordering communities. Danbury was a mess. The few miles that they were closer to the major blast area had increased the damage by a magnitude of 10. The same could be said of Ridgefield, Wilton, Bethel, Redding and New Canaan. The coastal damage was nearly total.

One of the returning scouts reported that he had been accosted by some really desperate and badly injured survivors from down around White Plains. "There was really nothing I could do for them, Bob. I'm sure they're all dead by now, but it made something very clear to me. We have to be prepared for foragers from other towns. They are going to be coming after us and what we have!"

*Jess Claypool*

In the weeks right after the attack Bob and a group of about thirty well armed, able-bodied men had formed a security force to back up what was left of the local police force. It worked quite well and marauders now avoided them completely. They had shifted their focus to less well prepared communities.

## 5

When Jason and Jack had met in the lobby of the guest quarters, Jack looked at Jason and exclaimed, "I'll be God damned! Where in the hell did he find you a uniform?" Jason replied "I think this is one of the Admiral's old ones. You know, from before he made Admiral?" Jason was resplendent in a captain's uniform complete with four stripes and pilot's wings. Not naval pilots, but United States Air Force Command Pilot's wings. "I wonder where he dug these up?" indicating the wings. "Nice gesture, though, isn't it?"

Jack nodded in agreement.

He had on a business suit which had probably come from the Admiral's personal wardrobe too. They both felt uncomfortably overdressed after all those months on the island in shorts and bare feet.

Jason and Jack arrived at the Admiral's quarters at seven on the dot. The Admiral had sent a glorified battery-powered golf cart for them.

The Admiral's residence was typical of on-base housing, just a little larger. Their driver, a seaman in a submariner's jumpsuit, escorted them up to the door, opened it for them, and immediately assumed the role of a welcoming committee of one, "The Admiral and Mrs. Wilcox are in the den, right through that door on your left." He took Jason's hat and ushered them over to the door to the den.

*Jess Claypool*

The Admiral, Zack, and their two ladies turned to greet them with warm welcoming smiles.

“Well, here you are!” exclaimed the Admiral. “This is my wife Mary, and the other lovely lady is Mrs. Peabody, who prefers to be called June.”

Jason noticed that the Admiral and Zack were both in civilian clothes. Admiral Wilcox, observing Jason’s discomfort at being in uniform, and a jury-rigged one at that, continued, “The explanation of why you have been provided a uniform of sorts will be clarified later. The reason we are in civilian clothes is that we, Zack and I, have both been promoted. I have been assigned the temporary post of Commander, Atlantic Fleet, and military governor of the Eastern United States. I’m adding two stars. Those are temporary also.” He turned to Zack and continued, “Captain Peabody has also been promoted; only his fourth stripe is permanent. He will be assuming the command of submarine operations here in Groton. June will have to get used to having her husband around home a lot more!

“Zack and I are just waiting for our new uniforms.

“Fix yourself a drink, gentlemen. We’re planning on dinner in about an hour, so we can bring you up to date on some of the things that have happened since that horrible day last January.”

The Admiral continued. “As you can imagine, the country is in deep trouble. The only communication capability is through the

military, and that is limited to bases that have access to nuclear powered ships.”

He paused, and then continued; “The Air Force and the Army are now almost totally dependent upon the Navy for their communications.”

“Here in a nutshell is how we stand in this country and the world six months after the attack. Before I talk about today’s problems, let me refresh your memories on the subject of world-wide disasters. The earthquake and subsequent tsunami in Southeast Asia killed on the order of 250,000 men, women, and children. We lost nearly 50 times that many souls just in New York. Things are not good anywhere. As you probably have figured out, the entire country, and much of the world, is under martial law.

“There is no radio or television.

“There is no telephone, not even cellular.

“Surface transportation is virtually impossible; the highways are jammed with abandoned vehicles of all kinds.

“Radiation problems have not been as great as we would have projected. There were more ‘clean’ or neutron warheads used than we would have ever anticipated. This will be very important to our recovery. It’s as if whoever selected the warheads wanted to kill only people, and civilians at that.

“We had anticipated that there would be additional deaths from other causes. You know, looting, starvation, and illnesses

*Jess Claypool*

brought on by the breakdown of governmental controls. You can hardly imagine what the initial loss of life was, but it was nothing compared to what we are experiencing around the world now. There are literally millions dying of starvation in every part of the world. There have also been millions dying of influenza and other diseases. I think starvation is by far the biggest problem world wide. Remember, the United States of America was the bread basket of the world. There are a few other problems to consider, too.”

He paused for effect, and then continued.

“The financial centers of the world no longer really exist.

“There is virtually no one left from the national political scene. They were nearly all lost in the first few minutes of the attack. The state and local governments are in somewhat better shape, but even they are somewhat hamstrung by the lack of communications and travel capabilities.

“We know that over thirty major cities have been destroyed in this country alone. Our initial estimates of loss of life are in the area of 70 to 90 million, just in the United States. We don’t even have a guess at what it will be world wide,”

Jason and Jack were not surprised by what the Admiral had told them. What he had said merely confirmed what they had imagined.

Admiral Wilcox continued, “We in the Military had to adjust our efforts when it became obvious that the Russians had not initiated

the attack, but Al Quaida and their multi-named co-conspirators had been behind the launch. That phase is over. Tactical nuclear weapons and unrestricted use of Special Forces have been used very effectively without fear of someone complaining about collateral damage. We don't see any form of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism as a threat for the foreseeable future.

“Enough of this for now. Let's have dinner and continue our discussion later.”

## 6

Dinner was a delight for Jason and Jack. The ladies had endless questions about their adventures and the two men did their best to answer them.

Jason had again pleaded for assistance for the survivors on the island. His thoughts were constantly on Val. His worry about her safety tugged relentlessly at his mind every minute of the day. The Admiral once again assured him that they were working on that problem even as they spoke.

After coffee, the men went back to the den because the Admiral had a few more things he wanted to discuss with them.

Admiral Wilcox didn't waste any time getting to the point.  
"Gentlemen, I need your help.

"I've been given the job of getting this country, or, at least the part assigned to me, back to a working, functioning, nation. We will have to address all those previously mentioned problems and some we haven't even thought of yet.

"Jason, I would like you to take on the responsibility of getting our transportation system functioning. I understand you were operationally oriented with Trans Universal, but you did have some management responsibilities too. Am I not correct?"

Jason's immediate reaction of complete and vehement rejection was silenced by the admiral's simple lifting of his hand.

“The reason I sent the uniform is simple. I, through the powers granted to me as military governor, have commissioned you as an officer in the naval reserve, and called you to active duty. Your rank will be captain, a rank which you will hold until we get some kind of a handle on our problems. It will also make it far easier for you to operate when you are on military bases. It’s like having two hats so to speak.”

Turning to Jack he resumed, “You, Mr. Miller. I believe are not married and have no family. Am I right?” Jack nodded with a quizzical look at Jason.

The Admiral continued.” Since you have no ties of family and such, I’d like you to stay right here at my headquarters as my Coordinator for Business and Industry.”

There was silence.

“Look gentlemen, there is no way I can do these things, run my part of the Navy, and be a military governor!” He paused. . . .”I need your help!”

Jason almost choked as he blurted,” I can’t do anything! I don’t even know if I still have a family! I’ve been gone for six months. I’ve got to get home!”

The Admiral once again just raised his hand, “We’ll take care of your problem in the morning, I’ve arranged for a National Guard Vehicle to take you to your home. I can’t guarantee what you’ll find, but I certainly wish you well. I’ll give you a battery powered two-way

*Jess Claypool*

radio so we can stay in touch. If you don't return here tomorrow I'll know your family is OK, and you can call me if you need anything. If I don't hear from you, I'll call you next week to see how things are."

"Now, go back to the guest quarters and get some sleep: you'll both have a long day tomorrow!

"Jack, I'll see you in the morning, about nine?"

Amanda had no warning of what was coming when the Humvee pulled into the driveway.

It had been nearly seven months since a government vehicle of any kind had ventured into their community. She noticed that this particular vehicle was from the Army National Guard. “Well, maybe Hartford has finally gotten around to seeing if we could use some help?” She left her desk and her draft speech for the next meeting of the Board of Selectmen, checked her reflection in the hall mirror, and opened the door to greet her visitors.

The Sergeant driving bounced out the driver’s side and rushed around to open the passenger door. The door was already opening when he reached for the handle.

She saw a lot of gold braid and ..... “Oh! Oh, My God! *It’s you! Jason! Thank God! You’re Alive!*”

She flew down the walk and launched herself into his waiting arms. She was laughing, crying, and blubbing simultaneously. She tried to touch every part of him at the same time while holding him at arms length to look at him, then crushing him back against her as if to reassure herself that it was really him.

His tears, her tears, became their tears and finally they just held each other and laughed uproariously. Then again they cried.

## 8

Val was starting to show. She was in her sixth month and Donna noticed it first.

She'd noticed that Val had been leaving her shirt tail out a lot, but the clincher was the safety pins holding the top of her shorts together.

"My God, Val, you're pregnant!" she blurted as soon as they were alone.

Val flashed her brilliant smile and beamed, "Yep, I figure I'm due October 15<sup>th</sup> or there about. I guess that will make you and Marie aunts by proxy. I suppose Vinnie and Fletcher can be uncles. I wondered who would be the first to notice. I should have known it would be you."

Donna was studying Val intently, finally, she quietly asked, "Does Jason know?"

"Of course not. He had enough to worry about without me throwing that at him!"

Val's smile faded as she asked, "Do you think they made it? Did Jason and Jack find their way to the mainland?"

"If any one can get through, we know Jason is the one," Donna replied quietly. "We won't really know the answer one way or another until help comes.....or doesn't."

## 9

The unbridled joy of Jason's homecoming had continued into the evening hours. Debby, almost 13, and Mandy, 11, had been firmly attached to Jason's body in various imaginative and annoying drapes, clutches, hangings, and embraces. Bob and Katie were about as bad as the two little ones. They hadn't given Amanda and Jason one minute of privacy since his arrival at the house. This swarming adoration, while much appreciated, was interfering with the families need to communicate.

Finally Jason held up his hands in happy desperation. "Give me some room, guys! I promise I'll give you all a chance to talk tomorrow. Right now I want to talk to your mom quietly in private for a while."

Katie winked at Bob and challenged the girls to partners Monopoly; a game that Bob and Debby had yet to win against Katie and Mandy. Debby whined, "We never win, Bobby! Can't we play something else?"

"It's a learning experience!" Katie retorted.

The younger Caldwells disappeared into the den and Jason and Amanda had their first time alone since Jason's return.

They blurted simultaneously, "I thought..." After a short, embarrassed pause, Jason said, "After you..."

*Jess Claypool*

Amanda didn't say anything right away; she let her head drop onto Jason's shoulder and continued, "I thought you were dead. I didn't think you got out of New York."

Jason laughed, "For once we were on time!"

Walter Smith Arrowood, Colonel, People's Christian Militia sincerely believed that the horrendous attack last January was a direct message from God. He really believed God had announced to the world that Judgment Day was upon us.

He also knew an opportunity when he saw one.

He was an amazingly charismatic man: well over six feet tall with broad shoulders and the chiseled features that you would normally expect to come out of central casting in Hollywood.

When he was younger, he had aspirations of becoming an evangelist; another Billy Graham. His progress along that career path was stopped abruptly when his self ordination became exposed. His fraudulent credentials were brought to light when a reporter from a local newspaper started to investigate charges that he had taken certain liberties with underage members of his mostly feminine congregation.

W.S., as he preferred to be called, avoided prosecution by enlisting in the Army. His military career was distinguished by complete mediocrity. PFC W.S. Arrowood took his Honorable Discharge, moved to eastern Tennessee, and embarked on a career as an automobile salesman- a career for which he was very well suited.

The next ten years offered W.S. the chance to build a base of operations for his ultimate calling- the founding of the People's

*Jess Claypool*

Christian Militia, an anti-government, anti-Jewish, and anti-Muslim organization. They were also an anti-Black and somewhat anti-Catholic society. He immediately promoted himself to the rank of Colonel and commanding officer.

The ranks of the PCM had grown from about twenty members at its inception to nearly 500 at the time the first Russian missiles began to fall. The mountains of Eastern Tennessee, Western North Carolina, and Western Virginia were largely undamaged by the attack. W.S. viewed this as a divine request for the PCM to expand and prosper. Under his guidance, expand it did, to over 5,000 today.

He thought his concept of a religious militia was unique, an original idea! If asked if his was a newer version of the Nazi Party, or the Ku Klux Klan, he would reject that comparison out of hand. If it were pointed out to him that the only difference between his organization and the Taliban was that one was Islamic fundamentalism and the other Christian, he would react quickly and forcefully. His reply would be a succinct; resounding “no!” He would then have the interrogator shot.

Jason's direct radio connection to Admiral Wilcox squawked noisily at 8:45 AM the day following his return to his home in Brookfield. He was preparing breakfast for the girls. The other elder Caldwells, had not yet shown themselves.

He shut off the annoying, alerting signal, and quietly asked "What's up, Admiral?"

"I have some good news for you Jason. I think you will be delighted to hear that we have dispatched a C-130 out of Patrick A.F.B. to your island with some supplies."

Jason didn't reply immediately. He couldn't... When he did speak, it was a simple, "Thank you Admiral....I assume that the crew will not be picking them up."

"No, it will only be an air drop. Satellite pictures show that the position of the Boeing on the runway makes a landing problematical. We'll drop a short-range battery-powered two way radio so that we can get a wish list together for the next drop."

Jason was quiet for a short time, and then he asked quietly. "Could I get a personal message, a letter, on the next drop?"

"Sure, we can do that, but if you're in a hurry it won't be very private; we'll have to e-mail your message to Patrick and they can put it in the next drop. There's a better way. I suggest that you write your letter, seal it, and give it to Captain Peabody for placement with the

*Jess Claypool*

next courier flight to Patrick. If you get it to him today, it will probably make the next supply flight to the island”

“The other concern of yours, picking them up, looks to be a job for a surface ship with tenders on board that can handle the shoals and relatively shallow water of the lagoon. We could also use a helicopter carrier if we can divert one to the Caribbean on its way home from the Middle East. It looks like neither of these things is going to happen for a while.”

Jason interrupted the Admiral, ”I can fly them out if I can grab some spare parts and a couple of mechanics and the right kind of an aircraft to get us back down there!”

The admiral chuckled and continued, “Well, Jason, I think that fits in with your new job! Make it work! I’ll call you in a few days to bring you up to date In the meantime enjoy your reunion.” The connection went dead.

Jason sat there for some time his mind in a confusion of conflicting thoughts. He had been the driving force to go to the island rather than staying some place here in the States. He knew that at the time of his decision it seemed like the only possible way to proceed. Now, looking back, he wasn’t too sure.

Whoever had done the target selection (and weapon selection) had been more intent on killing masses of people than in destroying the infrastructure. They had targeted large cities and left the U.S. Military relatively intact. It was obvious now that they, the

Islamic terrorists, wanted our military to be intact so that they could inflict as much damage as possible on Russia. If he had known that military bases had not been obliterated, he could have taken his aircraft to someplace like Patrick Air Force Base in Florida and would have avoided the deaths of Tom, Jacob, and that movie star.

“Stop beating up on yourself! You *didn't know! You couldn't know!*”

Jason did know this. That knowledge didn't make it any easier to live with.

## 12

There was an intriguing prisoner being held by the Iraqi Police at the Abu Ghraib prison. He insisted that he was a Russian Army Officer, but he had been traveling on an Arab visa with an Egyptian passport on the day of the attack. When his Arabian airliner was forced to land at the Baghdad airport, he had tried to dispose of his Arab identification papers by flushing them down the toilet.

When he was brought before the Iraqi and American interrogators, something very strange became apparent. The passenger manifest showed that there were no Russian Military Officers on board that flight.

There was a group of individuals who were very interested in this purported Russian officer. They were the combined United States and Russian investigatory team assigned to find out exactly what happened on the day when all those missiles were launched. Once he was assigned to them, it did not take these interrogators very long to find out all he knew.

Now the whole world would know how it happened.

Survival and recovery. The world recovers from Islamic terrorists nuclear attack.

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