

The Time & Space Trilogy continues with the second book, Morgan Island. Terry Morgan, a comatose science teacher, dreams of creating a new, socially conservative, capitalistic society. The rest of the world covets Morgan Island's success with catastrophic consequences.

MORGAN ISLAND; Second Book of the Time and Space Trilogy

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MORGAN ISLAND

Second Book of the
'Time and Space' Trilogy

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Morgan Island

Published by:
RedJohn Books, LLC
P.O. Box 1396
Bigfork, MT 59911

Visit us at www.redjohnbooks.com

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2009924381

International Standard Book Number: ISBN: 978-0-9816899-1-3

Printed in the United States of America
Booklocker.com, Inc.

TIME AND SPACE

Part 2: Morgan Island

a novel by

JOHN MERLETTE

CHAPTER 35

War!

AT 9:53 in the morning of April 17, District of Columbia time, President Reginald Thornton signed a short letter that declared Terry Morgan an uncooperative American fugitive. The letter further stated that the Government of the United States was taking appropriate action to capture the criminal and bring him to justice.

A middle-aged clerk at the White House casually took another bite out of her cream cheese smothered bagel from her left hand as she put the one page document into a facsimile machine with her right. She punched a phone number into the keyboard of the machine and pressed the 'Send' button. Seconds later, the formal *Declaration of War* arrived at Morgan Island.

Five minutes after the President was informed that the message had been sent, he made a series of phone calls. First, however, he privately consulted with Imam Waahid Mugniyeh and discussed the updated

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particulars of their invasion plans. He then called his Vice President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, the replacement Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the National Security Advisor, his chief of staff and the CIA Director into the White House Situation Room for an urgent meeting.

“For crying out loud, Reggie,” sputtered the Secretary of State, “there’s thousands of tourists on that island. You can’t just go in and bomb the crap out of Morgan City and the power plant while many of our citizens are lying on the beaches. There are people from half the countries of the world there. They’ll all jump out of their bathing suits when they hear the first bomb go off.”

“I agree, I can’t condone this reckless action, Mr. President,” admonished the Vice President. “You should at least allow time for the tourists to flee the island before you send warplanes and troops—.”

“Damn it, this isn’t a war, it’s a police action,” defended POTUS, “We’re sending law enforcement personnel trained in foreign operations, to capture a wanted fugitive. People from places like Israel should be used to seeing the military exercising their right and duty to enforce the law and maintain order. We’re not going there with the intent of killing any citizens, only to arrest their terrorist leader.”

“Sure as hell doesn’t sound like you’re sending a few cops to serve an arrest warrant on the man,” warned the National Security Advisor with a wavering voice that passionately spoke of his strong disagreement with his Commander-in-Chief.

“I’m not here to argue policy or procedure, people,” the President ominously said. “The plan has already been set in motion. I only brought you together so we can watch it unfold.”

“Aw, hell!” exclaimed the Secretary of State, Jack Hale, who abruptly rose from his chair and angrily turned his body toward the wall as though the act would somehow conceal his strong displeasure over the current state of affairs he was helpless to change. His knuckles were turning white in his clenched fists.

“What the hell’s your problem, Jack?”

“I can’t...I refuse to be a part of this madness, Reggie. You have no right—”

“I can and you will. Those are my orders.”

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“Well, sir, then you leave me no option but to submit my resignation. I personally believe you’re making a grave mistake and I do not intend to go down in history as being part of this heinous act. What you’re doing is in complete violation of the laws of the U. S. Constitution. You have no authority—”

“Bull! I have the citizens of this country entirely on my side! Screw the Constitution! Nobody here in Washington gives a crap about that worthless piece of paper anyway.”

The new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, having been a witness to a five-minute crash course in the President’s foreign policy capabilities, also announced his resignation rather than disobeying direct orders from his Commander-in-Chief, in spite of the man’s life-long reputation for dutifully obeying his superior officers rather than arguing over policy.

After watching the two men leave the office, the President turned to the others in the room with challenging eyes. The men were all cowering silently in their seats. “I don’t know about that wussy Navy guy, but Jack’ll be back. By damn, he knows better than to follow through on his stupid threats.”

After half a minute, the Vice President, in a conciliatory tone of voice asked, “What’s going on here Reggie. We want to help, but it seems to us like you’re obsessed with this Morgan fellow. There are other ways to deal with this matter without resorting to violence.”

“You don’t understand, Niles. It’s not that simple.”

The Secretary of Defense, Peter Simpson, challenged the hapless man with ire in his voice despite his supreme effort to keep his emotions in check. “Explain what you mean, Mr. President. I confess; I’m totally clueless regarding the true intent behind all this.”

The fact that the President was suffering from intense mental anguish and emotional stress was evident in his cracking voice and his struggle to hold down the bile that was making an effort to further ruin his day. “There’s more at stake here than what any of you are aware. I...I cannot and will not explain it any further as my doing so would jeopardize the lives of millions of American citizens. You’re all just

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going to have to trust that what I'm doing is in every American's best interest and that includes all of you."

"Oh, hell!"

"So, just what specifically do you have in mind?"

At 10:03, fighter aircraft lifted off simultaneously from several air bases along the southern coast of the United States, from Texas to Florida and from an aircraft carrier, the USS Kitty Hawk, at sea off the coast of South Carolina.

A first wave of 113 fighters and stealth bombers gathered into attack formations and headed south.

At 10:39, only fifteen aircraft remained in the air. The survivors, all FA-18's from the USS Kitty Hawk, continued on toward their primary target, the Morgan Island Power Plant and any active radar installations or SAM missile sites that might be detected by the aircraft on the way in.

For the rest of the air armada, there was utter chaos. As if by magic, the engines of all the fighters and bombers suddenly failed at the same instant. The military officers back at headquarters were in awe. There were whispers bantered about that Morgan Island possessed a secret energy ray that swept over the air fleet like a magnetic storm knocking out all the electrical power on the aircraft. Science specialists speculated that the aircraft might have been the victims of an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) unleashed by Morgan's evil empire. Nobody could conceive of any other way for so many planes to be shut down simultaneously.

Little did anyone know that the incredible power behind the felling of such awesome military might was nothing more than a group of thirty-four geriatric ladies maneuvering their computer mice on rubber pads while chatting about their grandchildren and retirement activities.

The ladies merely matched up the numbered dots on the screen with a menu on their monitors and then clicked the buttons that sent a message to the tiny 'Gremlin' microchips onboard the fighters. The virus programs that were loaded into the weapons, months or even

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years before, quickly did their dirty deed before the aircraft reached three-miles inside Morgan Island airspace.

The planes fell silently from the sky. The warm, moist air was filled with the parachutes of frustrated young pilots and weapons specialists who were screaming out their rage as they drifted down to the sea that was waiting for them below.

From intercepted, supposedly secure, military communications, the defense leaders on Morgan Island knew that there were 113 aircraft in the air armada. The electronic maps only detected the paths of 98 airplanes however. That left fifteen aircraft without secret microchips onboard and thus fifteen aircraft that would not crash when the ‘Gremlin’ viruses were unleashed.

The computers beneath Morgan City plotted the projected path of the remaining airplanes. An interception point was determined and the coordinates sent to the men who controlled the ‘Gulls’ that were tasked with finishing the job.

Bart Sutherland and twenty-nine other volunteer, part-time ‘pilots’ were at their computer workstations focused so intently on their monitors that they all appeared to be in a trance. Their squadron of ‘Gull’ drones had departed Morgan City ten minutes before the invaders reached the limits of Morgan Island airspace. The drones were circling slowly at five hundred feet when the pilots received word that survivors managed to escape the ‘Gremlin’ attack. Seconds later, the coordinates for a new intercept point was sent to Sutherland and the others and as one, they raced their ‘Gulls’ to confront the enemy.

Three minutes later, at 10:43, the drones arrived at their destination. The bogeys arrived thirteen-seconds later.

The ‘Gulls’ quickly climbed to a thousand feet and leveled off just beneath the FA-18’s that were maintaining a tight combat formation.

The pilots of the Hornets were confused and actively discussing the horrific destruction of the other aircraft. The men had become so dependant on the threat warning systems aboard their fighter jets, they

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were less prepared for what happened next than they would have been with no warning system at all.

The ‘Gull’ controllers switched from GPS navigation to manual flight control of the drones using the on-board arrays of cameras. Each pilot carefully maneuvered his drone until it was close enough to be attached onto its target. Only fifteen drones were needed. After successfully attaching to the fighter jets, the other fifteen ‘Gulls’ chased behind the targets as backup at a lower altitude.

When all the drones were secured, the explosives aboard the drones were detonated and the aft end of fourteen FA-18s disappeared in a huge collective cloud of smoke, wildly spinning engine parts and other debris. Seconds later, twenty parachutes opened above the sudden hailstorm of thousands of metal and plastic parts. Eight of the airmen never got a chance to eject, their canopies shattered by flying debris.

Captain Wally ‘Whipper’ Solomon and his co-pilot suddenly found themselves flying alone. The young pilot watched in horror as his companions disappeared in flashes of brilliant light around him. He had no idea that the ‘Gull’ clinging to his airplane’s fuselage had failed to detonate. He couldn’t understand why he made it through the first wave of destruction and now he was apparently the only surviving aircraft out of almost three hundred planes that started the mission.

“What happened, Sanchez?” Solomon hollered into his headset. “Did you see that? Did you see anything?”

After regaining his voice, the awestruck weapons specialist answered, “I’m not sure. When we drifted down just a minute ago, I could swear I saw something odd attached to Zeke’s—”

“What? You saw something on the outside of the aircraft? What’d it look like?”

“It was small and aerodynamic, like a—”

The two-man crew didn’t have long to ponder their fate. Within seconds of the detonation of the other ‘Gulls’, Bart Sutherland ascertained that one aircraft had survived. The plane wasn’t turning around, but continuing directly toward the Dr. Jane Collins Power Plant.

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Sutherland only had four-minutes left to destroy the FA-18. He shouted to the other ‘pilots’ in the Command Center that he would finish the job. He pushed his ‘Gull’ to top speed. Within seconds he was directly beneath ‘Whipper’ Solomon’s fighter jet, but rather than risking the time to clamp onto the fuselage, Bart flew his ‘Gull’ carefully to get just behind and below the fighter. He then accelerated his drone directly into the exhaust opening of the target’s starboard engine. A fraction of a second later, Sutherland depressed the detonation button displayed on his computer monitor with his right mouse button and Wally ‘Whipper’ Solomon’s Hornet’s right engine disintegrated into a fiery mass of flame and black smoke. Two seconds after that, the other engine self-destructed.

The helpless aircraft, or what was left of the forward section of it, tumbled in a free-fall for several seconds until it crashed. Capt. Solomon ejected safely, but Sanchez was fatally struck by debris during his attempt to escape the disintegrating airplane. ‘Whipper’ was stunned as he followed the floating canopy parts, other shattered debris and the remains of his flying partner in a slowly spiraling parachute descent into the territorial waters just off Morgan Island.

The Morgan Island controllers didn’t cheer. This wasn’t a computer game any more. Several real people, all good pilots doing their job well, were killed in the action. “War is hell,” said Bart Sutherland to no one in particular, as he watched the other ‘Pilots’ depress the buttons that destroyed the unnecessary ‘Gulls’.

“I don’t believe it!” shouted President Thornton. “I can’t believe this is happening!” Reggie was glancing at streaming message updates of the failed air strike that appeared in quick succession on his secure computer monitor.

“Not one plane reached the damn island,” confirmed the SecDef in utter disbelief. “What the hell do those people have? What are we dealing with?”

The President angrily grabbed a telephone from its cradle and hollered into the receiver, “Get that damn analyst from CIA over here right away. Yeah, that young black gal, in fact I want to see all the

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heads of our so-called intelligence agencies over here right now! Now, goddamn it!”

“Sir, the first of our Naval ships should be crossing into the territorial waters of Morg...er... Cuba right about now, sir,” the Secretary of Defense informed the President and the others.

“It will be interesting to see what they do now,” smirked POTUS. “They’re going to pay big time for what they just did to our planes!”

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