

Suspense builds when an old WWII submarine is modernized to commit acts of terrorism. Follow the harsh life an orphaned young girl, who rises to command the submarine from Germany, across the Atlantic Ocean into America's Great Lakes, executing a devastating nuclear attack...

**GREY WOLF OF SUPERIOR:
Domestic Suspense Fiction Based on a
Twenty-Six-Year US Coast Guard Career**

by John Kearns

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Grey Wolf of Superior

John A. Kearns

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Introduction

Dear Reader,

“Grey Wolf of Superior.” Drawn from a twenty-six-year career in the US Coast Guard serving both home and abroad.

Patterns develop that, our experience warns us, they can become volatile. Being “conventional” or routine, always conducting “business as usual,” we all fall into the trap of missing what could result when a person or organization starts being “unconventional.” In World War II, Germany brought many nations to their knee’s doing just that. “The Grey Wolf” refers to a submarine. Their destructive power was amplified by using it in a very “unconventional” way and attacking “soft targets.” The type XXI Elektroboat was a futuristic weapon created in the 1940’s, and its design was way ahead of its time. Its unique design was the blueprint for the first “Atomic Submarine.”

Some laws and treaties exist today in our nation, which prevents armed Naval ships from operating in the Great Lakes. A dangerous scenario leaving only the standard law enforcement equipped US Coast Guard, CG Reserve, CG Auxiliary, and local police to defend against it.

The worst scenario, worldwide, there are old stockpiles of weapons, some nuclear hidden away.

The work, tells the story of a young orphaned girl who, when given a chance, rose against all the odds to command a combat submarine and initiate the first non-conventional nuclear attack on our internal seas and power grids. It also shows the unlimited money and resources a modern-day terror organization can bring to bear against our nation.

This story also speaks to the men and women of the US Coast Guard, its Reserve and the Coast Guard Auxiliary who remain “Always Ready.” Providing a unique service to our nation so that others may live. In recognition of the many hours of brave deeds, risks, and challenges they meet daily passing by unnoticed. Our stories, actions, and hardships that remain untold. Though we are the smallest military service, our record and honor stand tall.

We were then, we are still, and will always be, the United States Coast Guard.

Semper Paratus

1 - The Wolf

“Contact, a ship is bearing 090 degrees, slow, single screw,” the sound operator called out, “Great Lakes Cargo Ship,” as he listened carefully in the sonar room.

In the conning station, the officer on watch replied, “start a navigation plot, helmsman, come to zero-four-five degrees, increase speed to ten knots. Chief engineer, Bring us to periscope depth.”

The WWII era German type XXI U-boat responded, climbing from Lake Superior’s cold depths. Wolfgang Schmitt, the engineer, remarked “I do not like the way the boat maneuvers in fresh water,” as he increased the dive plane’s angle to get more rise.

“Contact, a ship bearing one-eight-zero degrees, twin screws moving fast and closing, it sounds like the Isle Royal Ferry.”

The officer of the watch responded: “Very well, maintain present course and speed.”

The chief called out “periscope depth, steady, and hold at this depth.” The boat’s captain now arrived, taking over the deck and conning tower of the submarine. She ordered the watch to decrease speed to slow ahead.

“Up scope,” she called out as she bent over to grab the rising periscopes handles.”

Electric motors hummed and the lights dimmed slightly as the periscope extended to break the surface of Lake Superior. Searching in a wide circle as water still ran over the periscopes lens, there was a ship, with a twist of the periscopes handle,

the lens clicked, increasing the magnification to four times normal vision. There it was, in the aiming cross-hairs, a Great Lakes ore carrier came into view. Once steady in the cross-hairs, another button was pressed to “lock,” this fed continuous vital targeting information into the “Torpedo Data Computer” providing a mathematical aiming solution to the chosen torpedo from tube four. At two thousand feet, the Torpedo Data Computer lit up, indicating a firing solution was mathematically computed to shoot. The stately ship from another era still steamed east across the lake, hauling thousands of tons of iron ore pellets called “taconite” from Northern Wisconsin or Minnesota iron mines and iron mills.

“Torpedo depth thirty feet,” the captain, ordered and waited as the distance closed; at fifteen-hundred feet, the solution was still locked in, and the outer torpedo tube door opened, in perfect soft-spoken English, the captain ordered: “Torpedo loose.”

In the forward torpedo room, the torpedo man pulled down on the red firing handle, releasing high-pressure air into the tube. A pressure sensor on the torpedo depressed by the sudden release of high pressure in the tube, engaged a switch that started the weapons motors, while air pressure forced it from the tube.

The 1943 vintage “T-three electric torpedo,” now sped toward its target, the electric motors emitted no bubbles, no wake that could be seen approaching its target. The seventy-three-year-old torpedo’s one-hundred horsepower electric engine powered the two counter-rotating propellers. A gyroscope kept its run straight and level at thirty-two knots-per-hour. Running steadily at thirty feet beneath the surface, as it sped toward the unsuspecting ship.

The freighter’s cook was leaning on the rail, enjoying the late summer air as he noticed a flash of light in the distance.

A “periscope,” he thought, and horrified, he shouted, “Oh God, not again.”

In the lake’s clear waters since the zebra mussel infestation, he witnessed the long slender weapon coming toward them, and with no time to shout out a warning, his eyes blinked a tear. He bowed his head slightly to pray. He glanced down and saw the long silver weapon passing underwater below him, underneath the side of the ship.

“It’s too deep,” he thought and tried to yell out, but he was cut short by the invisible pressure wave hitting him as the deck lifted into the air beneath his feet.

This torpedo was designed to run under the ship, where it’s magnetic cap sensed the steel ship above; it signaled a trigger firing an explosive detonation cap, this detonating the seven-hundred-pound explosive warhead directly under the ship’s center. Traditional torpedoes struck the hull of a ship, blowing a hole in the side causing flooding, then eventually sinking.

Exploding under the ship was catastrophic, water does not compress so the force of the shockwave literally: “picked up” the ship’s center, it broke its back before it came down settling in the water; it blew it in two.

The U-boat captain called out, “make a note in the log, August 10, at 14:10 hours. We fired one “T-three torpedo” at a bulk carrier. Torpedo hit ship center, broke ship’s back, sinking in, add our position and note: “survivors’ boarding rafts, cannot make out ship’s name, estimate fifty thousand tons.”

Back on the ore carrier, with the ship’s pilot house forward and engine and living space aft, no one onboard appeared severely injured, just badly shaken. As the two ends started sinking. The ship’s captain from the pilot house end ordered, “Abandon ship.”

The crew started putting on “protective exposure” suits and launched the emergency rafts. On the rear section where most of the crew was, no alarms sounded because the power from the engineering space severed, when the ship broke in two. The ship’s deck officer took command aft, helping the confused crew members into exposure suits and the emergency rafts. Adding to the panic and confusion, the “grisly sound” of tearing and twisting steel filled the air. Now, thousands of tons of taconite iron ore pellets started rolling out of the ship’s split hull; they were turning the clear water rust red. Millions of small, round, metal balls resembling marbles, rolled from the ship’s holds across the steel deck plates, making a deafening sound. Black sticky fuel and oil started to surface from the ruptured fuel tanks as the crew abandoned ship.

The “U-2005e,” claimed her second victim.

A mile behind, the boat taking visitors to Isle Royale National Park, watched in horror as the great ship’s bow and stern lifted into the air, then fell back into the lake. The sounds of steel groaning and tearing like paper, carried across the water, the ship was going down. As it sank, the fore and aft end lifted forming a “V.” As they rose higher upward, it shuddered, then it slid under the lake’s calm water, blowing columns of steam and water high into the air, a whole ship gone in minutes.

The “maritime” distress channel “16” was flooded with calls from other boats, reporting a massive explosion off Copper Harbor, Michigan. People vacationing ran to the shore to see what the excitement was all about. Boats in the area sped to the scene, picking up any remaining ship’s crew from the life rafts missed by the Isle Royale Ferry.

At Portage Coast Guard Station, rescue boats were dispatched and on their way. Another great ship lay at the bottom in the icy waters of Lake Superior.

A Coast Guard HH65 helicopter arrived thirty minutes later, verifying all crew members accounted for, and to record the position of the sunken freighter. The task was made easier as it was still daylight, “air bubbles and fuel” were still bubbling to the surface from the doomed ship. The forty-four-foot Coast Guard motor lifeboat from Station Portage was on its way, but with its slow thirteen-knot speed, it would take hours to get to the scene. Group Duluth and Group Sault Ste Marie had their Marine Safety Officers responding to determine the environmental impact of the thousands of gallons of fuel leaking into the lake. Now, all accounted for by the freighter’s first officer, survivors were taken to Sault Ste Marie Michigan for treatment, and giving their account of the incident. Group Duluth had operational control under Rescue Coordination Center, Ninth Coast Guard District, Cleveland, Ohio.

The investigation into a shipwreck could take years to conclude with so many government hands in the pie; nothing would be forthcoming at other than a snail’s pace. But the shipping companies wanted answers now, not in a few years. How could a nearly thousand-foot-long ship sink on a clear and calm day in August?

Already, some of the freighter's crew and other witnesses were reporting, “it just blew up.”

But, one survivor has separated away from the others, he was unruly and shouting, “The white feather, ‘the white feather’ I saw it again.”

He was the ship’s cook, and he was held separate in the conference room at the Sault Ste Marie Coast Guard Base. They were waiting for the “National Transportation Safety

Board” members to arrive from Washington DC. The old cook saw something different, but the officials did not want anyone else to hear about it. He claimed he saw the “white feather of a periscope,” the old ship’s cook was a veteran of the merchant fleets of WWII, if anyone knew of submarines, it would be him.

He was sunk in the North Atlantic twice and knew how a periscope looked moving through the water. He saw that reflection and white feather wake made by the thin periscope tube moving through the water.

The reflective mirror of the periscope’s glass face makes an oval shaped image above the water from the sun’s reflections. He saw this twice in his life before today, the first time he spent a week in a life raft nearly freezing to death, the second time nearly dying of thirst in the North Atlantic Ocean. The younger, more junior Coast Guard officers laughed and joked about it, calling him a “crazy old man.”

But the group commanding officer at the Sault Ste Marie and some of the chiefs did not think it was all that funny. Finally, the Group Commander glared in the direction of the gaggle of younger officers, not a word needed to be said, they all fell silent and tried to look busy. They knew they just pissed off the “old man,” and life may not be so pleasant around the base for a while.

The Group Sault Ste Marie captain was pacing outside the room. Finally, he said to the base executive officer, “I’m going to talk to him.”

But duty bound, the executive officer of the group reminded him the “National Transportation Safety Board” said, no one is to talk to him until they arrive.”

The captain said, “thanks” XO, but I think there is more to this. XO, look how he is curled up in the fetal position.

The XO looked again and said, “Yes, but he is old and just went through hell, he is shaken up from the accident.”

With that, the captain said “No, that’s post-traumatic stress disorder, meaning he has been there before, seen something terrible, this brought out something horrible he has been trying to forget. The sinking was no accident, and I am going in and talk to him. He alone knows what and why this happened. I need answers before the stuffed shirts from Washington get here and take him away.”

Captain Steele served in the Coast Guard a long time, coming up through the ranks from his early enlistment to his heroic actions, earning him a wartime commission as an officer. He now was the commander of Group Sault Ste Marie Michigan.

As impressive as his numerous decorations, achievements and glowing record were, he could not overcome his misgivings in the political scene as a mustang officer. He did not have a politically correct bone in his body. So, he would never receive his admiral’s stars. In the peacetime Coast Guard, Captain Steele was out of date. He was not a yes man; He would never survive an assignment requiring him to do so. He knew inside this would be his last tour; he would be passed over for advancement, despite all he achieved and dedicated his life in service to our nation.

From the jungles of Vietnam and Cambodia to both the North and South Pole, here was a man that left good footprints all over the earth.

Captain Steele poured two cups of coffee, then from his office desk, he reached in and grabbed four exposure rations. Small bottles of “Remy Martian Cognac,” he then headed for the conference room. The Captain stopped, looking around for the ever-prying eyes of subordinate’s, Steele now added a small bottle to each cup of steaming coffee. As he entered the

room, the old merchant ship's cook fought his way to his feet and stood at attention despite his weakened condition.

"Have a seat and have some of this." Their eyes met, and both knew they were in that special "brotherhood" forged by years of service at sea.

"What do I call you," asked Steele?

Just "Cookie" was the reply. Been cooking on ships going on fifty-five years. Cookie sipped the coffee catching the burst of aromatics from the cognac and smiled. "I thought you were different; you're a real sailor."

Captain Steel replied that he started in Vietnam on 82-foot patrol boats, after that, did his sea time on a weather cutter, been onboard everything that floats since then.

There was a brief silence, they both knew what was coming, the awkward time to get thoughts straight and accurate, nothing is off the record anymore.

Captain Steele cleared his throat and said, tell me what you saw.

Cookie lowered his head and said, "Skipper, you won't believe me, but I saw the same thing in 1943 and 1944." "It looked like a long white feather moving across the water, above it, an oval glint of the sun. Then a minute after I seen it, two torpedoes from a U-boat slammed into us; the same thing happened here." The captain frowned and then asked,

"Are you saying there is a U-boat in Lake Superior."

Cookie replied, "That's what I am not saying, they will put me in a nursing home if I do. I am taking the earned privilege of being old. You know, no one cares what you say, and they just leave you alone."

"OK Cookie, you saw the reflection, next two shapes resembling torpedoes, correct so far? Next, you see them pass under the ship, but they did not hit the ship's hull.

Cookie replied, “only one torpedo, but it was too deep, and I thought it would miss us, it’s amazing how the waters cleared up.”

“What then?” Steele asked.

The old cook again lowered his head and said, “I tried to call out a warning, but I was in slow motion, then suddenly traveling through the air.”

“I got hit by things from the ship’s deck, and suddenly I was in the water, drowning and fighting my way to find something floating to support me. I had no life jacket, and the cold was immediate. I crawled up on a pallet and seen the ship in two pieces.” With that, he gulped down the coffee and asked if there was more.

Steele pulled the two remaining bottles from his pocket and handed them to him. “I will have them take you to a hotel to get some rest, do you have any cash?”

Cookie replied, “lost everything on the ship.”

Steele handed him two twenty-dollar bills and told him, “if you need anything, tell the hotel manager to call me personally.”

Cookie turned and looked Captain Steele right in the eyes and said, “I hope I am wrong, but I don’t think so.”

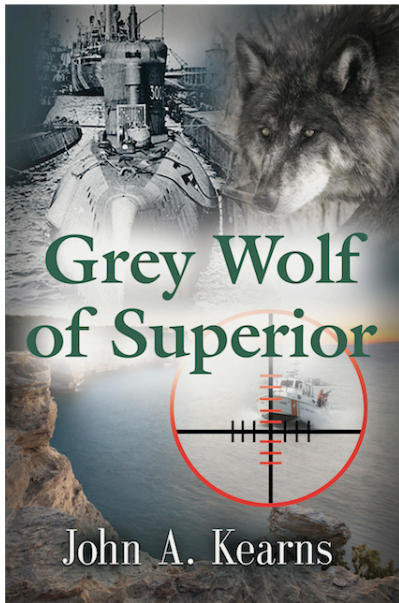
Captain Steele walked down the hall toward his office, his mind running at full speed thinking, “this cannot be, one could never get here into the Great Lakes under its power.

“Maybe a modern recreational sub, a drug smuggling sub perhaps, could fire a torpedo, if that’s what it was, but not a combat submarine.

Once in his office, he read the situation reports once more, the reports from the ship’s crew and the statements from the Isle Royale Ferry. He paused to think and decided to consider it; he then buzzed the operations officer, telling him to check with all stations in Group Sault Ste Marie and with

operations at Group Duluth, forward any reports of sightings of submarines, strange sightings, or sea monsters since the spring navigation season began. “Put them on a chart of the lake with dates and times and get it to me ASAP.”

Hanging up, he pulled a bottle of Irish whiskey from his desk and poured a long one in his coffee cup. He leaned back, closing his eyes and thinking what course to follow. The warrior spirit in him was cautious and concerned, the political officer class in him told him to pass it on up the chain of command, let someone else worry about it. After a while, he stood up and opened his safe, he pulled out his personal 1911 .45 caliber and two extra magazines, tucked them in his briefcase, and left the base. The warrior spirit won: he would not pass the buck; he was going to find out what happened.



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