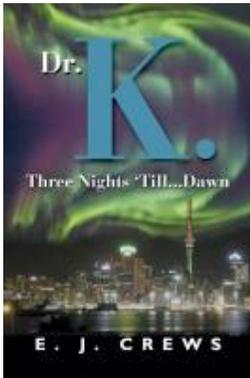
A night-time photograph of a city skyline, likely Toronto, with the CN Tower prominently featured. The sky is filled with vibrant green aurora borealis (Northern Lights) dancing across the dark night. The city lights are reflected in the water in the foreground.

Dr. **K.**

Three Nights 'Till...Dawn

E. J. CREWS



In this third book in the Dr.K series, the secretive group behind the worldwide media slander of him goes for broke. Dr. K.'s outspoken foe, Senator Clarke, gets their backing for his presidential campaign even after Lou's newspaper story of shocking child-sex allegations against him is printed. They even orchestrate a public spectacle of his family's grief after a tragedy befalls them, boosting his poll numbers.

Dr. K Three Nights 'Till... Dawn

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Your free excerpt appears below. Enjoy!

**DR. K.
THREE NIGHTS
'TILL...DAWN**

E.J. Crews

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2015

First Edition

Chapter 2

Hey Bulldog: 5-6 Lennon & McCartney

Across the most narrow part of the island of Maui, from the county police department, (where Dr. K's inquest was taking place), lies the old whaling village of Lahaina. There, the *Kai Hau* yacht and crew were lying in wait, (tied up next to the marina seawall), for Dr. K's return. The captain was using this time to examine the rules of the 'Carbon-Free-Race' that had recently been released to the public. He and the crew had let Dr. K. know that they wanted to enter the *Kai Hau* in the race. A win, would be the crowning achievement to all of their years of hard work, designing and building the boat.

Dr. K. was open to the idea, but he needed to know that the *Kai Hau* would win. He told the captain, that though he accepted the premise, that anything might happen over the course of such an event, he needed assurance, that his yacht would not be out-classed. If they could provide him such assurances, he would agree to enter the race.

Peter Whanga, the captain of the *Kai Hau*, was in his cabin, printing the documents from the race committee of the round the world event, when the call came over the intercom.

"Hey, Skippa, we've got company up here."

Putting down the page he was reading, he leaned across his desk and pressed the intercom button, asking, "Come again?"

"Just switch on the video from the pilothouse camera."

He picked up the remote control, on his desk and aimed it at the large, blank, video screen on the opposite wall. As the flat-screen powered on, four separate display areas appeared. Each square was

a view from one of the four externally mounted video cameras. Peter clicked the buttons on the remote control, until the view from the forward facing camera filled the flat-screen. He slowly got up from his chair as the image of a grey catamaran, speeding across the flat calm waters, came into view. The rapidly growing image, set off by the blue-grey mountains of the island of Molokai in the background, was headed directly for them.

"How fast is it approaching?" Peter asked into the intercom.

"Forty-five knots."

"I'm on my way!" he said as he dropped the pages on his desk and quickly left his cabin. Two, long, quick strides, down the narrow passageway and he reached the spiral stairs, that led up into the pilothouse. He took the steps, three at a time, in three bounds and emerged into the pilothouse. He pulled a pair of binoculars from their holder, next to the captain's chair, as he strode up to the steeply angled windshield. He raised and quickly focused them on the fast approaching boat.

"It just popped out, around Lanai, a second ago!" Reese said to him, as he adjusted the zoom on the video camera. He was busily trying to keep the ship centered in the frame of his video display.

"What is that emblem, below its bridge deck?"

Reese leaned closer to the screen as he answered, "There's too much glare to tell, from here."

"Well we won't have long to wait. It'll be here in minutes." Peter said as he lowered his binoculars. "Where is she?" he asked as he looked out at the boat.

Murray, standing in the passageway outside the pilothouse, answered, "Sunning herself on the aft deck."

Peter turned to him and said, "Tell her to get in her cabin."

"Ahh, Skippa! She's in the altogether, again." Murray lamented.

"It doesn't bother her, don't let it bother you."

"I'll go." Reese said as he looked up from the video display.

"You keep that thing in view, until you can identify it." Peter said to Reese. He turned back to Murray and looked at him, then blurted, "Move! Before I give you a clip around the ear!" Murray moved away from the doorway. His footsteps soon echoed down the passageway, as he ran along. The captain and his first mate, returned to watching the boat. When Murray returned to the pilothouse, the catamaran had stopped about half a mile away. The grey hulled vessel was lying broadside to them now.

"Crikey! She's a bit of alright, eh?" Murray said as he stepped into the pilothouse. "How big?"

The captain, standing next to the video display and Reese, answered him, without looking up, "Seventy-five meters."

"Woo-who! Hey what's that behind the bridge deck?" Murray asked.

"That's what we're trying to suss out... right..." Peter's voice trailed off as he grabbed the binoculars and went to the port side window. He lifted them to his eyes and focused on the ship again. "There... are... two... of... them..." again his voice trailed off as he lowered his binoculars. "And one of them is just taking off... they're helicopters!" He turned to Murray and asked, "Is she off the aft deck?"

"Done!" Murray said with a smile.

Peter turned back to Reese and asked, "How thick is that steel sheet, in the roof of the galley?"

Reese looked up from the video display and cocked his head at an angle, as he searched his memory. "Ah, well, it's pretty thin... just enough, in case of a grease fire, you know?"

"Right, it'll have to do." Turning to Murray he said, "Go get her into the galley. Under the counter, by the stove, would be best."

"Ah, Skippa..."

"Then tell her to put some clothes on! Now MOVE!" Murray turned and dashed out of the pilothouse. The whine of the helicopter, lifting off, could be heard above Murray's footsteps as he ran back down the passageway. Peter left his binoculars behind as he headed out of the pilothouse. "Leave that and come with me." he said to Reese.

The two walked out of the pilothouse and onto the deck of the port hull. Peter walked forward to the bow cleat that was wrapped in black braided dock lines. He stood there, one foot atop the cleat and watched the helicopter fly directly overhead. Reese leaned his head back and shielded his eyes from the noon sun, as he watched the helicopter hover above the yacht. It was so close, that the squadron emblem on its side, (a red fleur-de-lis on a blue and white check shield), was clearly visible. After circling over the yacht from stem to stern, the helicopter banked away and descended toward the seawall, about a hundred feet forward of where the yacht was docked.

The wheels never touched the uneven top of the seawall. But when they were mere inches from it, the door slid open and a uniformed man jumped out. He held his hand on his cap and remained in a crouching position as the helicopter rose up and banked away, returning to the grey catamaran. He stood up and walked the top of the rough seawall, until he reached the beginning of the floating dock, where the *Kai Hau* was docked.

"Bugger!" Peter said under his breath as the US Navy officer came walking over to the black braided lines that led up to the yacht.

"Captain Whanga, so good to see you again. Remember me?" he called up to Peter.

"Come for another inspection, have you Lt. Commander?"

Fitzpatrick put his hands on his hips, chuckled and lowered his head. He then looked up and asked, "Can I come aboard, captain?"

"Sure, you can give us a hand swabbing the soot off our decks, from that egg-beater of yours."

###

Fitzpatrick stood on the aft deck of the *Kai Hau* and leaned on the railing as he looked forward to the wind turbine blades as they slowly turned. He then turned back to look at Peter, watching him just a few feet away. Peter's legs were crossed at the ankles, his bottom pressed into the corner of the handrails, his arms out at his sides, one hand gripping the stern rail, the other resting on top of the port side railing. His foot slowly waved back and forth as Peter waited to hear what Fitzpatrick would say next. Reese and Murray were sitting just inside, in the shade, in deck chairs.

"It looks like these have more blades, than the old ones."

"Yeah they do..." Peter answered in a flat tone.

"You know that little stunt, in Newport, really pissed off the brass."

"Yeah well Advantics wasn't too happy with what you sent back to them. They received a dozen or so fifty-five gallon drums. You know what was inside the drums? Pieces! Tiny pieces, from the turbine generators."

Fitzpatrick chuckled, "Well, some people still thought there was something to learn by doing that..."

"Some people? Not you?"

"No... I figured it would be a waste of time, as soon as I saw what they looked like, being hauled out of the water, the next day. I must say, that was a neat trick, getting them to collapse like that."

"Not a bit! Banks do the same thing." Reese offered.

Fitzpatrick turned to him with a quizzical look, "Banks you say?"

"Yeah see the 'En-Zed' money is plastic. So the banks transfer cash in special bags that can melt the bills, in case of theft, same idea." Reese said with a broad grin.

"Huh!" Fitzpatrick turned back to Peter. "Well, that's all behind us... we're even."

"Not on your life, mate! My boss is out of pocket, for those two units. I'd say we're a far sight *off* being even." Peter said as he folded his arms across his chest.

"Yeah but you knew what was going to happen to them, as soon as they went under. I don't think you'll get anywhere with a reparations claim. But I'd be glad to send you the forms."

"Get stuffed!" Peter said as he pointed a finger at Fitzpatrick.

"Look, look" Fitzpatrick said as he raised both hands up, chest high. "I'm not here to rehash all of that. I've got a proposition for you."

Murray leaned over to Reese and whispered, "Oy, this'll be good."

"Does it entail another *inspection*?" Peter asked.

"Nah! We just did one." Fitzpatrick said with a straight face.

"Right... how d' we do?"

"Oh, you're clean. Nothing radioactive, no explosives, clean as a whistle."

"Now, what?"

Fitzpatrick turned to face the grey catamaran as he asked, "What do you think of her?"

Peter looked over at the ship, "You mean that egg-beater ferry?"

Fitzpatrick shook his head slowly as he smiled, "That *ferry* just happens to be the fastest surface vessel we have."

"Naff off!" Murray said loudly.

Fitzpatrick turned around and addressed Murray, directly, "That's the finest, most highly developed example of a Littoral Surface Craft, anywhere in the world!"

"What, built by some aerospace firm, I bet?" Reese asked.

"As a matter of fact, it was..." Fitzpatrick stopped talking, as laughter from the two, interrupted him. Exasperated by their laughter, he looked to Peter.

"You mix planes and boats and you get something that's not very good at either, you know?" Peter said with a smile.

"Well that remains to be seen, captain. That's partly why I came here to see you. That ship is on a multi-year evaluation program and publicity tour. It's just a research vessel, not in the Navy fleet. Now,

I've convinced the brass that it might help us to resolve this whole Greek thing."

"I don't follow."

"It's just that I think that story, about your attack in the Aegean, was... well... a bit exaggerated."

"Oy, those bullet holes, up there, that I had to fill in, were no exaggeration!" Murray said, pointing up toward the fiberglass overhang that extended over the aft deck.

"It's not that. We know all that happened. It's the speed you attained. That is, what the Greek government *estimated* your speed to be, that I find, frankly, hard to believe. There was nothing found, when those turbines were examined closely, that could possibly generate the power needed to push this thing along, that fast. The Greeks must have gotten it wrong. Everyone makes mistakes, ya know?"

Peter nodded as he said, "So true, Lt Commander."

"Absolutely! Which brings me to my idea for getting an accurate speed reading, of this boat. Once we confirm, what the lab boys reported, (about the wind turbines), we can all go on with our lives. You won't have to endure surprise inspections, anymore. I can go back to the Pentagon and stop following your ass all over the world. It's a win-win for both of us."

"And just what *did* your lab boys say in their report?"

"Basically, that the percentages of rare earth minerals and such, just did not indicate very powerful generators. It was not *possible* they could have generated the amount of power needed to reach such speeds."

"Ahh- ha... so you want us to make a speed run... so you can prove that, to your brass at the Pentagon."

"Exactly! We'll document the whole thing! It'll be just like an *official* world speed run, well almost. But once I show them you can't duplicate those speeds, again, they won't have a reason to bother you."

Peter gave Fitzpatrick a hard stare as he said, "You're going to measure out a kilometer course. Then document our runs through, both ways?" Fitzpatrick nodded. "A flying start, right?" He nodded again and smiled at Peter. "Where and when?"

"Here..." Fitzpatrick said waving his hand out toward the water, "In Auau Channel. It's a mill pond today. Why not now? Unless you have something else to do?" Peter shook his head, 'No'. "Or do you need time to get the OK, from the owner, Dr. K? I mean it's not like he'd dock your pay, for a fuel bill, 'cause you don't burn a drop, right?"

Peter looked over at Reese and Murray. They were both leaning forward in their chairs, looking back at him. Murray began to nod his head as he waited to hear the captain's response. "You're on!" Peter no sooner got the two words out, when Murray shot up out of his chair.

"Yesss! Good on ya, Skippa!" Murray said as he squeezed his hands into tight fists and pulled them close to his chest.

###

The grey catamaran lowered a rib speed boat over the side. It made its way right down the center of the channel, between the small island of Lanai and Maui. Before the *Kai Hau* left the dock at Lahaine, the captain went back into the galley. He took a couple of steps and then crouched down to look under the counter, by the stove. He looked at the woman sitting in the small space there. Her

head, resting on top of her knees, (her bare legs, drawn up close to her chest), was turned to the inside of the cabinet. He was not sure if she was dozing, or not. So he called out to her in a whisper.

"Greta... Greta..."

Slowly she lifted her head as she took her arms off her knees and let her legs slide out onto the galley floor. "Is it clear?" she asked in a hushed tone.

Leaning forward he extended his hand to her, "Yeah you can come out of there."

She took his hand and got up, out of her hiding spot. "Were they looking for me?" she asked as she stood up straight. "Because I told your crewman, that this was not a very good place to hide me."

"No, they were looking for this boat, not you. I just didn't know who or what they were after, at first. I was hoping if they scanned the boat, you wouldn't show up, under there."

"Show up? Like a heat signature?" Peter's eyebrows rose a bit, at hearing her question. She smiled and flashed her pale-blue eyes at him as she added, "I surprised you again, Captain."

"You did indeed, miss. Would you like to join us in the pilothouse? We're going to take her out."

"Without Dr. K?"

"We're just going for a quick ride around. We'll be back before he is."

"Ahh, the mouse at play, while the old cat is away!"

Peter chuckled at Greta's butchering of yet another saying, in her thick Nordic accent. Even after months of having her aboard, he and the crew still got a kick out of her penchant for rewording familiar sayings in her own way. "You might put it that way, yes." he said with a smile. As her bare feet patted across the smooth galley floor, he added, "I like the shorts and that top..." he stopped as she reached the doorway and turned around to face him.

"You don't have to say such things, Captain. I will be wearing something, so your men, will not be bothered, from now on. You don't have to lie to me."

"I wasn't..."

"Come now, Captain. You think I look *better* in clothes?" she asked. She held his gaze as she awaited his response.

"Ahh... no I wouldn't say..."

She quickly turned on her heels and walked out into the passageway. "Of course *not!*" she said over her shoulder.

###

The *Kai Hau* motored out of the marina and turned left at the end of the seawall. Behind her lay the steep, mile high, mountains of Maui, ahead, eight miles away, the three thousand foot peak of Lanai. The shallow channel between them, so still, one would think it solid enough to walk on.

Murray was on the radio to the grey catamaran, getting last minute details ironed out. Reese was sitting at the nav-station, using the radar overlay, to lock in the positions of the two vessels that marked the course. The rib-boat was the southern end, while the grey catamaran marked the northern end, of the measured kilometer. Peter was at the helm, gently guiding the great yacht out and around the seawall, with his fingertips on the joystick. Greta sat

behind them all, in the guest chair, just behind and to the left of the helm, where Peter stood.

"Whooo... that's a fast looking ship." Greta said as she noticed the grey catamaran, at anchor.

"Yes it very definitely is. They are the ones who requested us to come out and do a fast run." Peter said.

"Shall we race them?"

Reese chuckled, as Peter answered her, "Not exactly. See, they are marking one end of the race course. And over there..." Peter pointed toward the left, "...that little black rib-boat, marks the other end. We're going to run from one to the other, as fast as we can, twice. That way we can be timed both ways. The average of the two runs is then our time."

Greta leaned forward in her seat and craned her neck to see the boat he was pointing to. "Ahh, yes, I see." When she leaned back in her chair she looked at Peter and asked, "Then we take the fast ship's place and they make their run, yes?"

Murray and Reese looked up at one another, then turned to Peter. He stood there a moment, with his head cocked to his right. Then he slowly answered her, "Ahh, no... they didn't offer to do that..."

"But that's not very sporting. You show them your best and they don't show you? How do you determine the winner?"

Murray and Reese continued looking at Peter. "There isn't a winner." Peter said.

"Doesn't sound like much of a race." Greta said as she leaned back in her chair.

Murray left the radio and walked over to the helm. In a low voice he said, "You know, all of our record runs have been in heavy seas. We narrowly beat the old record times. We've not really shown our heels before, to anyone."

Reese turned to Murray and Peter and asked in a whisper, "Maybe we shouldn't do this, Skippa?"

The captain looked at the two of them as the radio speaker crackled with Fitzpatrick's voice, "Make the rib-boat your start. Over."

All three furrowed their brows at hearing the radio message. "Check that last message." Peter said to Murray.

Murray went back to the radio and picked up the microphone. He requested Fitzpatrick repeat the last message. After he confirmed that the little black rib-boat would be the start and thereby the final mark they would pass after their second run, he returned to the helm saying, "What are they up to, Skippa? Surely their instrumentation is on the grey cat? Why would they want us to start and end by that rib-boat?"

Peter slowly shook his head as he bear'd off to port and headed the *Kai Hau* toward the rib-boat, "I'm catching a whiff here, boys."

"Same here, boss." Murray said.

"Someone's hiding a fish in a drawer, for sure." Reese said.

Greta sat back and watched them, not really understanding what they were saying, but picking up on their rising tension. She decided to hold her questions for a time and just watch the proceedings. She wished Dr. K. was aboard, though.

###

Brian pulled the rental car into the parking spot at the Lahaine marina. Dr. Kantos and attorney Bonner, (sitting together in the back seat), had said little, on the forty minute drive from the Maui County Police Department. Brian got out of the car, quickly, hoping their arrival back at the *Kai Hau*, would lift Dr. K's spirits. But when he looked across at the empty space, where the yacht had been tied, he cringed. *What else can go wrong?* , he thought.

"What the HELL?" blurted Dr. K., as he saw the vacant slip and got out of the car.

Joe spotted the grey catamaran, out on the horizon, as he closed the car door. "What's going on out there?" he asked, pointing to the ship.

The three stood by the car as they watched the action unfold, four miles out in the Auau Channel. There were only three boats out in the channel. The *Kai Hau* was just completing its three-hundred and sixty degree turn, after making its first pass, through the one kilometer run. They watched, in silence, as the *Kai Hau* headed back toward the grey catamaran. The great yacht began to rock, slightly, from side to side. The white water, curling off both bows, was thrown out, like streams from a fire-hose, on either side.

"Why's it rocking?" Brian asked.

"She's getting her hulls out of the water..." Dr. K. answered, his eyes riveted on what was unfolding before him. "Like a woman... wiggles... out of her panties, one hip at a time." he added in a dazed tone of voice.

More and more of the fine edge of the bows could be seen, now, as the white water curl grew smaller. The rocking motion ceased and the radar arch on the stern came into view as the yacht leveled out. Dr. K. slowly lifted his left hand and shook his sleeve to expose his watch. Gripping the bezel with his right hand he pressed a button on it, just as the *Kai Hau* sped by the grey catamaran. The three,

(now all standing in front of the car), turned their heads to follow the speeding yacht, as it skimmed over the water, heading for the little black rib-boat. The curve of white foam, (shooting out of the jet-drives at the stern), came into view as the great yacht was broadside to them.

"Twenty-one seconds and change." Dr. K. said as he pressed the button on his watch again, just as the *Kai Hau* sped by the rib-boat.

"What in hell are they doing?" Brian asked.

"By the look of that helicopter, up there, I'd say those crazy Kiwi's, of yours, are giving a demonstration to the U.S. Navy!" Bonner answered.

"Yep, it sure looks that way, doesn't it?" Dr. K. said to Bonner. He put his hands on his hips, as he watched the great yacht slow down and lower its hulls back down to their waterline marks. He turned to Bonner and Brian and said, "Looks like the show's over. Come on; let's get over to the dock. This, I gotta hear!"

###

"Dr. K!" Greta said, getting out of her chair and dashing over to the windshield. She waved at him. He nodded back, as he stood on the floating dock, hands on hips, watching their approach. He was flanked by Brian and Bonner.

"Crikey!" Murray muttered under his breath, then turned to Peter.

"Better get out there, you two. I'll need everybody's help, on this one."

Reese got up from the nav-station and followed Murray out of the pilothouse, to the portside. He reached over and picked up the coil of black, braided, dock-line, hanging by the inside of the door, before stepping out on deck. Murray made his way down the

passageway to the stern. Reese walked out to the bow cleat and dropped the heavy coil of line to the deck. He busied himself, and kept his head looking down, not wanting to look at Dr. K, as the yacht maneuvered alongside the dock. The process took longer than usual and it must have looked very ham-handed to Dr. K. It was times like these, when Reese did not envy the captain. He quickly put that thought out of his head and focused on the job at hand. That being, to get the great yacht berthed, without something else going wrong. Even before he looked up, with the loop of dock-line in hand, he knew Dr. K. would be the one nearest the bollard.

When the edge of the port bow passed a few feet from Dr. K. he looked up to see Reese. "Heads up!" he called as he tossed the looped line, right over the top of the bollard next to Dr. K. Dr. K. looked on, as Reese let out a bit more line. The yacht coasted beyond the bollard, very close to the dock, at a slight angle. Reese then made the line fast to the deck cleat by his feet, stopping the forward motion. The sound of churning water, from the jet-drives, could be heard for a brief second. Dr. K. looked down the dock at Bonner, who also had nothing to do, as Murray looped the stern line around the bollard near him. Brian pushed the wooden stairs, on the dock, over to the side of the hull, near Bonner. Dr. K. looked up at the bow, again, but Reese was nowhere to be seen.

He turned and headed down the dock, to where both Brian and Bonner were waiting for him. Before he walked the twenty meters to the stairs, Peter was already coming down them. Dr. K. stopped in his tracks, at about the mid-point of the eighty foot hull. He waited for Peter, to walk up the dock, to him.

"Just taking her out for a quick blat?" Dr. K. asked in a stern tone.

"Something like that, boss."

"Why didn't you use the rudders, just now, when you docked?" Peter hung his head, slightly. But before he answered, Dr. K. asked, "You pranged 'er didn't ya?"

Peter's head tilted up, his eyes looked at Dr. K's a moment before he said, "Everything felt right, on the first pass, then..." he paused as Dr. K's eyes looked right through him. "I'm sorry, boss. I'll make good on it, honest."

The sound of the approaching helicopter reached them. Dr. K. looked over his shoulder and spotted it, traveling low over the water, heading for the marina. He turned to Brian and waved at him to go up the stairs. He then looked back at Peter and asked, "Did anyone see Greta?"

"Oh, no, boss. We kept her inside, just like Brian told us too."

"Good, good! Now Peter, what happened?"

"We don't know, yet. All of a sudden, just as we passed the start of the last run, all the electrics in the pilothouse shutdown. I couldn't steer with the joystick anymore. I brought us back using the throttle controls, alone."

"They're cable, aren't they?"

"Yeah it's a damn good thing, too; otherwise we'd be looking for a tow!"

"But you still have power to the electric motors?"

"Yeah and I think the turbines are OK, too. We kept up our speed, by the final speed trap, just fine! I don't understand what could have..." The sound of the helicopter was so loud, he could not hear himself, so he stopped talking. He and Dr. K. turned around to watch the helicopter as it hovered over the seawall. The door slid open and Fitzpatrick jumped onto the seawall. He held tightly to the

cap on his head as he hurried away from the helicopter. As it lifted up and banked away, towards the grey ship, Fitzpatrick straightened up. He was smiling as he made his way along the top of the old seawall, towards the floating dock where Dr. K. and Peter were watching him.

"Dr. Kantos! Good to see you, again. I wish you could have been here earlier. Your boat put on quite a show, but as I suspected, she didn't measure up to her PR." Bonner had walked up and joined Peter and Dr. K, just as Fitzpatrick came along.

Dr. K. folded his arms as he looked at him. "You know, I figured I'd be seeing you again."

"If it isn't Admiral Conroy's *boy*" Bonner said.

Fitzpatrick gave Bonner a sideways glare, then turned to Peter asking, "Twenty-one on the first pass and twenty-three seconds and change on the last run, not *exactly* world records, Captain."

Peter leaned forward to Fitzpatrick, about to respond, when Dr. K, said, "I saw the last run and she looked fine to me." Peter glanced at Dr. K. as he turned to face him and winked. "You were just saying that it was the best run she's made, to date, eh Peter?"

"That's right, boss. I'm sure glad the Navy here, got us on their instruments and all." Peter said with a broad smile.

"Yes, Lt. Commander, could we get that data? It would be a nice memento. I could frame it and hang it up in the main salon." he said with a smile.

Fitzpatrick gave him a puzzled look, then asked Peter, "Why was the second run so much slower? We thought you might have had a mechanical problem, of some kind."

"Nothing of the kind, she's as good as gold. In fact, me and the boys 'd like to have a go at your flash grey catamaran, over there. What 'd ya say to that?"

Fitzpatrick was surprised by his response and looked over at Dr. K. He pursed his lips and raised his eye brows, as he nodded his head. But Bonner responded for him.

"Yes, fair's fair, Fitzie. Go on, make the call and tell 'm we'll meet them on the other side of Lanai. You know... where you boys play around in your subs." Bonner said. "How much fuel would that thing, burn through if it ran the same course?"

Fitzpatrick finally had something to smile about and he did. He then said, "Zip... nada... She's nuke powered."

"Ahh!" Dr. K. said. "Hey, I've got an idea, for you, Fitzie. If you're not up to racing against us now, why not enter it in the round the world , Carbon-Free race?"

Peter piped up before Fitzpatrick, saying flatly, "Only commercial vessels are eligible. I was reviewing the rules, earlier today, just like you asked me to do. No military or race only vessels can enter the race."

Fitzpatrick, nodded his head, saying , "That's what we were told, too, when we inquired about entering. But, you know... this vessel is not part of the US Navy fleet. See, it's assigned to the O.N.R. for testing and evaluation, only. It really still is, a *commercial* vessel, owned by the builder." He paused to look at Peter and then Dr. K's reaction, before continuing, "Once we brought that to the race committee's attention and offered our helicopters and personnel, for search and rescue, should they be needed, well... let's just say they saw it as a whole 'nother kettle of fish!"

"You mean you're entered?" Peter asked.

"Yup!" Fitzpatrick said.

Bonner raised an eyebrow as he asked, "Why they hell would the O.N.R. do that?"

Fitzpatrick, turned his head to Bonner and said, "The brass look at the race as an opportunity, similar to those air races just before World War Two. You know, what were they now... oh yeah, the Schneider Cup races. It's a way to test new technologies, under pressure. You know, a number of designs that were successful in those races, float plane races, went on to be fighter aircraft in the war. In fact the Spitfire was derived from one of Mitchell's race winners, back then." Right then a car, parked by the gate to the marina, gave two quick honks of its horn. Fitzpatrick looked over to the car and gave a thumbs up to it. He then slapped Dr. K's shoulder and said, "That's my ride. Good seeing you again, Dr. K." He turned to Peter and shook his hand saying, "It's too bad she's not really up to scratch, yet, old man. But hey, maybe your boss can order up some of that Number-8 wire, and you guys can pull her together in time. Gotta go!"

As Peter and Bonner stood by watching him walk away, Dr. K. said in a low voice, "Peter... *file* the entry form." Peter turned to him in amazement. He saw the hard look in Dr. K's eyes as he continued to watch Fitzpatrick. Then he turned to him and keeping the same intense glare, added, "We will beat that little shit... right?"

Peter beamed a grand smile, then said, "Bet on it, until your nose bleeds, boss."

Chapter 3

I'm Looking Through You: 1-8 Lennon & McCartney

Whitney rolled over on her back and looked up at the shadow patterns across the ceiling of her bedroom. She had been trying to will herself back to sleep, but it was not working. The twelve year old sat up in bed and sighed aloud in frustration. She looked at the moon-glow coming through her window shades and figured that must have roused her. She then heard her stomach growling. *Cream puffs!* , she thought.

She threw off the blanket and dashed to the chair, where her robe has piled, in a heap. Quickly she grabbed the garment and plunged her arms into its sleeves as she headed for the bedroom door. Barefoot, she silently stepped along the hallway carpet, passed her mother's bedroom, to get to the stairs. When she got to the landing, her mouth was watering. As she turned the corner and started down the last six steps to the first floor hallway, she froze. There on the shining wooden floor was a bright reflection from the lights in the kitchen. *Bet it's Mom, she'll make me go right back to bed. No cream puffs for me now!* , she thought.

Crouching down on the steps, she looked down the long hallway. The large brushed aluminum double doors of the refrigerator were clearly visible, through the archway to the kitchen. Whitney looked at it and wondered if she was good enough to pull this one off. The kitchen table was on the other side of the center island counter. Her mother's chair faced the windows. If she was really, *really* quiet, about it, she could slip in, open the refrigerator, grab the container of cream puffs and get out, before her mother would notice. She smirked to herself as she thought, *I can do this*. She crept down the last of the stairs and placed her feet onto the cool hallway floor.

Halfway down the hall, she began to have second thoughts. She realized that the hall was too long for her to run back to the stairs, if her mother got up from the table to leave the room. She could end up getting caught, before she even got one bite! *The bathroom!*, she thought. She moved from the middle of the hall, over to the left hand side. Along that wall, just ten feet away, was the partially opened door to the bathroom. She could hide in there, if need be. Then emerge, after her mother passed, to get into the refrigerator. Again she smirked, as she thought, *This is sooo easy!*

Two steps closer to the bathroom door and then a shadow grew up and over the front of the refrigerator. She froze in panic, as she watched it. Then the figure casting the shadow, stepped into view. *Dad!*, she thought. *He's back!* She silently breathed out a long sigh of relief. *He won't send me back to bed.* She stood up straight and tied the belt of her robe smartly. Then she strode, confident in her welcome, toward the kitchen archway.

"What's that your second one?"

Oh my God, Mom!, Whitney thought. She ran for the bathroom door and slipped inside, before her father had turned around.

"It's my third, I had one before you came down." Lloyd said as he headed back to the counter, balancing the tall, overstuffed cream puff, on the small plate.

"Oh, that's just great! You know you gain your weight..."

"I don't gain weight! I'm skinny as a rail, always have been." he interrupted.

Elise looked over her shoulder at him from her chair at the kitchen table. He stood by the counter and poured another glass of milk, without looking back at her. "What I was *going* to say... was you always gain your weight in your face, first. And with the TV adding

ten pounds, to everyone anyway, you can turn into Mr. Potato Head in no time."

After taking a long drink of milk, he put the glass down and said, "Then I should expect to sweep my opponents in the Maine Primary."

"Go ahead, don't listen to me." she said turning back around, in her chair. She took the tea bag out of her cup with the spoon and strangled the last drop out of it, by wrapping the tag string tightly around it. "Why should you change now?"

"Stop it. I've had a tough few days."

The spoon rang out as it tumbled over the table top, fell onto the floor and danced there a moment, until the force that propelled it, died away. "You've had it TOUGH!" Elise said turning back to face him.

"Shh, you'll wake the kids." he said.

"Do you know how many times a day, someone asks me about that G.D. video?" He stood motionless, a fork full of the pastry in his hand. "Do you?"

"They'll forget about it, soon enough."

"Well, they haven't yet!"

He raised the fork up and put it to his mouth. He just glared at her as he chewed. When he finished he said, "Trust me. No one is going to do another story on that, again."

Elise shook her head, "Oh, I have no doubt of that. My father said Coates will take care of that. It's you that I can't trust further than I can throw you."

He smirked, then said, "You don't think I can live up to my part of the bargain? It's like twelve months! You don't think I can do that?"

"You haven't made it twelve weeks, so far!"

"What are you talking about?" he asked as he took the plate of pastry with him and headed for the table.

"You haven't been in my bed, lately. That can only mean you're getting it somewhere else."

"Oh, that's what this is about?" he asked as he put the plate on the table. He leaned over, bringing his face close to hers.

"Get that mouth outta here! I don't know where it's been." He smiled as he bent forward to kiss her. She leaned her head away and slapped him. He froze in place and then opened the eye he had closed, just before the strike. She glared at him as she said, "You're like a God damn dog, Lloyd. But I'm not one of your *screw* toys."

He rose up straight. Looking down at her, he asked, "I thought we had a deal?"

"We do! I won't divorce you before the election."

"No, no... I mean, I thought..."

"What, what? What did you think? That everything was going to go back to the way it was *before* I saw that disgusting video?" He lowered his head and shook it slowly. "That's right, NO! So what did you think?"

"I don't know, I just..."

"My God, Lloyd! She was younger looking than Whitney! Is that what does it for you, these days?" He lurched at her, raising his arm

and showing her the back of his hand. She did not flinch as she sat waiting for it. When it did not come and he straightened back up, she said, "That's right, giving me a black eye, right now, might be a *real* problem for you. You'd have Coates and his people working overtime, to suppress that one." He turned around slowly and went back to the counter.

"Why the hell couldn't you have been satisfied with that *first* girl of Preston's? Why did you have to go for those others?"

He had just picked up the milk carton and the glass next to it, when he heard her words. He turned around and slowly walked back to the table asking, "What... girl?"

She chuckled as she said, "Oh God, you're such a *Rube*, sometimes. Did you really think that a woman, that *beautiful*, would look twice at you, let alone let you do what you did to her? *Please*, Lloyd, wake up! I picked her out! Preston just delivered her."

He sat down in the chair, across from her. His face grew pale, his eyes stared at her as he frantically retraced his memories of Miranda. He finally found the words to respond and they stumbled out, "I... don't... believe you..."

"Believe it... everything she did, she was *trained* to do, Lloyd. It wasn't an affair! She wasn't some prostitute, either! My God, she was a damn pre-programmed sex-addict. She was certified disease-free too. You think we were going to risk you catching some STD?"

He blinked his eyes and lifted his gaze to meet hers. "We? What do you mean?"

"Oh, *pleese*." she said as she laughed. "What did you do, bump your head, recently? We, WE! *Your* family, *my* family, everybody who's gotten you to this place in your life. You think everything, just *magically* fell into place, in your life, to make you ready to run for

president?" She leaned forward, putting both hands on the table as she looked at him. She lowered her voice and in a low soft tone continued, "Mother of God... you don't know... do you? They never told you, did they?"

"What the hell are you going on about?"

For a split second, she thought better of laying it all on him, then she remembered how she felt, when she first heard about the kiddie porn video. Through gritted teeth she slowly began, "Lloyd, listen to me, now." She paused and let out a sigh as she relaxed, a bit, before going on, "Edgar is not your... biological father."

He hissed out a flat, "Huh." His face started to lift into a grin, then stopped and reversed into a blank look. "You're serious? My Dad, is not my Dad?" She nodded. "You're full of it!"

"Don't believe me? Check his war record. Find out about the wound they gave him the Purple Heart for." He tilted his head and narrowed his eyes. "That's right; he couldn't have kids when he came back. Think how that must have gone down with Gracie." He shook his head, at her. "Just look at any picture of your Dad, when he was about your age. Come on! You must have seen pictures of him as a kid, when you were a kid?"

He shook his head, "No, as a matter of fact. We never did anything like that. Besides, he passed away when I was little. I didn't have much of a chance to get to know him." He looked into her eyes, "So how do you know all this?"

She leaned back in her chair, then went on, "My father was told by your grandfather Bud. When he came to talk about us."

"About us? Granpa Bud, talked to your father... about *us*?"

She nodded and said, "Yeah he wanted my Dad to know that you were not just the grandson of an immigrant ex-governor. No, no, my Dad was not impressed by that, at all. Why the hell should he be? My family could buy the whole damn state of Rhode Island... that he had been governor of... if they wanted to. No, Bud wanted to prove your pedigree as being worthy of my own. Which he did."

"Just who was my father, then?"

"Ask your mother!"

"Don't be ridiculous! She's almost ninety, she barely recognizes me, these days. You expect her to remember something forty-six years ago?"

"Maybe it was memorable." she said, then lifted her tea cup and took a sip.

"Cut it out! You don't know, then, do you?"

She shook her head, as she placed the cup back down on its saucer. "Dad never told me. But, knowing him, as I do, whoever he was, *must* have been of royal blood. He drummed that into us all, as kids. We went back to the French aristocracy— we were special. He used to always say, he'd be 'damned if he would let us marry into some mongrel, immigrant, American family!"

If you still don't believe me, just look at all the money that, so quickly, flooded into your campaign. Come on Lloyd, think about it. How long have you been a senator? Ten years, just ten years! You haven't been around long enough to have *that* many favors to cash in. The smart money knows you're the *anointed* one. That's why they came up with a record amount, in record time. They want to be in line for the gravy train of your administration, before it leaves the station.

Don't you see, if you were *really* the grandson of Bud, you would not have raised that obscene amount of money? Hell, you wouldn't have even, been put forward as a candidate for president. No way, no how, not ever. Didn't they teach you anything at Yale?"

He shook his head, "To hear you tell it, I guess not."

"I doubt that. They taught it, I'm sure. You were just too damn busy screwing any skirt you could, back then, to learn."

"You didn't even know me then."

"My father gave be a file, this thick, on you, before I agreed to marry you." she said, raising her hand, with her thumb and index finger about two inches apart.

"So why all this grief? You knew what I was like, then."

She looked down at the tea cup. She pushed at the rim of the cup, lightly, with her finger as she said, "I thought I could control..."

"Me? Is that it?" he blurted out as he leaned in, over the table towards her.

"IT! I thought I could control *it*. Your damn appetite for *IT*! That's what they told me I could learn to do. But somewhere along the way, you got away from me." She looked up at him as she went on, "I actually began to have feelings for you, before Whitney. But then that degenerate Preston started to invite you to his *parties*. Christ, you were at one of those things, when I went into labor. I had everyone looking for you, that night. I finally left for the hospital without you. Then you came stumbling along to see me, after it was all over. That was *strike one*, Lloyd." she said, as she held up her index finger to him.

"But I listened to everyone's advice and didn't make a big deal about it to you. I would try harder. I decided Preston's party girls had nothing on me." she said. Looking down at her cup she laughed, then looked up at him and added, "Anything *they* can do... I can do better! That's what I told myself. I lost all the extra weight, just like that. I worked out and I looked the best I'd looked in years. There was a moment... just a moment though, when I thought I had you back.

Then Patty came along. You pulled the same, nine month long, disappearing act, for her, as you did with Whitney. Only you couldn't be found, at all, when I went into labor that time. That was strike two, Lloyd." she said showing him two fingers. She leaned back in her chair and looked at him. He was not making any attempt to interrupt, or break her train of thought. *What can he say?* , she thought.

She took a sip of tea, then continued, "Again, people begged me to stay with you. Now, it was for the *sake* of the children. And my father, even my *own* father, dissuaded me from leaving you, then and there. But I wanted something, in return, for staying." She leaned forward and her eyes opened wide as she looked at him and added, "And you know, they gave it to me!" She smiled as she leaned back and continued loudly, "Me! I was calling the shots! Not you..." She waved her finger in his direction.

"That's the first time, I realized, that I held sway over you, my father, hell everyone! You know why? Because they all wanted you to continue up the ladder. They had made a very large bet, on you and they wanted to get their pay out. So they were willing to give me anything, to keep the peace, at home, here. That's when I got my father to set up a meeting with Preston, just he and I."

Lloyd looked at the growing scowl, on her face as she began to talk about her dealings with Preston. It looked like she had just stepped into a soft spot, over the backyard septic system. She gave him a

rundown on the final process of selecting the woman that would become Lloyd's 'approved' concubine. Something that Preston had never let on to him had happened. He had truly believed, his meeting Miranda, at one of Preston's parties, had been a random event. Elise smiled at him as she exposed the farce.

She tilted her head back, against the high back of the chair as she continued, "She worked out, quite well, for a while, didn't she? Preston kept getting her programing updated, so you wouldn't tire of her... the way you did, me." She paused and looked down her nose at him. "But, I guess it was all a bit too much, for you to handle.

After I had Lloyd junior, I could see that you were way, way, out there. You couldn't relate to me in a *normal* way at all, anymore. And I sure as hell wouldn't do for you, what she could. Hell, I don't think I could *ever* do what she let you do to her." She paused and looked at him for a moment. Then, in a soft voice, she added, "God, I don't even think she would have either, if she was in her right mind. But then, Preston made sure she would forget, what happened between you two, anyway. So... who cares, right Lloyd? As long as you got yours. She was just a 'screw' toy, right?"

She picked up her cup and drank down the last of the tea. She let the cup clatter loudly, as she set it on the saucer. "And that brings us to strike *three*, Lloyd..." her eyelids were drooped, as the words came out through her trembling voice, "...fucking a little girl!" She just shook her head, repeatedly, from side to side, as she bit her lip after saying the words.

"You're someone I don't know anymore. I don't think I'll ever want to know, again. Coates made a deal with my father, for me to stay on, long enough, for you to make a run for the White House. OK, I'll live up to that. So you... you just, *lay off it*, for a while. You have to live up to your part of the bargain. Stay away from the Bimbos and jail-bait, long enough to get through the campaign."

She leaned across the table and took his chin in her hand and said softly, "Who knows, what might happen if you win? Maybe I'll pick you out another Presidential Model. Then you two can hump your brains out, like crazed rabbits, for all I care. No one will dare say a word, then. Then I can get my just deserts, as First Lady... that's *Lady*, Lloyd, not trained whore, in case you don't know... there's a *difference*."

Elise pushed her chair back from the table and got up. She picked up the cup and saucer and headed to the sink. She turned to him, after she rinsed the cup out and placed it into the dishwasher. He was just sitting at the table, staring at the now melted desert, on his plate. "We're almost there, Lloyd. Don't fuck it up, now." She headed for the archway, to the hall, then stopped and looked back toward him, adding, "In case you get any strange ideas, I'm locking my bedroom door, from now on. I'm sure I'll sleep better that way."

Whitney held her breath, pushing her body flat against the bathroom wall, (behind the door). She closed her eyes, as she heard her mother walk by. She opened them, as her mother's footsteps echoed, loudly, down the hall. She waited, until she heard the sound of her steps going up the carpeted stairs, before she drew another breath. She then decided to get out from behind the door and get back up to her room.

A mere two steps into the hallway, headed for the stairs, she was startled by the sound of breaking crockery. She whirled her head around, in time, to see the pastry dish shatter against the wall, in front of the refrigerator. She remained there, looking back at the mess, all over the kitchen floor. She did not even move, when the sound of her father's chair, scraping over the floor tiles, reached her. But when his shadow started across the front of the refrigerator, she snapped out of it. She turned and ran down the hallway, her robe billowing from side to side, behind her.

Lloyd crouched down to pick the pieces off the floor. Out of the corner of his eye he caught sight of Whitney, in the moonlight from the window, above the stairway landing. He turned and watched her bounding up the stairs in a full panic flight, then turn the corner at the landing and go out of his line of sight. His stomach knotted up as he wondered how much she may have overheard.

Chapter 21

Birthday: 3-6 Lennon & McCartney

Two days to go to the start of the Carbon-Free circumnavigation race and five, of the six boat fleet, were now anchored off the Monte-Carlo beach. The largest was the nuclear powered, 262 ft., Office of Naval Research ship, the *ONR-1*. The smallest was the German made, 75 ft. hydrogen fuelled, jet turbine powered, wave-piercing trimaran, the *Freiheitsgas*. Between those extremes was the *Kai Hau* and a couple of maxi-catamarans, converted to rigid wing-sails, both at 125ft in length. The only boat, yet to arrive, was Arnold Rasmussen's entry, *Le Effacer*. The story given to the assembled sporting press, at the luxury beach-front resort, was that it was undergoing last minute work in the nearby port of Nice, France. The race committee and most everyone else accepted this accounting of their delay, except Lou and Dr. K.

Both knew the boat's owner well enough to *never* take what he said, at face value. Rasmussen was in town, but avoiding the press. Mainly because of the swarm of innuendo around him, ever since he resigned as the manager of the world's largest mutual fund. Rumours in financial circles were that fraud investigations had been launched in three different countries. Though nothing had yet come out, publicly, these 'rumour mills' were typically fed leaks by staff investigators. One rumour was that Rasmussen was only days away from being charged with numerous counts of criminal fraud.

Lou was wondering what Rasmussen was really up to, as he walked along the Avenue Princess Grace, just outside the seaside hotel. As he walked further, he left the principality and entered the neighboring municipality of Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, France, though Lou took no notice. Outside of a sign on the sidewalk, one would never know they had crossed the invisible boundary, besides Lou was not focused on his walk. He was not thinking about the present. His mind was drifting between thoughts of events just

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ahead and nagging memories of events just past. In particular, how he ended up here in Monte-Carlo for the race. The odd chain of events began that morning he followed the others out of the *Kai Hau's* main lounge.

"How long have you been here?" he asked, when he noticed Miranda standing just outside the salon's doorway.

While looking, not at him, but out the window, she said, softly, in her child-like voice, "Long enough."

The others had not noticed her there as they headed up the passageway. But now, hearing their voices, Tom turned back and asked, "Everything OK back there?"

"Yeah sure. Go on ahead. We'll be along in a minute." Lou said to him.

Miranda turned and walked away, toward the aft deck. He quickly headed after her, catching up to her just as she opened the door. Startled, she blurted out, "What in the world!"

Lou looked into the room, that once was a lounge off the aft deck, but now resembled a mini-version of the Hanging Gardens. "Wow!" he said as they entered the room.

A horseshoe shaped trough was in the center of the room. Above it, plants were suspended in a net from the ceiling, their roots dangling down into the water. Miranda walked over and looked into the water and exclaimed, "Fish! There's little fish swimming around in here!"

The two circled around the room, looking closely at everything. They acted like wide-eyed children, pointing out various things and remarking, excitedly, on them to one another. They were united in their enthusiasm of exploring this odd addition to the yacht. While

standing on opposite sides of the narrow trough, they suddenly looked up at each other. Lou's smile quickly faded as Miranda asked, "Why didn't you tell me about Angelique? My God, you've been with me over a week... and you said nothing."

"Tom asked me not..."

"I don't give a *SHIT* about that!" she interrupted waving her hands, by her ears. "Tom and Brian aren't you. They have a job to do, you don't! I'd expect that from him, not from you." she said. She took in a breath, loudly, between clenched teeth, then asked, "How'd Tom do her?"

"He didn't..."

"Who did? You?"

"Hell, no!" he said curtly, then added in a whisper, "Miranda, she saved my life."

"She tried to take mine! A number of times, the little Bitch Witch!" Lou just shook his head. "Well are you gonna tell me? Or do I have to ask Tom or one of the others?"

"No... that won't be necessary... I'll tell you."

He then gave Miranda all of it, even more than what he had shared with Tom and the others. Miranda stood there, arms folded and listened. Her eyes examined and committed to memory, his every expression as he recounted the tale. Her ears picked up on every change in the tone of his voice and added it to the vivid memory she was making. After a long silence, when he completed the retelling, she spoke with a tremble in her voice, "My God... you talked to her?" Lou just nodded his head. "So what was that all about anyway? What did she think you were, a damn father confessor?"

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"I don't know... I never shared anyone's last moments, before. Maybe we all do it."

"Do what?"

"Try to make peace..."

"BULL SHIT! She was scared! Everything she said to you, was out of fear! She was just the same selfish conniving little *bitch*, she always was..."

"Come on... she's dead, let it go..."

"Let it GO! How could you?" she paused as she leaned over the trough. "Do you have any idea what she put me through?" she asked pointing her finger at her chest. He looked at the rage in her eyes and decided not to say anything. She leaned back and continued, "No, you don't, because I never told you. Do you want to hear about it now? 'Cause thanks to good old Doc Bennito, I remember it all, now. I can give you all the gory details. Like the premium she charged the 'Johns' to fuck me bare backed. The bitch figured I'd catch a dose, or something, that way. Only she didn't know Preston had me inoculated against every God damn social disease, known to man."

Lou shook his head as he looked down, saying softly, "Don't, don't do this."

She finally reined her rage in, a bit, before she continued, in a whisper, "You know I nearly jumped the hell out of a window, once... back in that brothel of hers." Lou was surprised. He wanted to say something, but nothing came to mind, that he felt she would tolerate hearing, at that moment. "That's how far the bitch pushed me... right out on that window sill." she added in a stronger voice. "Funny how you never see times like that, as turning points, until much later." She gripped the edge of the trough, with both hands as

she asked, "What'd you tell her... you give her some damn general absolution, or something?"

Lou waited until she looked at him, before he responded, saying softly, "I held her in my arms and listened."

She nodded, then released her grip and turned for the door. As she passed him, she paused and said in a trembling voice, "Comfort... to my enemy... that's what you gave her... and she knew it, even if you didn't."

Miranda kept away from him, the rest of the day. He was not sure if she shared anything of their conversation with, Rosie, but she too, gave him the cold shoulder. He decided to stay that night aboard the *Kai Hau*. It was there that he and Dr. K. spoke, at length about the upcoming race. Without any idea about what had transpired between Lou and Miranda, he offered him a spot on the crew. It seemed like a good idea, to Lou, at the time. But the next day, when Miranda was not there on the dock, with Rosie and Tom, as they departed the little cove, it occurred to him that maybe it was not such a good idea.

Now, as he leaned on the metal railing, overlooking Monte-Carlo bay, he missed her. The more he reflected on the month or more, he would be away from her, the deeper the pain grew. The nearby street lamp, flickered to life, catching his attention. He lifted his head up to look at it, as it began to glow a steady yellow light. He gave a smirk and shook his head, as he asked out loud, "What? Can't I just stand here and curse my darkness?"

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Lou made a hurried entrance from the Avenue Princess Grace and picked up the press-kit offered to him as he headed into the Sinatra meeting room. The room was packed with the international press and their extra sound and lighting equipment. The room was

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flooded with bright light in support of the scheduled live television broadcast. Lou found a seat on the end of the last row and sat down.

Before him, three massive windows, shaped like archways, decorated the wall behind the long dais, where the race entrants were already seated. The lights of their boats, lying at anchor in the bay just outside the windows, were barely visible through the glare of the meeting room's lights. Seated in the middle of the table was Rasmussen, with Lt. Commander Fitzpatrick, (in civilian clothes) to his immediate right. Dr. K. was on the far left with Peter seated beside him. The conference got underway with the presentation of a video program on the large screen mounted high up in the corner of the room.

The highly polished fifteen minute program gave a summary of how the first of its kind race, came about. Rasmussen figured prominently in the video as did his mutual fund, which was the event's major sponsor. A quick review of the course and rules was also presented. Basically the competitors would start from here, travel around the world in an eastward direction and return. They must also round one of the world's capes and pass through Cook Strait, (between New Zealand's North and South islands), all without stopping. Each boat must also do so without any carbon emissions. This was not a problem for the two maxi-catamarans, but all the other competitors had to pass a zero carbon emissions test, before their entries were accepted.

After the video, the public relations man, for the race, introduced the assembled competitors to the press. Each one in turn was given a few minutes to tout their team to the reporters. Some of them were there to promote a new technology, (like the saltwater to hydrogen fuel generator used by the *Freiheitsgas*). Others, like the two maxi-catamarans, were there only to complete the circumnavigation, while benefiting from the safety of an organized fleet race. Another entrant 'completing', more than 'competing' in the race, was the US Navy's *ONR-1*. Fitzpatrick explained that their primary role was that

of search and rescue services to the fleet. Two helicopters and four rib-boats, along with personnel, were aboard in support of that purpose.

Upon completing the round of introductions the PR-man opened the meeting to questions from the reporters. Lou listened to the polite give and take for about twenty minutes, when he finally raised his hand, seeking the recognition of the PR-man. When he was given the nod to ask his question, Lou stood up, unlike the other reporters.

"My question is for the race committee chairman; sir, one entrant is as of yet, not outside these windows with the rest of the fleet. I have been told that, at this late hour, it is lying in the port of Nice, being modified. How will you ensure that when it does finally arrive, that it will still comply with the 'no carbon emissions' rule?"

The round, rosy faced, chairman looked at the PR-man then, quickly, at Rasmussen, before replying with a slight French accent, "I believe 'at 'e boat in question 'as passed 'e race committee's carbon emissions test, already?"

"But if the boat is being modified, as we speak, how will you certify that the modifications have not impacted negatively on the boat's compliance to the rule?" Lou insisted.

Leaning forward, the chairman looked over to Rasmussen and said, "I believe the owner understands the rules. I expect 'e would 'ave informed the committee, if any modifications could 'ave changed the boat's emissions from those already filed with the committee. Would you agree, Monsieur Rasmussen?"

Arnie looked over to the chairman as he leaned forward to speak into the microphone. "Mr. Chairman, *Le Effacer* is only undergoing provisioning and minor adjustments. There is no truth to Mr. Tyrrell's assertion that she is being *modified*."

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"What's wrong with the local provisioners, that the rest of us used? Are the croissants really that much better in Nice?" Dr. K. leaned back from his microphone as the group erupted in laughter.

"There is no one at this table more committed to eliminating carbon emissions than I am! The very idea that I would allow a modification that would cause *any* carbon emissions is preposterous!" Arnie responded.

"It's a race, Arnie, the objective is to win, isn't it? I would think any modifications, that increased your chance of winning, would be OK by you." Dr. K. said.

"That may be your only reason for being here, Kantos, but I sponsored this race to showcase alternatives to fossil fuel power."

Dr. K. snickered then asked, "Oh, come now, Arnie! You don't really believe in 'dinosaur soup', do you?"

"What are you talking about?"

"This from a man who made his first million drilling oil wells! Come on Arnie, '*deep*' drilling wells are commonplace, all around the globe, these days. They pump oil from eighty-thousand feet down. You know that the fossil layer is only eighteen-thousand feet down! That's where the 'Flintstone generation' and all that 'dinosaur soup' is buried. Abiotic oil is everywhere, under the earth's mantle... a smart guy like you must know that?"

"I thought your doctorate was in economics, not geology, Kantos?"

"I can read, Arnie. And unlike you, I have substantial interest in fields other than my own; which is what brought me to this race. With the piddling prize money, you are giving, it certainly wasn't economics that drew me here!" Again laughter filled the room. Dr. K. waited a bit, then asked, "What brought you?"

"As I said, to showcase alternatives to *fossil* fuels and support technologies that will reduce carbon emissions and global warming."

Dr. K. laughed, then leaned into the microphone and asked, "How about Santa and the Easter Bunny, you forgot them."

Arnie chuckled, then said, "I see, you doubt 'Global Warming'." There was a smattering of laughter, from the group.

"I have no doubt that 'Global Warming' exists, but it comes and goes, my friend, due to the fickleness of the sun and this planet's volcanic activity. Nothing we do comes close to what those two most powerful natural forces can do to warm our world. People need to get over this delusion of humanity's control over nature. It is a vain and prideful self-appraisal, the very height of arrogance, something we should not sign on to, or support.

We should consider that age old warning; 'Pride goes before destruction.' I shudder to think about the scope of such destruction, should we empower these self-deluded people, in any way. Think what might happen if they *could* modify our climate, through weather or volcanic manipulation? They simply don't know what they don't know, about the effects and long term consequences of such meddling. But their very arrogance, that I spoke of, won't allow them to see this! So those of us not deluded, need to say 'no' to the plans and schemes of these self-appointed 'masters of nature', before they push our world to the brink of destruction."

The room was quiet for a long moment, before the PR-man asked, "Any other questions for our competitors?"

One of the reporters asked, "Dr. Kantos, it appears, from your comments, that you are not convinced that Mr. Rasmussen established this race to 'showcase carbon reduction technologies'?"

"I don't." Dr. K. interjected.

"Why do you think he has done all of this?" the reporter asked.

"To put on a show, one that would put the whole carbon emissions trading scheme back into the spotlight. Mr. Rasmussen is heavily committed, financially, to this *scheme*. At the moment few countries have adopted the idea of 'cap and trade', which he is promoting. He'll lose a substantial fortune, if the trading *scheme*, does not take hold."

The reporter looked over to Rasmussen and asked, "What do you have to say about that, sir?"

Arnie was still as he mulled over his thoughts, for a moment. He then responded, "I don't really give a damn what he thinks. This *is* a show, he's right about that. I believe it will be one that the world will take notice of and yes, also hear about reducing carbon emissions. This race will show the world that there are viable technologies for carbon-free transportation. Why Dr. Kantos himself is heavily invested in this! The Advantics company, that built both of our boats, (that he has controlling interest in, I might add), is busy building carbon emissions-free locomotives in New Zealand. So you see, he does have financial interests at stake."

"I'd just like to say that I invested in Advantics, not to promote 'carbon-trading', but to stop giving money to the idiots in the oil industry. Now that they've discovered abiotic oil, they plan on deep-drilling everywhere. That is something, based on their many disastrous oil spills, I don't think we want. Oil spills out at a much higher pressure, from eighty-thousand feet down. Just look at the mess they made in the Gulf of Mexico!" Dr. K. said.

Not waiting to be recognized, another reporter quickly asked, "Speaking of New Zealand, where Advantics is located, I wondered, Dr. Kantos, why you are entered under that flag?" The voice was

familiar to Lou. He craned his neck to spot where the reporter was seated, to confirm his identification, but could not see him.

"Because the boat was designed and built there and half the crew are Kiwis." Dr. K. responded flatly.

"Country of origin of boat or its crew are seldom, if ever the criteria in such cases. You just have to look at the entries for the America's Cup, to see that. Why haven't you, as owner, entered as an American entry? Don't you consider yourself an American?"

Arnie smirked as he waited for Dr. K's reply. Fitzpatrick was genuinely confused by the question and turned to look at Dr. K, who was leaned back in his chair looking at the reporter. He then leaned forward and spoke into the microphone, "After travelling such a very long way, Mr. Bennett, I would have thought you had enough time to come up with a question that pertains to this competition. But I don't want to send you back empty handed. I am not aware of any rule that stipulates the country of origin must be the boat owner's. However should the committee produce one, I guess I will have to comply and change it."

"To USA?" Ryan asked.

"I have dual citizenship, I guess I would have to consider which one I was willing to share the glory with... should we win, of course."

"What is there to consider? You were born an American, you're still a citizen, I don't understand your answer. Is it because you left America, after you were found negligent in your wife's death?"

Dr. K's face flushed bright red. Peter started to lean forward to the microphone, but when Dr. K's hand gripped his, he leaned back. "Since it is obvious that you won't permit us to get back to the business at hand, namely tomorrow's race, without some sort of

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sensational quote from me, I guess I'll have to oblige. I did not leave America, the America I was born into has simply disappeared.

It began to fade just as it was at its brightest, following the victory in World War Two. That was when it welcomed Nazi's to its shores. Then gave them leading roles within many U.S. agencies. It dimmed even more when it never brought to justice those who butchered its president, by gunfire, in broad daylight. When it threw sixty-thousand of its children into the fire of war in southeast Asia, the slide into darkness continued. Speaking of children, let's not forget the forty-million that have been aborted, mostly children of color, since a black-robed panel passed judgment on the innocents." The room had gone completely quiet as he paused.

"Shall I go on? Why not? When I watched on live TV as a tank, a *tank* mind you, shot flames at the home of civilians, in Waco, burning alive seventy-six men, women and children, then I began to ask myself is this happening in *my* country? I did not have an answer then. But it was later, after that federal building blew up, (again killing children, along with men and women), when I learned that it housed all the original immigration records for those thousands of Nazi's that were let into the country, that I came to realize that America had faded away, *completely*. That was when I began to spend more and more of my time abroad.

So I missed out on the live news coverage of that little boy, (whose mother drowned escaping with him from Cuba), was taken at gunpoint, by federal officers, from his uncle's home in Miami. I was also away when three, perfectly sound, steel frame buildings were brought to the ground in New York City, by fire. The amazing fact is, never before had a modern steel frame building *burned* down, let alone three on the same day, in the same place. Something about that event, that seems to have conveniently gotten lost along the way, is that the building code, at the time of their construction, *mandated* that the ability to have these structures be brought down, in their own footprint, be BUILT RIGHT IN! This ensured the safety

of neighboring buildings, should the fire department determine that any future conflagration could not be put out, because of their height.

This controlled demolition was then marketed as a *terrorist* act and used to leverage the start of yet *another* war. And you ask me... why I haven't listed *America* as the country for my race entry? Isn't it clear that *America* doesn't exist anymore? Oh, something that *uses* that name, definitely does exist. But even it knows it isn't really *America*. Look how it refers to itself, now, as the '*Homeland*', which the *America* I grew up in, never did. Personally, I think they should be true to themselves and just call it... 'the *Fatherland*'... that's just what they are... for that matter they should just go ahead and get rid of that red, white and blue flag and bring back the red, white and black one."

Dr. K. looked over the group as they sat in complete silence. Among them, only Ryan was smiling. "How's that? Did I answer your question *Herr* Bennett?"

"Yes, you most certainly did... thanks."

###

Lou awoke the next morning, predawn. He rolled over in his bunk and tried to settle himself back to sleep, but could not. His mind had been simmering all night, about today and finally boiled over. There was just too much ahead of him, today to continue sleeping. He got up, quickly dressed and left his cabin in the starboard hull of the *Kai Hau*. When he stepped off the spiral staircase, onto the main deck, he heard an odd noise coming from the pilothouse. He stopped to listen. It sounded like water splashing!

He rushed into the pilothouse, thinking the great yacht had sprung a leak. The red night lights in the room were on, but no one was there. Standing in the middle of the room, he felt a breeze coming from above and looked up to see the hatch in the cabin-top was open. He

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went over and without hesitation climbed up the ladder mounted on the wall.

Poking his head out, he slowly looked around. The sun was now glowing pink on the horizon's edge. The other boats, in the race fleet, were moored on either side. About sixty feet away, beside the radar arch at the stern, he noticed someone standing. He squinted his eyes for a moment and then recognized the solo figure as the captain. He climbed out of the hatch and walked back to him. As he got close, he could see Peter was looking through binoculars. Looking over, in that same direction, he came to a full stop, nearly slipping on the dew covered cabin top.

"What the hell?" Lou blurted out.

"Shh!" Peter said.

He regained his balance, keeping himself from stepping on the solar panels, that surrounded the narrow walkway from the hatch to the radar arch. Straightening up again, he watched the strange looking boat, as it maneuvered into position, two boats over from the *Kai Hau*. Her jet-drives churned the water in loud fits of splashing water as she stopped and started her movement in one direction or the other. Lou stepped over to the radar arch's vertical brace, where Peter was leaning and asked in a whisper, "Is that Arnie's boat?"

"Mmm Hmm..." Peter mumbled, as he kept his eyes looking through the eyepiece.

"I thought it was the sister to this one? Same model and all."

"That's how she left Tauranga, for sure. But that's not what she looks like now, is it, mate?"

"What *is* that on the roof? It barely fits under its radar arch. It looks like a Mohawk haircut!"

Peter let down the binoculars and turned to face Lou. His eyes narrowed as he said, "That bugger mounted the spare turbine unit on the cabin top!"

"That's a stupid place to carry it!"

"It's not being carried, old man, it's being *used*."

"What!"

"That's what I've been looking at, just now. The vanes are spinning just like the side mounted ones. They installed the damn thing!"

"So that unit on the roof is operational?"

Peter handed the binoculars to Lou as he stepped by him, saying, "See for yourself. I've got to tell Dr. K."

"How much more power does that give them?"

"Plenty!" Peter said over his shoulder, as he headed to the hatch.

###

By eight AM, all but Lou and Murray, were assembled in the main salon of the *Kai Hau*, for a pre-race meeting. The two were still busy uploading the digital photos they had taken of *Le Effacer*, from the hotels' motor launch, to the yacht's computer. Peter began the meeting by handing out the watch schedule, to all. It listed the crew pairings and the start and end times for each of the three watches per day.

The captain and Lou were teamed on the first watch of the day. Murray and Dr. K. were next, with Reese and Brian doing the late night watch. Greta and Jameson were on a normal workday scheduled, handling meal preparation and tending the hydroponic garden.

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Each watch team would be 'hands-on' in the pilothouse for eight hours. Coming 'on-deck' one half hour before and staying one half hour after their watch. That way any ongoing concerns or issues could be communicated by one watch team to the next. The schedule permitted the entire crew to be awake and on deck from 7:30am to 8:30am. So it was agreed they would have a 'working' breakfast each day in the main salon, at that time. Those on active watch at that time, (Peter and Lou), would be connected to the meeting via video link from the pilothouse, into the main salon's flat screen.

When Lou and Murray joined the meeting, Peter went over the starting procedure. The fleet would remain in their anchored positions, until the starter's gun sounded. As the race would begin at 1pm, Peter would be at the helm, with Lou at the nav-station. Reese and Murray would be on-deck to raise and stow the anchor, as well as keeping an eye on the fleet traffic around the yacht in the first minutes following the start.

Focus then turned to the video display, over the bar in the main salon. There the photos, just taken of Arnie's yacht, were displayed to the crew. Greta sat with Dr. K., Murray and Reese, at the bar, while Peter stood behind the bar, facing the display screen as Lou, with remote control in hand, paged through the pictures.

It was plain to see, by the finished fiberglass enclosure that surrounded the unit, that it had been installed, not just 'stored' there. There were aerodynamic fairings that rose from the cabin top, just ahead of the opening and swept up on either side, funneling air into the turbine blades. Reese remarked that most of the solar panels appeared to be missing. A profile photo showed this clearly. Only a thin strip of panels, on either side of the turbine tube, remained. Peter made note of the pronounced rake of the yacht. The painted waterline was out of sight, below the water, from the stern to about twenty feet forward.

"The unit looks to be mounted about center, on the roof. So why isn't she lying evenly on her waterline? Why is her stern down so much?" Peter asked as he leaned in for a closer look at the image on the display panel.

"She's carrying something else, something loaded much further back." Murray said.

"And quite a bit heavier, too." Reese said.

"Peter send that picture to Titus and ask him to figure out how much more weight, she's carrying." Dr. K. said.

"Right, I'll do it before we start." Peter said.

Lou continued on pressing the button on the remote control, bringing up new pictures on the screen. Then Jameson leaned between Greta and Dr. K. and said, "Hold it! Can you zoom in on that one?"

"What, these two? I thought Arnie had come out to see us, but it wasn't him." Lou said as he zoomed closer on the image of two men standing outside, on the aft deck.

"They're Dorrance's men. I worked with them in Paris, when Andre was there for a week." Jameson said as he straightened up.

"They're WCC security?" Brian asked.

Jameson looked at Brian, "Sort of, but back then they were the personal security detail for someone I saw, just once. Andre knew him, quite well. That was why we were in Paris, to meet with him."

"The name, do you know the name?" Brian asked.

"Just his first name... Otto."

###

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It was late in the afternoon, as Andre raced the old utility truck along the bay's shore road. Dr. Wagner rode next to him, his old black bag on his lap, bracing himself with his right arm up to the roof. They bounced up and briefly got airborne, before jouncing down hard onto the road.

"Andre! She's got two midwives attending her! Such haste is not needed." Kurt said loudly.

"You should have been there!" Andre shot back.

"Nonsense, it's too early, yet."

"Joanna sounded very concerned on the phone."

"She's a servant girl! What does she know? Did you talk to Maria?"

"NO! She's in labor I told you!"

The old utility truck screeched to a stop, in front of the tiny red cottage. Andre bolted out of the driver's side door and bounded up the walkway to the front door. Dr. Wagner got out and strolled up the walk, arriving to find the front door wide open. Coming from inside, he could hear the robust squeals of a newborn. He headed quickly for the back bedroom. There he found the Countess sitting up in bed.

Her hair, on the right side of her head, was matted down from sweat. She was looking to her left, where the two midwives stood, their backs to her, attending the infant atop the bureau. Andre and Joanna stood by her bed, on her right. She turned and upon seeing Dr. Wagner enter the room said, "My son waits for no man, Doktor."

He nodded as he walked over to the baby and replied, "Yes and he keeps his own schedule too. This is nearly two weeks early."

The midwives stood aside as he pulled a stethoscope from his bag, before dropping it on a nearby chair and coming over to them. They had just completed wiping the infant clean and wrapping him. He bent low over the infant and began his 'hands on' examination. The Countess sat in silence and watched it all. The squeals continued on, while he turned, lifted and prodded the infant. When he was done he wrapped the child tightly in the towel and motioned to the midwife on his right.

"Take him to her." Kurt said. The Countess, still fatigued, did not lift her arms to take the bundle, but waited for the woman to place him on her lap. She then cradled him in the crook of her left arm. "Remarkable, Maria! If I did not know better, I would have thought he was two weeks late. His color is outstanding. His lungs are clear and as you can hear, quite strong. Truly remarkable, for your first delivery. And you seem alert and fit."

"I'm fine, Kurt."

"In any event, I want to check your vitals... but it can wait." He then turned to the others and said, "Why don't you all leave our new mother alone, with her baby, for a time. Go on, have a cup of tea, or something in the kitchen. I'll call you back in an hour or so. You too, Andre." Once the others had left, he drew a chair over to her bedside. He sat down and watched her, with the child.

She began to softly hum a simple tune with a bright lilt to it. In a short time, the pauses between squeals, became longer. She rocked him gently as she continued to hum. Eventually he stopped crying altogether. She raised her head and looked at him. Her bright blue eyes, brimming with tears, sparkled. "I would never have believed this, Kurt. You told me many times, this would never be my fate, remember?" He nodded. "You said I should be happy to dedicate my life in the service of the Community. That my sacrifice was needed to help build a stronger bloodline, for our future."

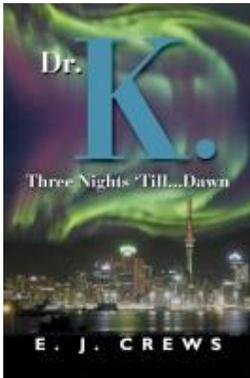
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"It's true, Maria. You have done all that, now this too."

She turned and looked back down at her son and said, "I should never have agreed then... I was so young, so naive and you should never have asked me, or anyone, to make such a sacrifice. I have missed so much because of you. I let you fill my head with all your grand plans of a glorious future..."

"Maria, please, don't say that. Not now, when everything is coming together, just as the Council told your mother. Our glorious future is only one, *small*, step away now. Take heart, my dear, we're nearly there."

"Maybe for you, but I have all the future I need, right here, Kurt." the Countess said as she bent low and kissed the head of her newborn.



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