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When Pele - the Goddess of the Hawaiian Islands and volcanoes - deserted Oahu for Molokai she placed Malei - the Fish Goddess - in charge of the seas around Oahu. Pearl Harbor - home of the Shark God - the same Shark God who guided Moikeha - the famous Tahitian Chief to the Hawaiian Islands in the 13th Century - came under her control. The Shark God takes many forms, but its most common breed is -
Tiger Shark.

Pacific Ocean - South of Oahu

Pat Penny - dressed only in shorts - climbed up from below decks, "Breeze feels good - sun sure is hot." He raised the convertible top over the cockpit of his catamaran - it was of little use. The late afternoon sun - setting in the southwest - still flooded his cockpit, "I'll fry like a lobster if I have to put up with this." He dropped the side curtain to starboard, "That's better. Cuts the reflection from the Pacific - too. Wonder if my *Tiger Shark* is still off the bow - leading me to where? A South Pacific island? Is he a reincarnation of a great white whale - the one who led Captain Ahab to his watery grave?" Pat walked forward on the port pontoon - shaded his eyes and looked out over the bow.

His own personal Moby Dick was not in sight. Hanging on the riggin' - he turned one hundred and eighty degrees and returned to the helm. Pat looked down into the catamaran's shadow. There - forty feet below - cruised his nemesis - eyes forever open - looking upward.

Pat held onto the rigging, "Well my friend - what are the fishermen of Oahu going to do without your protection now - the fish will not come to their nets and sailors will be lost at sea. Who sent you? Was it Malei or are you another horned disciple from my red dreams? *A Great Big Hairy Red Ones* personal emissary? I am sailing south to Palmyra - where I will rest - where you will have a cornucopia of reef fish to dine on." As the *Tiger Shark* rose toward the surface - Pat's fingers dug into rigging - in a death's grip, "I can hear your thoughts - where will we stop after Palmyra? I don't know. Tahiti or Fiji - maybe. I'll know after we reach the Doldrums. If you are still leading me - I promise I will continue to follow." The *Tiger* rolled over and slipped down - forty feet below - rolled upright and matched Pat's Cat's speed.

Pat returned to the helm - smiling, "It could be worse - a slow death - floating on these waters - fighting sun and thirst before going under. With my friend below - it will be quick - not painless." He checked his compass heading, "One hundred and eighty degrees" and then his watch, "an hour before sunset. How am I going to handle sleep? Sudden storm could flip my catamaran over on it's back and pitch me out - I'll be chum for my friend below." He looked around, "Only one way to do it. Sleep on the bench behind the wheel - wear a life vest - tie a line around my waist and to the stern. Might have to stop at a few islands along the way to rest - get some real sleep. A nap now and then won't hurt. Won't have any trouble sleeping after a day in the salt air and

sun." Pat checked the coordinates on his GPS navigation system, "I'm making good time - all ready a hundred nautical miles south of Oahu." He plotted this position on his map, "Nine hundred miles north of Palmyra. If the winds hold - I'll make landfall in a little over two days."

Pat scanned the horizon, "What's that? Looks like a ship on the horizon. If she is - I can't outrun her. Better hope she turns back north. I'm out of the shipping lanes. Has to be a yacht. That's a good sign. If it was a Navy ship she would still be coming on - strong." He removed his binoculars from their case and focused, "Medium sized boat. Not fast enough to overtake a catamaran - not with an evening Trade coming up strong. If she's trailing me - I won't see her again until late tomorrow afternoon - when the winds die down. Sun's over the yardarm - it's time for a Primo and Guinness Stout. If I mix it three to one - my Guinness should last and Primo will be drinkable." Pat placed his hands on the hatch - swung his feet over and dropped down below - into the galley. Wasn't hard to do - as his catamaran's cabin was one large great-room. He opened the ice chest - extracted a Primo and opened a recapped Guinness. He poured half the remaining Guinness into a thermal mug - emptied a can of Primo on top of it - being careful to pour the liquid down the side of the mug, but it still foamed up, "Damn Primo is all bubbles and fizz. Must make the damn stuff out of freeze dried hops. Now what to fix for dinner? Better make a salad and after my nightmare last night - I'll need a double order of sausage - and peppers. Have to ration sausage. Can't afford to run out. Sausage a day keeps *A Big Hairy Red Thing* away. *Tiger Shark* - I wonder why he's staying with me? Sharks are territorial - usually patrol their own territory. I'm almost certain he's the one who took the front end off my surfboard. Not many as large as he is - unless he has a brother. Am I his Ahab?"

Pat climbed the ladder above decks and sat at the helm - sipping his Black & Tan, "Wonder if I lost my Russian lady hunter. She is a pretty one all right, but those eyes - like cold blue ball bearings." He opened the Honolulu Advertiser, "Last newspaper I'll see for quite awhile. On the front page - in two inch headlines -

JCS Chairman Assassinated at Bellows Air Force Station

Pat read on -

Nothing remains of the Chairman. A projectile of unknown type vaporized him last night while he was on the lanai of the CINCPACAF Cottage. At the same time - the remains of a catamaran were discovered washed up on Waimanalo Beach. Naval Investigative Service is in charge. They refused to comment about a possible connection. A separate article about the catamaran is on page one of Section B.

Pat opened the paper to Section B and laughed -

According to Kimo Aku - Pat Penny from San Francisco purchased the catamaran Nui Hulu Ulaula Mea the day it disappeared. Mr. Penny was on a trial sail before sailing it to the mainland. Kimo knows of no connection between Mr. Penny and the assassination of the JCS Chairman.

Pat read several more articles and set the paper aside, "I'll need more than a little luck to be home free. How many have I eliminated? Thirteen - fourteen. I've been a busy little assassin. No frills - just do the job and move on. I'm more like my *Tiger Shark* below than I like to admit. We're both scavengers - we keep our areas clean - of the weak and unwanted. I wonder - is there more work for me to do before I can rest? Benny will know. When will he contact me? Has to be soon or I'll lose my edge. Only he understands my nightly torment with *A Big Hairy Red Thing*. I hope Benny's right about my Russian huntress leaving me alone. I'd just as soon do the hunting than be the hunted - no fun being a target." Pat uncased his binoculars and scanned the horizon to the north, "Nothing. Either she has turned back or is running with her lights off. No need to worry now - later maybe. I'm hungry. Just the thought of link - curled link - sausage is making me drool."

Pat dined on salad as his sausage and peppers cooked. He carried the platter to the helm, "Tempted to uncork a bottle of red, but I need my wits about me. Lost my weapon to that darn shark. Have to cut him open if I want to retrieve it. No chance of that. If I harpooned him - he'd take me and this catamaran under with him." Pat speared a curved link and began to nibble one of the ends and a feeding frenzy began. When he awoke from his reverie - his plate was empty and his shirt covered with grease. He checked heading and looked north - back over his shoulder for the lights of the trailing boat, but saw none. He placed his dishes in a bucket and dipped it in the ocean - one - two - three - four times - before going below to clean the galley.

Pat opened the wrong cabinet door for his dishes and found an unmarked sack. He looked inside and found an automatic pistol with a silencer and three clips, "A gift

from Benny." He checked the galley - again - to see if Benny had left another surprise, "If he had time to do this - would he plant an explosive device?" Benny scoured the cabin and the engine compartment, "Nothing here - the pontoons?" In the port pontoon - Pat found the device, "Are we ever getting sophisticated - damn thing is satellite controlled. Which means he hasn't made up his mind. Bet it has a feedback device." Pat found its twin in the starboard pontoon and took them below to the navigation table. He opened the first one up, "Not booby trapped - must think I'm distracted - or I'll only look for one. Trick is to disable the explosive charge - not the system." Pat checked the circuit, "They are getting sloppy." He wired around the charge and carefully - very carefully removed it. He carried it gingerly above decks - through it over the stern and returned. He opened the second device, "Maybe they weren't dumb. Can't wire around this one. He traced the circuit, "Don't have to - operates on a simple open circuit - all I have to do is cut the wire." He breathed a deep sigh as he carried the second charge above decks and tossed it over the stern. Pat replaced the devices back in their respective pontoons and went below.

With the galley clean - Pat returned to the helm - donned a life vest and tied a line to the stern. He leaned back and looked up at stars - so bright they lit up the night sky. Pat closed his eyes and wondered, "Benny gives me a weapon and ammunition to protect myself and then wires my catamaran with explosives. It's as conflicting as my execution order for the JCS Chairman. Russians program me to do it and CIA stands aside. I guess - if anybody is going to finish me off - Benny wants to be the one. I wonder if he is running a rogue operation. No time to worry now - enough worry about this sail. Lights are turned out and the wind generator is showing max charge to the batteries. I can top off with fresh water at Palmyra - maybe even catch a lobster

or two. Chart shows an abandoned Navy runway built in World War II. Should be a jungle shower - can't take anything for granted. Might not have fresh water. Better take salt water bucket baths on deck until I'm sure. This ocean is like a desert. Fresh water can't be wasted on frivolous things." Pat looked up again at a magnificent heaven - smiled and closed his eyes, "Benny - you'll have a lot of explaining to do - if and when we meet again."

As the sun rose above the swells - its rays struck the cockpit above Pat's head and moved slowly downward into his eyes. He woke up with a start, "I've been on autopilot for" he looked at his watch, "My God! I've been asleep for over twelve hours." He sat up, "Sausage did the trick. Better drop the curtain on the port side before this sun cooks me to well done." He untied the line and removed his life vest - tying it with the same line and placing it on the bench where he had slept. He checked compass heading, "Steady at 180° and hull speed is at twenty-two knots. Moving right along. Wonder if my friends are about?" Pat opened the case and removed his binoculars - scanning the horizon - from ninety degrees to two-seventy. "Not a soul in sight." He stepped forward on the starboard pontoon, "Wonder - do I still have my traveling companion? There you are - out front. Last time I saw a dorsal fin that big was on an Orca in the Norwegian Sea. You are a big one - my friend. Tell me - do you prefer Tahiti - Samoa - or Fiji? Where am I getting this notion to go to Fiji? Are you putting it in my head?"

Pat grabbed a handhold on the forward part of the hatch and swung below. He checked the satellite coordinates, "Four hundred nautical miles south of Hawaii - six hundred to go. This Cat was a good choice." He looked up at the bookcase above the navigation table and found a pamphlet tucked in with the charts and navigation tables." He turned it over, "About Fiji. Is my friend inside my head?" He opened it up,

"Not your usual tourist guide. Need coffee and breakfast. I'll read this while I dine." Pat lit the burner and heated a pre made percolator pot of coffee. Plop - plop - plop turned into a steady machine gun boil - he set the pot aside and cooked two eggs - covering each one with a slice of cheddar cheese - placing each egg between two slices of bread. He poured coffee and sat down at the galley table and opened the pamphlet to the table of contents. Pat saw the eagle insignia of CIA, "Benny put this here. How did he know I'd pull it out of the bookshelf?"

He leafed through the first chapter, "Well it's not an estimate. Has to be a white paper. Those are generally pretty factual. Lets see what the salient points are. Fiji is an independent nation, but has remained a member of the British Commonwealth. So its laws are based on British Common. That's good - not too certain I care for the Spanish or French systems. If I'm incarcerated - I'll get a fair hearing before they hang the guilty bastard - me. Not that I don't deserve a good hanging. What's the problem? Ah - here it is. British brought in Indians from India to work the sugar cane plantations. When they gave the Fijians their independence the Indians outnumbered the Fijians - controlled all the elective offices. And the Indian Political Party was to the left of Lenin. Indians now controlled the government and commerce and the Fijians owned the land. The Indians moved to declare Fiji a nuclear free zone and attempted to align their government with the Russians. The Fijians controlled the police and military. With a little help from an unnamed agency - they took control of the government and disenfranchised the Indians." Pat laid the pamphlet down and devoured his two egg sandwiches.

Pat picked up the pamphlet, "Still don't know why Benny stuck this in the bookshelf. He skipped to the last page, "At last - the punch line. New Zealand is the other country

in the South Pacific with a nuclear free zone. The Kiwis are sticking their fingers into Fiji's pie. Suva is the capital of Fiji and the Chief of Police's name is underlined - Bau - Chief Bau. Typical of Benny - he added a note" -

Fiji needs our continued support. Give Chief Bau all and any assistance he requires. The British aren't keen about the way the Fijians took their land back. They still get into a colonial mindset when dealing with vestiges of their empire. Tell Chief Bau I sent you. He's aware of your unique abilities. I'll contact you through one of our mutual friends. Oh - disarm the two devices I left on board. If you haven't read this - it won't matter. You will be better off going to the after life. The weapon in your cupboard - don't waste ammo - you'll need it in Fiji - - - - - Benny.

It was a simple code. The six dashes before Benny's signature authenticated the note and his command. Pat poured another cup of coffee - carried it and the pamphlet up to the helm. He shredded the pamphlet letting the pieces drop over the stern - one by one - into the sea and returned to the helm, "So that's it. Benny wants to make sure I'm on top of my game or there wouldn't be enough left to feed my *Shark*. At least it's a comfort to know I'm still wanted. However - I don't care for the agency's retirement plan. I wonder what the Fijians need - unique abilities? I'm a fair to middlin' assassin and I can run a few guns. They must have all the weapons they need - they took their country back and control the military and police. He mentioned Kiwis. They have to have contacts in Suva. Will three clips be enough?"

Pat hopped forward on the port pontoon, "Fiji my giant dorsal friend - we're going to Fiji. You better stoke up on reef fish at Palmyra. It's going to be a long voyage." The *Tiger's* giant dorsal fin cut through the ocean like a hot knife through butter - not wavering. As Pat laughed - the *Tiger's* head cocked toward him - eyes staring. Pat continued, "Has Benny placed a computer chip inside your head - where your brain is supposed to be?" The *Tiger* turned and swam toward the Cat - ducking under - before colliding with the bow. Pat hurried to the stern and looked down into the ball bearing eyes of sudden death, "I will not play with you again. I enjoy your company too much to become your dinner. Truce?" The *Tiger* ducked back under the boat and surfaced again - forty feet off the bow - measuring the catamaran's speed.

Pat stared out over the bow - past the giant dorsal fins wake - as it knifed through the water - on a straight line south toward Palmyra. The blue Pacific stretched out before him - to eternity, "You are not like the north sea - always boiling in turmoil. Pacific is an appropriate name. But - you too have a dark side. I admire your beauty and fear your wrath. Your freak storms strike unannounced - tsunamis when we are asleep and typhoons - you create monsters. And my only companion on your tranquil waters is my giant *Tiger Shark* friend - who'd as soon devour as look at me." Pat's mind rested - hypnotized by the vast waters of the Pacific. As a result - nothing happened for the rest of the morning and nothing happened the afternoon. Pat had closed his eyes and slept through both. He did not notice or care that his *Tiger* had returned to shade - under the catamaran's hull.

Pat awoke too soon - a little after five - sat up and rubbed his eyes, "I'll not rest well tonight." He swung below and checked the GPS readout, "Six hundred miles south

of Hawaii. If the wind holds I'll make Palmyra in twenty hours - two o'clock tomorrow afternoon." He opened another can of Primo - mixing in the last third of the first bottle of Guinness Stout in his thermal liter mug. He carried it along as he climbed back up through the hatch, "Better see if my friends are trailing on the horizon. If they're after me they should have caught up with me by now." Pat removed the binoculars from their case and scanned the horizon, "Only me and my friend out front. Wonder where they went?" He could feel a vibration - a rumbling sound. Pat cupped his ear to the north, but could not hear a thing. He moved his glasses up a notch - scanning the north sky and saw a metal glint reflecting from rays of the setting sun, "An airplane is heading my way. Better check the chart." He took a sip of beer and returned below to the navigation table and unfolded the chart of Palmyra. Pat ran his forefinger over the island, "Runway is big enough to handle a small jet, but by the sound of that one coming my way - has to be at least a twin engine prop - like that rust bucket that flew me to Norway." He popped his head up out of the hatch and scanned the northern horizon, "Coming this way all right. Wonder who they are? Better stay below. My Cat will stick out like a turd in a punch bowl. No use letting them see who's on board." Pat returned to the galley and prepared his evening meal - link after link of sausage and salad.

The twin engine prop passed by - five miles to starboard - disappearing on the southern horizon - toward Palmyra. Pat checked its progress with his binoculars, "Nothing else out here. Has to be heading to Palmyra. Has two tip tanks - so it isn't a one way trip. Island is privately owned. It could be the overseer - or the owners - CIA - or two more KGB tagalongs. Have to consider a worst case scenario. Unless I see it return - I'll have to take care of business before I continue on." He placed his dirty dishes and silverware into the wash bucket and dunked them in the ocean one - two -

three - four - five - six times. Then took them below to dry and placed them back in the cabinet. When Pat returned to the helm - the Trade Wind had freshened. He checked hull speed, "Twenty-four knots - moving right along. Better go below and study Palmyra's charts. May want to stay offshore until nightfall and sneak in." He swung back below and studied the chart, "No way to sneak in - not after dark. Channel through the reef is too narrow. Best bet is to give the island a wide berth and sneak in from the south. As high as these sails are - they'd spot me for sure. If they're as dumb as the ones they sent after me before - they'll only look north. Lets see - the obvious way is sail to starboard and come around. So - I'll adjust my compass heading three degrees to port and pass the island on the east - swing around and come in from the south." Pat returned to the helm and adjusted compass heading - three degrees to port.

Palmyra

"I'll know soon enough if my ploy worked," Pat whispered to himself as he turned north " and if my GPS is accurate. They can't see me and I can't see Palmyra. I can smell her - though. Strange how the aroma of tropical flowers carries on the wind - miles and miles offshore. Damn - my Tiger Shark has deserted me. Made a beeline for the reef before I was even close to abeam of the island. Must have really been hungry. Wonder if he will come back to keep me company when I depart." He looked up, "Better take the sails down and come in under power. Northeast Trade Winds will carry the sound away from the harbor and with sails up she'll have too high a profile. Waste all this work - trying to maintain the element of surprise - for a lapse of thinking."

Pat edged forward on the port pontoon and lowered the mainsail - tying it to the boom. He secured the boom and returned to the wheel, "Time to go below and load my weapon."

Might have to sail in firing." He laughed, "From this bouncing Betty - I'll be lucky if I hit a coconut palm." He aimed his Cat for the outer channel marker. Pat stayed within the channel as he passed through the reef into safe harbor. He counted, "One - two - three boats. All of them sail and expensive. Sailing to out of the way places must be getting popular. Suits me - there really can be safety in numbers." He scanned the tree line, "No one watching. Hello - there's a boat pulled up on the sand with a small outboard motor hooked to the stern. Pat uncased his binoculars and looked through the trees, "Almost like jungle undergrowth is heavy. Have to stay close to the paths. Hello - must be the one who owns the boat walking this way toweling her hair. Good - there's fresh water for my tanks and for me to shower. Wonder if there's lobster for the taking. If I'm going ashore - I'll need my weapon. Can't strap it around my waist - I'll need a pouch or a pack to hide it in. Water vessels - that's the ticket."

Pat dropped a single anchor off the bow - allowing his Cat to weathervane - the stern away from shore. He secured all loose gear above decks - went below to the storage lockers and removed four - five gallon plastic jugs. He tied them to a line - two feet apart, "I'll have to float them back to the Cat. Surfboard would capsize. Surfboard! Wonder if my *Tiger Shark* is lying in wait for me to enter the water? I'm a good hundred yards off the beach. He'll have four or five minutes to mount an attack." He stopped - the outboard motor sound came closer. "Hello *Happy Hour* - can I come aboard?" Pat stuck his head up out of the hatch - it was the boat from shore. The lady was young enough - tan and athletic looking, "Be my guest. Just got in. Wait till I put these vessels down and I'll secure your line." He tied the line to the port pontoon and helped her board. As she straightened her shorts she introduced herself, "I'm Sushi

Martin. We own the *Wanderlust* over there. Didn't hear or see you come in." "Came in under power - don't trust a strange channel. I'm Kimo Aku from the Big Island - on my way home from Tahiti - stopping at every Island on the way." "Your boat says Ventura, California." "Bought her in Tahiti. I'm sailing her back home. Flew down - too good a deal to pass up. Great boat - really flies over the water. How long have you been here?" "Five days. We sailed down from Maui to get away from the crowds. Do you need anything?" "I've stopped at every island on the way. Been frugal - never can tell when you'll get stranded out here. Is your first name really Sushi?" "Nickname - for being raw and spicy." "I was going ashore for water. Your hair is wet. Is there a shower?" "At the Naval Air Station or what's left of it. Be careful - there are two sinister looking types about. Landed in a twin engine airplane late yesterday afternoon." "Where are they?" "Last we saw of them they were walking to the north shore with high powered rifles. We're giving them a wide berth." "Water down the path?" "Almost to the Quonset hut. Follow your nose." "Lobster near the reef?" "We bagged a dozen this morning. Join us for dinner at six?" "I'll bring the wine. White or red?" "Both." "Your name - Kimo - it's Hawaiian?" "Means Jim - Jim Tuna - sounds much better in Hawaiian. Parents had a sense of humor."

Pat untied her line and watched to see which boat Sushi sailed too - before removing the surfboard from the bulkhead. He placed his weapon - silencer and two clips of ammo inside his toilet/shaving kit - wrapped it and his binoculars in waterproof plastic - then tied it and his shoes around his neck and entered the water with his surfboard. Trailing the four large plastic water vessels - he paddled his board to the beach. Pat secured the board - propping it up on the nearest palm tree - donned his shoes and walked inland on the path. Following his nose - he found the well and jungle shower. He filled a bucket and tested it, "Cold! That'll

send *A Big Hairy Red Thing* back to the devil. Better fill the shower tank and let the sun warm it up." He climbed the ladder to the tank on top of the shower platform and poured the bucket in, "Tight enough - no leaks." He made twenty more trips and stopped when the water tank was three-quarters full. Pat opened his toilet kit and removed Benny's weapon. He screwed on the silencer, "Benny said be frugal, but I better take along the second clip - just in case." He followed the path to the runway on the old Naval Air Station, "Not much left - tower - some locked storage - fuel tanks and an old Quonset hut." Pat climbed the tower and scanned the tree line on the north side of the runway, "Two paths. Neither ones been used much. The east one has fresh broken branches." He climbed down and walked to the airplane.

Pat looked over, "A Fairchild Merlin 300 - old, but it looks reliable. He attempted to open the side hatch - it was locked, "Wasting my time here. If I could get 'em airborne and give them a dose of their own medicine - I'd get rid of the evidence. Don't have time to set up something as fancy as that. Have to do things the old fashioned way." Pat walked over to the eastern path and followed it into the undergrowth. He walked twenty paces - stopped and continued this careful approach until he reached the beach. He stopped inside the undergrowth - uncased his binoculars and scanned the beach, "No one around." He looked up - into the tops of the coconut palms - stopping when he saw movement, "Hello - looks like one of them has climbed up to get a better view. One tagalong is atop the tall palm on the edge of the beach. The other must be at the base. He scanned slowly down the tree, "There he is - half hidden by the trunk."

Pat crept along - silently - to the base of the tree - placed the pistol to the back of the tagalong's head and fired. As blood and brains splattered on the sand - he looking down at the dead tagalong, "Wonder who he works for?"

Hollow points. Bit of an overkill. Quiet enough - though. Don't care much for the sound of this silencer - pouf doesn't do much for me. No closure. Better get on with it before that tree climber discovers he has no friend." Pat braced his pistol against the trunk of the palm and aimed at the head of the man in the top of the tree. He fired one shot. The rifle fell out - first - followed by the second tagalong. Pat anmbled over and checked for pulse, "If the bullet didn't kill him - the fall did." He looked out at the surf, "Tide's going out. It's time to feed my *Tiger Shark*."

Pat stripped the clothes off the second tagalong - grabbed his feet and dragged him into the water - pulling him as far out as he could by the feet. Up to his neck - he swam side stroke until he was fifty yards off shore. Pat let loose and swam quickly back to the beach. He stopped at the edge and turned around, "Sharks sure are hungry around here. Blood in the water must have attracted them." He stripped the clothes from the second tagalong and dragged his body into the water - stopping when the surf was up to his chest. He gave the body a push - turned and swam quickly to shore. He sat on the sand and watched the feeding frenzy, "Damn - that works better than acid. Better remind myself not to go swimming here."

Pat returned to the shade of the palm and searched their clothes for identification, "Not much to go on here - hard to tell who they work for. Could be CIA, but if I had to bet - I'd say KGB. Benny would have finished me off at sea - and he almost did. Might be contract. Can't be - they're not Hawaiian. It looks like I've depleted the local KGB office of all of its thugs." Pat emptied the wallets of all paper and plastic identification. He counted out their money, "A little over ten thousand. Had to be KGB. CIA doesn't allow anyone to carry this much. Things are looking up - this trip might show a profit. I don't need the money, but it might

come in handy." Pat walked a half mile along the tree line and then - fifty feet into the undergrowth. He buried their shoes and clothes in shallow sand, "Jungle will take care of the rest. Billfolds and identification - I'll take them with me and give them a burial at sea." Pat looked over at the palm tree, "What am I going to do with these rifles. Except for the JCS Chairman - long distance assassination is not my style. Well - I don't want them and I can't leave them lying about. I'll bury them off the path and let the jungle rust them into useless pieces." He hummed a Navajo song as he walked along the path to the runway, "*Quarry mine, blessed am I in the luck of the chase, comes the deer to my singing.*" Pat stopped - walked twenty paces off the path - dug a shallow hole in the wet sand and buried both rifles - covering it over with scattered palm fronds. He returned to the path singing, "*Hi! ni! ya! Behold the man of flint, that's me!*" A song uncontrolled and unquestioned.

Pat stopped at the tree line on the edge of the runway and laughed out loud, "Got rid of all the evidence but the plane." He rattled the keys in his pocket, "Looks like I'll have to make this bird a into real *Flying Dutch Man*. He unlocked the side door hatch and entered, "God is this plane hot inside." He opened the pilots side windows - looked over the dials and controls, "Might work - I'll need rope and some wire." He inserted the ignition key - turned it to battery, "Tanks are almost two thirds full" and turned the switch off. "If this works she'll be landing in the ocean a long - long way from here." Pat wandered over to the Air Station Quonset hut. He scrounged around for rope and wire - finding both under a bench along the side, "Must have used this Quonset for maintenance." Pat entered the airplane - released the brakes and wired the yolk and rudders to neutral. Outside - he lifted the tail section and pulled the airplane backwards

- to the end of the runway - tied one end of the rope to a sturdy palm - made a loop and passed it over the top of the vertical stabilizer. Pat dug in his feet - gave the rope a tug - testing it, "That'll do. Better make sure she's lined up into the wind - toward the end of the runway." He checked alignment, "Good as my eyeballs can do. Northeast Trade Wind - right on her nose." He climbed inside and started engines, "Ropes holding good at idle. May not be able to untie it - though. Wonder if there's a machete or a knife about?" He looked around the aft section, "I'll say there is. Must have been planning to slice me into little pieces - sending the fingers back for identification."

Pat returned to the cockpit, but this time stayed behind the pilot's seat, "Flaps? Full - half or three quarters? She's light enough - half should do." He placed the flaps halfway down and brought both throttles up to full, "No time to waste." Pat grabbed the machete and scurried down the hatch steps - closed it - checked airplane heading and cut the rope. The Fairchild Merlin leapt forward - airborne within a hundred yards - dipped a few times and sailed above the tree tops. Pat untied the rope from the palm and walked toward the Quonset, "Been so busy I forgot I came here for a shower and water to top off my tanks." He looked back over his shoulder, "Still climbing in a straight line - toward Northern California or maybe Oregon. Not enough gas to make it there - not with the throttles wide open and flaps halfway down. Maybe a thousand miles." Pat laid the machete down, "What if she gets bumped off course by the wind? Could wind up on one of the Hawaiian Islands." Pat removed the silencer and placed it and the weapon in his toilet kit, "Benny would be proud - two rounds and two kills." He returned the rope to the Quonset hut, "I'll keep the machete - might come in handy. Hope the sun heated my shower water." He climbed up the ladder to the tank and stuck his hand inside, "Warm - not too hot or cold - just right."

Pat climbed down - slipped out of his shorts - stood under the jungle shower and pulled the rope. Water cascaded down and around his head and shoulders. He released the rope and the flow stopped. As Pat began to rub soap on his arms and then his chest - he turned his head and cocked his ear. He heard footsteps on the path - followed by a familiar voice, "Hello Kimo - we heard the airplane take off and were worried about you." Sushi walked out into the open, "Looks like you need help soaping your back. Meet my twin - Tushi." "Well - as you can plainly see there's not much left of me to hide - least the back half of me. Might as well join me in a shower?" "Is there enough water?" "I filled the tank three quarters full an hour or so ago - so the water should be warm enough. Sushi and Tushi walked from the path removing shirt and shorts along the way. By the time they reached Pat - they were as naked as he. Welded together like cheese in a deli case - Pat gave the rope a pull and released it. With water droplets glistening on naked bodies under a warm - late afternoon sun - giggles turned into laughter. In the time it takes for a jungle flower to open in the morning sun - this menage a' trois was covered with soap from hair to toes - slipping in a thrill of creative caresses - stolen kisses and lingering embraces. Pat freed one hand - reluctantly - reached up and pulled on the shower rope - releasing a cascade of water. He smiled, "As you can plainly see - I'm ready for more, but I'm too wise to roll around on this ground. This jungle has bugs that can raise two inch welts. Why don't we adjourn to my boat or yours?" Sushi asked, "Did you bring a towel?" "Afraid not - we'll have to let the Trade Wind work its magic."

Pat led the way carrying his clothes - Sushi in his footsteps and Tushi not far behind - all naked as jay birds - except for deck shoes - along the path to the beach. He turned around, "Better dress before we walk out on the sand. Don't want to embarrass the neighbors." Tushi smiled, "Don't

worry - no one is home." "No one is on board either boat?" "There were three. They anchored two here and went deep sea fishing to the east. They should be back anytime." Sushi shook her head, "No - they said marlin were running two days to the east. They won't return for at least another day - maybe two." Pat pulled on his shorts and donned his shirt - tying his shoes around his neck, "We'll - I'm not getting splinters on my bottom riding a surfboard. Dinner on your boat?" Sushi laughed, "I'll start the lobsters as soon as we return. You bring the wine - I'll need a glass of red in thirty minutes." "How big are your lobsters?" "Three to four pounds."

Pat swam the board back to his boat wondering, "Twins - all alone in this harbor - the other two boats are empty. Not sure I believe their story about marlin two days to the east. They are a couple of hard bodies. I can vouch for that. If they have a contact on one of the Hawaiian Islands - they could make a tidy profit out of piracy. Who, but me would ever suspect them. Looks like I have three choices - pull up anchor and leave - eliminate them - or let it play out - their story just may be true." Pat lifted the water jugs over the stern - one by one and topped off his water tanks. He went below to change clothes and check his teltales, "They were here all right. Not KGB or agency or they would have picked up on my hidden traps. Didn't take anything or bother my strong box in the bilge." Pat emptied his tagalong's money and identification out of his toilet kit and counted, "A little over ten thousand." He placed the strong box back into the into the bilge.

Pat swung below - into the galley and opened his wine storage, "A vintage red and two whites for my ladies. Now - how shall they meet my *Big Hairy Red Things*. My pistol? Too messy - Benny said to conserve ammo. The syringe I inherited

from the KGB. Can't take a chance. My *Tiger Shark* will want to feed and the venom might affect him. Can't harm my *Tiger* - out of professional courtesy. He didn't harm me when he had a chance. Machete? No - too messy. If they come after me - an ice pick is quick - clean and I can carry it in a leather case - inside my shorts." Pat laid the wine on deck and followed - climbing up and out of the hatch. With the wine secured by a line - Pat paddled up to the closest abandoned yacht - sure it was between him and the *Wanderlust*. He looked through the porthole, "Two bodies wrapped in sheets. Ones a female. Recent - no odor yet. Must have met their maker last night or early this morning. I interrupted my ladies work. Imagine it's the same on the other boat." He reached for his ice pick - out of habit.

"Ahoy *Wanderlust* - can I come aboard?" Sushi stuck her head through the hatch opening and her body followed. She wore short shorts and a man's white silk shirt - tied in a knot at the waist, "Hand up the wine. Can you navigate our rope ladder?" "Only under duress and this qualifies." Pat hung onto the ladder with one hand and lifted his surfboard up with the other. He noticed an embroidered white scroll on her shirt collar, "What's that monogram on your shirt?" "*TT* stands for Titanic Thompson. Tushi is wearing one - too - belong to the owner of this boat. He's off fishing with his friends." Sushi nodded her head toward the other two boats. We came along for the ride - we've never been to Palmyra. Excellent wine! You have expensive tastes. We'll have to sip it slow." "Where's Sushi?" "In the galley - she cooks - I serve and pour. Wait here - I'll get a corkscrew and three glasses."

Pat looked the boat over, "Sixty foot if she's an inch. Bet she has two master cabins - one forward and one aft.

Three masts - not cheap - not cheap at all." He placed his ice pick between the cushions. Sushi walked up the steps from below - carrying three crystal wine glasses etched with the same monogram as the one on her collar. Pat had to ask, "Is everything monogrammed on this boat." "Not me or Tushi, but he tried." "Are you his mistresses?" "Doesn't he wish. No - we're his crew for this sail. We sleep forward." Pat held his glass while Sushi poured. She waited while he sipped, "Very good - a nutty taste. I'll have only one glass. Do you have beer?" "Not as much Guinness as you have, but I can make a Musty Ale for you - Guinness and a light ale." "You were on board my boat?" "Had to check you out. People are known to disappear from this island. Is your name really King Kamehamea?" "No and I'm not Kimo - either. He's my yacht broker. It's our little joke." "Then - who are you?" "I'm from Hungary - an Hapsburg exile - Rudolph." "Nobility?" "Yes - a minor baron."

Tushi came up from below, "Dinner is almost ready." Sushi poured her sister a glass of red, "I'm going below to mix a musty ale for Rudolph." "The one with the red nose?" "No - the one who has a nose made out of pine that grows." Tushi asked, "What does she mean?" "My name is Rudolph - Rudolph Hapsburg - not Kimo. Can't be too careful out here." Tushi sat on his lap and then straddled his legs, "I've never made love to a prince before. And she sang, "Someday my prince will come - " "And you still won't. I'm not a prince - only a Baron." "That's close enough" as she bent her head forward and kissed him."

Sushi came back on deck with his beer, "Save some for me." Pat asked, "Don't you want to eat dinner first?" Tushi unbuttoned her shirt, "Life is short - eat desert first." Sushi set Pat's beer on the table and removed her silk shirt. Pat whistled under his breath, "All I can do is double my pleasure." Tushi removed his shirt - Sushi unzipped his

shorts and Pat worried to himself, "Can I keep my passion under control? I can handle one, but two?" "Do you ladies want to take turns?" Sensing - for the time being - he was safe - Pat took both into his arms. Out of breath he whispered, "Are you both older than twenty?" They smothered his lips with their breasts - answering, "Yes!" "Good - I'm not wired for two twenty." Sushi stuck her tongue into his ear, "You are now." She pushed him gently over on his back and sat on his chest while Tushi straddled his loins.

Pat followed the twins into the galley, "If dinner is as good as desert - I'll die a happy man." Sushi placed her arm in his, "Not yet - we're not finished. Have you ever dined with two naked ladies before?" "Naked yes - in Vienna, but not with two and certainly not with two as beautiful as you. I own a house in Hungary - one that is quite famous for the quality of its ladies." Tushi asked, "Are we - are we as good?" Pat knew that the truth would not matter, "None of them have your unique talents or breasts as exquisite as yours. You two take my breath away."

Sushi carried lobster - shelled and swimming in a serving dish of melted butter and new potatoes to the galley table. It was as good as any Pat had ever had. When he pushed his chair a way from the table and began to wipe his face - butter dripped from his chin. He looked over at the twins and laughed - their faces were covered in butter. Tushi dipped her hands into the serving dish - covering her breasts with butter. Sushi dipped her hand in - came around the table and dripped butter down Pat's chest. He dipped his hands into the serving dish and covered Sushi's breasts - she straddled his lap and spread melted butter on his loins. Tushi pulled them up - three naked bodies covered in melted butter. Pat placed arms around both - fingers massaging buttery breasts - walking together to the front master cabin - collapsing in the heat of passion into a king sized bed.

Pat- still awake watched moonlight drift into the cabin - thinking - very quietly to himself, "They damn near killed me with their sexual acrobatics." Sushi and Tushi were sound asleep - curled up at his side. He sat up - moving gently out of bed - silently rolling from its head to foot. He looked back, "Still asleep. My wine mixed with sleeping powder did the trick. Glad they talked me into a moonlight swim. Butter turns rancid quickly in this heat and humidity. Time to get back on with my business." He climbed the stairs - retrieved his ice pick and returned to the cabin. Pat looked down on the sleeping sisters, "It will be quick my loves" and thrust his ice pick twice - into each heart. He sang as he lifted a silent Sushi up, "*Comes the deer to my singing.*" and carried her up to the stern - returning for Tushi. He looked down on their lifeless bodies, "Hate to eat and run girls, but I have to feed a hungry friend outside the reef." Pat walked through the cabins - removing his fingerprints from all surfaces. Returning above decks he tied their feet with a ships rope and the other end to the stern of their Zodiac. He returned to returning to his Cat - trailing his surfboard and food for his *Tiger Shark*. He tied the Zodiac's line to his Cat's stern - climbed aboard and sat down inside his cabin - a glass of brandy in hand. Pat sipped - then gulped, "Titanic must have gone overboard on his way here. And there is probably two more bodies on the yacht I didn't inspect. That makes six. Can't leave them here - they'll rot in the tropic sun. Better dispose of them tonight before heat and humidity does its work."

Sushi and Tushi looked up into the coal black eyes of *The Greatest of Big Hairy Red Things*. They said together, "What is all the celebration about?" "It has been many years since we have been honored by two such as you. Not many lady pirates about and twins - too. You are deliciously evil." Sushi saw a sea of thousands of *Big Hairy Red Things* singing

their praise. She asked, "How are we to be honored?" "A barbecue." He motioned for the throng to carry the twins along - honored celebrities. Ahead - Tushi screamed, "We are being served as the main course!" Impaled - a metal spit was thrust through her cheeks and appeared out through her mouth. Sushi squirmed - trying to get away - was tossed into the air - landing on a hot metal spit - her scream lost in gurgles.

The Greatest of Big Hairy Red Things sang as he turned the spits, "*The ancient folk with evil spells, dashed to earth, plowed under!*"

Pat Penny hauled in two empty lines - which once held twins - trailing behind the Zodiac - as he trolled outside the reef. A giant dorsal fin trailed after - rolling in victory, "You were hungry my friend. Be patient - wait here - I have two - maybe more for your hunger. You may wish to call your friends - to join in a feeding frenzy. The next batch has been well aged in the sun." Pat completed his grisly task by the light of a Pacific outhouse moon. Sheets - all evidence of blood and crime were transported to the beach - summarily burned on the sand and buried. Pat returned to his Cat and poured four fingers of brandy into his glass. He sipped and stared - and sipped and stared and shook his head, "Four adults, but not the child! And to murder for profit. I will not drink to your health my ladies - to your reward - may a thousand *Big Hairy Red Things* feast on your flesh tonight. That child - she was no more than eight or nine years old. Have you no decency?" Pat placed his head on the table and cried until tears would come no more. He walked over to the sink - washed the salt away from his eyes and gulped down the rest of his brandy.

Pat climbed up out of the hatch and looked out on the harbor, "Now what will I do with three yachts? Should I burn them - sink them - pull them out to sea and sink them there - or release them to the winds - sails full - or do nothing?"

He returned to the galley and nibbled on link after link of cold uncooked sausage, "I will sleep on it - if this sausage quiets my own *Big Hairy Red Thing*. My mind is muddled. How many have I - eliminated - is it seventeen - eighteen - or are there more? When will I ever find peace?" Pat cleaned up the galley and nibbled on crackers as he drank another glass of brandy. He looked at his watch, "Midnight. Time flies when I'm having fun." He did not sing a Navajo song of victory - only a low moan, "A child - why?"

As the sun streamed across his bunk, Pat rolled out of bed, "Feels like I've had my manhood torn out by the roots. I'll not forget Palmyra - the good things and bad. Got to wash myself clean before I sail out of here." On deck - Pat saw three boats sitting at anchor. He climbed into the Zodiac - started the outboard and landed on the beach. He scrubbed and scrubbed - the memory of last night lingering, "Three Flying Dutchmen it will be. I'll sail each one out of the harbor - raise sails and send these ladies on their way. It's best for all to think crew and passengers were lost at sea." Pat rinsed off and returned to the Zodiac - heading directly to the *Wanderlust*.

Pat adjusted compass heading to 220° - Palmyra was distant, but still a memory over the horizon. Fiji - his next landfall - lay twenty-four hundred nautical miles to the southwest. Out front was a giant dorsal fin - leading him on. He checked the speed. "Not bad - twenty-two knots. I'm not looking forward to ten days of open ocean sailing - my friend." Off to port he saw the sail of the last of his Flying Dutchmen, "Won't be long before I'll sail past all three ghost ships." He went below and prepared breakfast - a large mound of sausage - that writhed like stuck banshees in his frying pan. Waiting for it to cool - Pat checked his charts, "I might need a more southerly heading." He looked

at the current listed on the chart, "Entering the Equatorial Counter Current - west to east. My current compass heading won't be enough to counter the drift. Better change it to 200° after I finish breakfast." Winds are holding - that's good. They should diminish near the equator." Pat emptied the sausage out of the frying pan onto a serving platter.

Pat carried the platter to the helm and adjusted course to a new compass heading of 200°. He looked out over the ocean, "It is true - sailing is like watching grass grow. And it was - for the next day - and the next - and the next - and the next - and the next.

*"They who see the Flying Dutchman
never, never reach the shore."*

Moscow

Moscow's lights - twinkling in snow blanket twilight - on the horizon - announced Russian civilization after miles and miles of darkness. Natasha looked out - through the window of her New York to Moscow Aeroflot passenger jet - wondering, "Is it really good to be home? Or will I be dragged through another round of exhausting interrogations? Why else would I be called back - before I completed my mission? I wonder - will my superiors let me know if the two thugs I sent after Three Penny Pat were successful? I doubt it - chasing after him in a rented boat - how foolish! If Three Penny Pat can slip through three layers of protection to eliminate the head of their military - he certainly can outwit two of our KGB tagalongs." Natasha's rhetorical questions remained unanswered. The seat belt sign was on. The Ilyushin II-96-300 - powered by four Pratt and Whitney PW2337 turbofan jet engines had turned on final - airbrakes up and flaps down - floating through a cold winter sky toward Moscow. Natasha closed her eyes.

The Aeroflot jet turned off the runway onto a taxiway - its wheels crunching through a skiff of soft new snow. On a special access ramp - adjacent to the taxiway - waited a black VIP sedan. Natasha's airplane slowed to a stop - she was the only one disembarking. She exited interior warmth - and was greeted by sharp edged wind - cutting through her light western clothing - like ice fired from a scatter gun. Two Stalinist type KGB thugs stood by the sedan - immobile and impervious to the cold. The senior one opened the rear

passenger door, "Welcome home comrade Natasha. I hope you had a pleasant trip." Natasha stared him down - with ball bearing blue eyes - colder than the wind blowing up her dress and around her thighs, "Where are we going?" "I was told you knew." She did not know, but would not let on she did not, "Quickly then." She entered the back seat alone and he opened the front door and sat next to the driver - without desire to be close to a human icicle.

On the opposite side of the terminal - away from prying eyes - Natasha's black bullet sedan sped through a private exit - turning on the highway at high speed - toward the Gorod Moskva and the notorious Pokroysko Stresnevo District. Natasha breathed a sigh of relief, "Familiar territory - We're going to The Central Committee's dacha. I've been there too many times to count. I will live, but not after they lower my threshold of pain and question my performance as an assassin." Her sedan turned off the highway into a tree lined lane - screening this high level dacha from unwanted surveillance - stopping underneath the portico. Natasha waited for her escort to open the door - thinking, "At least I'm receiving the same treatment as our most privileged officials, but I would not care to vacation here." Her escort opened both doors - treating her with the utmost respect. Natasha was relieved, "I will live for another day. I should know. I've brought my share of permanent guests to this dacha."

The interior door closed behind her. Natasha was in a dim lit hall or room - empty except for a straight backed wooden chair in the center - facing a mirrored wall at the far end. She sat down - back straight - eyes forward - lips silent. She heard a click. The door was locked behind her. Natasha knew she was not alone. Others - from behind the mirror - watched her every move. Natasha did not move - or make a sound. She sat bolt upright - proud and silent and

unafraid. She continued to sit quietly - not moving - for one minute - two - three - four - five - knowing she had performed her tasks to the best of her ability - confident that nothing had gone wrong.

Natasha heard a familiar click from behind - as the door was unlocked. She did not hear it open and knew better than to turn and look. She smiled - thinking, "It is one of their best. His hand is on my shoulder and I heard only his last two footsteps." A deep Russian voice came from behind her chair, "Natasha start from the beginning. Tell me about your mission - what your orders were and how you carried them out." "No - I will reveal nothing. I am to report only to The Central Committee. My orders are to speak only to the Chairman - or the Secretary and only at their request. And they have not made that request." Greeted by silence - her interrogator turned and walked out of the room. Natasha was familiar with this procedure. She would be left in silence - her statement weighed and confirmed. Her interrogator returned, "Do you know why I asked you to tell me about your mission? Of course you do. When one of our very best agents fails - it is of great concern to The Central Committee. And you have failed!" Natasha's interrogator waited for this revelation to sink in and for her to respond. She remained sitting - in silence.

The interrogator walked around the chair - stopped in front and slowly turned. Natasha held back a gasp - the deep voice belonged to a long skirt - a high booted woman carrying a riding crop. She touched Natasha lightly - with the end of the crop - on the tip of her nose. Natasha sat rigid - not moving. Her interrogator continued, "Natasha - shame on you - you failed to eliminate Bulgar as you were ordered. If it was not for a high level mole - deep inside the CIA - Bulgar would have defected and spilled all and that would have been unacceptable. If it was my choice - you would be undergoing

an interrogation deep - deep underground inside our Lubyanka - as my special guest." She snapped her riding crop in two and handed Natasha an envelope, "Open it and read." Natasha opened it from the side - with the nail of her forefinger. It was from the Secretary -

"Your orders are to cooperate with Comrade Vulga."

Natasha looked up, "May I have a match - Comrade Vulga?" She handed Natasha a cigarette lighter. Natasha opened the top and struck the flint - holding the paper to the fire - not letting go until the last shred had turned to charcoal, "Orders - Comrade Vulga. Now what is it you would like to know?" "Begin at the beginning and do not stop until you have told me everything." "As you all ready know - I had orders to complete two wet procedures - Bulgar and Three Penny Pat. The first was completed by use of a syringe - while Bulgar was laid up at Georgetown Hospital in Washington DC. The second was interrupted by my recall." "Is that all?" "Do you truly desire to be bored by my routine - day by day existence. When I left the room - Bulgar was dead. No one - not even someone as evil as Bulgar - could survive the venom of a Southeast Asian viper. Unless - someone replaced the venom with a placebo."

For the first time - Natasha's shoulder's sagged, "Is there an antidote? Is Bulgar still alive?" "You are twice fortunate - Comrade Natasha. He replaced the venom with water on your flight to New York. So even though you failed - you were trying. We were fortunate - to have a very high level mole inside CIA. He completed what you failed to do. And his agency did not suspect Bulgar was assassinated. He used the heart medicine. We checked the atomizer in your purse. It too had been tampered with." "Then Bulgar is dead?" "And buried in an anonymous grave in America."

Vulga tapped the palm of her hand with the remaining half of her riding crop, The Central Committee is not pleased about Three Penny Pat. Not only did we lose a valuable resource when he assassinated their JCS Chairman - we have lost three top level agents - a car and an airplane." "They flew to Palmyra after Three Penny Pat?" "Yes - they are missing - along with a very expensive rental plane. All are gone without a trace. Three Penny Pat is a worthy hunter." "And we programmed him." "You have an unblemished record - until now - that alone has saved you. When someone of your stature fails - it is of great concern to The Central Committee." "May I leave now?" "No. Do you know where our VIP suite is?" "Yes - can I contact my children?" "No - in a day or two - maybe. Your interrogation is finished."

Natasha sat bolt upright in the chair - hearing no sound, but the interrogator's boots as she marched out of the room. Natasha smiled at Vulga's frustration - not being able to inflict pain. Not hearing the click of the lock - Natasha rose - walked quickly out of the room - into the windowed - well lit halls of the dacha. She walked directly to her quarters - undressed and drew a bath - knowing every word and move would be watched. Natasha checked - her luggage was here - unpacked and clothes in drawers, "Looks like my valet expects a long stay." Her feelings toward Russia would never be the same. Patriotism had been replaced by doubt. Natasha had been trained to interrogate, but was never prepared to be interrogated. And her doubts grew, "Bulgar was our number one and eliminated. I am now at the top. I must scratch - claw and fight to stay there. The only way out is - ." She tested the water - tainted a slight orange from rusty Russian plumbing. Natasha sighed, "It is tepid" and stepped in - immersing her body up to the neck. She closed her eyes and thought, "I am in danger, but The Central Committee will not strike. Not now - it is too early for that. And I am vulnerable, but of course this treatment is designed to make

me so. I will soon be the prey - not a hunter." She soaped a wash cloth - using it like a scrub brush cleansing, but fear and guilt remained - deep inside.

Natasha was released early in the morning - after devouring a breakfast plate stacked high with Russian sausage. Her sedan now had a driver - trained only to drive - with no shotgun thug at his side. As it sped through the late morning winter twilight - Natasha looked out on Moscow's snow covered streets. Winter - as usual had arrived early and would stay late. Natasha sat up, "Wake up lady! This is your favorite time of the year. Winter and you are as one. A joyous celebration of death." She arched her back and stretched her body forward until her knees touched the back of the front seat - a latent ecstasy flowing through her veins - almost reaching orgasm. Natasha leaned back in pleasure - the back of her long neck and cold pink cheeks luxuriating against the fur of her coat's collar. Natasha smiled, "At last - I have returned home."

Natasha tapped on the window - separating her from the driver. He rolled it down - part way, "What is it - Comrade?" "This is not the road to my apartment building." "My orders are to drive you to the Kremlin." He raised the window - mumbling, "She is colder than the driven winter snow." Natasha - resigned to her fate - closed her eyes and opened them - only when her sedan came to a stop inside the Kremlin's inner courtyard. She was greeted by a graying - apologetic bureaucrat who escorted her to The Central Committee's private chambers. A uniformed guard checked her credentials as another opened the large bronze door. She was greeted by the Chairman, "Sit down - over here - Natasha. Would you care for something to drink?" She answered, "No" and bowed in recognition toward the Secretary. She was seeing her benevolent fathers in a different light this morning. Their smiles no longer reassured her. The feeling

of warmth - generated in past meetings - changed to Arctic cold - as cold as the wind blowing through the inner courtyard this morning. She borrowed a few seconds of time - adjusting to the hard bottom chair.

The Chairman continued to smile as the Secretary spoke, "We have sent our three best assassins after Three Penny Pat. One attempted to defect - and is no longer with us as is our East German friend and you have failed. How can this happen? Between the three of you - over seventy have died. Do you have an explanation?" "No - and none is needed. It wasn't our failure. It was your success. Three Penny Pat was not programmed to fail - he was programmed to survive." The Chairman spoke, "And despite our best efforts - Pat Penny is still alive. And we have lost three - four - I am losing count - KGB tagalongs who joined in the hunt. I am at a loss - what do you recommend?" "As much as I would like to wreck revenge on him - my advice is to cut our losses - leave him alone." The Secretary - holding an opposite opinion - asked, "Why? Three Penny Pat has cost us dearly." Natasha smiled, "True, but he was our own - we made him what he is and reaped the wind. Any interest we show now will only lend to speculation that he was ours. Except for a few American Intelligence officers - he is known as theirs not ours." The Chairman stepped in, "I agree. We will leave him alone. You have given wise council and faithful service. It is time for you to go home to your children." Natasha asked, "Am I to retire?" The Secretary laughed, "No, but for now - we do not need your services. We will let you know when." They both rose - turned their backs and left the room. Natasha sat still - for the first time - cold fear crept in and enveloped her body. She rose, "So this is how Bulgar felt - when he knew his time had come."

Natasha could not get warm on the ride to her apartment. Even her hands were clammy, "This has never happened to me

before - I've never been dressed down by my superiors. I do not care for it." She looked out the window - snow began to fall again. She counted individual snowflakes. Each one had a short life span in early winter and fall - when they would melt and die. Not now - they were immortal. She began to relax. Each snowflake cleansed her primal fear. Before the sedan turned onto her apartment's street - Natasha opened the compartment in her mind - the one holding memories of her children. This compartment had cracked a few times on her mission, but did not break open. Now as memories flooded in - tears filled her eyes. When the KGB sedan stopped inside the her apartment's courtyard - her escorts hopped out - carrying luggage and opening doors. As they walked down the stairs from her third floor apartment - the junior officer spoke, "She is a cold one. Did you notice the size of her apartment?" "Yes - this one is of very high rank." "Why have I not heard of her?" "When you do it will be too late." "The Black Widow?" "Yes - did you not notice that all of her furniture is black leather?" "No - I gave it no thought." "Pay attention - or the next time it may be too late."

Natasha's children were away at school. Her Aunt left a note as she did every day - since she had gone away. She was shopping - standing in a queue - in hopes the State Store had an item of food - or maybe shoes. Natasha smiled and lit the fire under her samovar, "Poor Aunt - I have all this food and she does not believe there is enough. I have been too long without a proper cup of Russian tea." She filled her tub with hot water as the tea water boiled, "Strong Russian tea and a soothing hot bath will cleanse away my harsh treatment - at the hands of my superiors. As Natasha sipped tea - she lowered her body - slowly into the tub, "I will turn a nice cherry red for my own personal demon - *The Big Hairy Red Thing*. Natasha leaned back and closed her eyes. Memories of past assassinations flooded into her mind and soothed her bent spirit. She began to nod off - as she savored each death -

and slipped into dreams - her mind filled with the song of *The Greatest of Big Hairy Red Things, "The ancient folk with evil spells, dashed to earth, plowed under!"* When Natasha woke - her bath water had turned from tepid warm to winter cold. She walked to the living room wrapped only in a towel and looked outside, "Snow - lovely snow - my winter of death - cold and white." Her towel dropped to the floor.

Honolulu

Lieutenant Colonel Johnny Ropp stepped out of the shower and checked the time, "I'm late. Bobbie Jean will rake me over the coals. He read her note, "She left early to see the Halekulani Sunset show." He dressed, "Honeymoon is over when your Bride goes on ahead without you. And she was the one who said I should sleep in." As Johnny combed his hair and tucked his Cook Aloha shirt into his OP shorts - the phone rang. He waited - picking it up on the sixth ring, "Hello?" "Colonel Ropp - it's Ching-Chang. Tupelo just phoned from the mainland." "Does he want me to call?" "You're to return to Washington as soon as I can get you out." "Commercial or military?" "Military - priority." "Benny?" "Your guess is as good as mine - Tupelo didn't say and I didn't ask." "Well - I've had ten wonderful days for a second honeymoon - can't ask for anything more. When do I fly out?" "You're booked on a Tanker going to Omaha. Had to divert one - so they won't be happy - not being allowed to stay over." "What time?" "Turnaround on the tarmac at eleven tonight. Better get here by ten." "Bobbie Jean was about to jump ship and build a grass shack for us on the beach. She's fallen in love with your island." "All you Haoles say that. Tupelo has a jet waiting for you at Offutt." "What's all the rush. Don't ask." "Don't tell."

Johnny entered the Hau Tree Lanai - bent over and kissed Bobbie Jean on the cheek. She patted the chair beside her -

and motioned for him to sit down, "Romantic isn't it?" He didn't respond. "I smell a change of plans." "It is romantic, but all good things must come to an end. I have to return to Washington." "How soon?" "Ching-Chang has a tanker diverted to pick me up at eleven. Have to be at Base Ops at ten." "I can't go along?" "Not on a mission flight. I'll call the concierge at the Royal and see what he can do." "Do you want to dine here?" "No - at the Royal - I'll make my flight and our dinner arrangements at the same time. Hold my seat." Johnny shook his head, "And if I don't?" "Luigi will break your kneecaps."

Bobbie Jean and Johnny strolled arm-in-arm on the beach walk from the Halekulani to the Royal Hawaiian - frozen in time. She asked, "Remind you of something?" "Walking along the beach in front of your house in Mississippi City?" "It seems like yesterday - doesn't it. We were so young." "And in love. One look at you and I didn't have a chance. Was it fate or luck." "A little of each, but as a house gambler - I'd say more in the odds." "It wasn't it fate that placed us together in the same place at the same time?" Bobbie Jean smiled - brushed her thigh against his and squeezed his arm, "Don't ask." "Don't tell." The Royal Hawaiian rose before them - like an oversized Alamo - inside a small pink elephant - dwarfed by the surrounding high rise hotels - a gentle pink cloud trapped inside a cement canyon. They walked arm-in-arm - skirting the outdoor pool bar - into the hotel through spacious - plushly carpeted corridors. After the humid tropic night breeze - the Royal's air-conditioning was cool and dry to their skin.

As Bobbie Jean stopped at the Concierge's desk - she whispered to Johnny, "Go on ahead and put on a decent sport coat. We have reservations in the gourmet dining room." Three minutes later she entered their room, "No suitable transportation - yet. He's working on it. But you'll have a

limo waiting at nine-fifteen." "Aren't you going with me?" "Depends on when I have to leave - our table is waiting. The maid will pack us up - better leave your flight suit out." They arrived a few minutes later - enveloped by the Kahamanu Lake Trio's gentle Hawaiian music - drifting through the main dining room - into their private alcove. They dined on smoked Atlantic salmon and crab meat appetizer - waiting for mahimahi - grilled in a lemon and ginger sauce. Johnny finished all he could and pushed away from the table, "It's just as well we fly away now - or we'll grow too fond of this food and never leave paradise." Bobbie Jean said, "Hush" as they listened to the Trio's final dinner song - *Aloha Oe*, but her mind was elsewhere. "Do you know when you'll land in Virginia?" "There is a six hour time difference - twelve hours of flying time - add an hour time delay going in and out of Omaha - I should be there by six p.m. tomorrow night." "Can you pick me up at Dulles?" "Thought you'd never ask."

Johnny rolled over on his stomach - leaning on his elbows as Bobbie Jean talked to the Concierge on the telephone. She turned around, "Get your flight suit on. Our limo will be waiting by the time we get downstairs. You'll have to drop me off at the airport on your way to Base Ops. I have an 11:30 flight to San Francisco." "First Class?" "Of course. And a nonstop connection to Dulles. I should arrive three hours after you land." "By the time I get home from Andrews - I'll have just enough time to pick up the twins and drive to the airport. We'll wait at the arrival gate. Call Nanny from San Francisco and I'll call from Omaha." The tapping at their door announced the arrival of a bellboy for their luggage.

Ching-Chang helped Johnny unload his luggage, "A limo - no less. Where's Bobbie Jean?" "Checking in for her flight to San Francisco - on an airplane with better service than the one I'm flying on. Ten at night is a bit late for a

meeting. What's up?" "From Benny to Tupelo to Chang."
"Sounds like a turn of the century double play combination
for the San Francisco Seals." "Benny wanted you to know
what's happening with Pat Penny." "Where is the elusive
bastard?" "Somewhere south of here - sailing to the South
Pacific. Benny said he stopped at Palmyra for an overnight.
And three yachts and an airplane are missing." "Any
Russians?" "Three and two of them flew the missing plane to
Palmyra." "No trace of the folks on the boats?" "No - or
their boats." "Does Benny think he is out of control?" "I
didn't ask." "And he didn't tell." "Your bird was on final
when I came out to help you. Should be pulling up on the
tarmac - any minute. Will you be out this way again?" "Not
that I know of. Did Benny say something to Tupelo?" "No,
but there are signs. Fiji has asked us for help." "Fiji?"
"Fiji."

Two Flew East

Bobbie Jean stood at the window - overlooking the tarmac
from the VIP lounge - watching - as Johnny's KC-10 tanker
taxied by to the short runway on a rolling takeoff into an
unusual wind - not Kona or northeast Trade - but a wind from
the southwest Pacific. She sipped on a glass of red wine -
her favorite - since beginning a new life with Johnny - and
watched as the KC-10 rolled down the runway - lifting off
into the sky. She sat back in an easy chair wondering, "How
many times has he flown away - into the unknown - and for
what? It can't be money. Our government can never pay
enough for our continual separation. And no one in their
right mind would lay down a life for a State Department full
of Ivy League State suits with experimental whims. And our
Intelligence agencies are populated by the same wool covered
Ivy League minds found at State. The Cold War - now that was
different. But it's over. How long are we going to play
policeman? Duty - honor - country - yes, but to dance to the
tune - the whims of our State Department - who use military

force as a cover for their inability to conduct successful diplomacy - without a cognizant foreign policy. Wasn't it Bismarck who said military force is a failure of diplomacy? Whoever it was - failure is what we have. And I don't want to lose my good husband on foolish State Department errands. I think it's time for my Johnny to come marching home. He doesn't know it yet, but my wandering soldier has all ready seen his last hurrah." Bobbie Jean looked up at the TV screen. Her flight to San Francisco was boarding.

She left the lounge - smiling - knowing she was going to take control of her life - as soon as she returned home. She boarded the 747 - climbing the circular staircase to her First Class seat on the second deck, "Not my first choice, but not bad for a late reservation." She placed her purse under the seat - accepted a pillow - blanket from the flight attendant and fastened her seat belt, "May I have a glass of wine - a red Merlot if you have it - please." "Would you care for smoked salmon and crackers?" "Yes - of course. If I go to sleep - please don't wake me for the in-flight meal." Bobbie Jean nibbled on smoked salmon with capers and sipped her wine - finishing both before takeoff. When the seat belt sign flicked off - she adjusted her seat - leaned back and closed her eyes - thinking of home.

"Ma'am - wake up. Place your seat back upright - we're coming in for landing." Bobbie Jean opened her eyes, "I slept all the way from Honolulu? What is the weather like in San Francisco?" "Winter is summer here - sixty-five degrees and almost no wind. Do you have a connecting flight?" "To Dulles." "Your in luck - your departure gate is next to the one we will be using for arrival. Your departure may be delayed due to runway construction." "Still?" "Always - these were built on fill." Bobbie Jean looked out on broken bits and pieces of concrete - giant earth scrapers - earth movers and dumpy trucks as her plane touched down on a less

than even - rolling runway. The Flight Attendant stopped by, "Your flight to Dulles has been delayed."

Washington DC

Riding a late fall jet stream - Johnny's T-39 was not held up - he was ahead of schedule - on a fast bumpy flight to Andrews AFB - outside of Washington DC - in Maryland's overtaxed suburbs. Inflight service consisted of coffee or water - he had his choice, but chose neither. He slept till wheels touched smoothly down on the Andrews runway. An unmarked staff car - not of Air Force origin - stood waiting as his T-39 cut engines and came to a stop near the passenger terminal. The driver took Johnny's flight and hang-up bags, "Your farm in McLean?" "Benny sent you?" "Yes." "Any message?" "Call CIA Ops before you drive out to Dulles to pick up your wife." His driver drove through the crossroads of Morningside on Suitland Road - turning west on Suitland Parkway - to South Capital Street and the Frederick Douglas Bridge. Then to 395 and the 14th Street Bridge - turning north on George Washington Parkway toward McLean and Johnny's in-town farmhouse. Johnny almost rolled down the window to suck in the crystal clear - cool Indian summer evening air, but knew better. The glass was bullet proof - not meant to be rolled down. Traffic slowed as they climbed the hill along the Potomac adjacent Arlington. His driver regretted, "Traffic during rush hour here - like other smelly things - happens. I'll have you home in ten minutes. We'll turn in at the agency and go out the back way." "Great weather." "Right - fall doesn't receive the publicity of our cherry blossom spring, but it's cooler - drier and lasts three times as long."

He turned into the farmhouse lane and stopped. Johnny got out - shooed three sheep off the road and got back in. The driver asked, "Are those yours?" "Great little lawn mowers. If it wasn't for the farm subsidy - I'd trade them

in for a cutter bar." "Are you serious?" "No - thanks for the lift." "Don't forget to call Benny." Johnny was greeted by two well scrubbed twins and Nanny, "Glad your back - I have business to attend to in Mississippi." "How many barbecue places do you own?" "Two here - four there and that's all. Six is all I can control and keep the quality up. Before you ask - the boys were wonderful. Didn't have to take a switch to either one. Oh - Bobbie Jean called. She was delayed in San Francisco. Her plane won't land until nine and that's my taxi coming in the drive. I'll return in several weeks. Have business to attend too - so if you need to take off again." Johnny gave her a hug, "You just want to make sure your boys are staying on a straight and narrow path." "That and someone is dipping into the till of my restaurant in DC." Do you want Bobbie Jean to look into it?" "If she would. That friend of yours - Mr. Bidwell." "I know what you mean - it takes one to catch one." Nanny laughed - hugged the boys and entered her taxi, "Mind you - have Bobbie Jean give me a call tomorrow morning."

As Johnny followed the twins into the farmhouse - he asked, "Did you boys eat?" They laughed as they answered in unison, "Nanny made sure. Yours is waiting in the icebox." Johnny uncovered the plastic wrap from his plate and poked it into the microwave. As it cooked - he placed an encryption device over the mouthpiece of the kitchen phone and punched in Benny's special phone number at CIA Ops. Benny picked up on the sixth ring, "That you, Johnny?" "We've finally gotten past hello. What's up?" "Did Tupelo get word to you about our elusive friend?" "Yes - what's this about an airplane and three yachts missing on Palmyra?" "According to Penny - seems the KGB sent two of their best after him and he took care of the problem. Don't know how he did it, but the airplane they rented crashed on the big island of Hawaii." "And the three yachts?" "He ran into two lady pirates who shanghaied three yachts - butchered five people and had an

eye on his catamaran. So he fed both of them to the sharks and made Flying Dutchmen out of the yachts." "Ching-Chang mentioned an island country in the South Pacific. Am I being sent there?" "Maybe - not sure." "What's up?" "Started with Fiji's independence from the British. Indian Hindus took over and froze the local folks out - then got in bed with the Soviets. We gave the Fijians a leg up and they took their country back. Indians are a might upset." "Where do you want me?" "Report to the Pentagon Monday morning and call me after you arrive." "Will do."

Johnny took his plate out of the microwave and sat down to a basic southern dinner - chicken - mashed potatoes and green beans. He toyed with his food - thinking about Pat Penny, "Three thugs - two pirates and the JCS Chairman - and no one is chasing after him - except the Russians and he's in contact with Benny." Johnny finished his plate - placed the dishes in the dishwasher and smiled, "Nanny has it ready to go." He closed the door - turned it on and walked out to the stables. The twins were at it again - playing an intense game of one-on-one basketball - with neither giving the other quarter. He reminded them, "Your Mother is landing at nine. We'll leave in fifteen minutes. Better wash up if you want to ride along and if you don't - I'll let you explain to your Mother why you didn't."

As he closed the door to their station wagon - Johnny breathed a sigh of relief, "Almost a full tank of gas." JR laughed, "Nanny wouldn't drive in Washington DC traffic. She wore out the local taxi companies." RL added, "And JR and me almost learned to how to speak Farsi." "Farsi?" "Persian. All the cab drivers are from Iran or Haiti and we all ready know a little French." "If your Mother has her way you'll learn a lot more. Is soccer season over?" RL laughed, "For almost three weeks. We're into basketball now." Johnny grimaced - and thought, "I've got to get a job where I can

stay around home. My boys are growing up and I barely know them." He turned onto the Dulles access road and accelerated to ten miles an hour over the speed limit. His twins were conversing in French and laughing at each other's mistakes. Johnny smiled - proud, but a stranger in his own land. The trip to Dulles was almost over before it began.

Johnny parked in short term parking and they walked into the lower level of the terminal - climbing to upper level as Bobbie Jean exited from the people mover. As the boys raced past Johnny to give their Mother a hug - he noticed, "My God - they're almost as tall as she is. I really haven't been home." Bobbie Jean - now minus her carryon - gave Johnny a hug and a kiss, "When did you get in?" "Four hours before you. Nanny wants you to call in the morning." "Problems?" "Not at home - at her restaurant in the District." "How were the boys?" "Great - as always. I didn't know they spoke conversational French." "We need to talk about your job in the Air Force." "Or lack of one - I agree. It's getting worse - not better. Are you hungry?" "No - they fed well in First Class." "Tired?" "I slept all the way from Honolulu to San Francisco. I can use a long hot shower and a cold drink. Is the house well stocked with food? Don't answer - I forgot. With Nanny - it's probably overstocked."

Johnny learned more about his boys - listening in on the conversation with their Mother on the drive back from Dulles airport than he ever knew. After Bobbie Jean gave them their gifts and they were busy upstairs in their rooms working on homework - Johnny sat down at the kitchen counter. Bobbie Jean held his hand and looked into his eyes, "It's time." "I must have my head up and locked. I've been away - so much of the time - I don't even know my own sons." "When will you give notice?" "After I finish the Pat Penny thing. They're going to send me out to the South Pacific." "How soon?" "Don't know, but it's not in my nature to leave a job undone."

Don't worry I'll be home for good before next summer. Do you want to stay in the area?" "Haven't thought about where - just when. How about Mississippi?" "Not my cup of tea. No more than the Scioto River is yours." "The great southwest and Las Vegas is out." "How about school for our boys?" "They like it here." "So - we'll stay here through High School?" "Looks like we have no other choice."

Johnny woke on the third ring. He reached over and shut the alarm clock off, but the ringing continued. He shook the clock and the ringing continued. He picked up the telephone receiver, "Ropp here - and it's dark outside. Who is it and what do you want?" "Benny - you bastard. You must be on Hawaiian time." "Are we at war?" "No, but you may be. I don't want to hear any jet lag excuses from someone who has spent two weeks sunning in Hawaii. You've had a full day's rest on your flight back. Welcome back to the real world." "Thanks for arranging my flights and limo. What's up?" "The island country we spoke of last night. Tupelo needs the pleasure of your company at nine-thirty this morning." "It's Saturday!" "You can wear civilian clothes. Dress warm it's nippy outside. Tupelo will fill you in."

Johnny glanced over at Bobbie Jean. Her response to the ringing phone was to roll over and curl into a tight ball. He pulled on a pair of corduroys and a wool sweater, "God - is it ever cold here. He turned on the TV and checked the weather, "Above freezing, but forty-five degrees cooler than Honolulu. Bobbie Jean?" He looked over, "Sound asleep. She could fall asleep in a belfry and not hear bells." Johnny tiptoed past the boys' rooms - went downstairs - plugged in the coffee pot and walked outside to retrieve the morning paper from its usual spot - in the ditch. He drank two cups of coffee while scanning the morning paper for an article on Fiji, but found none. Johnny walked back up the stairs to the master bedroom - showered - shaved and dressed for a

cold virginia morning. He looked over at a sleeping Bobbie Jean and decided not to wake her. Instead he wrote a short note -

Called into the office

Be back by noon, Love

Johnny

Pentagon

Johnny stepped out on his front porch - greeted by a freshening cold northeast breeze, "Damn - feels like snow is on the way - unless the wind turns." He turned up his collar - sprinted quickly to the garage - backed his car out and averted two wandering sheep. He drove downhill on his farm lane and turned on the road leading to Chain Bridge Road. He was amazed, "Five years old and it still runs like a Swiss watch - doesn't pay to park anything new on a Pentagon parking lot." He checked the odometer, "A few more miles. Bet the boys snuck it out of the garage when Nanny wasn't looking." Johnny turned off Chain Bridge Road and drove south on the Parkway - almost alone - as always on a Saturday morning. He rolled the drivers side window part way down, "Shame to use an air-conditioner when the smog finally clears out. A little brisk after Honolulu, but Virginia's early morning autumn air is delicious - if I can remember to take it in - in bite sized chunks. He looked across the Potomac - down at the Georgetown Marina, "Empty this morning - must be too cold for racing shells." He turned off the Parkway onto Boundary Drive - driving into a mile long vacant lot - on weekends - called North Parking.

Johnny parked his car near the back entrance of the POAC and stepped out - turning his back to a stiff northeast wind that stripped autumn tan and gold leaves from bending - unwilling trees. He turned up his collar and let the wind

carry him along - with the leaves - to the Pentagon Parade Ground steps and turned west - quartering into the same cold breeze. He hurried toward the River Entrance - climbed the steps and stopped - as the GSA guard scanned his photo ID. Once cleared in - Johnny climbed the center staircase to the fourth floor - turned right and walked among a gallery of four star generals - past - turned right again on Corridor Eight - through a gallery of early Air Force art and the chimp astronaut - toward the magnolia tree outlined in the windows of A Ring. Blossoms gone - its green leaves would remain so until the ice age returned. He stopped in front of his General's Office and looked at the list of current occupants on the menu board. His name was no longer there. He punched in the cipher code and nothing happened. Johnny took the entrance phone off its cradle and dialed Tupelo's inner vault number.

Tupelo picked up, "Hello?" "Am I at Langley?" "Welcome back Colonel. I'll let you in." Tupelo opened the vault door with a smile and a handshake, "Welcome back - Lucky. Benny's in the General's office waiting." Tupelo motioned toward the door with his head, "Does the condemned desire a cup of coffee?" "Black - are you in on this?" "Does a duck have feathers?" As Johnny opened the General's Office door - the General's high backed chair spun away - facing away from him toward a viewless window. A minute later it spun around again. Benny smiled, "You're early." "So are you. Where's the General?" "On assignment." "Are you taking over?" "And wear a uniform again? Never. His deputy is." "And he is where?" "On assignment." Tupelo entered with cups - a carafe and a smile, "Coffee?" He set the tray down and each one filled their own cup.

Johnny took a sip, "What's up?" Benny's grin grew until it almost touched the rim of his glasses, "As of now you are detached to and will report to me." "And if you're not

available?" "Through Tupelo and as a last resort - CIA Ops. Now for the second shoe. As you may have surmised - I want you to go to Fiji. You can take your wife along." "How soon?" "Not for ten days - maybe a little longer. You'll have to stop in Honolulu. Ching-Chang will add to your knowledge on Fiji." "Where do I hang my hat?" "Office - down the hall. Keep the same cover. If it's compromised we'll devise a new one. As far as everyone is concerned - you are a special assistant to General Fallon. That will give you little leverage along with cover." "What about Pat Penny?" "He'll be there when you arrive." "What's his role?" "Unattached cleanup crew." "I'm a little confused - if he is the one who vaporized the JCS Chairman - why haven't you picked him up?" Benny stood up and motioned foro Tupelo to go, "Leave us alone for a few minutes?"

Tupelo picked up the coffee tray and disappeared through the door - closing it behind him. Benny sat down on the couch next to Johnny, "I had the room swept yesterday. There are no devices. Were you aware the JCS Chairman was one of theirs?" Johnny nodded, "Yes - but it wasn't confirmed." "Consider it confirmed. And the bad guys messed with Pat Penny's mind?" "Yes." "He was programmed by them to do the Chairman and they lost control." "And it's against the law for us to assassinate anyone." "Yes - and we know Pat Penny did the Chairman in. But there is no way anyone can prove it in a court of law. So - unless he really goes bonkers - Pat is home Scot free." "You said Pat is an unattached cleanup crew.'" "Without orders and on his own - he is doing what the powers that be consider necessary." "And as long as he takes care of business - you'll not bother him?" "Right - he is outside of our control and outside the law." "How about the Russians?" "They have decided not to continue to hunt for the one they call Three Penny Pat. It is too hard and for their purposes - too late." "Will he turn on us?" "I don't think so - but." "But what?" "Don't cross him or get

in his way." "What about Fiji?" "The Fijians came to us for help and we sent it. They're now free - in control of their land and we'd like for them to remain so. Tupelo will fill you in." "Are you and me finished?" "For now." Benny swung his chair around toward the window and looked out on another wall - with another window.

Tupelo met Johnny at the door, "You lucky dog you. A South Pacific Christmas vacation." He handed Johnny a sennit cord with a polished sperm whale tooth hanging from it, "This is a Tabua. It belongs to Benny. Don't lose it. The Tabua is a symbol of Fiji's good will. You'll be asked to show it and Benny wants it back unharmed." Johnny fingered the tooth, "Who do I show this Tabua too?" Chief Bau - Chief of the Royal Fijian Constabulary and a good friend of Benny's. Your cover story is - you're visiting to assist his force with a computer upgrade." "What's the real story?" "The upgrade is real, but get him up to speed on a Kiwi-Indian plot to overthrow his country." "You've got to be kidding me. I don't know a damn thing about Fiji - or a plot to overthrow it - other than what Benny told me." "We'll bring you up to speed." "Why me?" "Can you think of anyone less suspicious and nonthreatening?" "Or who knows so little?" "As I said - the computer upgrade is real and with your wife along - you'll be considered a tourist. Oh - Benny said take the rest of today and tomorrow off." "Thanks a lot. This is Saturday - tomorrow is Sunday and none of the Intelligence libraries are open until Monday."

Benny stuck his head out of The General's office door, "Finished?" Tupelo answered, "For now." "Come back in. I need another cup of coffee. I planned on giving you the rest of my information Monday, but I won't be here - my plans have changed." Benny waited until they were seated, "Quick and to the point. Chief Bau has uncovered a weapons cache. He thinks it belongs to the local Indian Hindu socialists -

provided by New Zealand sponsors." Johnny asked, "What type?" "The usual assortment. Russian surplus AK-47s - machine pistols - stun grenades - and enough ammunition to supply a brigade." "You said New Zealand. I thought it was all sheep and pasture." "And a hot bed for radical socialists. Do you remember when they wouldn't allow our ships make port calls." "Right - because we wouldn't tell them if they were carrying nuclear weapons." "Antinuclear crazies and active." "How is our General?" "He's ready for a loony bin or DIA." Tupelo laughed, "And nothing could be done because he was the mayor's son. Our General is on his way to DIA." Johnny asked, "A promotion?" "Up and out of the way." Benny added, "To the elephant's grave yard. You've got your marching orders. Any more questions?" "Who is paying for my trip." "CIA Ops." "Bobbie Jean only travels First Class." "We'll make arrangements when we have the date set. All you have to do is show up. Take the rest of the day off." "You are so kind."

Johnny stopped twenty feet past the entrance to Eighth Corridor and took a second look at the line drawing of Gus - the first chimpanzee to orbit the earth, "You look like an orangutan my friend. I notice someone has removed Bidwell's ID strip. You're no longer listed as a fighter pilot - Lieutenant General and former commander of Air Force Systems Command. Too bad - you could have made a change. Who knows - your portrait might have made the general's gallery on E Ring." Johnny laughed as he whistled - his footsteps echoing along an empty corridor. The walk across the parade ground to his car was a lot slower than coming - with the wind in his face and not at his back.

Bobbie Jean greeted Johnny on their front porch with a hug and a fresh cup of coffee. She linked her arm through his and walked to the kitchen, "Built a fire this morning. I could have used another hour of sleep, but the aroma of your

coffee and your door banging woke me up." "I'm detached to Benny. Office remains the same." "Will he be as demanding as your General?" "Don't see any change. I had to go in on a Saturday and I won't be around long enough for him to make a habit out of it. I'm flying to Fiji in ten days. Might be there over the holiday. CIA is paying the way. Nothing dangerous. They want you to go along." "Can we take the twins. It should be educational." "It's supposed to be safe, but they may be in harms way." "Will your friend - Mr. Penny - be in Fiji?" "Yes." "Then our boys will stay home or at their Grandparents." "We could compromise. I have to stop over in Hawaii for a week of training. You could fly down over Christmas and bring the boys along." "Let me sleep on it. You know they're on a basketball team." "No I didn't. That's another reason for me to get out of this business." "No time for family?" "Or for me." "Why don't you take me to lunch and we'll make plans for your future." "Where?" "Why Sam's - of course."

Sam's

Bidwell greeted them at the door, "Did you two enjoy your second honeymoon in Hawaii?" Bobbie Jean took Bidwell's arm in hers, "Not long enough. How is our restaurant doing?" "We should be expanding." "Your gaming activities must be doing well." "I need to invest my winnings." "You can go it alone." "Not in this business. I need your support and expertise." "Scout around for a location in the northern Maryland suburbs." "Lease or purchase?" "Purchase. Look for an upscale location - ground floor of an office building where parking space is available in the evening." "We might have to build." "Don't think so. Lots of office buildings going up. Someone has to be overextended." "Might take a few years." "Our Chef will know which one of his staff is ready to go it alone by then." Johnny asked, "Do you know a Chief Master Sergeant Tupelo?" "No - where does he work?"

"My General's office." "Benny Barnes." "How did you know?" "If I don't know him - he works for Benny." Johnny looked at Bobbie Jean, "Why don't we call Tucker and have a meeting at Sam's tonight." "As long as I don't have to cook." She asked Bidwell, "Our party room open on the top floor?" "No - but our private dining room is. How many?" "You and your wife - Tucker and his wife and us." "What time?" She looked over at Johnny and he answered, "Seven - add on Chief Master Sergeant Tupelo and his wife." Bobbie Jean raised her eyebrows. Johnny added, "He replaced Benny in The General's office - he's my new boss." Bidwell laughed, "Now I'll answer your question - he works for Benny. Do you two want to lunch alone or would you like company?" Bobbie Jean took Johnny's arm, "Alone - call Tucker. Johnny will call Tupelo and I'll order." Bidwell escorted them to a private booth - at the back - near the kitchen of Sam's restaurant, "Chef has a new crab sandwich he wants you to try." "Chesapeake?" "Water's cold - traps are out - more than likely - coffee or wine?" "Red and black." Bidwell motioned to a waiter - spoke briefly to him and left - allowing Bobbie Jean time to extract a long awaited promise from Johnny, "It's time for you to leave the Air Force." "In the spring."

Bobbie Jean sat quietly as Johnny drove her twenty year old Bentley south on the George Washington Parkway. She broke the silence, "Do you think its time to trade this one in?" "Are you crazy? It runs like a top - rides like a floating sofa and quiet - I can hear your heart beat sitting next to me." "How about a restoration?" "Your mechanic in New Orleans passed away. Is there a new one you trust?" "An expatriate from the Rolls factory in McLean." "Whatever you decide. I like this car - it's a classic." "Any second thoughts about leaving the Air Force next spring?" "No, but I have to finish my obligation first." "A contractual one?" "No - I gave my word and in my business - that's a binding contract. We may be in the deception business - but our word

is our bond. Tupelo is bringing his wife along and Benny is coming - too." "Did you invite him?" "Had too - he and Tupelo made plans to go out for tonight." "And they changed their plans to be with us?" "Not really - they all ready had reservations at Sam's. Our dinner invitation is free."

Johnny pushed the remote and raised the garage door to Bobbie Jean's private parking space and pulled her ancient Bentley inside. Why did you insist on an enclosed space?" "Old casino habits die hard. Just a deterrent to amateur car thieves." They walked through the underground parking garage to Sam's private elevator. Johnny inserted the key - the doors opened to a choice of four buttons - ground floor owner's office - penthouse - and parking garage. He pushed the penthouse button and the white light came on. They stepped out into Sam's private dining room. Their guests waiting - warming themselves by the fireplace. Benny walked over, "Pretty fancy place for on an Air Force salary. The view up here is fantastic." "Pays to marry a rich widow who owns a liquor store. Bobbie Jean - you remember Benny." "We're getting to be old friends. Is this the famous Tupelo - another friend of Bennys?" Tupelo introduced his wife and Benny's and Tucker walked over, "Johnny - I met your two friends in the Delta - a war or two ago." Benny stepped in, "Vietnam is in the past." Tucker added, "Paraphrasing Mark Twain - a good war spoiled. Have you boys learned anything from failure?" Benny smiled, "Be on the side of the people and stay out of jungles. We picked the wrong dictator and trained the other side - doesn't get any worse than that. Remember - we're an instrument of policy - State and the White House create it." Tucker smiled, "And all along I thought it was created by a small group of intellectuals at Columbia." Benny had a serious moment, "And we always try to prevent the last war - not the next one." Bobbie Jean stepped in, "Has everyone met the Bidwells? He is part owner and manager of our restaurant - Sam's." Benny smiled, "A

legend in his own time. Johnny - how did you get hooked up with the fastest set of card dealin' hands in the country?" "We crewed together on B-52s." Bidwell asked Benny, "Where are you working?" "Here and there - around and about. Consult with a few foreign governments and corporations. Haven't seen you since we both retired out of the Pentagon." "Tupelo took your place." "Roger that." "Are you both honorary members?" "Of what?" "The Sergeants Union." "You might say so." "Which one of you is sending my boy to Fiji over Christmas?" Tupelo spoke up, "I am." Tucker laughed, "Fiji? Johnny - you're being put out to pasture - unless the Fijians have returned to collecting heads." Bobbie Jean took Johnny's arm, "We can continue this over dinner."

*"Better to sleep with a sober cannibal
than a drunken Christian."*

Pentagon

Bidwell's comment - being put out to pasture - in the cold morning light had an augur of truth. On the morning of Johnny's second day at his new job - his status - detached to CIA Operations - didn't look glamorous, "No - feels more like I'm being hung out to dry on a very thin limb." Johnny turned up his collar to ward off the morning chill from a northwest wind. He checked his watch, "I'm late and I'm talking to myself. Better not jump to conclusions. Paranoia is for flag officers - politicians and toadies. And the only way I can make it to River Entrance from North Parking any faster is to run and that's not a good idea - wearing leather soled shoes."

Tupelo's greeting confirmed his new status. No more, "Good morning Colonel Ropp. Would you care for a cup of coffee?" Today it was a grunt - a nod and, "Stop back in later. I'll have your tickets to Fiji a little after ten." "No more special flights?" "Not where you're going. I'm giving you a five day layover in Hawaii. Will that be long enough?" "I have no idea. Does the condemned man still get coffee?" "Only if you pour it yourself. Oh - I moved your things out of your old office into your new one. It's around the corner - across the hall from your buddy - Gus the chimp astronaut." "Who told you?" "Bidwell - we belong to the Sergeants Union." He tossed Johnny his new office key, "I've stored what little classified you have in my vault. The DIA analyst for the South Pacific knows you're going to stop by today." "How about their library." "You're cleared." "Do

we have an expert?" "On Fiji? You've got to be kidding."
"Do I still have my own coffee cup?" It's in your desk - top
right hand drawer."

Johnny opened the door of The General's outer office -
looked across the corridor and saw his name - next to a well
worn wooden door, "I thought this was a broom closet." "It
was," Tupelo responded with a laugh. "Can't afford to waste
space on a temporary occupant." Johnny inserted the large
metal key - one that must have been invented in the Middle
Ages - unlocked his door - turned on the light and looked
around. His room was long and narrow - not two feet wider
than his desk at the far end - and smelled of musty wet mops.
He turned sideways to get behind his desk. On top was a
phone and two empty wooden boxes - one said in and the other
said out. He leaned back in his chair and smiled, "It
certainly is a broom closet. Not a problem - a new broom
sweeps clean. And this one won't be here long enough to get
mad." He checked the drawers. All of his personal items
were inside, but the move had scattered them about. Johnny
straightened each drawer and checked the phone. The dial
tone told him it was operating. He thought about phoning
Benny at CIA Ops to complain, but decided not too, "I know
he's waiting on my phone call. I won't give him an opening
to needle me about my new office. This has to be his little
joke. It's not all that bad - no windows - I can lock the
door and take a nap. All in all - I'll be a happy man when
the moldy mop smell airs out." He turned sideways to slide
past his desk - stepped outside and locked the door.

Johnny stopped by The Generals Office to pick up his
airline tickets. Tupelo stuck his head out of the vault and
smiled, "How do you like your new digs?" "Not bad. Won't
have visitors - ought to get some peace and quiet for a
change. Do you have my tickets to the South Pacific?" "Got
waylaid. Pick them up on your way back from DIA. I'll have

your wife's - too." "What if she doesn't want to go?" "I called - she all ready decided. Plans on arriving just before Christmas." "First Class?" "Only for her." "I'm going to stop at the Army Library. Data on Fiji is mostly open source. Call the analyst in DIA and let him know I'll see him after lunch."

Johnny had a spring in his step - a new sense of freedom - as he walked across North Parking in the afternoon sun - and not one ounce of puritanical guilt in his soul. Coming early and leaving late is a Pentagon disease he was now free of. The DIA analyst wasn't much help. Benny provided more information Saturday morning. He drove north to his farm in McLean - knowing he was out of the business of fulfilling other folks' dreams. Bobbie Jean walked out onto the front porch as he drove up the lane, "You're home early from the Pentagon wars - soldier. Were you fired?" "Don't I wish. More like being sent out to pasture. The Air Force is washing its hands of me before I get a chance to tell them I'm through." "Did your office disappear like the one in Omaha?" "Close - I've been moved into a broom closet." "You're kidding?" "The odor of moldy mops is overwhelming, but it has its advantages. I'm my own boss. For now - I can set my own agenda - stop working those twelve hour days and no longer do I have to repond to a General's beck and call. And as far as the world knows - I still work at the same job." "With a broom closet for an office?" "Didn't think of that. Not very good cover - is it?" "Your peers will know - you've suffered a great loss of prestige. I shopped for resort clothes this afternoon. Carry in the packages from my Bently while I start dinner."

Johnny finished the last of five trips and returned to the kitchen, "Are there any summer clothes left in Virginia?" "Don't knock a professional shopper - soldier - this is late fall - I bought everything on sale. Open a bottle of red and

we'll toast our new status." Johnny poured two glasses and opened the door to the backyard lanai. He stepped outside - leaned against the rail and gazed west at his woods. His sheep were edging their way towards the stables - nibbling at tufts of grass along the way. Bobbie Jean came to his side and linked her arm in his, "Brr - it's cold out here. Come back inside and keep me company while I make our salads." "Where are the boys?" "At basketball practice." "I have a better idea."

Nothing happened the next day - or the next - or the next - or the next - or the next - unless looking for information on Fiji is an earth shaking event. He stopped by Tupelo's vault on his way out, "I've done all I can here. Fiji isn't one of DOD's central areas of concern." "Make work for you - to get you out of my hair. Ching-Chang has all the details you'll need. Don't forget to give me a call when you arrive in paradise." "Is there some harm in my way?" "No - would we send you where there is?" "Yes and Benny has. I'm leaving in the morning."

One Flew West

Johnny looked up at the early morning sky, "Stars look like high intensity crime lights in DC - bright, but with a yellow cast." He retrieved his morning newspaper from the drainage ditch and returned to the kitchen. Bobbie Jean picked up the pot and poured coffee, "No breakfast for you this morning. I want you to eat on the plane. What does Tucker's Yellow Journalism paper have to say?" "Post is busy shooting messengers instead of the message. I'll finish packing while you read your favorite part." "The comics and the crossword. You're packed. All you have to do is carry your suitcases to the car." "Hate to leave at this time of year. Late fall means cozy fireplaces and walks with you in the crisp morning air." "Remember those thoughts each time

you think of going back on your word." "Don't worry - my mind is made up. If it wasn't - the wet mop odor clinched it." "Better hurry or you'll miss your plane."

As they drove to Dulles Airport, Bobbie Jean poured Johnny a fresh cup of coffee from the carafe by her feet, "How soon will you be in Fiji?" "Within a week if all goes well in Hawaii." "Stay away from the Wahines on Waikiki." "I've got my own Wahine waiting for me here in McLean. Don't want to be cut out of the will." "Fun-ny. I'm flying in a week before Christmas. Make sure we have a suite with a view." "On Uncle Sam's nickel - I'll have a room overlooking the dumpster ." "When I arrive - a suite at the Viti Levu." "Viti Levu?" "Fiji's best - I phoned last night." "Hotel owner's Mafia?" "Of course." Johnny stopped in front of the airline departure area - opened the door on the drivers side and held it for Bobbie Jean. She gave him a hug - a kiss and then a passionate embrace - before pushing him away, "Maybe we should come here in the evening." "To get our hearts started?" She hopped in - closed the door and popped open the trunk, "Have to get the boys off to school. Retrieve your luggage and - Johnny?" "He kissed her lightly on the lips, "I know - I love you too." He stood on the curb as the sky cap checked his bags through to Honolulu - staring at Bobbie Jean's tail lights - growing dimmer as they grew further apart.

By the time Johnny arrived at the mid field terminal - his flight to Chicago was boarding and the sensation of being alone was all encompassing. He had been cut loose from his moorings at work and now he was separating - again from his family. He had done so a hundred times, but this time - it was like being set adrift without steering or anchor. He picked up a copy of the Wall Street Journal on the way to his seat. After settling in - Johnny glanced at the lead story on the front page - *Corporate leaders promise to fire Americans* and

laughed, "The last time they made that promise - they hired workers from Central America. That bit of humor broke my mental funk." He folded the paper and inserted it into the seat pocket in front of him, "I'll read it on the way," but he didn't. As soon as wheels were in the well - Johnny was asleep. He woke when the flight attendant asked him to place his seat back in an upright position.

O'Hare Airport mimicked the city of Chicago - large - sprawling - with quick stepping throngs. Not spotless - or dirty - O'Hare is in a continual state of cleaning - not quite making it. Johnny laughed to himself, "A toddlin' town - now where are the toddlers? He walked past a satellite bar and noticed two - in their cups - waiting for passengers - or maybe a flight. He checked the departure TV screen. His flight to Honolulu had been dealayed for thirty minutes, "I won't have to run to check in. Napped through breakfast. Better find something hot to eat." Johnny set his briefcase down by a lunch stand and ordered a hot dog and small beer. As he spread mustard and relish on the dog - still in shock over the price, "A three dollar dog and a three dollar beer. I'll not dine here again." He took a bite, "Excellent dog - though and the beer is cold. Been through here - how many times? Ten - twenty? Never seen the town. Maybe there is just this airport. Forgot about the ethnic neighborhoods. Has to be similar to Omaha. A toddlin' town - Bobbie Jean will want to see the toddlers. Wonder if the Palmer House is still here? She'll know."

Johnny found his assigned seat was on the right side of the airplane. As he sat down he looked up - two very large people approached and thought, "Oh no - it's a twelve hour flight to Honolulu." He stood so they could sit - wondering, "How will they ever fit in these narrow airline seats?" His questioned was answered as each laid a roll of fat filled skin over the top of the arm rests. The Flight Attendant -

noticing Johnny's lack of space - his arms penned in by two large mounds of flesh - moved him to an empty aisle seat immediately behind the First Class section. He returned her smile, "You have my eternal thanks." She answered, "That's what the two people you left behind said." Johnny shook his head, "Without Bobbie Jean in charge - I'm in cattle class. I wonder - is Benny moving me away from the action because of my association with Three Penny Pat? Why would he?" And then it hit home, "I know too much. We don't assassinate friends or enemies - or do we? He can't select me to join his CIA team on his own. I haven't been vetted - except for that session after Tucker and Paddy Black were caught in a Vietcong ambush." Nothing fits - I'm without answers. Maybe I should abort this mission and get out now. Rather play the chess game - not be a pawn."

Johnny leaned back and unbuckled his seat belt as the 747 leveled off at initial flight altitude. He waited for the drink cart to pass by before standing up - stretching and waiting outside the door for an unoccupied sign. He returned to his seat and checked his watch, "Should have stayed awake on the flight from Dulles to O'Hare - now I can't get to sleep and we have eleven hours to go." The movie brought some relief. Johnny took his earphones off and watched another Hollywood tribute to four letter words and the Actors Studio art of shouting in silence. "Maybe Hollywood should return to making silent movies. Not half bad without sound. Even the out of place sex scene comes off better - without all that breathless groaning and moaning. Johnny stayed awake through the second serving - before finally falling asleep - waking as air brakes were extended - giving notice that his flight was beginning its descent toward Honolulu International's runway. He sat up and looked out the window, "Koolau Mountains are covered by clouds - streaming to the southwest. Has to be a strong northeast Trade Wind. We should land toward the terminal on the short runway."

Honolulu

Johnny looked around for an escort, but there was none, "News travels fast. My fall from grace has reached all the way here - out in the middle of the Pacific. Thought Ching-Chang would at least show up for old times sake." As he walked to the main terminal - a Trade Wind driven misty rain blew under the ramada. Wet - Johnny rushed on, "At least the Hawaiian Gods are blessing my arrival." He stopped inside the terminal and called the VOQ. There was no room at the inn. A multination military training exercise as underway. He called the Army hotel on the beach, but the Hale Koa was full. However - they were able to reserve a room for him at the Hawaiian Village. Johnny requested the Rainbow Tower, "This pineapple shower is a blessing - I'm staying at a first class hotel."

Johnny went to the rental car counter before retrieving his luggage from the carousel. His luck was indeed improving - last on - first off worked - and his rental car was in the covered parking garage - directly across the road from the terminal. He opened the trunk - the aroma of mildew greeted his nostrils, "Been around the island a few times." He closed it and placed his suitcases in the back seat, "Four door - cloth interior - hope the air-conditioning works." He drove down the access road to Nimitz Highway and turned right - Diamondhead - toward Waikiki, "Even at night I can smell the aroma of tropical flowers. He closed his window, "And a pineapple shower mist. Has to be the cleanest air in the world." He continued Diamond Head on Nimitz toward Waikiki and turned Makai - toward the mountains - on Ward Avenue - then Diamond Head on Ahuai Street and Mauka - toward the ocean - into the Ward Warehouse parking garage. He had executed three points of the Hawaiian compass, but not the fourth - Ewa - toward the Wainai Mountains. He parked on the third floor and walked out - under partial cover.

Passing the Old Spaghetti House in a Trade Wind Mist - Johnny sought shelter under the awning of Horatios - a continental restaurant. Hunger coming on - he stepped inside and found a seat at the bar - avoiding the dark wood booths lovers use. He ordered a dark draft beer and turned around - looking out the second story window at Kewalo Basin - the old fishing boat wharf. Tour Buses were arriving in the parking lot for sunset sails. He didn't bother with a menu, "Beef Wellington - medium rare." The bartender motioned with his head toward a two-person booth, "We don't serve here. You'll be more comfortable in a booth." Johnny smiled and carried his beer to a two person booth, "Old world customs and old world atmosphere. Must be left over from the monarchy." His salad arrived within minutes after he was seated, "Old world service - too." He looked at his watch, "Midnight in DC and six p.m. here. No wonder the service is fast." His Beef Wellington arrived as soon as he finished his salad.

After dinner - he returned to the bar and ordered an Irish Coffee. He asked the bartender, "Notice the fishing fleet is in port. What's up?" "Our Shark God has gone on a trip and fishing has gone south with him." "Is that the same shark who ate half a surfboard in Waimanalo Bay?" "You must be local." "I was here on business when it happened." "We think he destroyed a large ocean going catamaran - too. This Tiger Shark is a friend - he fishes the same territory as our fishing fleet does. We treat him with respect." "When did he disappear?" "The day after the assassination of the JCS Chairman at Bellows Field."

With his mind still on the missing Tiger Shark - Johnny almost missed the right turn from Kalia Road into his hotel - Hawaiian Village. He negotiated speed bumps with extra care - with slippery pavement and wandering pedestrians about. He turned right and pulled under the overhang - next to a lobby - open to Trade Winds, but still protected from misty rain.

The hotel night clerk looked up, "May I help you?" "I'm John Ropp. Called from the airport about a room at military rates?" "Colonel Ropp - we've been waiting for you. I have your suite ready - Diamond Head corner - top floor of our Rainbow Tower." "I can't afford a suite at military rates." "Your wife is one of our major shareholders. You are our guest." He motioned to a bellhop, "May I have your keys. We'll park your car. Do you have luggage?" "In the back seat." "Follow our bellhop." Johnny nodded, "If anyone calls or asks which room I'm in - don't give it out. And please - don't list my name or room in your computer." "Is there a reason?" "Six metal ones." "We'll list it under your wife's maiden name - Mrs. Langtry."

Johnny rode to the Rainbow Tower in a covered electric cart and followed as the bellhop escorted him to a private elevator - opening only on the top floor. He tipped the bellboy - generously and looked around, "Two bedrooms - a small kitchen with a fridge - bar - fruit basket - everything and what a view." He picked up the phone and called McLean. Bobbie Jean answered, "I was waiting for your call. How do you like your room?" "Owner's suite on the top floor. Are you an owner?" "A small piece of this chain - don't you remember?" "Why didn't we stay here instead of the Royal on our second honeymoon?" "The Royal is a grand old lady with a honeymoon tradition. I wanted to stay there on our first visit. Don't you remember our first time - at the Roosevelt Hotel in New Orleans?" "Blueberry muffins and rich New Orleans coffee." "Don't you like your new digs?" "Love it, but can we afford it?" "Hotel owners Mafia." "I forgot. Is everything quiet on the home front?" "We have a visitor." "Parked down the road?" "Yes, but not where I can observe him." "Lock the doors and keep my shotgun at hand." "I'm one step ahead of you. Who are they?" "Don't know - could be the good guys." "Why would CIA watch an empty nest?" "Right hand doesn't let the left one know where the fox has

gone to ground, but this time they must know where I am. Russians aren't interested. That leaves only one group." "Pat Penny's Hungarians?" "I'm not his daughter's favorite person." "A woman scorned!" "Is our phone tapped?" "Yes, but we have nothing to hide." "Watch your six - soldier." "I will." "And I will."

Villa Penny - Hungary

Pretty Penny - Pat's daughter - was furious, "The Croats want Pat to provide more Cork weapons. We can't - not since O'Leary joined *The Great Big Hairy Red Things*. And they don't have funds to pay for them. And Father has disappeared - somewhere in the South Pacific . Damn him - where is he when I need him. He's the only one who knows how to deal with those hotheads. We don't have weapons to lend - not for them - not out of our reserves. Mother warned him - Serbs and Croats have been at each others throats for centuries. No one - at least not in Hungary - would ever get involved in their tribal warfare. Almost every Balkan valley is a jungle - inhabited by different ethnic groups. And even though they all look alike - their only similarity is a hatred for each other." She shook her head, Mother was right again - Europe is more tribal than Africa. And our boundaries don't match up with our inhabitants - either. We should give each Balkan tribe weapons and ammunition - seal the borders and wait for a victor. I could phone Benny for help, but Father's the only one allowed to make contact. I'll make a note - we must set up an emergency procedure." The phone rang.

Pretty Penny waited for thr sixth ring before picking up the receiver hooked to their special line, "Hello." "Colonel Ropp is not here." "Did you tap his phone?" "Yes - he is in Hawaii, but his family is here. Any instructions?" "No - return to home plate - Three Penny is out of pocket. When he makes contact - I'll ask for instructions. Are you satisfied

with your surveillance?" "We have everything mapped. There is a dog." "You know how to take care of it." "Now?" "Of course not." "Break off - don't scare the fox - return home now." She set the receiver back in its cradle, "God save me from incompetent help. I can only count on Franz. I'll send him - when the time comes." Pretty Penny stood up - looked outdoors and stretched, "Winter is here - It's time to make our link sausage. I will add fennel and more peppers. Why has Benny loaded a weapon and will not allow us to pull the trigger? Where is Father when I need him. He must call - and soon."

South Pacific

The catamaran's mainsail flapped in the wind. Pat Penny sat up straight, "Wind! I'm out of the equatorial doldrums." He shut down the diesel - walked forward on the port boom and fully unfurled his main sail. He wet his hand in the ocean and held it high in the air, "No spinnaker - not yet - not enough wind. He looked at his watch, "I've been under power for - lets see - at least thirty-two hours." Pat placed his hands on the side of the hatch and swung below. He opened a can of Primo, "Time to celebrate my release from a windless sea. I've been sailing this watery desert much too long." He stepped back and looked at the beer can, "This Primo is beginning to taste like beer. Feels good to be back under sail. A fair wind is welcome relief from tropical heat." He checked his GPS readout and plotted his position on the chart, "I've passed Howland and Baker Islands. And with this wind - I should pass by Phoenix Islands today."

Pat opened another Primo, "Spoke too soon - better mix it with a bit of stout." He made a wry face, "This stuff is only good for cooking or disinfectant." He measured the distance to Fiji on his chart, "A little over thirteen hundred miles to go. If the wind holds - should be there in

five days." Pat carried his thermal mug of mixed stout and Primo to the helm and unlocked the wheel, "Moving right along now." He looked down - down into the depths, "I see you with your great big black eyes lookin' up at me - like I was a pupu. Stayin' in the shade of my Cat - are you? If you were white and I was Captain Ahab - you'd be my obsession, but your not and I'm not. I'm your obsession, but those eyes - they're never closed - always watching. You're beginning to make me nervous and I'm beginning to have empathy with Captain Ahab. We've both been alone - too long - you and me - out on this watery grave. Maybe that was Ahab's problem. I could use some human company. How about you? Are the only humans you desire is to satisfy your appetite? Am I company enough - or do you only speak with the other Hawaiian Gods? I'm beginning to believe your a shark God - too. Why else would you be leading me on? If you wanted too - you could destroy me and my Cat in seconds. I'm talking to a shark. Heat must be frying my brain. Better cool down with a bucket bath. Time to wash up."

Pat dropped his shorts. Undressed - he dipped a canvas bucket into the ocean and splashed salt water over his head and shoulders. He soaped down and repeated his bucket bath ritual until soap was gone from his skin. As he air dried in the wind - Pat spoke to his friend below, "I'm tired of these salt water bucket baths my friend and as much as I'd love to take a dip in the ocean - I don't think were that friendly. If you'd swim away for just a few minutes? Not your style? I'm not only talking to myself - I'm answering. Better call Pretty Penny and see how things are coming along at home. Maybe she can join Mother and me in Fiji. Might need a backup." Pat dressed - checked the main - locked the wheel and swung below to the Navigation Station. He picked up his satellite phone, "Screw Benny - doesn't matter what he thinks - I'm using this fancy CIA satellite system for a personal phone call."

Pretty Penny picked up on the sixth ring, "Hello."
"How are things at the Villa?" "Where are you?" "Can't say - not over this line. Someone might be listening in. It's a dangerous world out here. Talk to your Mother. She'll let you know where I'll be. Maybe you'll join us at Christmas."
"Do you need help?" "A backup." "Where is our Colonel?" "Washington DC." "Not anymore. Has Benny talked with you about him?" "Not on my agenda and shouldn't be on yours - either." "He's had me do the preliminaries." "That's out of line - we don't do friends. Just because you weren't able to snag him. Get over this woman scorned thing. You and me are not common killers and we're not going to become ones." "It is preliminary." "It is illegal and I'll have no part of it. Have you ground the sausage?" "I have begun. Mother will want to know your estimated time of arrival." "I'll arrive in five days. Can I expect to see you?" "We'll see."

Pat placed the receiver back in its cradle, "This is unacceptable. Unless he has turned? I doubt that. Money is the mother's milk of entrapment and Colonel Ropp doesn't need any. He and his wife have more than we do. What's gotten into Benny? Maybe I should break silence and give him a call. No - I will be too inviting a target - for him." He climbed above decks, "At least me and my Tiger have made an accommodation." Pat looked down, "You rascal you - using my Cat's shadow to attract fish. You've got a moveable feast! You old codger you - you're large enough to be an Orca and smart enough to be a great white whale - stayin' deep in the daytime and risin' up at night to give me a little bump now and then to keep me on my toes."

Honolulu

As the door opened - The Detachment Secretary looked up from her desk at the clock on the wall, "Mr. Ching-Chang - you're in late this morning. Traffic?" "Accident on H2."

Some one got blinded driving into the rising sun. Morning Advertiser here?" "On your desk. Tea or coffee?" "Coffee" and he smiled. It was her little game to let him know he was Chinese American on an island dominated by her people - Japanese Americans. And his little game was to answer with the usual response - coffee - making a statement that they were American first - race second and Hawaiian forever. He opened the paper to local news, "Did you see the Article about our fishing fleet?" His Secretary carried his coffee in, "No - is there a problem?" "They're in port. The day after the JCS Chairman was assassinated - fish disappeared." "The Shark God has left our islands." "You don't believe in those old Kahuna tales - do you?" "No one is catching any fish." "Touché! I apologize - I haven't been entirely truthful this morning. There was an accident on H2 and I was behind an elderly Japanese lady who had to look up through her steering wheel to drive. And she was blinded by the sun. But - I'm really late because I procrastinated - I don't want to attend the briefing this morning at FICPAC."

The Fleet Intelligence Center's building at Makalapa on the Mauka edge of Pearl Harbor was crowded - without windows and possessed faulty air-conditioning. Ching-Chang stopped by his Secretary's desk on the way out, "Should be back before noon. If Colonel Ropp calls - get his number and location. Tell him I'll call him back." "You're our Detachment Commander. Send some one else. You don't have to go if you don't want to." "It's about Fiji." "Send Kalani." "Can't - FICPAC won't let a civilian consultant in without an escort." "And you can't find him in time." "And PACAF won't allow me to use him as their representative." "I'm going to take an early lunch today." "Anything special?" "One of the secretaries at PACAF Intel is getting married. We're having a shower." Ching-Chang nodded and walked to his staff car. He drove the back way - around Pearl Harbor, "Kalani might be at his favorite fishing spot."

When Ching-Chang returned - his Secretary had left a note -

Colonel Ropp called, but wouldn't leave his number - or say at which hotel he is staying. Said he'll stop by after lunch - which is where I am.

Ching-Chang unlocked his briefcase and placed his notes from the FICPAC briefing on his desk. The FICPAC briefing had been a pleasant surprise. For a change - he was able to stay awake - even in the sweltering heat of FICPAC's briefing room - instead of napping after the lights dimmed. Rumors were on the wind about a possible KIWI socialist backed coup in Fiji. Local Fijian Indian socialists were believed to be laying the groundwork to retake the islands by force. This briefer was well versed. He even provided a short history of modern Fiji - including the transition from British rule to independence. Ching-Chang smiled, "But they're still members of the Commonwealth. When the British left - the plantation workers took over the government and left the native Fijians out in the cold. Just like we did to our Hawaiians. Except here - if you peel the skin off a Hawaiian - you'll find a part Chinese and if you peel the skin off a Chinese - there is a part Hawaiian."

Ching-Chang wandered out to the coffee mess - poured another cup and looked at his watch, "Eleven-thirty - Ropp will be here in an hour. Better bone up." He resumed where he left off, "After taking control - Fiji's socialist government formed an alliance with New Zealand's antinuclear movement and the Soviet Union in an effort to establish a nuclear free zone. However - when Fiji began to move toward the Soviet Block - Fijians - who still controlled the land - police and military - revolted and kicked their socialist Indians out of office. Ching-Chang smiled, "My Fijian

friends are more fortunate than we were - they didn't give up their land. And it looks like they want to keep it. The New Zealand government isn't supporting this - so it's Butch Cassidy - Sun Dance Kid time. Who are these guys and where did they come from? At least I was able to save some money. We were asked to support a fact finding mission and I don't have anyone to send. Not since Kalani retired. Neither does the Navy - or Army and Benny has Colonel Ropp on the way. I wonder how he knew?"

Johnny stuck his head in the door, "Are you plotting an overthrow of Mr. Dole's homeland." Ching-Chang laughed, "After this morning's briefing on Fiji - I was thinking about it. How did Benny know Fiji was exploding?" "He told me it was going to be a peaceful vacation." "To Benny - peace means no nuclear explosions. I'm glad your going down under because I don't have anyone to send. But - this exercise would better fit Da-Kine Local. Someone who blends in." Johnny held his temper in check - though his cheeks were flushed, "Cut out the Kabuki dance. I understand your concern. I know you'd rather send one of your people, but I didn't volunteer - I was drafted - so you can stop shooting the messenger - me. Aim at Benny." "We'll just have to make the best of it. It just might work out. As a Haole - you can stumble into places like a tourist - without raising too much suspicion. Peace? What can I do to help?" "Didn't get any useful data in Washington. DIA has mostly open source stuff. They spend very little time on friendlies. I need the nitty-gritty stuff. Where do I begin my data search." "FICPAC has a fair amount - mostly open. IPAC has an analyst who covers the whole South Pacific. I'd start there. Do you have transportation?" "Rented a car. Why didn't you have someone meet me?" "Didn't know you were coming in until after you arrived. Oh - Tupelo called. He's steaming. Why didn't you check in?" "Tagalongs at my house. Don't know whether they're good guys - or bad guys."

Johnny scanned Ching-Chang's notes from the FICPAC briefing, "Same-ol' - same-ol' stuff Benny gave me." "Damn that Benny. He knows more than he's letting on. I just found out about the problem in Fiji this morning at FICPAC." "Do you have anything on Pat Penny?" "He drowned at sea - didn't he?" "Someone who looks a lot like him is sailing in the South Pacific. Any fallout on the assassination at Bellows?" "Had to tear down and rebuild the Commander's cottage. The JCS Chairman's remains were imbedded into every piece that remained." "Is PACAF Intel still at odds with IPAC?" "Still haven't forgiven them for taking PADAF away." "PADAF?" "Pacific Air Defense Analysis Facility." "Do they have a legitimate beef?" "Yes - wars over in Vietnam - so they diverted the Defense Analysts to other work. Defense Analysis has gone the way of the cavalry." "Until another war starts. I'll start at IPAC."

Driving up the ridge line road - high above Pearl Harbor to Camp H. M. Smith is a trip through four climatic zones. From coastal tropical - to desert tropical - to hill country temperate - to mountain rain forest. The visitor slot was filled - so Johnny parked in the adjacent PACOM staff parking lot - cooled his heels at the entrance desk as the Marine Guard waited on clearance from IPAC Security. The IPAC South Pacific Analyst met him at the door, "Our librarian has all we have on Fiji ready for you. Recommend you look through it and then we'll talk." "If it's the same as DIA's - it won't take long." "Did Ching-Chang bring you up to date on the briefing we received at FICPAC this morning?" "Reviewed his notes - is it that serious?" "That's why you're going out - to see if it is." Johnny leafed through IPAC's information on Fiji and turned it back to the librarian, "Same as DIA and the Army Library at the Pentagon." "After you speak with our analyst - why don't you stop at the Bishop Museum. Their Curator is an expert on Fiji. Will tomorrow at ten be okay?" "Great - I can visit the museum - too."

IPAC's Fiji analyst capped off Johnny's most productive fact gathering afternoon. The discovery of a cache of weapons outside Suva - the Capitol of Fiji - would prove to be an augur for his forthcoming visit . When he stood up to leave - the IPAC analyst asked, "Has Ching-Chang mentioned Kalani?" "No - is it a town - highway or market?" "He's Ching-Chang's expert on the South Pacific. Kalani knows more about Fiji than the Bishop Museum. Believe he still consults with your Detachment. Where are you off too next?" "Your librarian set up an appointment with the Bishop Museum Curator for Fiji tomorrow morning. So - I'm through for the day. I'm heading back to the hotel. "Where are you staying?" "At the airport Ramada - got in late - nice, but not Waikiki." "And not Waikiki prices either." Johnny drove back to the Hawaiian Village Hotel with his windows rolled down - smelling the tropical flowers along the way. Before turning off at the H1 Punahou exit - he searched for and found the Bishop Museum - high above the roadbed - Mauka of the freeway, "Wonder how I get to it? Must be isolated by roads."

Nothing much happened that evening. None of his traps had been triggered - so he knew his room wasn't searched. Bobbie Jean was relieved. Her tagalongs - parked down the lane had left. When he mentioned the weapons cache - she replied, "Doesn't sound like a vacation to me. That does it - our boys aren't coming along. Where are you going to dine tonight?" "Ching-Chang's Uncle is the Executive Chef at the Golden Dragon - the Village's restaurant. Has a lobster sauce that is supposed to be terrific." "My - my - I've created a gourmet." "No - just the standard husband who is wife trained. Are you still coming to Fiji?" "Of course - have to protect my lifetime investment."

After so many briefings that glossed over facts - the Bishop Museum's Curator's was a breath of fresh air. "Like

most of the South Pacific - Fiji consisted of many islands - spread out over a great expanse of ocean. An independent dominion of the British Commonwealth - Fiji's population exceeds 800,000. Ceded to the British by Sera Cakobau in 1874 - their most famous Chief - the British in turn granted independence after World War II. However - the Indians brought in by the British to work the sugar cane fields gained control of their Parliament and attempted to establish a socialist government. This was a subterfuge - an effort to gain control of land owned by native Fijians. Conflict was created at the birth of Fiji's independence. Unlike Hawaii - Fijians maintained control of the constabulary and military. They took their islands back." "How would you classify the Fijians?" "Their way of life is similar to our Samoans. The Village and family are anchors. Although they were at one time some of the most feared warriors in the South Pacific - Fijians are industrious - intelligent and friendly. Their way of life incorporates most of the utopian aspects of socialism, but one that is clan centered." "Which islands are prime?" The northern island - Vanua Levu has the colonial capitol - Lambia. Viti Levu - the southern island - has Fiji's modern day capitol - Suva. However - the center of power is a little island off the coast of Viti levu - Bau - where Fiji's most fiercest warrior rulers live. You may notice that the last three letters of Cakobau's name are bau. You're free to look at all the information I have."

Johnny turned over his material and telephoned Ching-Chang at his Hickam Air Force Base Office, "I'm swimmin' up to my ears in data on Fiji. Meet me at the O' Club for a beer. We need to talk - before I fly out of here." "How did it go at the Bishop Museum?" "Between the Curator and the analyst at IPAC - I'm almost up to speed. Can you arrange a meeting with Kalani?" "How did you find out about him?" "Everyone I talked too recommends that I talk to him." "Too late for today. How soon are you planning to fly out?" "Day

after tomorrow." "I'll see what I can do. He makes himself scarce. I'll meet you at the Hickam Club in thirty minutes." "Traffic?" "Forty-five."

Johnny walked around the O' Club to the back Lanai - which overlooks the channel into Pearl Harbor's East Lock. The big E - aircraft carrier Enterprise - was entering the channel - absolutely silent on nuclear power - until Victory at Sea came blasting out of its loudspeakers - just as she came abreast of the Air Force O' Club lanai. Johnny sat down next to Ching-Chang - laughing, "Navy making another political statement?" "Not often we can watch a floating air base - as long as the Empire State building is tall - float by." "Why is she sailing in at dusk?" "Coming in after retreat - so she won't have to give full honors to the Arizona." "Understand - so her crew won't have to fall out in dress whites." "I ordered a pitcher of beer." "Anything wet. Did you find Kalani?" "I left a message." "Johnny poured, "Your Uncle is quite a Chef." "He goes to Hong Kong once a year to pick up the latest." "Is that where he found the lobster sauce?" "No - that's his own creation. How did your day go?" "I'm not an expert, but I'll pass for an informed visitor." "Best to play dumb."

Johnny took a sip and watched the Big E as it sailed up the channel and disappeared in the twilight. He refilled their glasses, "Does Fiji's colonial experience compare to Hawaii's?" "Might - outsiders look at the beauty of our islands and see paradise. After you live here awhile - you notice our soft underbelly - one full of turmoil - friction and conflict." "How so?" "Topography is a contributor. We aren't in Kansas - Dorothy. Hawaii is mountainous - if it's flat we build on it - plant it - or pave it. Fiji is like Hawaii - except our islands our volcanic and theirs are continental. I know it looks like we have a lot of space, but it's difficult to build on - or plant a cliff. So - we

both have limited space and unlimited people. For instance - on my island - Oahu - highways were designed to accommodate a population of less than 300,000. Today - we're at 600,000 and growing." "Can't you build your highways near the mountains?" "Yes, but when it's proposed - special interest group from here to California oppose it."

Ching-Chang ordered pupus, "Put a ten dollar bill on the table." Johnny asked, "Why?" "Local custom. We eat and drink until my ten and your ten are gone." "And then what?" "We go home and get chewed out by our wives." Johnny laughed, "We're more alike than we are different, but I can see the difference between Hawaii and Fiji. You don't have the same racial mix as Fiji. Your plantation owners brought in Chinese - Japanese - Filipinos and Mexicans to work the fields. The British brought in Indians from India. Hawaii absorbed all racial groups - in Fiji the Indians remained separate." "Almost like our Japanese." "Are they separate?" "They were for three generations. Now they're beginning to mix in. Hawaii has more similarities to Fiji's previous socialist government than most people like to think. We're a one party state. Our governor's party has been in power so long - he wanted us to return to the monarchy - with him as king. So - we built a welfare state and forgot that someone has to pay for it."

It was Johnny's turn to order pupus, "I won't have to buy dinner out tonight. Is there a solution to your traffic problem?" "Only if the politics of a one party state don't throw sand into the gears of civilized planning and zoning. Otherwise our only solution is to follow Bermuda's example - limit automobiles to one per household and eliminate car rentals to tourists." "I've been there - it works. They also limit the speed their autos can go by motor size and mechanical means." "Right now - if we want to stay on here - everyone in the house has to work - to pay the governors

taxes and the artificially high prices for food - housing - everything we buy." "What causes that?" "We tax goods when they arrive and each time they change hands." "Isn't that called a tariff? I thought that was illegal." "We disguise our tariff. We call it an excise tax." "Isn't there a sales tax?" "That comes when a product is sold to a consumer. We not only tax goods - we tax services - like real estate and consultant commissions." "No wonder prices are so high - you guys make Massachusetts look conservative." "Where do you think our missionaries came from?"

Ching-Chang ordered another round of pupus and both ten dollar bills disappeared. Johnny shook his head, "Fiji threw out their socialists." "Hawaii's the laughingstock of the west. At least Fijians saved their country. It's beginning to look like all we can't even save our okoles. Have you seen our two representatives in Congress" They make Lenin look conservative. We have a transplanted Hippy' and a lady who's so red we call her - Pink. Our central problem is a state controled school system - designed to provide political spoils - not to teach. The outer islands provide the party in power with its political base - so Oahu pays most of the taxes and the outer islands get money for roads and schools." "Doesn't a central system provide a level playing field for all students?" "Level is right - Hawaii's schools are so far below the national level - not one of our politicians send their children to public schools." "Sounds like Washington DC." "It's more like DC than we care to admit. I'm not one of them, but my children still attend private school - one of the best - Kamehameha." "Isn't he your warrior king - the one who united all of the islands?" "Yes - you have to have a percentage of Hawaiian blood to attend. Tuition is minimal. The Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop Estate runs the school. You are becoming a Local. As usual our discussion has strayed a long way from Fiji." "Not really. There is one universal constant - people will always be people and

most politicians will always be whores." "Or lawyers," Ching-Chang laughed. "And no right minded person is able to tell the difference."

Johnny drove back to the hotel with his memory banks and stomach filled to capacity. As he drove by Ala Moana Park - past the late afternoon jogging wahines - and all of their parts were bouncing in rhythm - it jogged his mind back to the present, "Ching-Chang has stripped the romance of Hawaii away. I'm not sure if I'm enlightened or robbed. I'll never again view Hawaii as a pristine paradise." Johnny checked his watch, "I have three hours before I'm supposed to phone Bobbie Jean - time enough for a practice nap."

The ringing of the phone matched the sound in his ears - still ringing from the lecture he received from Bobbie Jean last night. Johnny picked up the receiver, "Sorry about the wake up call." "Ching-Chang - how did you find my number?" "My Uncle is the Executive Chef. Meet me at the Detachment in an two hours - I have a surprise for you." "Roger that. You were right about your local custom. I slept through and failed to phone Bobbie Jean. She called and read the riot act to me. What's the surprise?" "You wanted to meet Kalani - Kalani Aku Kahiko. He was my expert on Fiji - before one of our Air Force Intelligence budget crunches forced Kalani into early retirement." Johnny looked at his watch, "I slept in. Is it really eight a.m.?" "Two a.m. Washington time. Happens to all you Haole tourists."

As Ching-Chang set his parking brake beside Kalani's truck he called out, "Hey Kalani - no can catch big fish in shallow water when sun is shining." "Ono la Ching-Chang. Da kine line is just to keep Ku ula happy. No fish in these waters." Johnny asked, "Is it because your Shark God left the islands?" Kalani reeled in his line and smiled, "Who da kine aikane - Ching-Chang and how come he's so akamai about

our Kahuna's Gods?" "Colonel Ropp is from Washington - Kalani. He's been reading up on Fiji and wants to ask you some questions." "Glad to meet you - Colonel. Its been a strange two weeks. Either our Shark God has gone away or Puu Loa is keeping the fish away from our hooks and nets. Even our fishing fleet is in harbor. These Pearl Harbor waters are a breeding ground for Hawaii's sharks and there are none to be found. And this harbor is the ancestral home of our Shark God. When the shark disappear - we are concerned. You want I should help this mainland Haole - Ching-Chang?" "If you will. Pull on your consultant hat and honor us with your presence in my office." "Might as well. No fish in these waters and I can use the money. All my children are on the mainland and my wife wants to visit her Grandchildren."

Kalani walked into Ching-Chang's office ten minutes late - his hair wet, "Used the shower you put in for your joggers. Is that still a fad?" Ching-Chang nodded, "Going the way of the hula-hoop. Are you going to move to the mainland?" "Wife wants too - to be near our children. We've been offered a lot of money for our land at Punaluu. That's on the North Shore - Colonel Ropp. I'm being taxed off my property. When are you going to pull the plug?" Ching-Chang frowned, "Kids are still in school. No work here. Might just follow you. You ready to bring Johnny up to date?" "Sure - you got a nice shower. No money for people, but money for things." "Ching-Chang laughed, "Things don't retire and get sick and cost Uncle Sugar money. And when we buy things - we pay off political debts."

Kalani looked over at Johnny, "Before you ask - I was in contact with Benny when he was out here. If he talked with you about Fiji - I gave him the information." "Did Pat Penny talk to you?" "He phoned. I've known Pat since our training days on the mainland. We didn't talk business. He's retired - isn't he?" "Only when he sleeps." "Tell me about Fiji."

"Are you familiar with the Fijian Scouts during World War II?" "No - are they famous?" "Are they - really did a job for the Aussies during the war. The Chief of police is a Bau and his father was one of their bravest Scouts. A lot of honor and pride in that family. You'll be working with Chief Bau. Don't fudge anything with him. Be straight up." "How about the political situation?" "Solved for now - since the Fijians took their country back. Funny thing about that situation - they tolerated the Indian socialists as long as they respected Fiji's customs - kept their hands off the land and didn't get too radical. You all ready know that the Fijians had control of their land - police and military and the Indians controlled commerce." "Sounds a lot like Britain in 1577." "Except Fiji doesn't have a house of Lords. The Fiji socialists still want a nuclear free zone and control of the land. Have to remember that Fijians are family and village oriented. They're generous to a fault - willing to share, but not their land - their heritage." Kalani stood up, "Got to see a man about a horse. Too much coffee this morning - I'll be right back."

Kalani returned and sat down, "Where was I? Oh - about Fiji being family oriented. Brits screwed things up. They imported Indians to work the cane fields. And as soon as they saved enough - the Indians opened stores and took over commerce. Then they sent for their relatives. By the time the Brits got around to giving Fiji their independence - the Indians were in the majority and voted in a block." Ching-Chang added, "Just like our Japanese." Kalani smiled, "And our Californians - lucky we live Hawaii. Fijians are still upset because they had to throw out an elected government. British gave them a sense of fair play. But - the same Brits brought in the Indians and created the problem. When it came to independence - the Brits screwed over the Fijians. Not giving them a right to govern their own nation." Johnny added, "Kalani - it never ceases to amaze me." "What?" "How

you can go back and forth between local language and the King's English." Kalani laughed, "Have to be bilingual to survive. I'm hungry. You buying lunch?" Johnny nodded, "As long as it doesn't cost me an arm and a leg. Where too?" Ching-Chang asked, "Dim sum?" Johnny looked puzzled, "Dim sum?" "Steamed dumplings with a variety of fillings. Bring baskets to the tables and you choose."

After lunch - Johnny asked, "Are the British supporting the Fijians - after they took control of their government?" "Colonial mind set. The Indians had the constitutionally elected government - so they supported them. That's why the Fijians have asked for our help." Johnny smiled, "And that's where Benny comes in." "And you. Indians never integrated into Fiji's culture. To Fijians - this was taking advantage of hospitality without honoring their customs. You picked up background data at the Bishop Museum?" "Curator gave me access to all he had." "The time has come the Walrus said - to bring you up to date on the Indian insurrection movement and your contacts in Fiji."

When Kalani finished - he checked his watch, "Got to get downtown in time for the fight." Ching-Chang asked, "Which one?" "The one between my wife and me. I was supposed to pick her up fifteen minutes ago." Johnny stood up, "Thanks for your help. I'll go over what you told me on my flight to Fiji tomorrow. It's time for me to battle the late afternoon traffic into Waikiki. Ching-Chang - what's the quickest way?" "Nimitz - to Ala Moana - to Kalakaua. H1 backs up at this hour. Give Pat Penny my best." Johnny walked to his car wondering, "How did Ching-Chang know that Pat Penny is heading toward Fiji? Damn - it's Benny!"

Johnny hung up the phone, "Can't get over it being six p.m. here and noon at home." He poured a glass of wine and walked out on the penthouse lanai and watched the setting

sun's reflection off the surf. He leaned back in his chair. When he awoke - a moon's reflection danced across the waves. He placed his feet up on the lanai table and sipped wine from a wine glass - still half full. The Village dinner cruise catamaran was sailing out to sea - toward December's Cold Moon - like a deer toward a Pennsylvania hunter's spotlight. He looked at his watch and couldn't read the time - night was caressing this one time swamp - fishpond and now a sea of high rises. Night - when Hawaii returned to its rightful owners - the Menehunes - the little people - now only ghosts - whose tears fall with the Trade Wind's misty rain. Johnny set his wine glass down and drifted off - wondering, "Is this mist - full of Menehune tears - for the loss of their land to the Polynesians or the loss the Polynesians suffered to New England Missionaries?" He drifted deeper into dreams - of Menehune ghosts - whispering in the Trade Wind mist -

*Our fishponds
No longer here -
Gone - are
The paths we trod
Strangers now trample
Hawaii Nei's sod -
Now at night
We collect our fee
Where we once danced
Proud - and free -*

When Johnny woke again - it was ten p.m., "Damn - all the restaurants are closed. What a strange dream - little people - their chant is still ringing in my ears. Must have been a very fine vintage wine. Can't sleep on an empty stomach. The Wailana Coffee Shop is still open." Johnny

stood on the lanai and took one last look out over the ocean,
"This is an easy place to visit and a hard place to leave. I
could stay here -"

Outside - at street level - the Trade Winds were gentle
on his face. Johnny looked up at a moonlit sky. Misty rain
fell from clouds - streaming toward the ocean - escaping the
Koolau mountain peaks. Johnny whistled under his breath,
"Menehunes will never rest tonight," as he strolled out of
the Hawaiian Village grounds and turned Mauka - into the
Trade Wind mist. At the Kalakaua intersection - he waited -
and waited - and waited for the walk light to turn on and
then had to run to make it across before the light turned
against him. The Wailana Coffee Shop - more like an old
fashioned diner - was still open - a haven from a Trade Wind
mist - turning to rain.

Well past eleven - Johnny returned to his room - poured
the last of the bottle of wine and dialed Tupelo's number at
the Pentagon. Tupelo picked up, "Hello - Benny gives you his
regards." "Ask him if he had my house under surveillance."
"Never know, but I doubt it. What are your plans?" "I'm
finished here. Will leave for my second destination in the
morning." "Counting spears for an order of battle?" "Very
funny. When is the elusive one docking." "Don't know, but
it has to be soon. You were supposed to call in as soon as
you arrived. Thought I'd save money." "And watch your six."
"And watch my six."

*"Now the laborer's task is o'er;
Now the battle day is past;
Now upon the farther shore
Lands the voyager at last."*

4

South Pacific

Twenty-four hours away from safe harbor - Pat Penny was wide awake - at the helm - and in good spirits, "We're a day out of Fiji my dorsal finned one. A hot shower is ahead for me and reef fish for you. Our voyage is almost over. And this time the Pacific Ocean has lived up to its name. Its been smooth seas and fair winds. This catamaran has cut through South Pacific swells like a hot knife through butter. Only one turd in our punchbowl - I'm out of Stout to mix with our Primo beer - so it's time for landfall." He locked the wheel and looked down - forty below - at his *Tiger Shark*, "Keep an eye out for passing ships - I'm going below for a very late breakfast." Pat placed his hands on the side of the hatch and swung below, "Feel spry - lighter. Must have lost twenty pounds on this voyage. And I'm browner than a berry. Time for scrambled eggs mixed with bacon - cheese and garlic. And tomorrow morning I'll dine in a real restaurant."

Pat carried his breakfast back above decks to the helm, "Put enough salsa and catsup on food and you can eat most anything." Pat nibbled at his food and looked down, "How are you getting along down there my fat fish friend? Tired of your fare? Sushi for breakfast - sushi for lunch - sushi for dinner and once in awhile - a bit of long pig." Pat finished the rest of his egg mixture - stood up - rinsed his plate in the ocean - set it down - walked forward and checked the sails. He sniffed the air, "I can smell tropical flowers on the wind. We're close to land. I'm going below and get some

shut eye. Might be a boat or two out here - so give me a bump on the bottom if you sense we're in trouble." Pat's *Tiger Shark* moved forward - out in front of the bow - then rose - swimming ten feet below the surface - eyes forward and forever open.

Pat woke up - groggy - checked his clock and jumped to his feet, "Damn - I've slept over sixteen hours." He scrambled aft to the navigation station and checked the GPS counter, "Four hours out of Suva and it's almost dawn. I've changed heading and I'm on course, but how could I? Unless my dorsal finned friend nudged my Cat to starboard." Pat turned on his radio on and tuned to the harbor HF frequency, "Hello Suva - this is *Happy Hour* out of American Samoa. I'll be docking in three - four hours. Do you have instructions." "*Happy Hour* - this is Suva - you are cleared to dock. Please follow our instructions when you clear the outer marker. Do you have VHF?" "Roger - I have VHF. Will you patch me to your Constabulary?" "No, but we'll pass your message." "Advise Chief Bau that Three Penny Pat is inbound. Tell him I'll live on board - for now." "Call at the outer marker. We'll advise you of the Chief's response."

Villa Penny - Hungary

Pretty Penny replaced the receiver - connected to the Three Penny special line, "Two calls in less than a week. Father must be lonely or very nervous. And he keeps talking about his dorsal finned friend. He needs help all right, but it might be medical. Fiji? What is our mission? Mother doesn't know and Benny won't talk - not to us. I'll have to pack clothing for the tropics. It's summer down there. And the flight will be a long one. I won't be able to carry weapons - not on a commercial flight and a leased plane will be searched." She walked next door to her Mother's.

Suva - Fiji

Pat followed the *Tiger Shark's* wake into Suva Bay. At the outer marker - the dorsal fin turned in a one-hundred and eighty degree half circle - parting water - on a direct line toward the catamaran. It dove under the bow - lifting it up. Pat looked down into two giant eyes, "Are you trying to tell me your leaving? But - to where?" Pat saw a small dot of an island in his mind, "Norfolk?" His Tiger rolled over on its back and swam away - out to sea. "Norfolk - I wonder why? I thought you'd stay outside the reef to feed. I'll miss you - my giant dorsal finned friend." Pat's mind was flooded with scenes of New Zealand, "Kiwi - you came along to guide me and to dine on Kiwi. I hope you have a taste for fermented mutton."

Pat furled the mainsail and started his diesel. He engaged the prop and locked the helm - going below to radio the Harbormaster. He tuned in the Harbor VHF frequency, "Hello Suva - *Happy Hour* has just passed the outer marker and is awaiting instructions." "Welcome to Fiji - *Happy Hour*. Chief Bau sends you his regards. Tie up by my shack. Follow my dockhand's instructions." "Will do." Pat set out fenders on both sides of his cat in preparation for docking. As he approached the main dock - the Suva Harbor dockhand guided his Cat toward a visitors slip. The Harbormaster came out of his shack, "Hello *Happy Hour* - I'll take care of your ship. Chief Seru Bau has a car waiting for you." His driver appeared out of thin air - at the dockside, "Bring along your luggage - Chief Bau has reserved a room for you at our best hotel. We will clear your boat through customs." The Harbormaster asked, "Do you need assistance?" "She needs a good cleaning and the pantry needs restocking. I'd like the mast - fittings - sails - diesel - batteries - the whole works checked. There are still six cases of beer on board

that I didn't use. Tropical sun - it should be disposed of. Do you think your men can get rid of the evidence before Customs seizes it?" The harbormaster smiled, "Aye - Aye Sir - it will be gone before nightfall. Do I have authority to replace worn or cracked fittings? "Fix anything up to five-thousand dollars. If it goes over that give me a call. Where am I staying?" His driver beamed with pride, "The Viti Levu - south of Suva - our five star resort. Do you have any weapons?" "Brought along a pistol. Should have carried a rifle - too. Shouldn't travel in these waters without one." "Chief Bau requests that you leave it on board."

Pat packed what he could - put the rest of his clothes in a duffel and handed them up - out of the hatch to his driver. He sat up front, "Did the Chief leave a message for me?" "He'll contact you at your hotel. He said to let you know your family will be in tomorrow and that the government of Fiji will only pay for your room." Tell him not to worry. My wife will want a suite and I imagine my daughter will - too. We'll accept his hospitality and save his funds for better things. Understand you have a few problems." "They are minor irritants. We are looking forward to your ideas. Do you know Lieutenant Colonel Ropp?" "Not that I remember - I've been away from the business for quite a spell. Is he here?" "He is flying in tomorrow."

Pat whistled as he saw the cottages, "Just like the Halekulani in Hawaii - with a better ocean view. I've decided to stay in the room you reserved tonight and arrange for suites tomorrow. When will Chief Bau contact me?" "He did not say - soon I imagine. If you do not need me - I have another passenger." "As soon as I can find a bellhop. Tell the Chief to call - soon. Thanks for the ride." Pat checked in and made arrangements for tomorrow's arrivals - followed the bellhop - an Aussie beer in hand - room service on his mind and a hot shower ahead.

One Flew West

Johnny flew out of Honolulu as he arrived - no one met him and no one waved good-by. He had a restless night. His dreams began with Menahunes and ended with a giant *Tiger Shark* hungry for Kiwi. He tilted his seat back - back, but sleep did not come. Yesterday's discussion with Kalani was still bouncing around - in the recesses of his mind like a musical ball for movie sing-alongs. He had asked Kalani, "Why are we spending so much effort on Fiji?" "State Department is still playing dominoes." "Has to be more than that." "Could be that the Filipinos want us out - so we'll lose Subic Bay Naval Base - Clark Air Force Base and Crow Valley - the low level flight area and bombing range. If we lose bases in the Philippines - we'll need friends in the South Pacific and Fiji has a deep harbor. Could be a possible naval base." "Not enough room for a low level flight bombing range. The Aussie outback would be more suitable." "Scare the hell out of a bunch of kangaroos and snakes." "May even bother a few of the large Station owners. The next closest bombing range is in Alaska and that's too far. I can find no quid pro quid for helping Fiji except to be good neighbors. Regardless of our needs - we'll assist Fiji - if they ask."

Kalani nodded, "Aussies aren't fair weather friends like the Kiwis. They know an alliance is a two way street. They are as independent as we are. Kiwis and Filipinos? They've forgotten the last war. If we hadn't come along - they'd all be speaking Japanese and living in concentration camps." "I have an idea about what's behind it, but I want to hear yours - first." "Filipinos - to them we're a colonial power who's stayed too long at the fair. We've been asked to leave by their legislature and we should honor the request. Kiwis - they're a bit more complicated. An antinuclear stance - which makes about as much sense as their extinct national symbol - a wingless bird. Did I hit the mark?"

Johnny smiled, "Dead center and you blew the target away - too. New Zealand's insularism is more than geography - it's a state of mind. They have natural gas and volcanic steam to drive their machines and to hell with the rest of us." "Our Pele isn't all that keen about us using her vapors to power generators." "Anyway - they've bought into the nuclear free zone. It's way beyond green - it's a political movement - equivalent to an ostrich with its head in the sand." "If the Kiwis picked Fiji's Indian socialists to further their nuclear free schemes - they bet on the wrong horse. Fijians aren't the type to put up with a bunch of radicals quoting false science. Mind you - they aren't keen on hunting whales or destroying the land. Nuclear power does the least amount of damage. Harness Pele - those Kiwis are plumb crazy - playing around with their Gods." "New Zealand has denied our Navy port calls - so in practice we're no longer Allies." "Good riddance if you ask me. Let those mutton eaters stew in their own socialist juice. When fuzzy headed radicals gain control - reason goes out the window." "Is the New Zealand government behind the weapons cache found outside of Suva?" "No - just a bunch of fuzzy headed Kiwi socialists."

Kalani asked, "Do you think nuclear power is the key to independence in Oceania - the South Pacific nations." "It's either nuclear or fossil fuel and we all know what fossil fuel can do to the environment. The Kiwis are opposed to it. They're sitting on top of all that natural gas - geothermal and hydroelectric power. The rest of the South Pacific isn't blessed with their natural resources." "Ching-Chang said you were familiar with the new breeder reactors. Isn't that the answer to nuclear environmental problems?" "Must be - the antinuclear fuzzies are screaming bloody murder. It uses low pressure - has a higher level of safety and doesn't produce nuclear waste. A logical replacement for the current high pressure fission reactors."

Kalani shook his head, "No wonder those fuzzy heads are opposed to it. They have a lifetime of emotional opposition invested. Don't understand the Kiwis. Maybe our California vacuum heads have been immigrating there - too. We have them here -too - comparing the disaster at Chernobyl to the minor accident we had at Three Mile Island. Those folks have a five watt bulb screwed into a two-twenty socket." "We've lost a thousand times more people to fossil fuel accidents than we have to nuclear." Johnny opened his eyes and moved his seat back to an upright position, "Kalani looks on the Kiwis as the scourge of the Pacific. Well - they depend on trade to survive, but don't want to pay the piper to defend their trade. Wonder how long we're going to put up with that kind of selfishness?" Johnny mulled over Kalani's comments, "Can't blame an entire nation for the shortsightedness of a few. But Kiwis? They are most certainly a niggardly group of parsimonious bastards. Can't stand holier than thou Church folks and here is a whole nation of thin lips.

Johnny set his briefcase on his lap and looked over his notes from the Bishop Museum -

1. *Fiji's islands continental - like Solomons & New Caledonia..*
2. *An independent dominion of the British Commonwealth.*
3. *Population - like Hawaii - over one million.*
4. *Navigating open ocean when Europe knew world was flat.*
5. *Strong economic base - self sufficient in food and housing.*
6. *Dress similar - Samoa's lava-lava - Scottish kilt - Fiji's sulu.*
7. *Legal system - English common law.*

The flight attendant placed an excellent hot lunch on his tray. Johnny opened the plastic pouch covering his knife and fork with his teeth, "Never can open these damn things" and put the parsimonious Kiwis out of his mind. After lunch

he unbuckled his seat belt - stood to stretch his legs and walked the cabin. He looked out the windows at the vast Pacific until bored - returned to his seat - tilted his seat back and went to sleep - dreaming of Menehunes.

Johnny felt a tap on his shoulder and opened his eyes - smelled a lovely perfume and looked up - into the eyes of the Flight Attendant. "Sorry to wake you - Sir. We are landing at Suva in twenty minutes. We're descending close to several thunder storms. Not supposed to be violent, but our pilot wants all seat backs up and seat belts fastened." Johnny was glad to be awakened. His dream began with Little People and progressed to a *Tiger Shark* with a Strine' accent. It liked Kiwis - for breakfast - lunch and dinner. Johnny rubbed sleep from his eyes and looked out the window, "Pilot was right about thunder bumpers. Not very high - Trade Winds must keep them down to size." As the clouds parted - a deep blue ocean - sprinkled with emerald isles came into view. A few turns - a bump or two near the thunderstorms air pockets and the airplane tires screeched - meeting the concrete of Suva's runway.

Suva - Fiji

Johnny walked through the afternoon tropical heat toward Suva's terminal - carrying his briefcase - glad to be on the ground again. No matter how many times he flew - the most enjoyable flight segment was walking away. After clearing customs and reclosing his bags - a familiar person caught his eye. Across the terminal - walking quickly to the arrival gate - Pat Penny. Johnny thought to himself, "We'll meet sooner or later. Should it be sooner?" He turned away, "Never do today what can be put off until tomorrow. Think I'll check the lay of the land before I start up with that elusive one again." Johnny walked out the terminal door and hailed a cab, "Viti Levu Resort."

Pat waved to his wife - Patricia and daughter - Penny as they appeared at the door and descended the stairs - wilting in the tropical heat. He called out, "I'll meet you outside of customs." Both Mother and Daughter were riding on a second wind. Their flight had been longer than either one had ever experienced - halfway around the world with stops in India and Australia. Pat had two sky caps waiting to carry their luggage from Customs. Patricia gave her husband a hug, "You look none the worse for wear from your ocean voyage." "I lost a few pounds." "And you're brown as a berry. If it wasn't for the worry lines - you would look like a young man again." "You two look beat. Didn't you stop on the way?" "Only to change planes. Did you make reservations?" "Two suites at the Viti Levu - overlooking the ocean. It will be a great Christmas." Pretty Penny stared at her Father, "Do we have a mission?" "Benny was vague. I have a limo - we can all ride in back."

Patricia rolled up the window separating the driver from them, "Tell us about your voyage." "Uneventful - except for a minor skirmish on Palmyra." Pretty Penny's eyes lit up, "How many?" "Two KGB tagalongs and two pirates." "Pirates?" "Lady pirates - murdered a child and several adults. I was next on their list." "You mentioned a *Tiger Shark*." "Damnedest thing - same one who ate half my surfboard on Waimanalo Bay. Stayed with me the entire voyage - even dined on the evidence at Palmyra." Patricia frowned, "I don't want to hear about it." "He was a monster all right - led me across the Pacific - straight to Fiji. Didn't have to navigate - except to make sure I was on course. He stayed below - in my catamaran's shadow in daytime. If I slept in - he bumped me back on course." Penny asked, "Where is your friend now." "He moved on to Norfolk Island - looking for Kiwis." "New Zealand? How do you know that." "When he left - as I entered the Bay - I had an image - a mental image in my mind." "Mother! You're married to Captain Ahab."

Pat looked at his Daughter with a rye smile, "Mother says we're remodeling our Budapest restaurant? How is it coming along?" "Ahead of schedule. The Chef and maitre d' have finally made up and believe it or not - they're working in harness." "Now - that is a miracle. Who brought them together?" "A son - a daughter and marriage." "Will it last?" "The marriage - yes. Their friendship? I hope until our remodeling is finished. This year's grape harvest looks like our best ever. It will be a vintage one." "We need more storage space to age our wines." "I've taken care of that." "Hillside cave?" "Yes - Franz is in charge?" "We'll need a road to the entrance after he moves the earth out?" "We'll use stone first and see. Before I forget - your Croat friends asked for more weapons." "Cork is out - from our reserves?" "No - your Croat friends are without funds and your instructions were never sell weapons from our reserves." "You don't need me - you're ready to fly solo. When this is over - I'll retire." "Where?" "To a place where I can age gracefully and ask forgiveness for my sins." "Sounds like a Greek island monastery." "Very funny - look around - isn't this resort beautiful." Patricia - who had remained silent on the trip from the airport - smiled, "I am pleased. How are the rooms?" "Clean - spacious and each of our suites has an ocean view - a four star."

Pat whistled as the bellboys unloaded the limo trunk, "Did you two buy out Paris?" Patricia laughed, "And Vienna and Milan. But - at out of season costs. Is this a working vacation - or can we resort it?" "Resort it - by all means. We are without guidance, but not without funds. I checked around - how about a Christmas sail on my catamaran to Fiji's old whaling capital on Ovalau Island and then off to the Yasawas?" Penny wrinkled her brow, "Yasawas?" "North of here - islands strung across the Pacific - white sand pearls on a blue azure plate. We'll cook lobsters under the palms and sleep out under the Southern Cross." Pretty Penny

pouted, "I will need a companion - to share this romantic adventure." Her Mother laughed, "I doubt if there is a rent a boy friend service on Fiji. If you were at home - there would be many among our down and out nobility who would fill your dance card - but Fiji?"

Patricia - dressed in a white flowing gown - waited out on the verandah - standing at the porch rail - looking out over the coral blue waters of the South Pacific. Pretty Penny - dressed in an identical light blue gown - joined her, "Incredible view - isn't it. Where's Father?" "He went on ahead to the bar. Are you ready?" "And starved." They walked along stepping stones - bordered by tropical flowers - from their cottage to the dining room. Pat was at the bar - deep in conversation with another guest. Patricia tapped his shoulder and they both turned, "Look who I found wandering the halls - Colonel Ropp." Johnny smiled and stood up - with a look on his face - betraying how he felt - sheepish. He searched for words, but found none. Patricia asked, "Will you join us for dinner?" Johnny - not wanting too, but unable to escape, "If it isn't an inconvenience."

While Pat ordered drinks - Pretty Penny asked, "Why are you in Fiji - Colonel?" "My General sent me here to help the Chief of Police with a computer buy." "An American Air Force Intelligence Officer assisting a foreign police department? Do you expect us to believe such a fairy tale?" "It is a little far fetched isn't it. I didn't question it when I was told to fly out here and offer Fiji's Chief of Police our assistance." In an attempt to head off trouble - Johnny added, "My wife will be joining me in a few days. You do remember her - don't you?" Johnny had lobbed the ball over Pretty Penny's head and out of the court. Pat asked, "Have you talked with Chief Bau?" "Not yet - never met him. Before I forget - Kalani and Ching-Chang asked me to give you their regards." "Am I an item of interest?" If Pat was

worried - he didn't show it. "If you're worried about the JCS Chairman - not anymore, but they know where you are. Are we working together?" "Only if Benny sent you." "He did and whatever he has planned - were in it together."

With a gorgeous body - harder than any woman he had ever met - Johnny was unable to keep his eyes diverted from Pretty Penny. His mind raced - barely in control, "Bobbie Jean has child like softness only Southern woman possess." Pat Penny broke the spell, "Our table's ready. Lobster here is first rate." Johnny followed the Penny family - noticing from the back - Pretty Penny and her mother were shaped the same and thought to himself, "Must be a Hungarian thing - hot blooded - good looking women." He held the chair for Patricia while Pat held one for his daughter. The maitre d' approached - offering menus, "Our Chef is Portuguese. His specials are highly peppered. Let your waiter know if you desire milder seasoning." Pat looked over at Johnny, "I'm buying." "No - we'll use Ten Cap rules." "What's that?" "Split the bill - we'll divide the cost between you and me. I think I'll have Steak au Poive." Patricia added, "I'll try the Pacific lobster tails." Pretty Penny smiled, "Portuguese Sausage" and Pat added, "A platter full. I ran out two days back - while I was sailing in." Patricia gave them both a withering look - one that said without speaking, "Use your forks like civilized people - no grease dripping from your chins - not in front of company."

After dinner - Pat asked, "How about an after dinner drink on the verandah? Johnny begged off, "Long flight - I'm a victim of jet lag. I'll see you at breakfast - we need to talk." "Is eight o'clock too soon?" "Fine with me. What have you heard from Chief Seru Bau?" "Only that he'll contact me. How about you?" "No contact - I'm anxious to get started. A Computer buy can drag on." "Are you thinking about leaving the Air Force?" "Might - I'm not sure."

Bobbie Jean asked, "What time is it in Fiji?" "Lonely time - ten p.m. tomorrow here." "Three p.m. yesterday in McLean." "Ate dinner with Pat and Patricia Penny tonight." "Is their daughter along." "Yes - with a body harder than ever." "Did you test it?" "Of course not - you know that thing about a woman scorned?" "I'll be out as soon as I can book a flight." "How about the boys?" "Nanny's here. When school is out she'll take them to Mother's place in Jackson." "Mississippi instead of Bellpoint - Ohio?" "Your parents are in Florida." "I really do need a day job." "But - they're coming up to Jackson for Christmas." "Will you be able to get a flight out on such a short notice?" "Don't worry your overtaxed hormones - Dear. I'll use one of our casino jets to the West Coast - and Johnny?" "Yes - Love?" "Is Penelope Penny staying at our hotel?" "Yes - Love." "I have a four words for you." "They are?" "Lock your bedroom door."

Johnny walked out on the verandah - soaking in the warm tropical morning air, "Gorgeous view - Pat. How long have you been up?" "Chief Bau called me at daybreak. He's going to join us for breakfast." "That was quick. Did he leave any instructions for me?" "He wants you at headquarters this afternoon. You weren't feeding us a line about the computer buy. And he said to enjoy our view of the Kora Sea. Fishing fleet is on their way out - like a travel poster." "Hard to return to Washington - after this. Did you order?" "Just coffee and juice - thought I'd wait for the Chief." "Did Benny give you any instructions?" "Never does - I'm supposed to figure it out. I tell him what I'm going to do. When Benny remains silent - it means approval." "That sounds familiar - non attribution and plausible deniability. "Our Benny is qualified to be a politician." "Is that how he handled your JCS Chairman wet procedure?" "Sort of - I was programmed by the Russians. He didn't step in and stop it." "He let them take out your friends and only your actions kept you alive." "Benny is an opportunist."

A handsome - dark complected man - dressed in a kilt like sulu and a shirt with epaulets without rank strode out on the veranda. Four large bodyguards followed. Two sat at tables - providing a screen from the hotel. Two stood out on the lawn - providing a screen from the ocean approach. Chief Bau approached their table, "Colonel Ropp - Mr. Pat Penny?" They both stood and answered, "Yes - Sir." "Good - I am Chief Seru Bau. I hope my guard doesn't disturb you. We can't be to careful - as you well know." He sat down and smiled at Johnny, "Tabua?" Johnny opened his shirt and displayed a sennet cord with a whale's tooth attached, "I am at your service." "Do you mind?" Johnny removed it and handed it to the Chief - who turned it over in his hand - inspecting the sennet cord - the polished Sperm Whale tooth and handed it back, "It is Benny's. No two are alike. The sennet cord is made from braided grass. We have lots of grass, but Sperm Whales are in short supply. Colonel Ropp - if you were not in possession of Benny's Tabua - this would be our first and our last meeting."

Pat asked Chief Bau, "Would you care to join us for breakfast?" The Chief looked over at the Maitre d' and nodded his head, "I have taken the liberty of ordering - fresh fruit and my favorite - waffles. We live in perilous times - I need your assistance," he looked at Johnny, "and your expertise. Come by my office this afternoon. I will introduce you to my assistant - the one in charge of our computer buy. Will your wife be joining you?" Johnny nodded, "Yes - when she heard that Pat's lovely daughter - Penny is here - Bobbie Jean made flight reservations on the first available flight. She'll be in tomorrow." "Excellent - you and your families are to be my honored guests at our Christmas Meke on my ancestral island - Bau. But only the men - Colonel and Mr. Penny - will share a bowl of our Yagona with my village. My Father wants to meet both of you. He is a Victoria Cross Fiji Scout - my mentor and advisor."

Three waiters carried breakfast trays stacked high with waffles and to Pat's delight - link sausage to their table. Conversation ceased until waffles and all of the sausage were devoured. Chief Bau pushed his chair back and stared at Pat Penny in admiration, "I don't believe I have ever seen anyone who likes sausage as much as you." "Keeps my red devils away. I have not lead a saintly life." "I want to hear about your sail from Hawaii. We had a giant *Tiger Shark* appear at the entrance to our Harbor when you arrived. Did he sail with you from Hawaii?" "He kept me company for the entire voyage." "As do our Hawaiian brothers - we too have a common respect for the power of these great sea creatures. The shark is one of our favorites. Where is he - now." "I don't know how I know, but he is visiting Norfolk Island - looking for Kiwis." "A very wise and honorable Hawaiian visitor - your shark. We must hope he finds his Kiwis and enjoys a very special dinner. Colonel Ropp - I will see you this afternoon. Mr. Penny - will you join me in a stroll? I want to hear more about your shark and we have important business to discuss."

Walking along the path near the ocean - where the sounds of surf covered their voices - Chief Bau whispered, "I would never request your assistance - it was offered." "Benny?" "Yes - a dear friend. His Company came to our assistance when others turned away." "Who do you have in mind?" "We have two Indian Socialist leaders, but do not bother them. Without under-bosses - they are helpless." "Your items of interest are middle management?" Chief Bau did not answer or show any affirmative body signs, "I'll let you know when and where I will pick you and your family up for our Christmas Meke." "Will I be provided with a list of Fiji's Indian Socialist under bosses?" Chief Bau nodded, "Yes - Colonel Ropp will insert many names into our police data base. You may wish a demonstration. A list of those who are to be restructured will be included."

Wellington - New Zealand

Ian's grin grew wider - wider and wider - until it stretched from ear to ear, "Say - Max what are the odds for enticing the French to sink another Green ship?" "Have you gone bonkers? We don't need another incident like the last one. We're doing fine as we are - why take the chance of being discovered. Wouldn't look good to have our Press find out New Zealand's leading socialist is behind the sinking of two Green Ships." Max - Max - you know I'm having a little fun, but we can get a lot of mileage from another Rainbow Warrior incident. Got rid of the American Navy with the last one. It would be great fun to agitate our Green friends into increased political activity. If we can get them tangling with Fiji or the Aussies - their eyes will be turned away from us - until our last dam is up. And then it will be too late." "I thought we were socialist?" "We are - my friend - we are. I love socialism. Big central government means big business for my concrete and steel. Socialism - got to love it - that's where the real money is."

Max remained silent as Ian continued his ideological onslaught. He'd been through one too many of these wild eyed lectures. When Ian Fleming began one his socialist sermons - it meant only one thing to Max - more work than he or anyone else could handle. Still - it was better to preempt than wait for unwanted guidance, "If it's all right with you - I'm going to fly down to South Island and check on our warehouse outside of Christchurch." "Max - that's a good idea. We just received another weapons shipment from the Russians. Make sure they didn't stiff us on the order." Max knew why these weapons were free. Ian had the Russians between the rock and the hard place. If he talked to the right people - all hell would break loose. Fleming had become Russia's Kiwi tar baby. They were joined to him at the hip and he wouldn't let go of them.

Max stood up and was halfway across the room - almost to the door when he froze in his tracks, "Max - after you're finished at the warehouse - catch a flight to Suva and find out what happened to our cache of weapons. We'll wind up arming the Fiji Army if we don't plug the leak." "Over the weekend? I haven't had a weekend off in three months. Don't you think it's too soon? My visit might turn the bloodhounds on to us." "Time enough has passed. See if you can find out how Chief Seru Bau discovered the weapons. Tell Jawa we can make a one time replacement, but I don't want anyone to know who is furnishing his weapons. Last item on your plate is to give me a report on our Indian friends. Find out who's the weak link and eliminate him. Oh - make sure they can secure our shipment and see if they still need weapons training."

Ian looked Max over. If he stared at him long enough - all he would see was the wart on the end of his nose. Max's mind finally clicked into gear, "When I land in Fiji - I'll nose around a bit before contacting Jaws. If I discover what I think I will - I'd like your permission to eliminate that bastard on the spot. He's a weak link even if he turns out not to be the one who tipped off the Chief. If Chief Bau ever comes down hard on him - he'll sing like a bird." Ian shared Max's concern, "I thought about eliminating Jawa, but we can't. He's too well connected. Not only does he have close ties with our Russian friends - he's married to the sister who's brother is slated to become Fiji's next Prime Minister - if our overthrow is successful. Even if he is the weak link - the one who tipped off Chief Bau - don't do anything unless you contact me. If he isn't - we'll talk over his disposition when you return. Keep it under your hat - I'm working on a Chinese connection. If they're agreeable - it's a whole new cricket match." "Ian - the Indians hate the Chinese." "That's why I like the games we play. One last item. Get that wart cut off your nose. You're too easy to identify." Max turned to leave.

He turned back, "I'll have it off before I fly south. Can I use one of our company planes." "If you have the wart cut off, but not to Fiji. Tell Jawa not to go lighting the fuse prematurely. And make sure his new storage place is safe from Chief Bau." Max - relieved he was only required to do the impossible - not the ridiculous - nodded, "Yes." Ian Fleming - humming the International under his breath - turned to his seventh floor picture window - looked out over Cook Straight and watched as clouds drifting in - mesmerized. Max Lax - sensing more guidance might be on the way - bolted for the door - quietly opened it and slipped away. He rode the elevator down - down to the underground parking garage. His mind wasn't on murder, but of trout fishing, "Next time I visit South Island - I'll muck around - up in the mountain streams south of Christchurch." He loved to fish fast moving streams - fed by cold glacial waters. In his mind's eye - Max saw his cast strike true as a large brown rose to his fly. His mind - reeling it in when a horrendous thought struck, "Ian is going to dam up all of my favorite trout streams. Where will I fish?"

Max stopped by the company doctor's office on his way to the airport. When the doctor touched his wart with liquid nitrogen - Max's eyes crossed in pain. They watered so badly - he had to sit in the waiting room for over an hour before he could see to go outside to his car. And then the company pilot wasn't happy - he waited an extra forty-five minutes for Max to arrive at the dock. His nose felt like a cricket ball wedged between his eyes on the long seaplane ride to Akaroa Harbor - south of Christchurch. And when his pilot - irritated by the unexpected flight and long wait - splashed down - the cricket ball wart on the end of his nose fell off - bleeding. Max Lax was quite a sight - being forced to jump from a bobbing airplane to the dock - with a handkerchief in one hand - to stop the nose bleed and suitcase in the other. And - as the copilot threw his briefcase across the open

space to him - it bounced on the dock - opened with papers scattered about. Max barely got the case closed when the prop wash blew him against the outside wall of Fleming's warehouse. He shook his fist and shouted at the retreating seaplane, "You bloody bastard - you!" But - couldn't finish - as he was covered with salt water spray.

The warehouse manager rushed to Max's side, "Do you want me to report the pilot to Mr. Fleming?" "Wouldn't do any good. The pommy bastard is married to Ian's sister. Can I use your office to clean up?" "Better yet - Ian installed a shower and locker in our rest room." "What for?" "Don't you remember the militia he was going to enlist?" "Right you are. Didn't need too - not after we took control of our government." Max hung his outer clothing up to dry in two shower stalls- showered the salt out of his hair in the third and dressed in dry clothes. Upstairs - out of the basement - Max looked around, "I didn't know that Ian had installed a dehumidifier." The manager smiled - proudly, "Big one - isn't she? Ian put her in to keep our weapons and powder dry - she's a beaut all right. Are you ready to inventory?" "Did we get new weapons?" "Think most of these were used in Afghanistan. We spent a month cleanin' and oilin'. Test fired a random lot. Work all right. Russians build sturdy enough." "Free - Ian can't argue about condition. How many did they drop off this time?" "Ninety percent of what was promised - ten percent always disappears."

Max's stay on South Island wasn't long enough - not for one who likes to fish for trout. The warehouse manager was right about ten percent slippage, but condition was good - though used. Max fumed as he rode in a taxi to Christchurch Airport. He had to fly to Sydney and then the long haul out to Fiji and his nose still hurt. He missed today's plane. He'd have to fly out early in the morning and by the time he arrived in Sydney - all the restaurants were closed.

Suva - Fiji

The burning hot tropical sun bounced off the tarmac - into Max Lax's eyes. Without sunglasses he was almost blind and the sun did another number on nose - still sore from frozen surgery. He shaded it and his eyes with one hand - carrying his briefcase in the other - into Suva's Terminal. Inside - Max phoned Motila's General Store, "Is Mr. Motila available? I represent a new line of canned meat products from New Zealand. We make ours with mutton instead of pork byproducts." "Mr. Motila is at Moris Hedstrom - a competitor - canvassing prices. You might try Hedstrom - we have no use for New Zealand meat products." "Will Mr. Motila return today?" "No! I said we had no use for your product." Max had all the information he needed. His first stop would be the docks - the second - Motila's and third - his hotel. He retrieved his luggage from the carousel and walked over to the rental car counter - sweating profusely. He asked for a car, "Something cool - can't take much of your heat." The attendant looked up, "Welcome to winter in Fiji. You're from?" "New Zealand." "Ah - the cold pommy country. You're reservation listed a preference for a convertible. I have a Morgan." "The car of my dreams, but air-conditioning?" "In a Morgan?" "I should have known better. Can't pass up a chance to drive a classic. I'll take it."

Max carried his luggage outside the terminal and across the street to the rental car parking lot. He scanned the few cars parked there, "There she is - a lovely Morgan rag top roadster in British racing green. You've got those lovely high narrow wheels - too. For a change - this is going to be a fun visit!" Max put the top down and covered it with the boot. He placed his gear in the passenger's seat - inserted the key and shoved in the clutch. He pushed down on the starter, "Started right up" and waited for the gears to synchronize before placing the stick in reverse. He smiled,

"A little grinding. Not too bad for a crash box - bet first isn't synchronized." The high pitched grinding sound told him it wasn't. Max shifted gears ten times before he could shift without looking and after that - Max was off on the road to Suva - happy as a lark.

Max wandered in and out of several sailor bars near the docks - knowing from past experience - sailors liked to do two things when ashore - drink and talk. In less than two hours - Max discovered why Fleming's weapons were uncovered. He phoned Ian in Wellington, "Damn - was Jaws stupid - stored our items near one of his primary targets - in the basement of a house near the airport - and with all his warehouse space! Wasn't long before Chief Bau noticed activity where there shouldn't have been any and investigated. Weapons in hand - he has an eye out for the owners. He knew these guns belonged to Indian Socialists - all of Fiji knew, but Chief Bau could not prove ownership. He was without conspirators and our Socialists were without weapons." "Make sure our next shipment is kept in a safe place." Max hung up - drove to Matila's General Store and parked in front - in a loading - no parking zone.

Max entered - adjusting his vision from Fiji's bright tropical sun to the store's dark interior. Jaws was in his office - located halfway up - above the floor and below the ceiling - where he could look down on employees and customers alike. Max's greeting was strictly business, "Greetings Jawa - Mr. Fleming sends me and his regards." "Good afternoon Mr. Max Lax - I am honored by your presence. We are dreadfully sorry about the loss of Mr. Fleming's gifts. They were most graciously provided and we are most embarrassed by their loss. We have elaborate plans to prevent a reoccurrence. We will not lose them to Chief Bau again. When he next sees our weapons - we will be firing them at him. Max said nothing - he watched as Jaws squirmed - enjoying the torture. Jaws and

all of Fiji's Indians could hang together or separately as far as Max was concerned. He finally spoke - softly, "There'll be no tracing of this shipment to Mr. Fleming. I'm directed to use extraordinary measures if need be. I want to see where you're going to store our weapons and your plans to receive them. If we decide to provide them." Max enjoyed this more than driving a rag top Morgan - turning the screw into Jaws and watching him squirm, "What guarantee can you give that your Chief of Police will not discover our weapons a second time?" "I think you will find our new procedures to your satisfaction. When can we expect your shipment?" "Not so fast - I need assurances before Mr. Fleming will set a date." "You may inspect our storage when you are ready. I believe you will find it satisfactory." "Are we conducting a Kabuki dance? I need to explore several areas before I set a delivery date. One - you must have secure storage. Two - will you need training? Three - when do you plan to execute your overthrow?"

Jawa hesitated - he did not care for Max Lax's imperial attitude. He had had enough pommy condescension to last him a lifetime. When the time came - Max would also be at the end of his gun sight, but for now, "In due course - Ides of March." "Ides of March? Are you plotting an overthrow or putting on a Roman play?" "An overthrow. We must strike soon. Our Fijians are not happy with my people. They are encouraging us to return to India and many of my people are returning. We must strike while we still have a majority. And the Americans are a problem." "How so?" "They provided our Fijians with weapons to overthrow our government. They may try to initiate a military arrangement." "What in the world would they want with Fiji?" "Their Kadena and Clark bases are on a closure course in Okinawa and the Philippines. And if they lose Subic Naval Base they will be looking for another deep water port. We must keep them out." "Your Russian friends can no longer support you." "We plan on

carrying the socialist torch until they return to their senses. They still need our support for their ocean factory fishing fleet."

Max listened carefully - looking for a weakness that might doom Jaw's plans. He found it, "Don't let your emotion blind you. Can't mix socialistic idealism with profit and win." "You forget - my Kiwi friend - Ian will lose if the Americans win. He can only win if we control the government. Ian lost all of his cement contracts when were thrown out. If he wants to pour concrete in Fiji - at his inflated prices - he must support us." Max's foot began to twitch - Jawa was gaining control. He moved quickly, "I stopped at our South Island warehouse on my way to Suva. Your shipment is ready. It will be sent to you only after I am certain you are. We have everything you requested - AK -47s - machine pistols - stun grenade - ammunition and explosives. If you need other weapons - you must explain your requirements." "Training - we will need training." "How many days?" "Two to three days." "Where?" "At the weapon storage site." Max checked his watch, "Getting late - I'll check into my hotel and have a bo-peep at your storage in the morning." Jawa placed the palms of his hands together and bade farewell to Max, "Call me first. I will meet you at my warehouse on the docks." "How will I find it?" "It is the largest. My name is on two sides - facing to and away from the docks."

Jawa watched with a scorn as Max walked out the front entrance. He nodded to a manager - who followed, "One can not be too careful." Jawa closed his eyes, "My Kiwi friends hate me as much as I hate them. But - we Indians have an advantage - we will never die - we are reincarnated. When we take power - neither Max Lax or Ian Fleming will ever set foot on Fiji again. All competition will cease and all non Indian commerce will be confiscated. Fiji's society will be stratified like our homeland. The untouchables will be

Fijians and their land and wealth confiscated. Fiji's gold will be sent to India - to provide gold leaf to gild our ancestor's tombs. Our elders will return to the Holy Ganges in style. Only an Asian mind understands - family! A family nation and a nation of families. Isolation from outsiders - that's the key. We must rid ourselves of pommy customs. Time is on the side of the cobra - patience is our tactic - reincarnation is our goal. And when we have the bomb - we will be fearless." Jawa penned the last entry in his journal - closed the cover and smiled - like a cobra does when eyeing a rat for dinner.

Four blocks, but a country away from Motila's General Store - Johnny had just completed a tour of Chief Bau's offices. His escort opened the door to the Chief's outer office. Chief Bau's secretary looked up, "Colonel Ropp? Chief Bau is waiting. Would you care for tea?" "Yes." "Cream or sugar?" "Neat." She opened the door to the Chief's office, "Colonel Ropp to see you - Sir." "Have a seat. I see Lucinda has tea for us." Chief Bau waited for Lucinda to pour and continued, "We can speak freely here." "About Benny?" "And other things. Our Indian friends are becoming active again. I believe they will strike soon. I want to nip it in the bud." "You have other plans for me?" "We welcome your expertise on computers - however I do have a few additional tasks for you. Did Kalani bring you up to date on my Country?" "Yes and so did the Curator at the Bishop Museum." "We are certain the Kiwis will again attempt to ship weapons to our Indian friends. When and where is all the data I need." "Not an easy task. Intentions are the most difficult Intelligence items to collect." "We know who will ship them and who will receive them. Starting from that knowledge - what should we look for?" "Looks like you need to track ships departing New Zealand. Computers can help, but until your system is up and running you can keep track with paper and pencil. Who do you think will run their

guns?" "Our Green friends." "Are you certain?" "They are very selective in their outrage. We agree with their fisheries stance, but not their political aims. They are joined at the hip with our Indian Socialists in support of a nuclear free zone. We are interested in nuclear power. The Greens are opposed to it. We have made enemies."

Johnny sipped tea and thought out loud, "Now that's a tar baby I didn't expect." "Tar baby?" "Sticky wicket." "Ah yes - our Green friends can raise a righteous fuss. They have friends in the media who can roast both our countries. They are pure socialists." "Pure?" "Our Green friends will approach Fiji like a farmer with two cows. The Greens want to take the cows from us and mix them with all the other cows. But - we will be forced to take care of the cows and all milk will come from the government." "How do they differ from your Socialists?" "Our Indian friends are bureaucratic. We will be forced to care for the cows. They will establish regulations limiting the amount of milk we may keep. But - being Indian - cows are sacred - beef will be outlawed. Being commercial - all profit from our milk sales will return to their ancestors in Mother India." "You agree with thier efforts to save creatures of the sea?" "Conservation is not the property of the left. If the Greens believe that - they need to take a second look at the environmental mess the Socialists made out of Russia" "Instead of kissing up to them?" "We in Fiji are in agreement and support most of the Green's legitimate concerns. But - we do not support their antinuclear stance. A well planned - constructed and maintained nuclear power plant does not create acid rain - or fill the atmosphere with fossil fuel byproducts. We are our ancestors caretakers of Fiji's land and waters."

Johnny had to be honest, "I'm not aware of any Green folks - or their Kiwi supporters and I haven't the foggiest who your Indian Socialists are. Can you give me a place to

begin?" Chief Bau tapped a pencil on his desk, "I thought Kalani brought you up to date." "Not on specifics. Hawaii is half an ocean away." "You can start with Jawa Motila - a leading Socialist and owner of a major retail store in Suva. He has a warehouse on the docks. And we have a Kiwi visitor - Max Lax - who we believe is Jawa's weapons contact." "It looks to me like you have it well in hand." "We thought we did the last time. If it wasn't for a fortunate bit of luck - we would have never discovered their weapons at a house near our airport. If you stumble across anything - take notes and report to me, but do not interfere. I would also like input from your people in Washington." "Benny?" "His people - yours and Ching-Chang's. When you speak to them - ask about our Kiwi friend - Max Lax." "That's an easy name to remember." Lucinda opened the door, "More tea?" Chief Bau motioned toward their cups.

Chief Bau leaned back and looked at Johnny - thinking, "He may stumble onto something, but his main purpose is to draw our opponent's attention. While they are busy watching him - we will look for their storage site - while Pat Penny raises havoc in their ranks." Johnny set his cup down, "Your computer buy. Where do you want me to start. I don't want to interfere needlessly." "Your input will be just in time. Our contractor's study is due in" - he checked his calendar, "three or four days. I'm concerned it may be too complicated for my limited work force." "The size of a given data system is not driven by requirements, but by the amount of money available - plus twenty percent." "I was afraid of that. For now - check on our Indian and Kiwi friends. Give me a status report in a day or two - earlier if you stumble onto something." Chief Bau stood up - signaling their meeting was over. He handed Johnny an envelope, "This is a list of our Indian activists. Look it over as a data input to our new computer system and then give it to Mr. Penny. If you see Pat this afternoon - tell him I'll meet him at your hotel bar

for sunset cocktails." Johnny shook Chief Bau's hand and walked out to Lucinda's desk, "Where is Motila's General Store?" She took him over to the window and pointed toward Suva's tallest building, "You can't miss it - it's only three blocks away."

*"As some day it might happen
that a victim must be found,
I've got a little list - -
I've got a little list - -
Of society offenders who might
well be underground,
And who never would be missed
- - who never would be missed."*

Suva - Fiji

Chief Bau and Pat Penny sat down at a table - with their backs to the wall - out on the verandah of the Viti Levu Bar. The Chief's guards were around, but unseen. The Chief asked, "Did you see the list?" "I have it with me. That's more wet procedures than one mechanic can handle." "I'm interested in the ones at the top of each column." "Good - that makes only six." "Will you need assistance?" "No - I have an assistant with me." Chief Bau did not have to ask who - he knew it was Pat's daughter. Pat asked, "When do you want me to go to work?" "How much time will it take you to set up?" "I know so little about your Country - at least two weeks." "After you finish your preliminary study - have Colonel Ropp contact me. Timing is critical - I will let you know when." "Do you want publicity?" "No - it is best that we keep this effort under cover." "Your ocean is very deep." "And silent."

Chief Bau signaled to the bartender. In less than a minute a waiter appeared carrying a platter of link sausage for Pat and teriyaki beef and pork cubes for the Chief. He smiled at Pat, "The sausage will keep your devils at bay. You know that you are a wanted man - don't you?" "I was not aware - by who?" "Your own government. Every Port in the South Pacific has been alerted to watch for you and your catamaran. Our instructions are to report your whereabouts and monitor your activities." "It's that damn Benny - he was concerned I might sail somewhere else." "Our Indians have spies within my government. My talking to you will look to

my Indian friends as only a policeman checking up on a wanted outlaw. Benny has provided us with cover." "Inadvertently - Benny's intent was to nail me if I didn't comply with his instructions."

Unable to wait any longer - Pat began with one and then another - downing a half platter of sausage. He wiped the grease from his chin, "Where did you meet Benny?" "When we were about to gain control of our government from the Indian Socialists - the British refused to support our efforts. A word here - a word there and an enlightened Country provided all the weapons we required. Benny was the one who listened. And when we discovered that our Socialist friends stripped our treasury - Benny listened again and we are now solvent. And when I asked Benny for assistance - he responded with you and Colonel Ropp. I need a brigand like you - someone who is not connected with my government or any government." "Why do you need Colonel Ropp?" "Primarily as a diversion - and he can help with our computer upgrade." Chief Bau handed Pat a business card, "I'm the only one who will pick up at these numbers. Call if you are going to be compromised - or when you have completed your mission." "If I need assistance?" "Through Colonel Ropp." "Your Christmas Meke - is there anything I can bring along?" "This is the South Pacific. We can always use more beer, but please - no more Primo." "I should have warned you - it's drinkable if you mix it with a Stout or Porter. Does Colonel Ropp know about my mission - or the content of the messages he's going to carry?" "No and if he asks." "Don't tell."

Pat Penny asked for a table to be set up - out on the verandah - away from other guests - for breakfast. His daughter pulled out a chair before coffee arrived, "Where is Mother?" "Sleeping in." He waited until the waiter took their order - poured coffee and left, "I may need your help." Pretty Penny sipped her coffee, "How many?" "Six." "Who is

our client?" "Chief Seru Bau." "Will he turn on us?" "I don't think so. It will be neat. There will be no evidence - even if he does turn. Guess what - I am wanted." "Who set you up?" "Our friend in Washington. It will make our escape difficult, but doable." "How about Colonel Ropp and his wife?" "What do you mean?" "Are they part of the six?" "Of course not. Don't even think about it. We stay alive by keeping our emotions in check. Our business - is business." Pat handed Penny the list, "Only the ones at the top of the columns. How do you want to handle the preliminaries.?" "I'll do the location and record patterns. Disposal?" "Deep six in the ocean. I can move my Cat to a central location. It rides shallow enough to come in close. I'll get bags - weights and weapons." "Wait on weapons. If we can get in close - an ice pick may be the ticket." "How much of the KGB serum do you have left." "It goes a long way - I'm carrying enough to coat twenty needles. Are you thinking blowgun?" "If we must - it eliminates the mess and if we have problems removing the evidence - the diagnosis will be cardiac arrest. Do you need a rental?" "I'll purchase a second hand pickup today - it will blend in." "This is Fiji - your truck will, but you won't." "We have a problem." "Not at night."

Pat's wife - Patricia arrived - fresh from a morning shower - her hair still wet, "Have you ordered?" Pat answered, "Yes - English muffin and eggs for you. We have extra sausage." "No thank you. The Harbormaster called about your catamaran. He said there were no problems. He had it cleaned - installed new wiring and plugs?" "Spark plugs - did he stock it?" "I gave him a list of supplies for our Christmas sail. We have to purchase our own beverages." "I hope you didn't order any mutton - goat or pork." "Only beef products and sausage. I want to do a little shopping today. Do you want to go with me?" "I need to buy several kegs of beer to send over to Bau for Chief Bau's Christmas Meke." "Is that all he wants?" "I asked." Pretty Penny

wondered, "Have either of you seen Colonel Ropp?" Patricia answered, "I saw him at the front desk renting a bicycle to ride into Suva. He certainly has strange habits." Pat nodded, "There may be method in his madness. He'll look like a typical ecofreak tourist to the local Indians - so they'll give him a wide berth and little notice."

Johnny looked over his bicycle rental, "One speed - wide tires and wide seat - a beach bike. It'll have to do. He pushed it out to the access road and hopped on, "Tires are full - she rides good." After a wobbly start - he was on his way. With the wind at his back he made good time. He saw the sign on from four blocks away. A garish sign proclaimed - Motila's General Store in secondary - bright colors, "Must have been mixed by another one-eared painter gone mad." He parked his bike under the front overhang - walked inside and strolled through the wine section. He selected two mid-priced bottles of Medoc that looked interesting and browsed among the groceries. He noticed, "Foodstuffs from India - Fiji - New Zealand - Japan and England, but not one American brand." And he noticed the attention he was getting from clerks and floor managers, "Motila's must not get many tourists. Floors look like they were made with wood planks from H.M.S. Bounty. Wide cracks full of dirt and sawdust - reminds me of Grandfather's General Store back in Ohio. Even use a mixture of oil and sawdust for cleaning."

Johnny looked up - into two dark black holes - the eyes of Jawa Motila - peering down from his elevated office in the back of the store. Johnny nodded his head - smiled - holding his gaze to Jawa's eyes. Jawa - startled - turned away - returning his eyes to his ledger. Johnny continued down the aisle - his thoughts conjuring up Ebenezer Scrooge - from Dickens's tale of Christmas - elevated above the throng - keeping an eye on clerk and customer alike. A clerk appeared - walking briskly up the aisle. Johnny handed him the wine,

"These will do fine - ring them up" before the clerk could say one word. He followed the clerk to the cash register and paid in Fiji coin. Outside - Johnny tied down his purchase inside the bike's basket. He noticed a tagalong as he peddled away.

Johnny was still smiling to himself as he came out of the third alley he had ducked into - knowing his tagalong could not follow. He rode down to the docks - to Motila's warehouse and stopped across the street. The warehouse was surrounded on three sides by a large electric fence. Johnny surmised, "Bet it's open on the dockside." He looked up at the roof line -

Motila's General Store

was splashed across the top in the same garish secondary colors as Motila's store and thought, "Must be an Indian thing." As Max Lax drove up in his Morgan - Johnny ducked inside the tea shop on the corner - across the street. He recognized it as a rental, "Hello there - might have found our Kiwi - for a two-bagger today. Looks like he has three - maybe four guards on a roving patrol and a gatekeeper to check people in and out. If I was hiding guns - couldn't pick a better place. Best place to hide anything is out in the open - in a crowd." Johnny ordered a cup of English breakfast tea - two triangular shaped scones - sat back in his chair and waited. As Jawa Motila drove up in a Rolls Royce - the gate opened - then a front garage door opened and his Rolls disappeared inside. Johnny was on his second cup when Max walked out the front entrance and drove away in his Morgan. Jawa followed a few minutes later.

Johnny paid for his tea and scones - left a generous tip and walked outside, "Lets see - if I ride down to the end of the block - I might have access to the dock. Short of breaking and entering - not much else I can do here." He rode to the corner and walked his bike on the side street to

the dock, "Talk about a soft underbelly. All that electric fence - roving guards and the back of his warehouse is open to a public dock." Johnny walked along the dock to the back of the warehouse, "Normal shipping and receiving." He looked - saw no one - climbed down the ladder and looked underneath, "Hello - a series of hinges above the waterline. Looks like it'll swing open. Have to be at low tide though - not enough clearance." Johnny rode off the dock - and up the road to Police Headquarters.

As he entered - the desk sergeant waved him toward the elevator, "Chief Bau has been looking for you." Lucinda looked up as Johnny entered the Chief's outer office, "When you're done - stop by my desk. I'll take you to Lieutenant Matuku's desk. He's in charge of our computer buy. Chief Bau will see you now." Johnny opened the door, "You wanted to see me?" "If you don't mind? I've assigned you to work with Lieutenant Matuku. Do you mind taking instruction from one of lower rank?" "Not at all - I'm on his turf." "Matuku is in charge of my Operations Section. He's been with our constabulary since graduating from Southern California with a degree in Law Enforcement." "What's the Lieutenant's first name?" "Charles, but we are formal here. He will prefer that you use Lieutenant when you address him." "He can call me Johnny or Mister - if we want some semblance of cover. I stopped at Motila's General Store to take a look-see at your Indian friend." "Was his Kiwi contact there?" "Saw him park outside Motila's warehouse down by the dock. Driving a Morgan. Aren't many of those around. Motila followed in his Rolls." "Did you discover anything?" "Not from those two, but out back - I noticed a hidden loading entrance underneath the dock. There are a series of hinges above the high water mark." "What do you think?" "If they are going to unload weapons - it will have to be done at low tide for clearance and even then they'll have to use dories or Zodiacs." "I came to the same conclusion." "Does Motila have an Indian

crew?" "No - he hires Fijians to do the heavy work. I have two trusted men inside." "Why did you want me to take a look around." "It pays to have a second opinion."

Lucinda knocked on the door and opened it, "Lieutenant Matuku? Colonel Ropp to see you." "Come in - I've been expecting you." Lucinda closed the door. "We're pretty far down the road with our planning. I received the final system proposal this morning. It will be difficult to change our requirements this far along. Our contractor will jack up the price if we do. Don't get me wrong, but I've had more help than any human can ever need or want from contractors. Each one has the world's best and most complete computer system." "I've been sent to assist - not interfere. I don't intend to tell you what you need, but I might be able to separate the facts from your contractor's gibberish. I've been in on a few system failures myself. If computer types spoke the King's English we'd know what we were getting. Most often a system grows at the same rate as your funds become available. Can you bring me up to date on how you're organized?" "How about coffee first - a bad habit I picked up in LA."

Matuku poured as he motioned for Johnny to sit down, "As you can see - my Operations office is quite compact - small is the more correct word. I have two sections aptly named - Internal and External. Chief Bau borrowed this concept from Scotland Yard. We run ours in the same manner as they manage their Investigation Division. Since we have more problems inside than outside Fiji - my Internal section is three times the size of External. When Chief Bau formed them - they were of both equal size with External organized along the lines of Her Majesty's Secret Intelligence Service. I reorganized it to put my people where our problems are - our Socialists. Our problems with our Indian population have at times been overwhelming." "How many people do you have?" Five in External - with emphasis on South Pacific. Our intelligence

requirements center on narcotics - contraband and smuggling." "Then you must have fifteen officers in Internal." "And their requirements are driven by the activities of our Indian Socialists. Ours are called Inspectors like their Scotland Yard counterparts. I'll let you guess how we weighted our data requirements." "Toward External - so you can hook up with other data bases." "You're ready to look at the systems we've been offered." Lucinda knocked on the door and opened it, "Colonel Ropp?" "Yes - Ma'am." You may wish to go to the airport. Your wife is due in an hour." "How did you" - and Johnny stopped, "Of course - you have access to the manifest. I'll stop in tomorrow morning. Will that be too late?" "We won't make our final decision until after the New Year. From our conversation. I think we'll be able to work together. I want the most bang for our buck" and Matuku smiled, "Slang - another bad habit from LA."

Johnny walked outside and looked at his bicycle, "Sure picked the wrong transportation to go to the airport and pick up Bobbie Jean. How did she get here - so quickly? Don't ask. I'll ride out to the airport - rent a car and have the hotel pick up my bike." Riding against the wind - Johnny walked into the terminal barely in time - just as Bobbie Jean walked through the entrance gate, "Didn't expect to see you here - soldier." They embraced and she pushed him gently away, "Ugh - did you run all the way from the hotel? You're soaked with perspiration?" "Rode a bike into town downwind. Unfortunately - it was into the wind coming back." "How did you know I was flying in?" "Chief of Police's Secretary. They have a manifest on all arrivals. This is not O'Hare." "Did you rent a car?" "No - I wasn't expecting you this soon - or my bike ride to the airport to take so long. Haven't had time." "Good - I have a limo waiting for us." "I'll have the hotel gather up my bike." "What in the world are you doing with a bicycle." "Attempting to look like a tourist instead of a spy."

Johnny waited for Bobbie Jean to clear Customs and then carried her luggage outside to a waiting limo, "Only two bags - you're traveling light." "A Casino plane stopped to pick me up at Dulles on a return flight from New York. I didn't have time to do my usual packing. I made plane reservations to Fiji while we were in the air to LA. Did you reserve a suite?" "No - didn't have time." "I did. We'll find out how good your Viti Levu's concierge is. He is supposed to transfer your things while you were out. What were you doing in town." "Had an appointment with the Chief of Police - Seru Bau. You'll like him. We're invited to his family's Christmas Meke on his home island - not far off the coast." "What is it called?" "Bau." "He must be important. Did you see that roadster that just passed us. It's a Morgan - like one you've always wanted." Johnny looked at the tail end of Max Lax's Morgan, "I wonder where he is going?" "Do you know him?" "He's the one I checked on this morning for the Chief. A Kiwi." "What's it all about - Alfie?" "We'll talk at the hotel." "If he's trying to stay incognito - he sure picked the wrong car." "Like a limo?" "Touché." "Did you have trouble making a connection to Fiji?" "No - there were First Class seats open to Sydney and from there to here. I was going to use a Casino bird, but your friend said no." "If it's Benny - he's not my friend, but he's right. A private jet would have raised a few eyebrows."

Max Lax's Morgan swerved back - into the driving lane after passing the limo. Out of curiosity he looked over to see who was taking a ride, but the windows were too dark. He shifted into high gear - passing by the Viti Levu Resort - his Morgan leaping to his command. He looked into his rear view mirror - watching the limo as it turned into the Resort. He sped on ahead - slowing five miles later - turning away from the ocean - into the foothills of the coastal mountain range. Max slowed to a crawl - shifting down into second gear - looking for a coral gravel road. He found his marker

and turned left - disappearing under a canopy of Monkey Pod trees. Day turned to night as the tropical forest closed in above - interlocking branches blocking out all sunlight. As the path climbed upward - night gradually turned into purple twilight - slowly brightening - as Max's Morgan came out of the darkness into blinding sunlight. Max shaded his eyes as his roadster crawled to a pause - atop a grassy knoll. As his eyes adjusted - Max slipped his gearshift into second gear and followed the white coral driveway toward the ocean overlook side of Diesel's plantation house mansion. Max parked - opened the car door and looked out on a magnificent ocean view, "No one is going to sneak up on Diesel." Diesel - Rajiv Desaij - earned his nickname leading the Socialist Union's recruiting drive of cane field workers. When anyone got in his way - Rajiv ran over them like an out of control diesel truck.

Max's feet crunched on Rajiv's white coral path as he approached the wraparound porch steps, "No way anyone will sneak up - not crunching on this damned coral. And then they would have to navigate Diesel's porch. Wide enough to give Diesel an easy access field of fire." Max stopped halfway up the porch steps and looked back over his shoulder - down on a panoramic view of the Kora Sea - dotted with emerald green islands - like moss on white rocks. He turned - climbed and sat down in the visitors chair - waiting. He closed his eyes - thinking, "In this British Raj mansion lives an Indian Hindu - one who has elevated himself up a caste or two. No longer is Diesel an untouchable. Rajiv is the real leader of Fiji's Socialist Party. Jawa Motila sits out front - like a puppet - and sometimes a target while Diesel pulls strings." Ian Fleming and Diesel were reluctant comrades in their task to rape Fiji and overthrow of the current Fijian government. Diesel took a page from Lenin's play book - organizing his Socialists into six cells. When last in power - Fiji's treasury wound up in Ian's and Diesel's pockets."

Diesel looked out - from behind one way glass, "Max has his eyes closed. He has learned patience. I will let him stew awhile. Jawa was right about this one - he will be eliminated when he is no longer needed. We will do Max when we throw out our Fijian landlords. This time it will be a blood bath. None of Fiji's Chiefs will be spared. We will not underestimate them again. When Chief Bau's discovered our weapon's cache it was a setback, but not a devastating one. Jawa has given excellent counsel - again - time is on our side. He was right - I have been away - too long from the lessons of Mother India. My British training made me think in too short a time span. Our long range plan is to take from this land and give to the land of our only true Gods. The temple honoring my Father is only half done. Gilding the dome with gold foil is expensive, but the means are here - in Fiji. I must be patient - there is no need to accelerate the rape of this land. What I can not finish - my sons will. Money will flow again to the banks of Holy Ganges - to complete construction of all our ancestor's monolithic masterpieces. Max is snoring - patience has turned to sloth. He has waited long enough and I want to be rid of him."

"Max - wake up - it is me - Rajiv Desaij." Max opened his eyes, "How long have I been asleep?" "Not long - the view is mesmerizing - isn't it?" "Put me to sleep. I can see why you picked this spot." "It was not of my choosing. We squeezed it away from it's previous owner when we were in power. He was a British pom. Max stood - bowed and placed the palms of his hands together in Indian fashion - greeting a superior. Rajiv returned his greeting, "What mission brings you to my house. Ian and I were in agreement - you were to only contact Jawa." "I came to see you at Ian's direction - to find out how we lost our last shipment - to speak fully of our intentions and to fully understand yours. He does not trust Jawa Motila." "I am embarrassed by his distrust. The error was not intentional - it was only by an

unusual bit of luck that Chief Bau discovered our cache. We have taken steps to insure that it will not happen again. Tell me about your shipment."

Max almost, but did not frown. Eliminating Jaws was going to be more of a problem than he had anticipated. The flush of anger quelled - he spoke quietly, "You will see your weapons soon - after the New Year." "Where are they." "In Ian's warehouse south of Christchurch. Our Russian friends provided used gear. We had to clean - repair and test each one - very time consuming. I'm afraid our price will be a little higher than quoted." "How much?" "That decision will be between Ian and you. I am here to make sure Jawa has a secure facility - find out if you have other requirements and report back to Ian. If all is in order - Ian will ship your weapons." "Is all in order?" "I haven't fully decided." "How do you plan to ship our weapons?" "Safely - we have made arrangements with the Greens. They will deliver and provide training." "You can't be serious about the Greens providing weapons training?" "They have been well trained - first by Russians and later by Syrians at terrorist training centers. You will be quite pleased with their proficiency. A Green ship will be at anchor in Suva Bay for three days. Delivery of weapons will begin the first night and training on the afternoon of the second day. Can you build an indoor range in Jawa's dockside warehouse." "Yes, but I am still concerned about the Greens. These people are not like us. They are idealistic - pure socialists. I do not trust them." Max laughed, "They are unaware of the profit motive behind each revolution." Rajiv smiled back at Max, "Ah - I love the profits of a successful revolution. I see the cover Ian's scheme provides. After the episode in New Zealand - most of our South Pacific nations will leave the Greens alone. They can move contraband about - freely." "And when their done here - they can return to harassing fishing fleets - a good deed by anyone's standards."

Rajiv picked up a small temple bell from the tea table between their chairs and rang it six times. A fawning servant appeared and poured tea. Rajiv asked, "Scone?" "No thank you." "I anticipated your visit - Ian called earlier. He asked for the same data on how your last shipment was discovered and confiscated. I assured him it was our fault - unloading in daylight. He said to tell you to confirm our shipment." "I will, but I am still concerned about Jawa - he is your weak link." "If you insist - I will have a trusted servant at his side with orders to kill him if he attempts to betray my trust." It took all of Max's emotional control to hide his joy on receiving this bit of good news, "Ian will be pleased. What are your disposition plans for the current crop of Fiji officials?" "I understand Ian's concern. He will see new resolve among my Socialist followers. This time we will follow Stalin's example - we will copy his version of cleansing our Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Our Dictators will act as Proconsuls - and I will watch over them as a Praetor - judge and jury from the shadows. My bidding will be done. It is time to feed our sharks in Suva Bay. You have my personal assurance that your shipment will stay in safe hands. Have Ian call me when he knows the date of arrival." Max stood - placed the palms of his hands together and bowed, "My report will be favorable."

Rajiv watched Max walk down the porch steps and turned - thinking, "Max - you will be first among equals when our sharks have their feeding frenzy in Suva Bay." Max drove his Morgan slowly around the plantation house on the coral path. He waved, but to no avail - Diesel had his back to him. He wound slowly down into the canopy of trees - reassured, "Ian will be pleased." Rajiv Desaij closed the door, "The fool doesn't even know we provided the Morgan to insure we didn't lose track of him. When he is among the first to go - it will be a mercy killing." Max exited the Monkey Pod canopy - remembering Ian's assessment of Diesel, "Our Indian partner

is untouchable - social climbing comes naturally to him. But if I was a betting man I'd say he has some of Alexander the Great's gene pool in him. He has an empire conquering frenzy that comes from more than his Lenin books. Has to have some of the genes of that Macedonian traveler."

Wellington - New Zealand

Ian Fleming arrived at his office early - still worried about Max, "Diesel phoned right after Max left - thinks he has gone bonkers. And Max phoned as soon as he arrived. He thinks Diesel and Jaws have both gone bonkers - too. Talked about renting a Morgan in Fiji and how much fun it was to drive. Might as well have put a bell around his neck. He had to have rented the only Morgan on Fiji. Max had to stick out like a sore thumb." He looked up at the clock, "Quarter till eight. Secretary won't be in until nine. I'll have to brew my own pot of tea. Good - she has it all ready to go. All I have to do is light the fire." Ian placed his leather flight jacket over the back of his chair - sat down and swiveled around toward the picture window - facing east - looking out over Palliser Bay. He gazed at twilight fighting its way upward on the horizon - through Wellington's rain and mist. He swiveled one eighty - looking out into the darkness - where the Tasmanian Sea would - like Max - soon appear. Max swiveled ninety degrees - facing his desk, "The view from the seventh floor is always cloudy. If I spent all of my time behind this desk - I'd have nothing, but a myopic view of my socialist Kiwi world. Early morning clouds - packed full of moisture - are marching like puffy fat white soldiers toward old Wellington town. Rain is more like a mist. What is it Hawaiians call it? I know - same as our Maoris - rain is a blessing on ocean trips or new ventures. Well - my efforts in Fiji can use all the help our Polynesian Gods can give - with Max and his accident prone Indians carrying my water." Ian swiveled around and looked out toward the

Tasmanian Sea. Darkness turned to gray and then - sunlight popped through - like a halo in the clouds. He swiveled a quarter turn and looked south - across Cook Straight toward Cloudy Bay - South Island, "Sinking the *Rainbow Warrior* was a blessing from our Polynesian Gods. What a piece of luck! Frenchies took the blame and no one in the South Pacific will ever search another Green Ship for contraband."

Coded messages were seldom sent from the seventh floor, but Ian sent one today - to his warehouse agent in Blenheim town. It was cryptic -

"Drive north to Christchurch and speak with the Captain of the Rainbow Warrior Resurrection. Tell him to sail to Akoroa after Christmas - load and be on his way. My agent - Max Lax will arrive before he weighs anchor. He's my representative with our Indian friends. He'll sail to Fiji. Make sure our Captain loads at night and is on his way before dawn.

Ian

Max knocked on the office door and looked inside, "Mind if I interrupt?" "Not at all - Max - not at all. I arrived early - just to see you. Tea's ready - care for a cup-a?" "I'll pour - double lemon?" "Sour she is. How did you find our friends - Jaws and Diesel?" "Defensive, but ready. If looks aren't deceiving - they're prepared for another go at it. Jawa's warehouse storage entrance is underneath the dock in Suva. We'll have to unload with dories at low tide." "You're certain they can secure our weapons?" "I'm never certain about our Indian friends." "That's why I want you to sail on the Green ship." "What's her name?" "She's called the *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection*. She'll be underway after Christmas. Fly down to Christchurch. Our Captain will be waiting for you. I've sent a message on ahead. He knows

you're coming and that you're my personal representative." "I'd rather drink at the local Public House with my mates. I haven't had Christmas at home in years." "You can fish the trout streams." "I'll leave in the morning." "Take care of your affairs at home - first. I'll let you know when our seaplane is ready." "That pommy bastard." "Relatives are the bane of profit - Max and a necessary evil." "Am I sailing direct?" "No - roundabout for cover. You'll have a layover on Norfolk Island." "With the lepers?" "They have it cured." "I was talking about those inbred natives exiled from Pitcairn."

Max edged toward the door - anxious to leave before Ian decided to sound off - on another philosophical journey that meant nothing to Max - as he understood none of it. Ian rose from his chair, "Another cup-a - Max? Oh - our Green friends won't be using dories. Remember? They used fast Zodiacs to harass the French Navy ships. They'll slip under the dock at mid tide. Depending on the height - might even be able to deliver at high tide." "Using Greens - looks like you have a foolproof plan." Ian smiled - thinking, "Yes - if I can only control the fools I'm surrounded with." He sipped some of his tea, "Max?" "Yes?" When your ship sails into Suva Bay and after all of the weapons are safely ashore - inform Rajiv - if his revolution fails - I won't supply any more weapons for another go. It's too risky in today's world."

Ian turned away and stared out the window. Max edged toward the door. Ian turned and steered Max toward the window overlooking Cook Straight, "Beautiful - isn't it. We're perched up here on the side of this hill - enjoying a view the Maoris used to dread." "Max was more practical, "You won't be able to play golf today." "I need to work on my boat." Max edged away, but Ian steered him back, "Do you think our Indians on Fiji will cooperate with the Chinese?" "Have you made a deal with them?" "Our Russian sponsors have

turned into robber barons. Rajiv is still worshipping a God that is dead - the Comintern." "The what?" Ian decided it would be futile to educate Max - so he didn't, "Our Indian friends have not forgiven the Chinese for creating border clashes along Sikkim - Nepal - Bhutan - Assam and invading Tibet." "I know they don't like the Chinese." "We are changing our allegiance from the Russians to the Chinese." "Have you informed Rajiv?" "In due course Max - in due course." "You didn't tell me what a Comintern is." "It's the international organization the Russians created to export their brand of socialism." "And it's no longer alive?" "It died when the Berlin Wall came down." "If you're sending me to sea with a group of wild eyed radicals - I'll need some time to get my affairs in order." Ian nodded, "Yes" to his longtime friend. He had not chosen Max for his intellectual curiosity. Max was a practical plodder, "Get your affairs in order - Max. I'll phone when it's time to go."

Honolulu - Hawaii

Ching Chang nodded to his Secretary and picked up his telephone, "You got me just in time - Johnny - I was about to cross the street and brief the DI. How are things in the South Pacific?" "Great - Chief Bau is a great host. Gets any better and I might abandon ship and stay down here in paradise. Do you have any guidance for me?" "Do the right thing." "Where have I heard that before. Did you fly the line?" "Still do with the Hawaii National Guard." "I didn't know you were a fighter jock." "Am a fighter jock - no past tense in our language." "Bet you fighter jocks have a secret handshake." "Don't ask." "Don't tell. I need information on our computer system." "Which one?" "The one the analysts use at the Pentagon. Not certain that the PACAF DI has one yet." "They do." "See what a six terminal mini system - similar to ours - will cost and find out if we can export it to the Fiji Constabulary - one with all of the programs, but

none of the data." "I'll start here and then talk to Tupelo. Kalani wants to know if you need anything?" "No - tell Kalani - I'll bring him up-to-date an my way back through. Oh - ask Kalani if anyone back there holds data on two Fiji Indians - Jawa Motila and Rajiv Desaij and a Kiwi - Max Lax." "Max Lax?" "I can see you chuckling - through the SATCOM. Have Tupelo phone a Tucker Tubbs - to make sure my sheep are surviving." "Sheep?" "And they're all black sheep." "Don't ask?" "Don't tell." Ching Chang hung up and punched in the CIA Ops number for Benny.

Suva - Fiji

Johnny's call to PACAF took more time than he had planned. Bobbie Jean paced out on the lanai, "I thought you'd never get off the phone. And they say women talk too long. Are you ready?" "As soon as I tie my shoes and pull on a shirt." "Hope they make a mild Bloody Mary at the bar. My stomach is still in LA. It will be at least a day before it arrives here." "I'm ready - are you ready to do battle with Penelope Penny?" "Now I remember why I flew out here in such a hurry. Why didn't you buy a sulu to wear to the Chief's Meke?" "Not sure I'd look good in a kilt and I didn't want to insult the Chief and his family." "You're right - it would look patronizing. Order me a mild Bloody Mary - without salt and the local pepper sauce. I'm going out on the verandah and take in this lovely ocean sunset." Bobbie Jean walked outside - leaving Johnny at the bar - wondering, "Sure is edgy. Never saw her so nervous. This competition with Pretty Penny must be affecting her more than she is letting on." He ordered a Double Brown Dominion Bitters beer and took a sip while the bartender mixed Bobbie Jean's Bloody Mary. He turned the bottle over in his hands, "No truth in advertising. It's a Kiwi beer - more like a sweet Porter." He carried their drinks out on the verandah where he embraced and kissed Bobbie Jean.

Bobbie Jean melted into Johnny's arms, "What is this all about?" "Don't you like it?" "More than you'll ever know." "I thought you needed a hug. You've been edgy - since you've arrived." "I know - I'd just as soon sock Penelope as look at her. Do we have to sail with them?" "Chief Bau invited us to sail on his boat. It would not be proper hospitality to refuse. A car will pick us up in thirty minutes." "Will we have to ride to the harbor with the Penny family?" "No - they're all ready there - on his catamaran." "Good - I think I'll be able to avoid her on the boat and we can sit with our hosts - away from your - friends." "Do you really want to make her feel uncomfortable?" "If I can't sock her - yes." "Use your best Southern charms - get up close and personal. Be overly friendly. You won't have to avoid her - she'll avoid you." "I'll put that thought in my Southern Lady data bank." "Car's waiting - are you ready?" Bobbie Jean set her drink down on the railing and walked along, "You might be right - I'm reacting when I should be in control. Shouldn't we bring a present for our hosts?" "I purchased two full kegs of beer. Sent them on the supply boat this morning." "We're in the tropics - how about ice and tubs?" "Came with the kegs." Johnny held the car door open, "All items going to Bau Island receive first class treatment." "Us or the beer - Soldier?" "Both."

Bau Island - Fiji

Johnny opened the car door and Bobbie Jean slid out of the back seat, "Pretty fancy - being delivered in a police limo. Is that our transportation?" A large Police Patrol boat stood waiting - decked out with Christmas bunting and colors. Lieutenant Matuku - dressed in formal Police sulu - saluted as they climbed the gangplank, "Chief Bau sends his welcome. His brother will be our Captain for this sail." He grinned at Johnny, "Two full kegs of beer - you are all ready a legend on our isle. Mr. Penny sent over two - also. Our

village will have beer enough to last through New Years. Mr. Penny and his family are below. If you are ready - we will cast off." "Sail away. Do you mind if we sight see from the bow. My wife and I have never sailed these waters before." "After we clear the harbor - you will see the splendor of our magic islands - so green above the emerald Pacific blue. Do you care for a drink?" Bobbie Jean answered, "White wine for me and Johnny?" "The same." Matuku nodded to a steward and two glasses appeared in less than a minute, "We have a spread below - if you are hungry." Bobbie Jean said, "Later - maybe - I don't want to miss seeing the beauty of your land from the sea."

After they cleared the harbor - Chief Bau's brother introduced himself, "I am Koro Bau - your Captain for this voyage. My Father named me after our sea - hoping I would be a sailor one day. My brother told you where our Christmas Meke is being held. You will be guests at our village. We will have food and drink for all and community singing. It will be an honor for us to provide our hospitality to such very special guests." Johnny mentioned, "Hawaiians call their songfest Mele and yours is Meke - are they the same - connected?" "Both words are derived from a common Polynesian background. Our Hawaiian brothers concentrate more on chants and dances. Our Meke is more melodious. Like our Samoan brothers - we love to sing - to harmonize. I'm pleased that you did not choose to wear sulu. Our Father thinks that all Englishmen look silly in kilts and out of place in sulus. We'll arrive at Bau at sunset. Make yourself comfortable and enjoy the emerald view of our magic land."

Two hours later - Koro guided the Patrol Boat along an extended dock - jutting a hundred yards out into the sea. He docked in as close in as possible - making sure his craft would not be grounded at ebb tide. Johnny helped Bobbie Jean down the gangplank - ahead of Pat Penny and his family. An

hour into their trip - Bobbie Jean had befriended Penelope - smothering her with syrupy Southern charm. As they walked along the dock - she whispered to Johnny, "Your suggestion worked - Pretty Penny will stay pretty far away from me for the rest of our stay." "Thought you were going to run out of pretties my Pretty." "I know you - you're not my husband - you're the wicked witch of the west?" "I'll have to stay out of the water." "What do you call that contraption?" "That's a jitney - a cross between a Jeep and a ten passenger van - a Fijian RV."

They arrived at Chief Bau's village - a short fifteen minute jitney ride from the dock and were greeted warmly with flowers and drink. Straw mats were placed under the palms at the edge of the beach - providing an outdoor banquet table. A large wood fire burned on the beach - sparks flying upward - village children dancing around - more for ambiance than warmth. Several pits of white hot coals were in evidence - as working ovens for this evening's meal. Chief Bau came forward and introduced them to his Father and Mother and motioned for them to sit nearby - on straw mats. The Meke began as soon as Chief Bau's Father raised his hand. Drinks were served - formal introductions of their guests to the village made - before a sumptuous meal of roast pig - baked fish and yams was spread out on the mats before them.

When the Christmas Meke feast was consumed - Chief Bau's Father escorted Johnny and Pat to the Village Longhouse. He motioned for them to sit down on straw mats - woven by the Village women. Tonight - women were not invited. Women's liberation had not arrived in the South Pacific. The Chief's Father spoke, "Colonel Ropp - Bau is honored to have you as her guest. As an appreciation of our respect you too are to be honored with our Village Tabua. Come forward." Johnny stood up and approached the Chief's Father. He bent down on his knees and extended his neck. The Chief's Father placed

the sennit cord with its amulet - a polished tooth of a Sperm Whale around Johnny's neck, "It is a symbol of our goodwill and friendship. My son told of your willingness to assist us in securing our homeland from those who live among us. Those who desire to take our land from us and turn us into slaves. Those who mistake our hospitality for weakness. He stood up and shouted, "Tabua!" The Village men responded, "Tabua!" He whispered to Johnny, "It wasn't long ago - when a European extended his neck - we had a new head to join others on our village fence." The Chief's Father laughed and the elders joined in - all knowing that his little joke - at a time before the Great Seru Bau - had a serious ending. Johnny returned to his place on the mat as the Chief called for Pat Penny to come forward. As Pat turned to return to his place on the mat - the Chief's Father placed his hand on Pat's arm, "You have used a war club many times. How many have you sent to the hairy red devils?" Pat smiled, "A dozen or two - maybe more. I don't keep score."

Chief Bau motioned for the men to remain quiet as he passed a wooden bowl of milky liquid to Johnny, "We will drink Yaqona together to cement our friendship. We call this mixture Grog, but it is not a mixture of rum like the British Navy's Grog. Theirs is rum - water - lemon juice and sugar. Ours is made from the root of the Pepper plant. We drink it from a wooden bowl. Colonel Ropp - it is your turn - drink!" Johnny tilted the bowl toward his mouth and sipped two ounces before handing the bowl to Pat. His grin was brave, but the water in his eyes gave away his feelings. After the pepper taste passed - he noticed an immediate numbing of his tongue and throat. After all had partaken the Chief stood, "It is Christmas. A time to be with our families. We usually talk story when we gather here in Our Long House. Tonight we will return to the Meke and join in the singing. Colonel Ropp and Mr. Pat Penny have provided enough beer to last through the holidays. We must now honor their gift."

Johnny returned to Bobbie Jean's side. She asked, "How did it go?" He pointed to his throat and downed a pint of Swan's Premium Export Lager from the newly tapped keg, "We were treated to a drink made from the Pepper plant." "I read about it, Yagona isn't it?" "Yes and very hot." He showed her the Tabua, "We were honored tonight." "Did you like the Yagona?" "Chief Bau is right when he said it is an acquired taste. All things considered - I'd rather have a glass of Port, but I'm pleased to be honored. My throat is still numb. The Chief's Father didn't water it down for his Haole guests." "Haole?" "It means stranger in Hawaiian." Johnny - Bobbie Jean and Patricia joined in with the Village as they sang familiar songs and Christmas Carols. At exactly eleven p.m. - the Chief's Father stood up and raised his hands, My son's guests must now return to Suva. We have been honored by their gifts and their company. Around their necks is our Tabua." He clapped his hands and the Village rose as one, "It is time to honor Fiji with *Isa Lei*." Johnny and Bobbie Jean held each other - listening to magical harmony -

*Isa - Isa you are my only treasure
Must you leave me so lonely and forsaken
Oh - forget now -
When you are far away -
Precious moments -
Beside dear Suva Bay.*

The melody of *Isa Lei* whispered like chimes through the palms - the smiling sound of laughing - lyrical children. Johnny whispered to Bobbie Jean, "It's like a stadium full of barbershop choruses - all singing acapela without an E flat section." Johnny and Bobbie Jean walked arm-in-arm to the jitney - trailing after the Penny family.

When the Chief's Father nodded to Seru Bau - the Chief excused himself and followed his Father to the edge of the surf. His Father waded out - over his ankles, "Have you made the arrangements?" "Yes - the sullen ones have agreed to do our bidding." "Do you have confidence in them?" "Benny sent them." "Then it will be done. Why do you not take away the leaders?" "They are not like us. The ones in the middle run the movement. Those at the top will be sharks who have lost their sense of smell." "Where is the giant *Tiger Shark*. The one who led the leader of the sullen ones here?" "Pat Penny says he traveled to Norfolk Island in search of Kiwi." "How would Pat Penny know?" "He said the shark spoke to him - in his thoughts." "When the sullen ones are finished with their tasks - let them go." "Are you certain?" "Pat Penny has been touched by one of our Gods and is pursued by foreign devils. I don't want his red devils under our sacred soil. It took many years for us to be rid of our own."

Suva - Fiji

Johnny arrived at Headquarters as the sun cleared the sea. His computer system survey was completed before the sun crossed midday. He stopped by Lieutenant Matuku's office, "I won't waste your time or mine with a drawn out report." "A verbal is good enough for me. What do you think of our set up?" "Well - a data automation system is only as good as data you have in it and is only of value if you can get it out in a usable format." "How about our other country access?" "Looks good to me. Your cooperation with Australia is just what the doctor ordered." "What do you think of my organization?" "Your External Section is first rank - your people know their business. I won't judge your Internal Section. Not my area of expertise and I wasn't given access to sensitive data. From what I've seen - all you need is a good data storage and retrieval system. A simple mini - rapid access system should do the trick." "Looks like you're

ready to review system proposals from our contractors."

"After lunch - I'm buying if you care to join me?" "Where would you like to go?" "You lead the way - I'm a stranger in these parts." "Smile when you say that - stranger." "You and I are beginning to sound like dialogue from a John Wayne cowboy movie." "We show all of his movies."

After lunch - Johnny leafed through page after page of data automation system contractor proposals. Boiler plate and gibberish made them all look alike. By four p.m. he had seen enough. He checked in with Lieutenant Mantuku, "My eyes are crossed." "What do you think?" "They gave you standard government contract proposals - enigmas wrapped in enigmas." "You read the boiler plate. Will they do the job and which one do you recommend?" "All respond to your requirements - and to those of a dozen other countries - too. And they are all expensive - loaded with lots of overkill. Two propose mainframes and one has a series of minis tied together with an elaborate Rube Goldberg communication network. They will all work, but are more suited to a larger operation - ones requiring fifty or more terminals. If you decide to purchase any one of them - you'll need on site contractor support and double your current manpower." "We're in agreement. I came to the same conclusion. We need support - soon. Should I ask for more proposals?" "Take too long. Tell you what - we have a system all ready designed that might fit your needs. We use it at all of our offices and better yet - it's turn key. All you have to do is plug it in and enter your data. I'm not certain how many terminals it can handle." "Sounds good to me. We don't need an elaborate system to do simple tasks. Maintenance can create down time and we're a long way from contractor support." "How many terminals do you need?" "With simultaneous access of data - a minimum of six and a maximum of ten. As you are aware - our storage requirements are not complicated - we track a few ships and lots of people - not orders of battle."

Johnny leafed through his notes, "That pretty well sizes it up. How do you plan to load data?" "My men will learn the system as they load - we'll work overtime if we have too. I have only two questions. How much will your system cost and how soon can it be installed?" "I laid that question on Ching Chang back in Hawaii - several days ago. If one is available - in less than two weeks. Costs? Systems design and integration are paid for. Shouldn't be half of what your proposals call for. Might even get my government to pay for it - if you'll agree to share data." "I'm in agreement. We better talk to Chief Bau. We are into decisions neither one of us can make. I'll call and see if he is in."

Chief Bau listened to Johnny's proposal without comment. He got up from behind his desk and strolled to the window - looking out over Motila's General Store and the Kora Sea. He turned toward Lieutenant Matuku, "What do you think?" "I'll have to see documentation. If it's as good as Colonel Ropp says it is and less than half the cost of our contractor proposals - I say we accept his offer." He turned toward Johnny, "You said two weeks for delivery - if your system is available. Knowing your government - I find that hard to believe." "Not if we make arrangements through CIA." "I'm not sure I want CIA involvement. To be controlled by our friends is not my cup of tea. When we agree - it is all right, but what happens when we have conflicting interests? Who will be your contact?" "Benny." "Then again - the price is right. Can you make all of the necessary arrangements?" "Can you give me three days? I need a few answers and some help in Washington. I'll have to cut through quite a bit of red tape." Chief Bau looked over at Lieutenant Matuku, "How long will it take for one of your contractors to provide a working system?" "Six months." He looked back at Johnny, "You have your three days. I must have a guarantee that you can provide a system that meets our requirements and rapid delivery." "Benny's word?" "As good as gold."

The Chief's Secretary - Lucinda opened the door, "Chief - you have a meeting with the Prime Minister in ten minutes." "Tell him I'm in negotiations with the US Government on a computer buy and I will be a few minutes late." He turned toward Johnny, "Tell me what will happen if we are searching for an unknown - an item that isn't in our data base?" "If it isn't in your data base - you won't find it. What our system will do is point your people in the right direction - where to find the information about your unknown. Are you talking about the Kiwi - the brains behind your Socialist's overthrow plans?" "Yes. How does it point?" "The system I am offering is identical to the one we use at all of our offices - a thing called relational search. It points toward confirming or like items. Through relational search - your analysts can pull up connecting data - like known associates - companies - shipments and phone numbers and hopefully point toward your unknown." "It sounds too good to be true, but then - so do all data automation systems. I better go to my meeting. You have three days. Give Benny and his associates my regards and the best of the Christmas Season."

*We're one strange species
Sittin' atop the food chain -
Sendin' space probes - out
And don't find signs of life -
Yet we believe aliens visit
Every single night -
We build fancy adding machines
That store and retrieve information -
We attribute them with human form
Sometimes - procreation -*

Suva - Fiji

It took two marathon phone calls to Ching Chang before Fiji's Constabulary data automation buy was agreed too - even though the last confirmation call was troublesome. Ching Chang was adamant, "Langley insists on funding it all with no strings attached - a symbol of their goodwill." "Who did you talk too?" "Tupelo." "Did he get this communication from a mutual friend?" "A mutual friend cleared it through Tupelo. An instructor - installer will be sent with the system." "Will you give me a heads up when it's on the way?" "I'll try too. If we slip up - Chief Bau will let you know." "One last favor." "Go ahead." "Let Tupelo know I'll have to stop his shipment if Chief Bau doesn't agree." "Are you kidding - the wheels are all ready in motion." "Chief Bau is concerned about your nonexistent strings." "I don't know if I can stop it, but I agree with your assessment. Kalani insists that we not press the Chief for a decision." "I agree - Chief Bau is his own man. I'll pass on your info about it being cost free to Lieutenant Matuku. If I don't call by your time tomorrow afternoon - it's a done deal."

Bobbie Jean was not pleased, "If they ask you again - I will not go - not on a Christmas sail with Penelope Penny. We are staying in a world class resort with a four star Chef and you want me to leave these modern conveniences for bucket showers and sailboat toilets?" "Pat didn't ask me straight out - he was fishing. I'll tell him my work with Chief Bau is keeping me busy." "Is it?" "No - as soon as his system arrives - is installed and checked out - we are out of here."

"Then can we resort it?" "As soon as I receive the Chief's approval to ship the system." "What's the hang-up?" "CIA is giving it to Fiji. Chief Bau is concerned that there will be strings attached." "Are there?" "Not supposed to be, but Benny is in on it." "Chief Bau has a right to be concerned. Can I ride along with you." "Don't know how long I'll be - do you want to wait?" "Heavens no - I'm going shopping at one of the quaint general stores." "Go to Moris Hedstrom's. Stay out of Motila's." "Why?" "The owner is one of the reasons I'm here." "In harms way?" "Yes."

Johnny cooled his heels outside the Chief's office while the Chief held a private discussion with Lieutenant Mantuku. After two cups of tea and a bathroom break - the door opened. Lieutenant Mantuku beckoned for Johnny to come in, "We're ready for you now." Chief Bau motioned for Johnny to sit down, "Tell Ching Chang we accept - be it reluctantly." "My arrangement was to call if you didn't. It's on the way. Do you mind if I ask what made you change your mind." "I believe there are no strings attached to your gift, but we're willing to accept the risk because Benny is on the other end. He has always been fair and most important - he has respected our right to not always agree. Enjoy your vacation on Bligh Waters." "We're going to celebrate at your hotel." Chief Bau glanced at Lieutenant Matuku and back to Johnny, "You're not sailing with Pat Penny?" "No - my wife and I decided to share this magical time together - alone."

Johnny caught up with Bobbie Jean outside of Moris Hedstrom's, "What did you buy?" "A new swim suit for you - clothing for me and wine for our room. Did the Chief agree to take your system?" "He did. As soon as it arrives - we can make plans to return home." "You can stop worrying about a revolution - for now." "Do you know something we don't?" "Of course - Fiji's Indian Merchants are too busy making a profit off the Christmas Season to stage a revolt."

Pretty Penny sat down next to her Father at *Happy Hour's* galley table. She asked, "Does it suit you?" "Won't be easy - four in one night." "Are you familiar enough with these waters to sail in close?" "Won't have too - had the Zodiac - the one from Palmyra - repaired. It'll be delivered this afternoon. You bring them to the shore and I'll motor in. Who's first?" "The One From Column A." "He's in town. Don't bring him to the docks." "Of course not. Meet me at the beach west of here." Pretty Penny placed her finger on the map. Pat shook his head, "You might get your pickup stuck in the sand." "I've checked it out - sand is firm." "How did you arrange it?" "The One From Column A is meeting me on the beach for an evening swim. He'll be in the water - all we need is a rope to drag him out to sea." "And the other three?" "They don't celebrate Christian holidays and they don't swim. I've arranged business meetings. Timing will be critical." "How about the last two - from Column E and Column F - on Ovalau Island?" "We'll sail directly there after we finish the One From Column D. I only need to work out the geography and timing. The One From Column E lives in Levuka and the One From Column F lives in the country." "How about evidence?" "There will be none - they will all just disappear." "Excellent - Chief Bau will not have to explain and if he must - they returned to India - or he may wish to have an unsolved mystery." "And our cover will be that we are on a Christmas sail to the Yasawa Islands." "How about your pickup?" "I sold it to one who lives near the One From Column D. I've agreed to leave it at a prearranged location on the north shore - after we are finished." "Keys under the drivers side mat?" "This is a very trusting land."

Bobbie Jean woke Johnny from his afternoon nap, "Guess what?" Johnny opened one eye and then the other, "I missed an evening meal?" "No - it's too soon for that. The Penny family has checked out of our hotel." Johnny sat up in bed and through his legs over the edge, "Are they flying back to

Hungary?" "No - his wife said they're going on a Christmas sail. Where are Bligh Waters?" "North of here. Captain Bligh and part of his crew sailed by here on longboats after the Bounty mutiny. Don't think they were able to land - Fiji had headhunters in those days. Where did you see Patricia?" "Had my hair done - at the beauty shop." "Are they going to return?" "She wasn't sure - they might sail on to Australia. It's only three in the afternoon. You can go back to sleep or join me by the pool. Have to get a little tan before we return or it wouldn't be a vacation."

Bligh Waters

Patricia checked the cold locker, "Lobsters and large ones." She noticed package after package of link sausage, "Did you stock up with enough food for a trip to Australia?" Pat stuck his head down through the hatch, "No - only enough for a few days sail. We'll decide where we want to go after Christmas." "Where is Penny?" "We'll pick her up on our way by the north shore. She sold her pickup to someone up there. And I have to make a few stops along the way for Chief Bau." "Where are we sailing to?" "Eventually the Yasawa Islands. After we pick up Penny - we'll sail to the northern island - Ovalau. The old Capitol is there - Levuka and then across Bligh Waters." "Sounds to me like you're working - not on vacation." "Just a few items for the Chief and we'll be on the way. Great looking lobsters - aren't they?" "One would be a meal for all three of us." "Are you ready to sail? I want to be underway as soon as the beer arrives." "There is a truck outside from Moris Hedstrom. What did you order?" "Five cases of an Australian beer - Toohey's Lager." "Are we going on a sail or to a party?" "Both." "I don't know if we'll have room in the cold locker for greens and your steaks sausage and beer." "Look behind the table - there's two more coolers for the beer. Did they deliver the wine?" "Yes - a case of red and one of white Bordeaux."

Pat started the diesel and untied the lines as soon as the Moris Hedstrom delivery truck pulled away from the dock. He was underway - out in the channel soon after. Patricia came up to the helm, "Are you going to raise the sails?" "Might as well. We have a bit of time to kill before I make my first stop. Take the helm - channel markers are universal - same as they were in Cork Ireland." Pat raised the main - in a matter of seconds his Cat responded - flying over the bay at fifteen knots. He looked up at the sun, "At least an hour before sunset. Hope the beach Penny picked isn't used much. He returned to the helm, "You want me to cook dinner?" "No - I don't care for sausage. Are you very hungry?" "Not really." "I'll prepare sandwiches." "I'll have two - make them sausage sandwiches."

Pat anchored half-a-mile off the beach. He looked through his binoculars and found Penny's pickup, but no sign of her, "Must be in the water. How am I going to dispose of him? I wonder - is my *Tiger Shark* still around? If he was - a disposal would be no problem." Pat scanned the surface of the Koro Sea, "I know he's on his way - I can feel it in my bones." He called down to Patricia, "Taking the Zodiac for a little spin. Be back in less than an hour." Pat untied the boat - slid it into the water and followed - starting the outboard before untying the line. He picked up the coil of line from the bottom of the Zodiac and tied one end securely to an aft fitting and eased his Zodiac away - traveling toward shore at a speed - just above idle. He scanned the sea, "Still no *Tiger Shark*. Maybe that feeling was just my imagination working overtime."

Pretty Penny waved and shouted above the waves, "You're just in time. Help me hold him under. He's putting up more of a fight than I expected." Pat jumped in - grabbed an arm and helped Penny hold the One From Column A underwater, "You

should have put your knee in his back." "I did, but this one is overly agile." "He's stopped struggling." "Give him a minute or two to make sure." Pat let loose of the One From Column A's arm and grabbed his line from the bottom of the Zodiac, "I'll come in earlier at the next spot - in case you need help." "How do you plan on disposing?" "I'll cut him a bit - let him bleed for chum and create a feeding frenzy off shore. Hold him down while I tie his feet with my line from the Zodiac." "Don't cut him until I'm out of the water. Is your line secure?" Pat tugged on it, "Yes - ready to push off. Hold the boat while I roll in over the side." Pat sat up - started the outboard and pulled in the line, "Hefty one - isn't he. I'll wait for your signal." Penny swam to shore and turned - blinking the flashlight tied around her waist - dot - dot - dot - dash. Pat leaned over - slashed the One From Column A's wrists and began trolling offshore. A giant dorsal fin appeared - cutting through water off the stern. Pat laughed, "I knew you were around - hope you like your meat marinated in Curry sauce." The bite was clean - it cut through the line just inches away from the One From Column A's feet. Pat increased power - pulling out of the way of a feeding frenzy. He reeled in the line - now empty of its cargo and coiled it on the bottom of his Zodiac. Ten minutes later he was alongside *Happy Hour*, "I'm back." "That was quick. Where too - now?" "East side of the island - to a private dock. Another stop after that and then we'll pick up Pretty Penny. Any sausage left?" "I cooked extra."

Pat acknowledged Penny's signals with his flashlight and drove the Zodiac alongside the dock, "Any problems?" "No, but I can't carry him alone." "Where did you leave him?" "In the front seat of my pickup." "Is he dead?" "No - I put this one to sleep. Good - my *Tiger Shark* and his friends are here to take care of our disposal problems. I don't want to destroy a good friend with our Russian poison." Pat carried

the One From Column B over his shoulder in a fireman's carry. He laid him on the dock - climbed down the ladder and untied his Zodiac. He threw the line up to Penny, "Same as the last one - tie the line around his ankles and roll him into the water." "I may have to use an ice pick on the next one." "Keep the bleeding internal - don't want to leave unnecessary clues laying around. How are we doing - time wise?" "Ahead of schedule." She rolled the One From Column B off the dock and into the water. Pat reached down with his knife and sliced both wrists, "See you off the next beach" and opened up his outboard to trolling speed. A-hundred yards off the dock - a familiar dorsal fin appeared, "You're getting a taste for Curry my sharp toothed friend." In seconds the rope was cut away from the One From Column B's feet.

Patricia was waiting as Pat pulled alongside, "What are you doing for the Chief? You're not carrying anything to shore - or bringing anything back." "He asked that I check on a few folks living along the ocean. Asked me to see if they're preparing for a shipment. Just one more stop and then we'll pick up Penny." "Have you seen the giant shark circling our boat?" "Yes - he means no harm. Besides - our Cat is too large for him to swallow." Pat tied the Zodiac to the stern - started the diesel and raised anchor. He kept the sails furled for a low profile. Pat looked at his watch, "Have an hour to make it to the next beach."

Pat blinked his recognition signal and Penny returned it with her flashlight. He drove the Zodiac up on the beach and hopped out, "Any problems?" "I need your help on this one. Can't get him out of his office." "Who am I?" "A Kiwi with business connections in Hong Kong." "What's the con?" "Silk and gold - all stolen of course. He has a guard." "How do you want to handle it." "Inside job?" "Don't think so - not unless we have too." "It could get messy." "Can you divert the guard?" "He'll pat you down for weapons." "I'll use

what's available." "There's a Fiji war club leaning against the wall in the corner." "Too messy. You drive - let me think on it." Penny pulled up in front of a store front office. Pat could see inside, "There it is - a paper weight with a spike to hold papers. Haven't seen one of those in years. Make it quick."

Pretty Penny knocked on the door and the guard opened it. She entered first and Pat followed - sprinting out from behind her - on a dead run toward the desk. The one from Column C looked up as the paper weight spike entered his temple. Penny - ice pick in hand - dispatched the guard as he turned to run after Pat. Pat lifted the One From Column C out of his chair - pulled him across the floor and laid him next to his guard. Penny - all ready out the door - turned her pickup around - backing up to the door. They lifted the guard in first and the One From Column C followed. Penny latched the tail gate and pulled the pickup over to the side of the parking lot - out of the light. When she returned - Pat completed the cleanup with a wad of papers - crumpled in his hand, "Need to dispose of these - from the spike. Do you notice any blood on the floor?" Penny checked the desk area and the floor near the front door, "No - a neat job. Do we leave his car here or drive it to the beach?" "We'll leave it at the beach." Pat looked inside the top desk drawer and found the keys, "I'll follow you."

Pat parked the One From Column C's car off the beach - inside a turnaround gap in the brush and walked over to help Penny. She had the tailgate down and was shaking her head, "The guard bled a bit. Should have put a cover down." "After we have them floating - I'll wash it down with salt water." "Do you have a bucket?" "Always carry one - to bail." Pat lifted the One From Column C up on his shoulder and carried him out into the water. He tied a line around the feet and returned, "I'll take the head - you take the

feet." "Might have to drag him." "It's low tide - tracks will be covered up by morning." The guard was too heavy for more than a few steps, "Put his feet down. We'll each take an arm and drag him." Knee deep in the surf - Pat untied the line and ran it through the aft fitting - freeing up the other end. He tied the guards feet and grabbed the bucket. Three trips later - the bed of the pickup was clean. Pat asked Penny, "How are we doing on time." "Better move out - we're thirty minutes behind schedule." "Help me move the Zodiac out into the surf. Hope I have enough power - my cargo is floating toward shore." Pat started the outboard and eased the Zodiac away from shore. When the line pulled tight - the stern began to sink. He let up on the power and eased slowly away from shore. Free and clear he set the outboard motor to idle - pulled the bodies alongside - leaned over and slit their wrists.

Pat sailed the Zodiac alongside his Cat and tied it to the stern. He brought in the empty line, "Clean cut on both ends. My friend must like the taste of Curry." He rolled up the line and climbed on board his Cat. He let Patricia know he had returned - she was in their stateroom - reading. Pat poured a beer and carried it above decks, "Have to put up the main or I'll never make it to the next pickup point in time." He hauled in the anchor - unfurled the main - unlocked the helm and set course for the north shore.

When he arrived at the north shore dock - Penny was pacing, "Where have you been. I've been waiting for ten minutes." "Any problems?" "Only with your tardiness. The One From Column D is waiting in my pickup." "How did you get it done?" "Too large for me to handle - so we met in my truck. I handed him my flashlight and some papers to read. While his hands and mind were busy - I finished him." "Where are you going to leave the truck?" "Here - ready to load up?" "Yes." "I'm famished - any sausage?"

Pat called up, "Is the Zodiac tied down?" "Almost - is the sausage ready?" "Will be as soon as you get down here." Pretty Penny sat down - across from her Father at the galley table. In front of her was a large platter of Portuguese link sausage. Pat speared another link off the top, "You don't look tired - not at all. Damn! Four in one night - not one in the same place - spread out across a strange land That's quite a feat." "Not if you plan ahead - which we did. Our next two will not be as easy." "I don't see why not. We'll strike in two days - before their disappearance becomes an item of interest." "Who will the ones who work for our four departed friends go too?" "To the Chief? I don't think so - not if they operate in secret - as I believe they do. It will be a a week before anyone notices our four Indians are missing." "The Constabulary?" "Our sponsors. No - we have at least two - maybe five days to complete our mission. Did you leave a paper trail?" "No - I destroyed every piece of evidence." "Then it's time to set sail to Ovalu Island. Do you want to stand the first or second watch?" "Second - do you think our dream will come again tonight." "I hope not, but it may take more than Portuguese link sausage to keep our *Great Big Hairy Red Things* at bay after our work tonight. It's time to sail away. I don't want to be caught out here before sunrise - when the fishing fleet sails. Relieve me at three bells." "Three what?" "Nautical talk - three in the morning."

Wellington - New Zealand

Ian Fleming held his nose, "Max - you've been back for half-a week and your clothes still smell of Curry. You need to air them out." "I had 'em dry-cleaned. Curry smoke is the devil to get out of woolen clothes. But - it's better than the odor of New Zealand mutton mouth." "Your Christmas preparations will have to go on hold." "Is it time to go?" "I want you to fly to Christchurch in the morning." "Are you

having difficulty with your Green friends?" "The Captain is making noises about waiting until February to sail. I can't abide with that. I want no further delays." "Do you want me to ride herd on the operation?" "That's why I hired you. Our Green folks lack discipline - they tend to run off - too much spur of the moment." "Now is a fine time to tell me I'm sailing into troubled waters with a bunch of amateurs." "On land - yes. Once you're away from the dock - you'll be fine. Your ship's Captain is George Potz. Might be too much of a liberal for you, but he sails a tight ship." "Another one of those liberal nuts who's willing to kill for peace?" "That's what makes him such an ideal candidate for our purposes." "I hope so. I'm not all that keen about sailing on a ship full of fools. Call it a premonition."

Max headed to the teapot, "Care for a cup-a?" "With lemon." "The usual coming up." Max carried a pot of tea and two cups back to Ian's desk. Ian sipped a little - stood up and walked to the window overlooking Cook Straight, "And I'm having second thoughts about the ability of our friends to carry out a successful revolution. What do you think?" "I'm not fully convinced Diesel and Jaws can pull it off. They don't appear to have the stomach to stay the course if there is a long drawn out fight. Can't they achieve their goals through the ballot box?" "Fijians made that mistake once - they're not going to let it happen again." "Well - from what I've seen - I'd rather be on their side than with your Indian friends." "The secret to killing a snake is to cut off its head. If they do that - we will win. If their revolution is protracted - we'll lose." Max asked - with a glimmer of hope, "Are we in or out." "I'm an optimist - so we're in. Go to the docks at eight. My seaplane pilot will fly you to Christchurch." "Do you mind if I might take time off for a bit of trout fishing in the mountains." "As long as you keep Potz on schedule." Ian turned away and returned to his view of Cook Straight, "You can go. Keep me posted - daily."

Max muttered to himself as he walked to the elevator, "Just being up here on the seventh floor creates a distorted view of the world - joins the optical nerve with the lower intestines. I know Ian is allowing his political philosophy to override his common sense. Oh well - it's a job when others are on the dole." The elevator arrived and Max rode silently - down to the garage. He hopped into his MG Midget and roared out onto the street, "Hope Ian remembers to have my MG picked up at the docks. I better make a note to remind him. Have to get my gear together early - might decide to hang one on at the Yellow Stripe. Potz? Never heard of him - on't take long to check out his nest of Greens. They're like magpies - always chatterin'. I'll still have time to go fishing. Hope the water is still up in the trout streams. Been wet here, but it might have been a dry winter on South Island. White Christmas? Not here - it's midsummer down under." Max pulled into his garage and closed the door, "Got a few chores to do and then I'm off to the good ol' Yellow Stripe. Might be my last chance to drink a beer with my Wellington mates. Yellow Stripe - what a name. We Kiwis know when to cut and run with the best of them. Why - we only have one Frigate. There is no way we'll fight to defend this land. Don't have the equipment or the backbone. A Kiwi bird has only one white feather and it's on his arse."

Max selected enough clothes for a week, "I'll have a bit of laundry to do on the ship, but I have to fly back from Suva. Can't take a steamer trunk." He packed his MG Midget - closed the garage door and walked to the Yellow Stripe Pub. At one time it was the Lion and Unicorn - quite proud of its fighting British ancestry. But - when the socialists took control of New Zealand and began to disarm and anti-nuke - the publicans painted a yellow stripe down the front in disgust. Yellow Stripe it was and would remain so - until the Kiwi government stood for something other than the dole. Max opened the door to laughter and then a greeting, "Hello

Max." "Hello mates. I need a beer and a song. I'm off to Christchurch tomorrow." Max had a that premonition again - this time it came with a vision of a *Tiger Shark* with a toothy grin. Deep down he had that sinking feeling, "I'll not be drinking Dominion Bitters here again."

South Island - New Zealand

Max almost up-chucked on taxi out - Fleming's seaplane rolled in the swells. Ian's son-in-law pilot noticed his chalk white face when Max boarded, "Hung one on did you - Max?" Max didn't answer - he only grunted. The pilot smiled as he thought to himself, "Max - you're going to have a rough flight. I'll make sure you lose whatever breakfast you've had this morning. Have to admit - you don't look half bad - with that wart off your nose, but you still smell like a publican's arse!" Max strapped in, "God did I let it all hang out last night. My head feels like the inside of a bass drum - being struck on both sides and vibrated by the sounds of wailing bagpipes." It was a rocky flight even though the air was smooth. Max knew that his pilot was trying his best to turn him green, but steeled his will against the results of a bumpy ride. Splash down was more like crash down. Max disembarked on wobbly legs with the contents of his stomach in place and intact. He threw his suitcase to the dock and followed after it - jumping to escape falling in the bay. He turned and shouted at the pilot, "You son of a," but bitch was lost in wake of an engine roar - as the seaplane turned to taxi away.

Captain Potz stood waiting at the top of the gangplank, "Ian's pilot must not care for you. You're carrying too much baggage for a short visit. Are you sailing with us?" "I'm Ian's insurance policy." "That's a polite way of saying spy - isn't it?" "It is, but it's also with great reluctance." "I understand. Ian was upset with my recommendation that we

delay until February. It couldn't be helped. We needed a new part for the engine room. Didn't think it would come in time, but it arrived yesterday and is all ready installed." "When do you plan to get underway?" "Twenty-seventh - two days after Christmas. We sail to Akora Harbor from here at twelve noon. Do you have any plans for Christmas? One of our local benefactors is putting on an affair for us. We'd like to have you along." "Appreciate the invitation, but I've a little trout fishing to do. And if I'm as lucky as I was the last time - we'll have fresh fish for dinner when I return. I'd like to leave most of my luggage on board while I'm away." "You have a stateroom. Where will you fish?" "I'll be staying at the cabin of a friend on Ashley River. No phone there - so don't sail without me." "Be here on time - I won't delay past noon."

Max set his luggage down and stood beside Captain Potz - at the rail. He looked out on Christchurch. South Island's largest city was decked out in Christmas reds and greens, but it wasn't Max's season. "Captain - I have two complaints about your operation. One - it's hard to take you folks seriously - you spend most of your time in the South Pacific. You'd have a lot more credibility if you spent more time near the Arctic where the fish harvest is raping the sea. Two - I support your efforts to save the fish, but don't understand your antinuclear power stance. Doesn't pollute like fossil fuel. You folks are irrational." Potz counted to twenty before answering, "My environmental politics are none of your damn business. What does matter is how fast your Indian friends can off-load our weapons when we arrive in Fiji. Only two reasons I'm helping Mr. Fleming out - I'm being paid a bundle to haul your guns and I'm socialist - an advocate of achieving our ends with the barrel of a gun. Stick with your trout - Max and leave the fate of the world to us with the socialist dream." "What you really mean is - power to the people means power to the people's leaders." "You're

catching on - Max - there's gold in those socialist hills. But - I am a bit nervous about your cargo. Not the first time we've hauled weapons, but it may be the last. I'll show you to your cabin."

Max picked up his suitcase and followed, "What are your plans for the three Zodiacs you have strapped to your decks?" They have a dual purpose. We use them to harass warships and whalers. And we'll load them with your weapons - out in the harbor. They are fast and have a low profile. We can't take my ship into the dock." "Why not?" "Have to pay port and dockage fees. Can you see us hauling weapons crates down the gangplank?" "No - your plan is sound." "What do you think of my ship - the *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection*?" "Does open ocean rust bucket ring a bell. Don't you fellows believe in scrapping and painting?" "Part of our disguise. You'll find our inside accommodations first class. When you've unpacked - meet me back in the Ward Room for lunch. We serve in half-an-hour. After lunch - I'll give you a short ship's tour and you can be on your way." "I forgot to bring along aspirin. Does your cook have any? I really hung one on at the Yellow Stripe last night?" "We have a bowl full of aspirin in the Ward Room."

As rusty as the *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection* was on the outside - inside the cabins would be the envy of the Queen Elizabeth. Max unpacked all, but those items he would use at the cabin and walked to the Ward Room. He sat with Captain Potz and looked over the other passengers. He whispered, "You've a boat full of the great unwashed. None of them look like they're familiar with an honest day's work. Thought most of those folks disappeared when Jack Kerouac died and the Beat movement turned commercial." "Don't knock it. They pay my way - or their parents do. These are the idle sons and daughters of the nouveau riche." "Your crew looks like

sailors." "Except for a few deckies - most of my crew are hardened Merchies." Max heaved a sigh of relief, "Maybe your ship won't sink in the first storm we encounter." Captain Potz laughed, "We've been at it quite awhile. If you've finished your lunch - we'll take a tour."

Didn't take long. Max looked the hold over, "Dry and clean - it's ready for weapon crates. How will we load?" Can be topside, but if the Koro Sea is calm - we'll load her from the side. Look to port - your left - see the hinges. It folds down." How do you keep the water out?" "Like an airplane door - it's self sealing." "Carried contraband before - hasn't she?" "That - Max is why socialism is so profitable." "Except for your passengers - it looks like the *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection* is open and ready to do the red devils business." "Have you seen those hairy red things in your dreams - too?" "Just a glimpse. Lately I've been seein' a giant *Tiger Shark* with a large toothy grin." "Are you going to call Ian and tell him it's a go?" "Yes - on my way out - have a rental car arriving in ten minutes. I'll call him from the pay phone on the dock - in case anyone is trying to listen in." "Give Fleming my regards."

Ian was relieved, "Great - were back on schedule. What did you think of the passengers?" "They could all use a good scrubbing. Wish I had brought a camera along so you could see what a motley crew looks like." "Don't worry about them. They're all true believers. Every single one is a killer for peace. No port authority in the South Pacific will tangle with your group of radicals. We couldn't purchase a better cover." "Did you retrieve my MG Midget?" "Had my Secretary pick it up two hours after you left. It's downstairs in my office garage. She says you have a cylinder that's leaking - needs an engine overhaul." "She's right - I planned to take care of it when I return." "She'll take it in for you - so

it'll be ready when your voyage is over. Talked to our friends in the South Pacific. They're ready for you." "I'm off to the cabin. Can't call from there." "No need too. Good luck on your fishing trip. If you run across a likely dam site - mark it down and I'll have my engineers take a look-see." Max hung the receiver up, "In a pigs eye - I will. Dam up my favorite trout stream - never!"

Levuka - Fiji

Patricia helped Pretty Penny bring *Happy Hour* to Levuka Harbor's dock. Penny tied the lines as Patricia held the helm - holding their Cat against the dock. Penny returned to the helm, "Is Father still asleep?" "Out like a lamb, but he seems to be tossing more than normal. Would you care for breakfast?" "Just sausage and eggs - no bread - then I'll take a little nap - too." "How long do we plan to stay?" "Not too long - maybe two - three days. Father mentioned a Christmas sail to a desert island in the Yasawas. I'd just as soon stay here and dine at a good restaurant." "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree."

Pat was the second one up. He looked at his watch, "Twelve-thirty - I've slept nine hours. He rinsed his face and opened the stateroom door to the main cabin. Pretty Penny was at the galley table - pouring over a street map. Pat asked, "Where's your Mother?" "At the shower locker - cleaning up. I've located the One From Column E and the One From Column F." "Where are they?" "Right here in town. We may have to leave evidence." "How so?" "We don't have time to develop an elaborate con - to have them come to us and I don't have a truck." "What do you recommend?" "I'll be too obvious - why don't you do the leg work on this one. Once we see where they are and some of their habits - we'll decide." "Disposal?" "I'll leave that up to you. It might be too hard. Heart attack might do for one, but not both. Too much

of a coincidence." "Traffic accident?" "Too little time for a set up." "Murder and self defense?" "None of it strikes me. Zodiac and feed your *Tiger Shark* - that's the ticket. All we have to do is find a quiet spot in the harbor and carry them there. Your shark will do the rest - no evidence - no crime." "I'll scout around after I feed my red devil. Is there any sausage?" "I have a fresh platter warming. Did you have a rough night?" "The Hairy ones were tossing me about with pitchforks. And you?" "On a spit again - over an open fire. I woke up covered with perspiration."

Pat returned from his scouting trip a little after dark, "We're in luck. I made contact. We're dining together at the best restaurant in Levuka." "How do you know that?" "I asked them. They think I'm a high roller with contraband to sell. I used the One From Column C as my contact. They want a piece of the action." "What if they call to verify?" "Who's going to answer?" "What's the con. We have a small freighter at anchor offshore. Have the Zodiac ready at eight-thirty. I'll bring them to the far end of the dock." "The dark area - good idea." "Have a bottle of Champagne and three glasses waiting." "What costume shall I wear?" "Wear something brief and nautical." "But - not an engineer or deck hand?" "Right. What means do you recommend?" "Ice pick - less chance of blowing a hole in our Zodiac." "Wait until we're out of the harbor - as they toast our illicit venture. I'm going below to change clothes." "Wear your white deck shoes - scarf - Rolex Submariner and blazer."

Pat brought the One From Column E and the One From Column F to the deserted - far end of the dock - as Pretty Penny sailed in with their Zodiac - decked out in blue short-shorts and matching halter top. She helped their guests down the ladder and into the Zodiac. Pat entered after and untied the line. He introduced Penny as his First Mistress instead of First Mate to the laughter of their two Indian passengers.

"Shove off," Pretty Penny called out, "I want to return your passengers before eleven tonight." The One From Column E asked, "What is the name of your ship and how long will it take to sail out to her. Pretty Penny answered, "Not long she's only three miles out. Her name is *Red Rover*. Hold on to the sides - I'm going to open her up. It'll be a fast trip." The One From Column F asked, "What did she say?" Pat Penny smiled, "It won't take long." After clearing the last channel marker - Pretty Penny crooked her finger and motioned to The One From Column E to come closer. With a grin as wide as a Cheshire Cat's - he scooted aft. As he stroked her leg - she looked over at her Father and nodded. Two ice picks found two hearts in an instant. As if on que a giant dorsal fin appeared - trailing aft of their Zodiac. Pat rolled The One From Column E overboard. He disappeared in a foam of red blood. Pretty Penny turned the Zodiac around as Pat rolled The One From Column F overboard - close, but not too close to the Tiger Shark's feeding frenzy. Within minutes - all that was left of their passengers was inside a churning mass of tiger sharks in a sea of red.

Pat shined his flashlight into the bottom of the Zodiac, "Only a few drips. What was that *Red Rover* bit all about?" "You are getting forgetful. Don't you remember the Party Game - *Red Rover - Red Rover - Come Over.*" Pat laughed, "Both of our Chief's friends have come over all right." "And it's all over for them. "If his six Indian friends hadn't been so secretive - they might still be alive." "How long do we have before one of their associates misses them?" "Might be as long as two weeks. With all six missing - whoever keeps track of them might believe they're away at an off-site meeting." "And they are - so to speak. Are we going to sail away tonight?" "No need too. We'll leave after we wake up in the morning. Did you prepare sausage?" "All we have to do is heat it up." "How much gas is left in the outboard

tank?" "Half full." "We'll fill up the cans when we return to Suva Bay. Don't want to raise suspicions." "Do we have enough for our Christmas voyage." "We're still sailing to the Yasawas - aren't we?" "Of course - we need cover." "Unless you spend twenty-four hours pleasure cruising - we have more than enough."

Pat slowly folded the sheet over on his side of the bed and made an attempt to silently slip in. Patricia turned over, "What time is it?" "One a.m. - what woke you up?" "The garlic breath from that sausage you and Penny ate tonight. Where have you been?" "On an errand for Chief Bau." "I hope it was legal." "Nothing of importance. He requested my assistance in solving a small political problem he was having with his Indian constituents." "Did you resolve it for him?" "We did - it was more of a cleanup thing. Are you ready to sail away on our Christmas voyage." "Are we still on vacation?" "Of course." "Then don't wake me. I'm going to sleep in."

Pretty Penny stumbled out of her cabin, "What time is it?" Her Father answered, "Late - you slept in - it's nine in the morning." "I would still be asleep if it wasn't for the wonderful aroma of your Portuguese sausages. I'm glad you woke me up. I was being roasted on a spit - again. Will we ever be rid of those *Great Big Hairy Red Things?*" "I'm afraid they'll only leave our dreams after we've been given the sacrament of penance." "Not until then?" "Not if you're willing to confess to our family Priest." "He would die of a heart attack." "Weren't you visited in your dreams?" "Yes, but my friend - the *Tiger Shark* chased them away." "I'm not certain I want to sail on these waters with him around. He might turn on you and us." "That's why I've decided not to sail to Australia. Don't worry - we're safe for now. He has gone away. In my dreams he returned to Norfolk Island - to

be with his friends and wait." Wait for who - for what?" "A Kiwi and fermented mutton was the only glimpse he gave me. But - you're premonition is well taken. In my dream last night he smiled at me and he had that look - like he was very hungry - the one you get when you devour a sausage. They're ready - do you want eggs - too?" "We should - woman can't live by sausage alone." "Very funny my wandering Daughter. Just for that you will be our egg Chef." "Soufflé?" "No - how about a sausage omelet." "A sausage omelet with cheese coming up."

Patricia opened her stateroom door, "I smell a sausage and cheese omelet. Is there enough for me?" Pretty Penny smiled, "Yes - I made enough for three servings." "Where is Pat?" "Above decks - casting off. Get dressed - we'll all dine at the helm." The harbormaster untied the lines, "Where are you sailing - too?" "Yasawas - going to anchor out under the stars and enjoy a quiet Christmas." "Be careful on Bligh Waters - lots of hidden shoals and there's been some shark sightings off our harbor." "Not unusual for here - is it?" "Not this one - a real giant of a *Tiger Shark*." "We'll keep an eye out and stay clear." Pat cranked up the diesel and backed away from the dock.

Penny and Patricia began with a carafe of coffee and finished - carrying platters and plates of food up to the helm. Pat asked, "What do you think of my catamaran?" Patricia was pleased, "Fast and stable. How soon can we raise the sail?" "Won't be long - as soon as we clear a couple more channel markers. Can't raise it here - we'll go to fast for harbor speed." Penny asked, "Which Yasawa island are we sailing too?" "Don't know if they have a name. They're in the channel between Nathula and Navita. We can raise the main - now. Take the helm and I'll go forward." Pat unfurled the main and instantly - *Happy Hour* sprang

forward as if she had been freed from chains. He returned to the helm, "Stay with it - while I eat brunch. Great omelet." "I think we're out of the harbor. What is this channel called?" "Vatu Ira and we're almost in Bligh Water." "The Harbormaster warned me that Bligh Water can be shallow. Said to stay several leagues south of Yandua Island. That'll keep us clear of hidden coral heads." "Coral heads?" "The tips of underwater reefs."

Yasawa Islands

Pretty Penny called out, "We're as close in as I want to take her." Pat came jumped over the bow and walked toward shore, "Bring her on in - we can beach her - it's all sand on the bottom. How do you like our little deserted island?" "It's beautiful - almost beyond description. Are you sure no one lives on it?" "Chief said there wasn't any fresh water. Clean up the boat." "What! I'm not a chambermaid." "I meant stow the lines and drop anchor off the stern - so she doesn't float away. I'm going to scout around for firewood. We're going to cook lobsters out on the beach."

Patricia had the fire started and rig fashioned - over the blaze by the time Pat returned with his last load of driftwood, "We can hang a pot from it to cook the lobsters." "If the flames don't burn it away." Penny wrapped large baking potatoes in wet green leaves, "We'll lay these on the coals when the time comes. I'm going for a swim. Why don't you join me?" Pat walked toward the Cat, "Go ahead - I'm going to open a couple of bottles of wine and let them breath a bit. Might even sample a little. Sunset is in and hour. Is everything ready for the fire?" Patricia answered - as she stripped down to the buff, "All but the sausage. If you and Penny want to add it to the lobster - you'll need to thaw some out." She ran into the water - dove and swam to Penny, "Come in - water's warm - it must be eighty-six degrees."

Pat added driftwood to the fire - opened a bottle of wine and leaned back against the base of a palm tree, "So far a great vacation. My immediate family is skinny dipping in the green-blue waters off of a deserted Pacific island and I am sipping a glass of aged Bordeaux Red." He watched as they swam, "God they are drop dead gorgeous" and with visual pleasure as his wife and stepdaughter walked out of the ocean toward him - salt water droplets dripping from glistening naked bodies. He placed his hand against the palm and stood up - offering each a towel. Too late - each took an arm and dragged a not too reluctant Pat Penny toward the ocean - scattering his clothes along the strand as they ran into the gentle surf.

*Rub-a dub-dub
Three in a tub
And who do you
Think they be?
One assassin
Two assassin
Three a-passion
In Their altogether
In the sea -*

Moscow

Natasha heard the ringing and was glad - the spit she was being skewered on was to close to the fire and turning much to slow. She could feel the hair beginning to singe on folded arms and her skin was blistering. And the cruelest blow of all - leading a throng of *Great Big Hairy Red Things* was Bulgar. She protested, "But he is dead - isn't he?" The third and fourth rings awakened Natasha from another night of restless sleep. She rubbed her eyes - reached out for her Western alarm clock and pushed the plunger down - the ringing continued. She sat up on the edge of her bed - looked over at her alarm clock, "Seven in the morning" and glanced at her phone. It was still ringing. She waited - counting, "Nine - ten - eleven - twelve" and picked up the receiver, "Mechanics - may I help you?" "Mechanics auto repair?" "Yes, but we repair only Western cars." "I have an American auto that needs a major overhaul. Can I bring it in this morning for an estimate?" "Let me check my schedule." Natasha waited for ten seconds, "I may be able to fit you in this morning. When can I expect you?" "Is ten o'clock too early?" "No - bring it in then." "Will you be wearing a uniform?" "Is it required?" "Yes." "I'll wear my Mercedes brown one." "Good - ten then?" "Yes - of course."

Natasha replaced the undertaker black hand set into its ornate French - cradle and frowned, "My long vacation is soon to end. She looked out of her bedroom window onto street lamps lighting up a dark Moscow dawn - snow falling in thick

- dry clumps, The streets will be deserted. Only fools and the KGB will venture out today. Why do they want me to wear my uniform? I will be too easy to identify." She telephoned her Mother, "I might be away - on business. The children are away at boarding school. I have not changed the lock. If I do not call tonight - " "I understand - I will come over tomorrow." "Mother?" "Yes?" "I have food enough for three months. Use it before it goes bad - promise?" "This time I will. Our State store shelves have been empty for over a month." "You can use my special card anytime you want too." Natasha's Mother didn't answer. Natasha knew, "Of the old school - too much pride."

When Natasha stood up - her nightgown slipped from her shoulders to the floor. She did a ballet turn in front of her bedroom mirror, "You still have it! I've worked hard to maintain this body - still soft - without the hard edges of a body builder. Time is running against me. I need to attract a new husband. No! I will not look. I am done with that part of my life. Pleasure is always available. None of my coworkers interest me. If I do - I must find an equal." She held her breasts high in her hands, "Still - a little tuck wouldn't hurt." Natasha released her breasts, "Good - they barely moved" and walked to the bathing room. She filled her tub with hot water, "I will take time for me to soak in a long hot bath. I must be in tune with my body. She turned the water off and entered - slowly from the back - stroking her nipples gently with the tips of her fingers.

Natasha opened her eyes - her water was now tepid. She climbed out - reached for a towel and patted her hair to a damp dry, "The natural curl will take over. The air is so dry - it will not take long." She lifted her right leg - pulled on new French underwear and looked in the mirror - like a moth attracted to a flame, "No bra - not yet. In a year or two maybe." She pulled on a French silk shirt -

buttoned it and tied her tie. Natasha slipped into a uniform skirt and then her jacket - turning from side to side - looking into a full length closet mirror, "A fraction too tight - like it always is. Any advantage - or diversion can be to my advantage. I wonder if the Chairman of The Central Committee is waiting for me? Will I have a new assignment? Or will I meet the same fate as Bulgar?"

Natasha stepped out of her apartment's elevator. A long black government limousine waited outside her door. Her escort rushed to open the door as the driver opened the passenger door. She settled into the back seat and asked her escort, "Where is our destination?" "A dachi outside of Kalingrad - Comrade. We'll send someone to your apartment for warm weather clothing. Will there be someone who can assist?" "My Mother will arrive tomorrow." "You will be out of country for up to sixty days. Do you want me to inform your Mother?" "Yes - call her tomorrow - she will let my children know. They are away at boarding school. Mother will be staying in my apartment until I return." "Quite a midwinter storm." "It will keep Moscow's streets clear of those who should not be driving." Natasha looked out of her passenger window at the snow - cold and foreboding - she felt warm. They passed the obelisk honoring Russian achievements in Space - she wondered, "Will I ever find another suitable mate. There is a Ship's Captain in the Black Sea Fleet - no - not yet, but maybe - it is worth exploring." Her escort asked, "Did you say something - Comrade?" "With all of this snow - I feel like an Arctic explorer."

Their limousine stopped in front of the Foreign Ministry dachi. Natasha was escorted inside by her fellow passenger. They stopped outside the parlor on the first floor and The Central Committee Secretary stepped outside to greet her, "Welcome Colonel Natasha." "Have I been promoted - jumped two ranks?" "Of course and you deserve it. You have served

the State well. How many enemies have you sent on their way? I know - don't ask - don't tell." He pinned on her new rank and kissed her on both cheeks. She gave a slight bow, "Thank you - I'm almost speechless. With the cutback in personnel - I did not expect this honor." "You deserve this modest symbol of our recognition. The Chairman insisted on it. Your duties will expand with your promotion." "Will I keep my - secondary mission?" "No - not secondary - prime. You most certainly are not relieved of your prime mission. We have important work for you. You have replaced Bulgar Spion. You are now our number one. The Chairman has asked that you keep a low profile. You are not to discuss your promotion with anyone inside or outside the KGB. He may even ask that you use your talents as a decoy now and then." "Am I being given a new assignment?" "You are - as our Englisher friends say - going down under." "To Australia?" "And New Zealand. You leave in three days. Good hunting."

Natasha was in shock. Her promotion date was still five years away - and to skip a rank. Still she wondered, "Why didn't The Chairman present me with my rank. The Secretary - not unusual, but - unless they have decided to place me at a distance. That makes sense - I would do the same if I were in their shoes." Her thoughts were spinning out of control. Natasha activated her internal gyroscope and the spinning stopped. As her escort led her away she reestablished her guard - her emotions were now in check - under complete control. Her escort stopped at a door on the first floor, "This is your suite - Comrade. Wait inside. You will be contacted later - for your first class." Natasha nodded and went inside, "I must keep my guard up. My superiors may be preparing the same gift I gave to Bulgar for me. If I was going to do it - is this the path I would choose? Would I promote my agent and send her away to an area she is not familiar with? The South Pacific is far far away from my normal hunting grounds. No - that is impossible - I would

not eliminate my agent there. She would be on her toes. No - the time to do it is when she is relaxed - with someone she knows. And that's where we made our mistake with Bulgar. I was an unknown. Natasha! You are over reacting. My mind is racing. It must be true. My promotion is a reward and this a true assignment."

Natasha soon learned her special assignment was to be a standard wet procedure - eliminating three socialist problem children. Her cover - a KGB inspector - checking Security. This too was covered. Her overt mission was to discover ways to impede relocation of American forces in the South Pacific. To look for and identify new or existing training areas that could be used for joint training. And her final cover - to assist the Cultural attaché in scheduling a future Bolshoi visit. All of these missions were real - as good covers should be, but it made Natasha smile, "I have never been this deep - under cover. This wet procedure must very sensitive." As she closed her notebook after her last class - Natasha knew, "I need not worry. My wet procedure will not happen down under."

One Flew East

After suffering through four days of intensive cultural and local language idiomatic training - Natasha was ready to board an airplane for friendly India. On her layover in New Delhi - she would be informed of the identity of her targets and given final instructions. As Natasha settled into her First Class seat - she continued her review of notes she made on Australian idioms and thought, "English is difficult enough, but this is ridiculous. G'day - bewdie - fair go - she'll be apple? Why - the only word I know is tucker. Someone must speak English in Australia." Natasha continued her review until she was satisfied she would never understand Strine. She accepted a pillow from the Steward and leaned

back. It was time to isolate and lock away all thoughts of home and children into a separate mental compartment - not to be opened until mission completion. As the lock snapped in place - Natasha leaned back and closed her eyes. She slept until her Aeroflot aircraft touched down on the runway outside of New Delhi.

The India Customs Official waved Natasha through without even a glance at her luggage - a common courtesy - exchanged among dear friends. Natasha stepped outside the terminal and almost fainted in the stifling heat. She wiped her brow with a handkerchief and turned to her escort, "Is it always this hot?" "No - it is winter here - too. You forgot to complain about our smog." "Is that what I smell - it is awful." "It gets worse in summer." She nodded toward the passenger door of her waiting embassy sedan, "Is it air-conditioned?" "We could not survive without it." He opened the door and she waited inside - in air-conditioning as the Porter loaded her luggage into the trunk. As they traveled through New Delhi to the embassy - the stench of animal and human waste was so overpowering it filtered through the sedan's air-conditioning vents into the back seat. She covered her nostrils with her handkerchief, "The stench is awful - how can you stand a daily dose of this?" "Have you ever been to Karachi?" "No - this is my first time in your part of the world." "There is a place in Karachi - on the road between the docks and downtown - called Breathless Corner. It makes New Delhi's stench seem like the odor of flowers and perfume."

Days later - an impatient Natasha paced inside her embassy room, "Three days and all I have learned is how much the Station Chief wants to return to Russia. I am becoming increasingly irritated by this heat and humidity and the incompetence of our embassy personnel. No one knows the name of my contacts down under - or the location and names of my targets. Why am I here?" That evening - as she was handed

an envelope - Natasha knew. On one page were the names of her targets and her contact, "New Zealand! I would not have guessed. Ian Fleming? Where have I heard that name before." Natasha realized that this stopover was a ruse - a necessary part of her cover. The Black Widow was once again - in the center of her web of intrigue. She returned to her room and glanced at her calendar, "How could I forget. It is the day after Western Christmas. Orthodox Christmas is on the seventh - after the New Year. I wish The Central Committee Secretary had not insisted that I leave before the holiday. I have not shopped for my family. Grandfather Frost will not visit them - unless - the peddler stands at the airport." She picked up the phone and called the Cultural Attaché, "I need tickets for a flight out to Australia - as soon as possible." He moved heaven and earth to get her a flight through Singapore in the morning. Not out of duty, but to be rid of her, "There is something about that one that makes my skin crawl." He returned her call, "I have a flight through Singapore to Sydney. Does that meet with your approval?" "Only if it is First Class." "Singapore Airlines. Departure at eight a.m. tomorrow morning."

Natasha left the embassy an hour earlier than she needed too - to escape the morning sun's heat - and New Delhi's stench and humidity. She did not wait for her escort to open her passenger door, "I can't wait to get out of here. The odor and heat are unbearable. Don't waste time - I want to be on my way." Natasha browsed through the peddler stands inside the terminal until it was time to board. She looked, but could not find a thing suitable for Christmas. She checked her watch - "Maybe." She requested and was allowed to board Singapore Airlines - early. As the First Class service began - Natasha knew - she would never fly Aeroflot again without remembering today's service. She began a movable feast with prawns in oyster sauce - and treat after treat until she was pleasantly sated.

Natasha's flight to Singapore was over much too soon for her liking, "This is a first. I stayed awake the whole way. Any flight after this will be a letdown. And if I wasn't sailing in two days - I would find a way to stay over here - in Singapore. I have never seen a city - so clean." She searched through the shops at the airport while waiting to board her flight to Sydney. She looked, but could not find Christmas presents suitable for her family in Moscow. The local embassy asked if she wanted an escort, but Natasha declined, "Make arrangements for me to stay in the airlines VIP lounge. I will rest until my flight out."

Natasha's flight to Singapore was magical. Her flight to Sydney was rustic. A planeload of vacationing Aussies filled the cabin with down under Cockney accents. Natasha checked her notes - comparing their words with what she had written down. She almost understood, but not quite, "I have an idea about what they mean, but I'll never be able to speak Strine." The Consulate Chief waited outside of Customs for Natasha, "Welcome to Sydney. How long do you plan to stay?" "I have had enough of planes. Can you arrange for a sedan to drive me to the Capitol in the morning? What is its name?" "Canberra." He looked Natasha over - out of the side of his right eye - not wanting to confront her head on. He made an instant decision to be rid of her, "My consulate car will be waiting for you. Let me know the time you desire." "Have you made reservations for me?" "At the Parkroyal." "A hotel?" "Yes on Darling Harbor." "That's a strange name." "This is a new country - very informal. Aussies work hard - play hard and some of them even know how to cook. Will you require an escort this evening?" "No - at least I can drink the water here without fear of being poisoned." "You must have been in India." "Yes - have your sedan waiting for me at seven tomorrow morning. I need only a short time to complete my work." As soon as Natasha's luggage was inside the hotel - the Consulate Chief walked away.

Natasha turned to say thank you, but stopped short when she saw his back as he walked through the revolving door. She turned and asked, "Are your shops open this evening. I have Christmas shopping to do." "Yes - until ten. Christmas was two days back." "Yours - my Orthodox is in two weeks." Natasha waited until the bellhop opened the drapes before tipping him. She began to undress - peeling away the stench of the Far East away as she shed her clothes. She entered the bathroom, "A shower! I am back in civilization." She turned the water temperature to tepid warm and stepped in, "Free shampoo! I never want to leave this modern miracle of man," but she did. Natasha dressed in summer slacks and a white silk blouse - both of which were very revealing. She locked the door to her room - rode the elevator to the ground floor and strode outside.

Natasha looked at the time through a shop window, "Eight p.m. - I have two hours before the shops close." She walked along harbor streets - looking into shop windows until she found the right one. A Koala Teddy Bear for her son - an Italian designer purse for her Mother and a set of hunting boomerangs for her daughter. She smiled, "Like mother - like daughter. She is my huntress. My son? More of a student or a bureaucrat. The embassy will have these presents in Moscow before Christmas - or heads will roll. I am hungry. Where is the restaurant the Desk Clerk recommended. I remember - on the harbor."

When she read the sign - *Tucker & Prawn* - Natasha knew she had found dinner. She was escorted to a table near the kitchen. She faced the Maitre d' and smiled. He reacted like a sea bass as it looked into a shark's open jaws. Less than a minute later - he held her chair as she sat down at a table - overlooking Darling Harbor. She had an unobstructed view of Sydney's famous Opera House. Natasha ordered a mixed grill - prawns link sausage on the barbie. She whispered to

her waiter, "Half a pound of prawns and two pounds of link sausage. Is it pork or mutton?" "We have both." "Italian?" "Yes and it is made from pork. It is very spicy and hot." "Excellent - and a bottle of Nouveau Beaujolais." "Nouveau?" "Young - not more than two years old." "Is that French?" "Yes." "We carry only Australian wines. They are quite good." "Do you have a red Merlot?" "I'll fetch it right away. It's a bewdie. I won't come the raw prawn with you." As he walked away - Natasha opened her purse and took out her notes, "'Excellent - I will not try to fool you.' Why didn't he just say that." He returned with the Merlot and opened it for her to taste - and waited. She checked beading - swirled her glass and sipped, "It's a bewdie - good on yer" and smiled. "Don't come the raw prawn with me. You're from back of Bourke." "Never - never? fair dinkum." Her waiter left - shaking his head, "This Shela has a European accent with an Aussie tongue. Oz is indeed a strange place." Natasha raised her glass, "Za Vacha Zdorovye to you Bulgar - you bastard you - wherever you are."

Natasha toyed with her prawns after she wolfed down her sausage. She looked around the room, "Rough and rustic. It reminds me of the American western movies we watched in KGB training. The men here are very independent. They drink beer like my Tovarishch drink vodka. I could settle here. It is - how do the Americans say? A rough around the edges style of living." She stopped toying with her last giant prawn and devoured it. She left a sizable tip - wiped the grease from her chin and left. Her waiter removed the dishes and watched as Natsha walked away, "Bewdie butt, but that Shela would rather drink with the flies."

Natasha walked along the harbor - window shopping - relishing the cool air of an Australian midsummer evening. She had observed and absorbed all the Strine idiom she cared for - or needed, "They do speak English - if it is with a

strange accent. I won't be around long enough to become an expert. But - natives always appreciate an effort to learn a few words and that is all I will do. I would like to spend an extra day here and in Singapore, but my work has just begun. The pace here is much slower than Washington DC and the people seem harder to read." She checked her bearings, "I better return. I must have walked two kilometers away from my hotel." She turned and looked in both directions, "Good - an illuminated sign." She looked at the stars, "And north." Twenty minutes later - Natasha walked into the front door of her hotel.

Natasha stopped at the desk and checked for messages. There was one, "My sedan will be waiting outside at seven in the morning." She asked the desk clerk, "Where is all the singing coming from?" "Inside our Pub. An Australian rules football team from Perth is celebrating a victory over the local lads." He added with pride, "If you want a drink - we're allowed to stay open until one." "I might peek in - I have to be on my way at seven. When does your dining room open for breakfast?" "Six - we're early risers." Natasha walked to the door of the pub and looked in. The smell of wool jerseys and testosterone was overpowering. The singing stopped - the football players turned and stared at Natasha. Natasha smiled, "Now I know how the lamb feels when it stares up into the jaws of a wolf." She turned away - walked to the elevator and returned to her floor - alone, "I am so tired, but from what? Natasha opened the door - the aroma of football players still filling her nostrils. Her mind was clouded, "They are exciting, but jet lag calls. I wonder?" She looked at her clock, "No - it is almost eleven. But - I must try that shower again. Natasha began to undress - folding her clothes on the chair. She grabbed her toilet kit and walked into the bathroom. She turned the shower handle from tepid to cold. Natasha stepped in and shivered on the outside - warm on the inside, "Snow Shark indeed!"

Natasha awoke - refreshed and dressed by six-thirty, "And I was not visited in my dreams - not by red demons, but a *Tiger Shark?* One who still addresses me as the *Snow Shark?* A most unusual dream." She closed her suitcases and left them in the middle of her room, "The bellboy will take care of these. I have thirty minutes before my car arrives." Heads turned as she entered the dining room. Natasha smiled - inwardly, "I still have it." Warned by last night's Maitre d' - she received a window table - a waiter waiting, "Coffee or tea?" "Your tea?" "A strong English breakfast." "I'll have a pot with bangers and scrambled eggs. Make that a double order of bangers. Will you please expedite - I have a car coming for me at seven." Natasha looked out the window - at Darling Harbor and the rising sun's reflection on the Opera House, "What a gorgeous view." Her waiter returned with a pot of tea and her order, "Is there anything else I can do for you?" She tasted her tea, "Yes - a plastic cup for my tea. I will take the rest with me. Oh - the bill, too - please. I must depart in ten minutes."

As Natasha paid for her room - the consulate sedan rolled to a stop at the hotel entrance. She exited the front door - like a European Princess - bellboy carrying bags in her wake. She stood by - sipping tea from a plastic cup as her luggage was loaded into the trunk. Her driver opened the rear passenger door and held it - waiting. She asked, "How long will it take?" "The better part of a day - Comrade." "We better be leaving." "We have prepared tea and sandwiches - located in the console in the back. Let me know if you need to stop." "Is there anyplace of interest along the way?" "Kangaroos and wallabies - kangaroos and wallabies and little else. A lot like our steppes." He closed the door and entered the driver's side. Sydney - like Washington DC was designed like half of a giant wheel - with it's spokes traveling outward for roads. Their trip outward from the hub was fast - traveling in reverse traffic flow.

Natasha enjoyed the drive to the outskirts of Sydney. Houses decked out in green - white and brown dotted the hill sides. She poured a cup from the thermos, "Sweet Russian tea - it is a treat." As they drove through the foothills of the Great Dividing Range - Natasha thought, "Like our steppes - indeed. We don't have trees and marsupials bounding across the road. Why - we almost hit that last one. Huge - he seemed unafraid of cars." The further away from Sydney - the more barren the landscape became. The only two highlights on were the rest stops at Picton and Goulburn. As they drove along the road - curving around Lake George - Natasha leaned back - sound asleep.

Natasha sat up - half awake as they arrived at the outskirts of Canberra. Not far from the modest Russian Embassy - in the suburbs of Canberra. Unlike her lodging in Washington DC - the Canberra compound was small in size and staff. She was greeted by a harried Cultural Attaché, "My staff is quite limited and very busy with the draw down of US Forces in the South Pacific. And you arrive to check our security." Natasha stared at him until she could feel his body visibly shrink before her eyes. She commanded, "Have someone take my luggage to my room. I do not have time to listen to your problems. Assemble your staff and meet me in the conference room in thirty minutes. You will receive your guidance - then." He stood there with his mouth open. Natasha shouted, "Move!"

As Natasha entered the small conference room - the Cultural Attaché and his staff edged away from her without moving their chairs. She waited for the rusting of papers to cease, "I will address your security when I return from New Zealand." The Station Chief asked, "And when well that be?" She stared at him until he cringed, "When I have finished my mission. You are under orders not - I repeat not - to advise our New Zealand Embassy or anyone here that I will be there.

Any violation of this order by anyone in this room will result in extreme action. Am I understood?" It appeared that Natasha's reputation had preceded her. The only response was red faces and nodding heads. Natasha looked around the room - her glance pausing on each member of the Cultural Attaché's staff. Their blank stares confirmed her belief that all KGB Foreign Ministry types were barely one notch above an analog tape recorder. "I am interested in discovering where the new joint training range will be." The Station Attaché answered, "We know nothing of a new training range - or one for joint use." Natasha waited until his staff began to stir in their chairs before responding. She snapped at him, "If one knows about military installations - do they not require a railhead - highway and buildings for support? Will not the aviation notes spell out restricted areas - Tovarishch!" She spit out her words like a Prussian military instructor to a squad of slow learning soldiers. "Australians and Americans will have to sign an agreement for any area planned for use as a joint training range." The Station Chief again demonstrated his ignorance - stating the obvious, "The Australian Outback is of enormous size - Comrade. An aerial training range could be established anywhere." Natasha decided not to rub his face in his own stupidity, "Very good - Tovarishch - I agree with you. The Australian Outback is an immense desert. That is why it is a good location for a training range. You know of the installation at Alice Springs?" The staff nodded, "Yes." "Find the Air Station - the support buildings - the closest town and the transportation network and you will find where a range is being constructed. Your task is not as difficult as you believe it is. Any joint use facility requires the cooperation of politicians. There is no sieve that leaks more than a politician. Question your contacts and you'll know status - schedule and location. I must leave for New Zealand. When I return I expect to hear your answers and well thought out recommendations."

Natasha turned and walked out of the briefing room - leaving her audience in stunned silence. She climbed the stairs to her room thinking, "This cover makes little sense. In our long list of priorities - what America does in the South Pacific is of little consequence - as long as they don't interfere with our friends in India and New Zealand. Southeast Asia? Even we don't want to be stuck in that quagmire again. I have sown the seeds of discontent. Now is the time to leave - my work here is finished. I will need airline reservations for tomorrow morning and I am quite hungry. I hope the embassy kitchen has sausage."

The embassy driver dropped Natasha off at the departure gate - helped unload her luggage and drove away like a scared rabbit. She was pleased, "I have their attention. When I return - all my work will be done for me. Yesterday - a day full of sausage and contentment - I gained another nights rest - except for the *Tiger Shark*. Am I really a *Snow Shark*?" The boarding call for her airplane to New Zealand interrupted this morning's mental regurgitation. Natasha knew better than to ask for tea, "I'll have what do you call it - without vodka?" "A Virgin Mary." "Yes and did you get my request for a special meal?" "Oh - you're the one that requested a triple order of bangers. Are you sure you don't want eggs with them?" "Of course I do. It is a new diet fad. My Secretary must have forgotten."

After devouring the last link sausage and sip of her second Virgin Mary - Natasha leaned back - closed her eyes and began another round of mental gymnastics. Her concerns were flooding out of a dozen mental compartments, "Always - in the past - only The Central Committee Chairman was allowed to issue my orders. The Secretary gave me my promotion and this assignment. Either The Chairman is ill - or I will be soon out of favor. Only a fool would pick the first choice. I must assume the second if I am to survive. Now is not the

time to worry. Later when I return - then is the time to be concerned. For now - I must have positive images." Natasha called up - from the dark part of her mind - the image of each victim - beginning with number one. She was asleep as she counted sixteen - not making it to twenty-six.

South Island - New Zealand

Max Lax's legs were cramping as he climbed the gangplank to board the *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection*. He paused halfway up - resting his cooler full of fresh trout on top the rail. Captain Potz looked down from above, "Need a hand - Max?" "If you'll have one of your deck hands take this cooler to your Cook - I'll return to the dock and pick up my gear." Captain Potz motioned to two of his men to assist. Max completed his climb. "Welcome back - Max. Looks like you had a very successful fishing trip." "True Captain - true. Hard to return to your rust bucket after enjoying the beauty and solitude of a white water mountain trout stream." "How many did you bring us?" "A little over three dozen - scaled - gutted - cut and ready for your grill. Hope you and your Green friends aren't opposed to a fish dinner." "We may be opposed to nuclear power, but we're not anti fish. We'll dine on trout tonight. I speak only for my crew. I'm not certain of our passengers. Might want to get them out of the way." "How much dead weight are you carrying on this trip?" "They may be dead weight, but liberal support is essential to our survival. Counting you - six." "Not certain Ian would approve." "They'll provide additional cover for your cargo. All of them represent major contributors. We take a few along each time we sail. We let them participate and pretend they're a great help. They feel good about being here and we get paid handsomely. We do spend quite a bit of time keeping them from killing themselves. I'll khave them occupied when we're doing Fleming's work. A fair trade - don't you think?" Max did not respond.

Captain Potz took Max's arm, "Your gear is stowed - fish are in the galley and you look like you've hit the wall. And you smell like a bear that has just come out of hibernation. Now is as good a-time as any for you to shower - shave and change clothes before we get underway. We're still taking on fresh water. And Max? Send those fishing clothes of yours to my ship's laundry." Max knew when to keep a conversation short, "Now that you mention it - I can't stand the smell of myself. I do need a hot bath. Any change in plans?" "We won't spend as much time as planned in Akaroa Harbor. We'll dock - load weapons after nightfall and sail away early next morning. Your crates are ready to go - aren't they? Did you pack them in unmarked crates?" Max turned and walked away so Potz wouldn't see that his face had turned red, but the back of his neck gave his emotions away.

Max entered his stateroom mumbling, "Of course we have our senses about us. Enough - so I won't listen to anymore claptrap from an anti nuke gadfly. Our weapons are marked all right - in farm machinery crates - coded so we know what's in each one. like - an A-50 means fifty AK-47s. Only Ian and me know the code. If I get a chance - I'll push that Potz overboard. This has to be my punishment tour. I can't stand the sight of those arrogant Green bastards." Max stripped out of his clothes and turned on the shower. He stepped in - still fuming, "Got to remember to retaliate when he tries to humble me. Should have asked if his crew was inflicted with the dropsies. Might drop one of our crates and have it break open - compromising our shipment. Got to cool down - get my wits about me. Shouldn't let him get under my skin."

Max pitched his leather jacket on top of his bunk, "At least he has clean modern cabins. Can't see how a rusting hulk can be so poorly maintained on the outside and look so good on the inside. Max peeled off his fishing clothes -

throwing them in a pile on the floor, "Potz was right about my clothes smellin'. God - they smell like the floor of a sheep barn." He stretched and looked around, "Got-a plush cabin here - desk - wall bunk - couch - chair and even a private shower." He placed the contents of his pocket and his wallet on the desk and turned on the water in his shower. He stepped in holding his breath, "Inside this shower - my skin smells like smoke from my cabin mixed in with dead fish." Ten minutes later - Max stepped out and toweled off - feeling like a new born. His dirty clothing caught his eye, "Someone was rummaging through them while I showered." He looked over at the desk, "And through my wallet - too." He checked it over, "Nothing taken - so it isn't a crooked crew member." Max pulled on clean clothes, "Who could it be? French secret service? CIA? New Zealand Police? His Green friends - most likely. Captain Potz has a nosy one on board. He won't find anything in my gear."

Max checked his storage locker, "Whoever it is was in here - too. Has to be someone on board. Probably one of Potz's Greens. A professional wouldn't have left things scattered about. Better not mention it to Potz - he might be the one behind it. Ian wants a status report on this rust bucket - loading - crew - passengers and unusual occurrences. I'll give him an earful tonight." Max sorted and folded his clothes before placing them in his laundry bag, "Hope the ship's laundry doesn't shred my gear. These are my lucky fishing clothes."

Max walked aft to the wardroom - dropping his laundry bag off at the ship's laundry on the way. He whistled under his breath, "That's a relief. One of his Green ladies is doing the laundry. Should be something left of my gear." He looked around the deck, "Every fool on this ship is above decks - waiting for departure." Max opened the door to the wardroom and made a beeline for the coffee pot. He poured a

mug full of coffee - almost to the top. He stuck his head inside the galley door and asked the cook, "Are the trout iced down?" "So - you're our fisherman. Safe as babes in their mother's arms. We'll cook half tonight and the rest two days from now. That was quite a haul." "How do you plan to cook them?" "Pan fried with lemon and salt - or blackened - New Orleans style." Max smiled and gave the Cook a thumbs up. He added sugar to his coffee - stirred it and wandered outside to observe departure.

Max selected a spot on the rail - far away from the *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection's* crew and passengers. He leaned forward to watch as lines were untied and had to choke back his laughter to keep from rolling on the deck. Potz's crew brought new meaning to a derisive term - Fire Drill. Untying and pulling lines on board were as difficult as operating a wedge for two of his finest. They elevated getting underway to a comic art form. One tumbled backwards into the bulkhead while the other slid overboard into the water. Captain Potz turned away from Max - feigning disgust, but looked upward to the wheel house and smiled at his First Mate at the helm - slowly edging their ship away from the dock. Max siezed on the opening, "Don't you need a tug to get this rust bucket out to the channel?" "I know Max - getting underway is a new experience for some of my crew." Max didn't let up, "Are these the old salts you were bragging on?" "Some of them are. These will learn - or they'll soon be tossed ashore." Max whispered, "Are you going to trust those two Keystone Cops with Ian's weapon crates?" It was Potz's turn. Color began to rise on his neck, "No - only a trusted few - my Mate and his assistant. My core deck hands and my engineers know their jobs."

Max was still smiling as the Captain strode away. He sipped coffee and had a look-see at his fellow passengers, "Not a sailor in the group. Designer clothes and jewelry.

Man and woman alike will sink to the bottom if they ever fall overboard. They reek of money. Ian was right - liberal causes - that's where the coin of the realm is. There is big money in building socialism. It's a whole lot easier to spend the taxpayer's money than to use your own. Must be how the rich stay rich - take from the poor and give it to each other. Potz's Mate is doing a seaman's job - sailing this rust bucket out into the channel - at least he's all right. Didn't have to use a harbor tug." Max stayed at the rail - long after three passengers returned to their staterooms and the other two to the wardroom for a game of backgammon.

As the houses of Christchurch faded into the surrounding hills - Max lit his pipe and mumbled to himself, "Sure gives me a lot of confidence when the Captain has a ship full of fools and a crew of clowns handling his boat. Well - here's hoping our sail around Bank's Peninsula is long enough for a shakedown cruise. Lucky for them we're sailing in calm waters. We're in for another scorcher of a down under summer. Sailing north to Norfolk Island if the seas are rough like they usually are - won't be as easy. Not a whitecap on Pegasus Bay this afternoon. Swells are long - slow and smooth. Even I could steer this rust bucket through these waters today."

Max climbed the stairs to the wheel house and opened the door, "How long till do you plan to stay in Akaroa?" Captain Potz looked up from his navigation charts, "We're scheduled to dock at Fleming's warehouse just before nightfall. How are you getting along with the other passengers?" "I'm not - haven't had time to meet them. What do you plan on doing with your baggage while we load?" "I'll have our passengers off the ship after we dock. Third Mate is going to escort them to a local seafood restaurant. Do you want to join them?" "You've got to be kidding - Ian would have my head on a platter. I'll supervise loading. How many men will you

need to assist?" "Two - the rest will be on shore leave."
"Aren't we going to have the fish I caught for dinner?" "I forgot - don't want to waste a good catch. I'll call the cook. We'll have them tomorrow night." "I almost forgot - how about the authorities?" "I've all ready radioed ahead to the Harbormaster. Your boss greased the way. We shouldn't have trouble with the authorities."

As Max began to back out the door - Potz said, "Take a look at my chart - I'll show you our route." "Wherever it is - I hope it's in calm waters so you can train your crew." "We'll train them on our way to Norfolk Island." "Are we going directly to Fiji from there?" "We could, but I'd prefer to stop at Tonga - Western Samoa and then Fiji. I've got things to do and a roundabout trip should provide good cover." "I notice we're not sailing to the Society Islands." "Papeete?" "Are you afraid of the Frenchies?" "Pays to be prudent where they're concerned. We can sail direct to Suva from Norfolk Island if you insist." "The sooner the better. I plan to leave your rust bucket after we unload weapons at Suva. I'll call Ian when we dock and confirm our route and departure date." "I'd rather you not do that - except for the date we leave Akaroa." "Have to let our Indian friends know when we're arriving." "I don't want them to know we're coming until we're there." "You worried about a leak?" "Yes." "I still have to call Ian after weapons are loaded." "You can communicate anything except destinations - departure and arrival dates. It's my job to see your cargo arrives safely." "And to protect your Green friends. You'd look like you're all connected at the hip if you were wearing jewelry." "Funny - Max - funny." "Sorry - can't get used to this world we're living in today. Men wearing long hair and bloomers and women wearing jockstraps and tattoos." "Do you know anyone on Norfolk Island?" "As long as we're stopping - I have some business to take care of. How long do you plan on staying?" "Two - three days."

North Island - New Zealand

Ian Fleming's mouth fell open - his facial expression was like a deer when caught in a hunter's headlights. He attempted to cover his surprise by turning away so Natasha couldn't see him, but was too late. She smiled at him - enjoying his uncomfortable look, "You were expecting a man?" He did not answer - not right away. Ian smiled - thinking, "My new contact is not only a lady, but a drop dead gorgeous blonde beauty" and stuttered out, "The western wind will always blow in." And Natasha responded, "And the sea is always calm." They matched halves of a letter - Ian's half was sent from Moscow two weeks earlier. He apologized, "I didn't expect a lady and certainly not one of great beauty." Natasha turned the compliment away, "Good day Mr. Fleming. My name is Natasha - Natasha Noscent. Before you ask - my trip from Moscow was a pleasant one. I highly recommend First Class on Singapore Airlines. We know why I'm here. I am only interested in accommodations and locations. Other than that - we will not discuss my work. Did you bring a sedan - or will we hire a taxi?" "Do you have luggage?" "A sky cap is retrieving it from the carousel." "My auto is double parked in front of the terminal." "Just like a diplomat." "How so?" "Ours always park where they are not allowed." "We'll stop at my office - first. We can speak openly - there. How did you like Australia?" "I loved it. It reminds me of western movies without cowboys. But - I prefer New Zealand. I am more comfortable under the umbrella of socialism."

Ian held the right side passenger door open for Natasha, but she would not enter until her luggage was safely in the trunk. He stood by - thinking, "She is attempting to gain control over me. Should I let her - or should I assert myself?" Natasha tipped the sky cap and entered, "Sorry - I have had luggage damaged." Ian entered the drivers side - started his sedan - pulled away from the terminal and drove

swiftly onto Wellington's streets - slick from late morning rains. Clouds still battled with the sun - playing peek-a-boo through lingering mist and an occasional rainbow. Ian turned sharply - from the street into his office driveway - causing his car to slide before regaining traction.

Ian entered the underground parking garage and pulled into his private spot. Natasha couldn't resist a sarcastic comment, "Our your streets always this slick?" Ian was just as sarcastic, "Only when it rains." He hooked up the natural gas hose to the sedan's tank. Natasha asked, "What are you doing - Comrade?" "Natural gas hose. We use it instead of petrol. I'm replenishing my tank. It's a wonderful fuel. Has a few drawbacks." "And they are?" "Short range and limited refueling points." "How do we get to your office?" "Follow me - I have a private elevator."

They rode in silence on Ian's elevator to his seventh floor office. Natasha used this time to size Ian up, "Not as tall as I expected. Has the beginnings of a Capitalist pouch above his belt. Smells of cigars and mutton, but so did most of the New Zealanders on the airplane. He is a bit flighty. Seems to be on edge. I'll have to relax him - before ... seventh floor? Where are the others? Now I remember my - from my KGB training. There are two seventh floors outside of Washington DC. My favorite is the one in Maryland and our enemies control their agency from the one in McLean." The light came on for the seventh floor and the elevator doors opened to Ian's office suite. Natasha followed him into his office, "What a magnificent view! What do you call this body of water?" "My office overlooks Cook Straight - it separates North Island from South Island. Would you care for a cup-a tea?" "Yes - with sugar."

Fleming poured befor moving behind his desk - sensing that he needed separation from this visitor. He waited until

she prepared her tea. Natasha - sensing a void - stepped in, "How will I get to Fiji?" "I have a ship waiting for you in Akaroa Harbor - at my warehouse. I'll fly you there in my seaplane this afternoon." "How will I get to shore in Fiji?" I'm using the Rainbow Warrior Resurrection - a Green ship. They carry Zodiacs to harass Western fishing vessels. My Captain will instruct you on their use. You can access your targets from the sea." Ian opened his desk drawer and took out a chart of Fiji and a plain manila folder. He pushed them across the desk, "You will find all the information you need on the chart and in the folder." "Besides locations - does it provide access and habits?" "A complete dossier." "How do I get around on land." "Bicycle. Your contact is listed in the folder." "Will we sail straight to Fiji?" "No - you have an interim stop - Norfolk Island." "Is that all you have for me?" "Yes - when you return home - inform your superiors that we had to clean and repair most of the weapons in the last shipment." "I will - you are aware that our continued support is now based on simple economics and not politics?" "No - I was not." "We need ports and fisheries for fishing fleets and markets for commercial and military exports. We will accept an American presence in the South Pacific, but we prefer it not to be overwhelming. We will supply all the weapons you need for your clients. But there will be one small difference - you must pay cash - as the Americans say - on the barrel head." "As long as you ship weapons that are clean and operational - I can live with that." "Do you have replacements?" "In Fiji?" "Yes." "We have excellent middle managers." "I am ready to leave. Is your seaplane available?" "It is waiting."

Ian accelerated his sedan - speeding out of his driveway - turning the corner on two wheels. Natasha held onto the sissy bar, "There is no need to hurry. Your ship will not sail without me." Ian slowed down, "Sorry - my mind was elsewhere. I was thinking about Western access to your

agency files." "You need not worry - all data on your New Zealand operations are secure." "KGB files?" "No - we have removed all sensitive data from those files - including data on your operation." "But - I have seen news reports." "They are like baby birds - your Western reporters. They swallow each and every worm we feed them." "And all of the worms are false?" "Enough of our worms are true - or we would not be able to deceive. Is your ship seaworthy?" "It may look like a rust bucket on the outside, but it's a solid ship." "Good - I will look upon this voyage as a vacation."

Natasha turned away - to look out the passenger side window at the afternoon mist and to end a conversation she no longer was interested in. Her mind was elsewhere, "I miss the snow - the cold deathlike comfort of snow - white snow." "Did you say something - Comrade?" "Your New Zealand mist reminds me of Moscow's snow. I want to be left alone on my voyage to Fiji. Instruct your crew. Where is this harbor called Akaroa?" "On the south side of Banks Peninsula. Christchurch is on the north side. It is too long a drive by auto. That's why I'm flying you there in my seaplane. The one over there - tied to a platform by the dock. My pilot is waiting." He coasted to a stop by the ramp leading down to the seaplane platform.

Ian leaned against his sedan while Natasha was assisted by his seaplane crew - thinking, "What a cold piece of work that Russian lady is. Natasha - like other very beautiful women seems totally unaware of her own beauty. She reminds me of someone. Who can it be? Now I remember - she bears a striking resemblance to Grace Kelly." He reached into the front seat of his sedan - picked up his car-phone and dialed. "Russian Embassy. Who do you wish to speak too?" "It's about a ballet performance in February." "Wait a second while I transfer your call to our Cultural Attaché." "Hello, who is calling?" "Bond - is this the Cultural Attaché?" "Do

you have a message for me?" "Our ballerina arrived this morning and is on her way to South Island." He hung up and dialed the ship's telephone, "You will have no difficulty recognizing your new passenger. She is a knockout - looks just like Grace Kelly?" "Who?" "The actress who married a Prince." "What color is her hair and what is she wearing?" "Her hair is blonde and she is wearing a white turtleneck sweater and light blue denim trousers. She will greet you with Brave New and you will respond?" "The usual - World Order. Can you give me a better description?" "Best looking woman you've ever seen."

Natasha waited outside the seaplane hatch as the crew handed down her luggage. She pretended to be interested in her possessions, but watched as Ian made his phone call. She saw his lips form Cultural Attaché and knew, "The Embassy is tracking me. It is either worse than I thought - or routine procedure. Either way - I must be on my toes." She entered the plane and took the aft seat - away from the pilot's compartment. She accepted the tea offered her by the steward and nodded - she was ready to get underway. When she was alone in the compartment, Natasha opened the manila envelope and extracted the papers. At the top of the first sheet were listed her contacts. She read, "My Captain is George Potz - my contact in Fiji is Krishna Minon - code name - Minnow and Ian's man is Max Lax. My KGB illegal is the ship's Captain! Very - very unusual. It is usually one of the crew." She read her list of targets, "Three and they must be done in one evening. And on a land that I'm not familiar with. I must read and reread their dossiers and I can only hope my map reading will suffice." She read and memorized, but in the recesses of her mind - a compartment opened. One that had been closed since her husband was murdered. Self doubt now flooded her thoughts, "Am I the hunted - or am I the hunter? Will these be my last wet procedures?" Natasha was not afraid of dying. She feared only the unknown.

Natasha looked up from her papers. Fleming's pilot had reduced power. He was in final preparations for a landing on Akaroa Harbor. He called back, "Slash down in ten minutes." Natasha placed the papers back inside the envelope and looked out the window. She saw the *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection* for the first time, "My God what a rust bucket!"

"I must go down to the seas again - to the lonely sea and the sky -

And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by -

And the wheels kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking

And a gray mist on the sea's face and a gray dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again - for the call of the running tide -

Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied."

South Island

Max had a good laugh. Cook had his mind made up. Even though there were only five on board - fresh fish was on the menu and fresh fish it would be. Cook was busy baking fresh biscuits and was about to fry new potatoes when Max stuck his head through the galley door, "Make yourself useful my fine fisherman friend. I have five trout filleted and breaded. Add the pepper and lemons and do the cooking. Where did our crew and passengers go?" Max peppered the fillets - squeezed fresh lemon juice over them and placed them one by one into an oiled frying pan, "Into town for an early dinner. How long do you cook them?" "Like you - until they're a golden brown." Captain Potz stuck his head through the galley door, "Dinner ready? We load in an hour." Cook opened the oven door and hauled out a pan full of biscuits, "Make yourself useful. Break 'em apart and put them in a basket. Potatoes are done and our fisherman can carry the fish to the wardroom in his frying pan. Bring the coffee and we can dine as soon as we sit down at the table." Cook looked at the wall clock, "We're dining early - it's only four bells."

After dinner - Potz asked Max to step outside. Max lit his pipe, "What do you want from me?" "Fleming telephoned early this afternoon. He has his seaplane on the way with a special passenger. He wants you to make sure she has a good voyage. Said she doesn't want to be bothered by the other passengers - so you have a tall order." "A lady? Who is she and why is he sending her?" "Don't know why he's sending her and I don't care. Her name is Natasha Noscent. The first

name ought to tell you where she's from." "A Russian - a Russian lady. Ian should have told me." "She was just as much a surprise to him as she is to you. All I know is she's a high priority cargo." "They're beginning to load." "Do you want to watch from here or in the hold?" "From here. How come we're loading in daylight." "We're going to depart early - as soon as we have Ian's passenger on board." "What about your crew and the other passengers?" "As soon as we button up - I'll have my Second go find them. If he can't - we'll sail without them."

Max called Ian from a pay phone on the dock, "We're loaded and ready to go. All we need is your passenger. Why didn't you tell me?" "Found out about her after you left. Is everything okay at your end?" "I'm concerned about the Green passengers being on board with our cargo." "Don't worry - they're good cover. The authorities will leave a Green ship alone - especially when it has passengers along." "What am I supposed to do with your special lady? Am I to make the initial approach?" "No - wait until she approaches you. And Max? Make sure our Indian friends know how to operate the farm machinery." "With those folks there's no guarantee, but rest assured I'll give it a try."

Splash down on Akaroa Harbor felt to Natasha like her seaplane was landing on a pile of moving bricks. The flight down from Wellington was long and uneventful - except for an unscheduled landing at Christchurch for a minor engine problem. Natasha wondered why the pilot insisted that she stay on the plane while he made an animated phone call from the dock. Her flight - or fight defense was rising - until the copilot whispered, "It's his bookmaker. Changing a few bets on the matches tonight." "Matches?" "Cricket and Rugby." Natasha said, "Oh," but did not understand except that it was non threatening. If the landing at Christchurch was rough - the one in Akaroa Harbor was more of a controlled

crash. Max stepped outside the wardroom to see what the water sonic boom he heard was all about and stayed to watch as Fleming's son-in-law taxied his seaplane to the warehouse platform. He was more than an interested bystander as she disembarked, "Ian was right - this ones a knockout. Legs are a bit wobbly. Can't blame her. That damn son-in-law of Ian's should be fired."

Natasha walked to the gangplank and looked up at the ship, "Rainbow Warrior Resurrection - where have I heard of that name before? God - what a rust bucket. Looks more like death warmed over than life after death." Potz met her at the top of the gangplank, "Soon as your settled in I'll sail. My Second Mate will show you to your cabin." "I am starved. We had an unfortunate delay in Christchurch and I missed dinner." "I'll have Cook fix you something. Stop in at our wardroom after you're settled in." "May I have a pot of tea?" "English breakfast." "Yes," she smiled - "we'll talk later. Is Max on board?" "He's the one hanging over the rail - staring at you with his mouth open." "Have Max meet me in your wardroom," she looked at her watch, "In thirty minutes."

Natasha motioned for the Second to put her luggage down in the middle of the room, "You may leave now." She did not care for his open mouth - lapdog look. Natasha locked the door behind him and looked around, "I didn't expect this much luxury on a ship that looks - so scruffy. I need a shower and a change of clothes." She looked at her watch, "I have time." Natasha opened her suitcases and unloaded her clothes into the closet and sea chest. She took her toilet articles into the shower room - turned on the water - undressed and stepped in - turning the faucet from tepid to cold. After two or three minutes - she turned the faucet to warm and soaped down. Rinsed and refreshed - Natasha stepped out of the shower - dried her hair first and then - vigorously

toweled her body. She turned her clothes over with her toe, "They must be washed. I can still smell - what is it? I know Curry smoke." She dressed and walked first to the laundry and then to the wardroom.

Max had chosen a table close to the centerline of the ship. From past experience - this was the position of least motion - even when tied at the dock. Max really needed a drink, "Cup-a tea will have to do. I must to get a-hold of myself. My nervousness is beginning to show. Sailing with a ship full of Green fools must be my punishment for living too rowdy a young life." Natasha entered the wardroom and walked directly to Max's table, "Max Lax?" He stood up and offered his hand, but she did not take it. Natasha sat down, "Ian sent me. Is that tea?" "English breakfast." "Fetch me a cup and tell the cook I would like a platter of sausage and rolls." "We have fresh trout." Natasha stared at Max and he jumped to her command like a schoolboy in class.

He returned with a pot of fresh tea and a basket of warm biscuits, "Sausage will be up in a minute or two." Natasha poured a mug full and added sugar, "What kind of sausage?" "Only kind we have in New Zealand - mutton." "Sheep?" "Yes, but it's not bad. You remind me of someone - an American movie star - Grace - can't remember her last name." "Kelly and I've seen her movies. There is a resemblance, but I am Russian - not Irish-American. My name is Natasha." Cook appeared with a plate of link mutton sausage, "Is everything satisfactory?" "I will let you know after I finish the sausage. I will require at least one platter of sausage a day." "I have enough on hand until we reach Fiji. I'll restock there." He walked away - wiping his hands on his apron. Natasha speared a link with her fork - bit off an end and tasted it like a wine connoisseur sniffing the cork from a new bottle of wine. She bit the other end - swirled the remnants in her mouth and speared another link.

Max watched with his mouth open as Natasha devoured link after link of mutton sausage - like a carnivore devouring an antelope - grease dripping from her chin. He looked away - until he heard a groan of satisfaction and her fork clank on an empty platter. Natasha wiped the grease from her chin, "Will you be leaving the ship at Fiji?" Max was worried. He wondered, "Does Ian have another surprise for me?" He replied, "After our Indian friends complete training - I'll fly back to Wellington. I have a few loose ends that need tying up." "I understand we have a stop planned at Norfolk Island on our way. Have you been there - before?" "Yes - it used to be an Australian prison island for their hard-core criminals." "Were you in prison there?" "Of course not - I'm a Kiwi and Norfolk Island hasn't been a prison for years. The British moved the Bounty descendants from Pitcairn to Norfolk Island. I have a bit of business to attend too with them." "I remember reading about them. Isn't there an inbreeding problem there?" "A little. Norfolk belongs to Australia they're the ones with a problem." "Why are we stopping?" "Don't know why. Captain Potz said we had too." "How long will we stay?" "A couple of days. Go ashore if you've a mind too. "I just might." "The old prison and the Norfolk pines are worth a trip." "Is Potz familiar with your delivery to Fiji?" "He has responsibility to delivery and train." "Why are you sailing along?" "Ian ordered me to go. I'm his insurance policy. Why are you coming along?" Max realized - too late he had spoken out of turn. Natasha stood up, "I want to thank our Cook for preparing an excellent out of order dinner. He is a great cook. Will you share another pot of tea?" Max had stepped in it once, but even he knew when to say, "Yes."

Natasha returned empty handed. Max stood up as she sat down, "No more tea?" "Cook is brewing his own special blend. It will be out in a minute." Max was curious, "Have you ever dealt with the likes of Captain Potz and his Green friends?"

I've seen the results of Green efforts in Europe, but no - I've never been directly involved. I have heard your Captain is a great supporter of liberal causes. I might have seen him at one of our workshops when I was younger. Are you concerned about him?" "No, but I am concerned about our Green passengers. I don't care to work with rank amateurs." "Get used to it - Max. It's our brave new world. We're forced to travel the same communal path. Remember - our Greens are like lemmings. All we have to do is prod them in the right direction and they move the way we want them too - like Japanese on vacation. It is always easier to exploit those driven by good intentions. Who contributes the most damaging pollution?" "The Americans?" "No - my country and China. And do the Greens hound us?" "No - of course not." "I do agree with you on one thing. Our Green friends are - as you say - rank amateurs, but controllable." "And this group?" "I wouldn't worry - they're whale watchers. Did you feel that? Is the ship moving?" "Engines have turned over. We're about to get underway. Do you want to watch Captain Potz's deck clowns go through their departure antics? It can be a three ring circus." Natasha rose from her chair, "I need some air. We can continue our conversation outdoors in private - at the ships rail."

The deckies didn't disappoint Max - with three falls and one long slide into a bulkhead - Rainbow Warrior Resurrection was underway - in style. Natasha laughed, "I see what you mean." "And that's the crew - not our Green passengers." As the ship moved slowly out into the channel Natasha whispered, "I want your candid opinion of our Indian comrades on Fiji. My briefing at our Embassy in New Delhi was inadequate. And tell me what you know about Chief Seru Bau." "Jaws - Diesel and Minnow?" "I do not know them." "Those are my nicknames for Jawa Motila - Rajiv Desaij and Krishna Minnon." "How well do you know the man you call Minnow?" "Not well - not well at all. Jaws and Diesel jump to his commands, but I've

never been honored by his presence. I'll be up front with you. I do not care for Jaws. I think he is an ass." "And the one you call Diesel?" "Jaws works for him and Diesel does nothing to improve the situation - so he shares part of the blame. I don't trust these folks. They lack staying power and they don't pay attention to details." "The problem stems from their religion - reincarnation. If things don't work out in this life - there is always hope in the next." "Do you still support the overthrow of Fiji's government?" "Me? As you say - I could care less." "How about your government?" Natasha knew the answer was no, but remained evasive - surprised at Max's insight, "We do and we don't. We wouldn't initiate a revolution at this time, but we may support one if it begins."

Max listened without speaking - knowing he was in over his head - discussing politics with a Russian and a lady at that. He was a doer - not a thinker. Natasha watched Max's face as he stood at the rail - staring at the land as they moved further out to sea. She couldn't help, but think, "It would be a waste of our resources to eliminate this hard working Kiwi. He knows nothing of the source of our water - Max is a bucket carrier. I will enjoy his company while I can. He might provide insight about this strange land and I must learn more about Fleming's habits." She didn't mention threats of exposure from the Fijian socialists, but saw no harm in confiding in Max - it would keep him disarmed. She continued, "I have specific instructions on what to do if our Indian friends fail - again." Max knew when to back down, "My instructions are to respond to your wishes. Ian asked that I leave you alone. So - if you need me - I'm here. If not - we're strangers. You and me are riding on the same wave as far as Ian's Indian friends are concerned. They are - in the main a worthless lot." Natasha watched as this poor - unknowing fool walked to the wheel house, "Poor Max - he'll never see New Zealand again."

Max opened the door, "Did all of your passengers return in time?" "Every single one." "It is your great misfortune that two of your deck crew did, too." "They'll learn. If not we'll have entertainment. My Second will keep them away from sharp objects and ropes. What did Ian's friend have to say?" "Not much - just sea stories and such. How long do you plan to layover at Norfolk Island?" "Forty-eight hours - maybe a little longer. We'll anchor out in Sydney Bay. You can go ashore if you wish." "Might take you up on it. We have some minor business loose ends I can tie up. Why are we stopping?" "Our Green passengers requested it." "You enjoy sailing close to the rocks - don't you?" "I'll see you at breakfast. You can't complain about my ship's Cook's meals." "He's a bewdie - your Cook is."

Max turned in early, but could not sleep - tossing and turning until well past ten. Unable to sleep - Max got out of bed and showered - dressed and walked the deck - returning to his cabin shortly after midnight. And when he finally fell asleep - he dreamed again - of a giant smiling *Tiger Shark* with a hunger for Kiwis.

Natasha's evening platter of sausage kept her red devils away - or it may have been her talking *Tiger Shark*:

"Snow Shark. You must listen to our Pacific Gods. You may think you are the chosen one who will eliminate Max, but you cannot and will not. Mali says he is mine in two or three days. How do I dine on Kiwi? Let me count the ways."

Natasha half awake - tossed and turned - wondering, "A shark paraphrasing Shakespeare? No it cannot be," and returned to the arms of Morpheus as her ship continued on - sailing to its destiny - Norfolk Island.

Suva - Fiji

Bobbie Jean had been away for two days, but to Johnny it seemed like a year. When Pretty Penny and her Mother flew back to Hungary after returning from their voyage to the Yasawas - Johnny could read the moving script on Fiji's sand. Bobbie Jean - no longer threatened by another tigress - heard the call of hearth and home. Her maternal instincts surfaced, "Are you sure it's all right with you? I'll stay on if you want me too." "You need to be home with our boys. School starts next week." "Are you certain Pat Penny stayed on?" "As soon as his wife and daughter flew out - Pat returned to his catamarran. Last time I checked - *Happy Hour* was tied up at the dock in Suva Harbor." "Is he a threat to you?" "I'm not hunting him - he's not hunting me and we're both working for Chief Bau." "And Benny. What is it you Air Force types say?" "Watch my six."

Johnny sat twiddling his thumbs - the computer system design he was to support no longer needed his assistance. Chief Bau had his men inside and outside Motila's warehouse. Until the new computer system arrived - he was a fifth wheel. He spent the morning sleeping in and the afternoon reading. Make work activity didn't rush in like atmosphere filling a vacuum, but it helped delay the onslaught of loneliness. Nightfall and a transpacific telephone touch with Bobbie Jean delayed another onslaught until morning. The Viti Levu bartender walked out on the verandah, "Colonel Ropp?" "Yes?" "You have a long distance telephone call." Bobbie Jean asked, "How is whale watching?" "Boring - if the new system doesn't come in soon - I'm flying home." "Is our dearest friend still living aboard?" "We are all vegetating here. Has the snow melted?" "From the roads - not from our lawn." "I leave for Australia in a couple of days. I've been asked to look into training ranges." "Is that part of your job?" "No, but it is now." "Call?" "I will."

Two weeks of hotel turned a great vacation into the pits. Johnny began to feel like a mental patient trapped inside a claustrophobic ward. He was ready to go - anywhere. And that was to be his next trip - anywhere in Australia. A vacation in Fiji? A great place to relax - to get away from it all had worked. Johnny had transitioned from a physical state of semi hyper to one of being bored silly. A phone call interrupted his rapture of non bliss. He laid his book down and picked up the bedside phone. Tupelo asked, "Did Chief Bau pass on my message?" "About my visit down under? I'm still waiting for your instructions." "Second biggest lie - they're in the electronic mail. You can pick up your message at the local Police Station. I sent it in care of Chief Bau." "What's happening at the fort?" "Besides baby-sitting you a boondoggling Lieutenant Colonel - I barely escaped disaster here." "Has our favorite General slipped another cog?" "More like he stripped all of his gears. He's hearing voices again." "That's not unusual - for someone in DIA." "It is if one hides in his closet in his bedroom at home and acts on their advice." "Do you still have a few voices left over in our empty General's office?" "Touché!" "Tell whichever voice is in charge I'll return as soon as I complete my visit down under." "In your dreams. Return to Fiji after your sojourn in Australia - I have work for you." "Is Fiji's computer system ready?" "It's out at your old office undergoing testing. Tell the Chief we have a present for him. We're loading data on his part of the world to save him time. We'll provide data updates via SATCOM if he wants them." "What happens if our data erases his?" "That's why you get the big bucks. Work out a fix." "Thanks a lot. How soon can we expect it?" "By the time you return - his gear should be on the way. Oh - we have a contractor coming along to hook it up - to provide technical support. Your job is to provide training and operational support." "Do you have the technical guy's name?" "That's up to the contractor." "Tell the voice in charge I'm coming home as soon as I'm finished

here or in three weeks - whichever is sooner." "Not until you finish your job." "Which is?" "Do the right thing." "Where have I heard that before?"

Johnny rented a motor scooter - rode to Suva and stopped at the docks to see if Pat Penny's catamaran was still tied up. It was - clean as a whistle. If Pat Penny was under surveillance - he couldn't tell. The whole scene looked laid back - tropical. Pat was sitting at the helm caressing a mug of coffee, "Haven't seen you since Bobbie Jean flew back to Virginia." "Pentagon ordered me to hang around until Chief Bau's new computer system is installed. Did your family arrive safely back in Hungary?" "Without a hitch." What he didn't say was he was deeply worried about his daughter's mental health. So much so - he sent Penelope home before she could carry out her plan to eliminate Johnny and his wife. She was finding pleasure in what Pat considered a business. His prime directive - never mix the two had been violated. Pat continued, "Not the Viti Levu, but my Cat will do. Chief asked me to nose around and that's damn hard to do from a hotel suite." "I know a lot of folks who would change places with you on your boat in a New Jersey minute." "New Jersey?" "Thirty seconds quicker than New York. I stopped by to let you know that I'm going down under tomorrow." "Sydney?" "Only passing through on my way to Canberra." "Why don't you let me buy dinner tonight at your hotel." "Is this business or pleasure." "Both - Viti Levu has the best Chef in town. On the verandah at six?" "If your buying." "Dinner is on me - you pay for the drinks."

Johnny rode his scooter along the dock to the bay side of Motila's warehouse, "Empty of life - nothing unusual going on here." He rode around on the side street and stopped in front of the tea house across the street, "Guards inside the perimeter - patrolling inside the fence. Same number as last time. He looked up and down the street, "No one is watching.

Hope Chief Bau knows what he is doing." Johnny saw the glint. Looked like it flashed off the glass of a pair of binoculars, "Motila isn't letting the grass grow - I'm being watched." He rode on to the police station thinking, "If I wasn't under surveillance before - I am now."

Lieutenant Matuku looked up from his desk, "Any word on when our data automation system will arrive?" "Should be here in a week. It's undergoing integration and testing at the Paddock in Virginia. We're giving you a bonus. CIA is loading data for your area. They'll provide updates - if you so desire." "I appreciate your people loading data." "Even though it may be out of date?" "It will give us a base line to start from. Even on Fiji - data loading is not the most popular sport. But for now - we'll take a rain check on CIA updates. I don't want their data to erase mine." "I told my contact the same thing. He told me to fix it. If you store it in parallel with yours and manually input what you need - it can be done. Don't let it come in on automatic. Better to hand massage it in." "Like talking about caging a tiger before seeing its size. Tell you what - we'll run a test and see if it works. Then we'll decide. Do we still get your promised technical support?" "CIA is sending a contractor along with the system. I'll provide training and operational support. Where do you want your terminals?" "At our desks. We'll need ship locations." "Noncombatants only." "We will appreciate any data on merchant ships sailing in our area - or en route to our ports."

Johnny nodded and turned to leave. Lieutenant Matuku stopped him with, "When you get to Australia - say hello to Wing Commander Stubbington for me. He helped train most of my men. We have a high regard for Stubbs." "Stubbs and I go back a few years too. Good troop. How did you know I was going to Australia?" "I have your instructions on my desk." He handed the message from Tupelo to Johnny:

*For Lieutenant Colonel Ropp
Releasable to Fiji Constabulary*

Air Force Ops requests that you travel to Canberra and discuss joint air training ranges with RAAF. See if a joint low level bombing - electronic warfare range is feasible. Bring back their thoughts. No commitments. Travel is funded by Ops. They request that you be frugal.

Tupelo

Johnny handed the message back to Matuku, "I'll leave in the morning. Shouldn't take long. I'll hurry back in time to help with your installation." "I met your wife. You're in a hurry to return home." "You broke the code. Will you let the Chief know?" "He blocked a seat for you on Quantas." "Can I use your secure phone? I have to ring up Ching-Chang in Hawaii." "It's in my outer office."

"Is Ching-Chang in?" "No - he's out of pocket. At an off-site at the Kuilima Resort with his Secretary." "When will he be back?" "Two or three days. Sooner if his wife catches him." "Sorry I called. Who is this?" "Kalani - I'm wearing my consultant hat while Ching-Chang is out screwing around. I got your list of names. They're all bad guys. I sent the details out yesterday. Chief Bau should have them in a couple of days. I hear your going to Australia. Give my regards to Wing Commander Stubbington." "He gets around." "He was assigned to the joint staff up at Camp Smith. Good troop. Almost forgot - give my regards to Squadron Leader Glider Glasgow - too." "I've worked with them both. They're at the top of my list. Where are they stationed?" "Last time I talked with them they were at RAAF Richmond." "Where is that?" "North of Sydney." "I'll call on my way through. Tell Ching-Chang I'll stop by in a couple of weeks." "Have

him call me when you arrive here. You can bring me up to date at the same time. Don't travel that way much anymore. Do you know anything about the disappearance of a half dozen Fiji socialists?" "First I've heard of it." "Is Pat Penny on island?" "Pat's onboard a catamaran in Suva Harbor. His family returned home after Christmas. Do you think our boy has been up to something bad?" "Probably a coincidence." "How's the fishing?" "Gone south with our *Shark God*. Have you heard of a giant *Tiger Shark* in your area. One accompanied Pat Penny on his voyage here." "That son of a bitch! He has our hungry Polynesian God watching over him. Watch your six!" "There's a lot of that going around."

Johnny stuck his head in the doorway of Matuku's office, "Kalani sends his regards. Going back to my hotel before the afternoon tropical shower arrives. Rode into town on a motor bike." "Do you want me to pass your data on to Canberra?" "Wouldn't hurt. Pentagon security can screw up a wet dream." "Can you give me an estimate on how long you'll stay over in Canberra?" "Lets see - a day over - three days of pointy talkie and a day back. Not more than five days. I'll check in with you when I return. Have you heard anymore about a giant *Tiger Shark* outside your harbor?" "Not since Christmas. He arrived at the same time Pat Penny did. We have not seen him since. Why do you ask?" "Kalani believes it is their Hawaiian *Shark God*." "Has fishing suffered in Hawaii?" "No one is catching fish." "Kalani is right."

Pat Penny walked out on the Viti Levu verandah - quickly - head down like a man on a mission - boring in on Johnny, "Sorry I'm late. Had to catch a taxi. Not many around my part of the docks. They hang around the airport and hotels." "That's where the fish are. What'll you have?" "A vodka martini - shaken - not stirred with five small onions in it. What kind of beer is that?" "Brass Monkey." "Never heard of

it." "East coast of Australia. Freemantle Aussies know their way around a brewery. When will you be leaving?" "Not until Chief Bau says he no longer needs me." "What are you doing for him?" "He has me wandering the docks - looking for scuttlebutt. Have you heard anything from Hawaii?" "Are you still worried about your disappearance?" "Yes." "You can stop worrying. You've been declared dead. No one is looking for you. Biggest problem is fishing on Oahu. Its gone south with their *Shark God*. Kalani claims you stole him away." "My friendly *Tiger Shark*? A genuine monster - that one is. He's hanging around Norfolk Island, but don't ask me how I know. You don't want to hear about my nightmares." The waiter brought Pat's martini and another Brass Monkey for Johnny, "Will you be dining out here?" Pat nodded, "Yes. We'll eat dinner on the verandah."

Johnny filled his glass, "Is your wife going to stay in Hungary?" "Not right away. She's flying back to our cottage on the Ogeechee. Putting it up for sale and shipping our furniture to storage. Had to get legal papers to declare me dead." How about your trawler?" "Still docked in Annapolis. Patricia is having it moved to the Mount Vernon Yacht Club. We'll live aboard when we visit the States." "Moving out of Georgia for good?" "My best friends are dead at the hands of Russian assassins. Those bastards might come looking for me - so it's Hungary - or my boat." "Kalani asked me if I knew about the disappearance of half-a dozen Fiji socialists. I haven't heard a thing at the Police Station." "Did you ask Chief Bau?" "No - I just found out. Do you know anything about it?" "Kalani must be drinking too much home made okolehao." "Okolehao? Okole means rear end and hao is tin or steel." "Hawaiians have a way with words. Hammered on your ass by moonshine made from Ti roots." "You didn't respond to my question. What do you know about Fiji's disappearing six?" "I don't have the foggiest where they

are." "Don't ask?" "Don't tell. Are you hungry?" "I could eat a shark. Missed lunch." Pat signaled to their waiter, "Menus? We're ready to order."

Johnny asked, "Have you found any scuttlebutt that might interest me?" "I've nosed around the docks asking about Kiwis. Only one anyone knows is a fellow by the name of Max Lax. I checked him out. He works for a major construction company out of Wellington - New Zealand owned by another Kiwi - Ian Fleming." Johnny began to smile, "First the vodka martini and now the author. Are we playing a game called Spies-Are-Us?" "That's his real name. There's no connection to the Bond books." "What's the significance of your Kiwis?" "Ian Fleming is in tight with Fiji's Indian socialists. He pours a lot of cement and asphalt in the South Pacific." "Is he an honest businessman?" "If he ran a butcher shop his fingers would be on the scale. The current Fiji government had to redo every bit of the work he did here. Asphalt was bonded with sand as a filler. If the cement specs called for three inches - he poured two. Fleming's company has so many false fronts and names - it's almost impossible to nail him down. Chief's Uncle - the Prime Minister sent them packing when he took control. It's almost a lead pipe cinch that Fleming is the one behind the weapons Chief Bau confiscated." "Are they on to you?" "There too busy trying to locate their six missing middle men." "Be careful - they don't play by our rules." Pat smiled - thinking, "Then - neither do I and that's what is catching them off guard." He mentioned, "Max Lax has been in town. Idiot was driving a Morgan. Stuck out like a whore in church." "So he's the one. Saw the Morgan. I'd love to have one of those." Their waiter arrived with soup and salad.

Pat set his fork down, "Not a bad salad. When is your computer system supposed to arrive?" "Within a week. It's the same as the ones we installed in our detachments." "The

ones that were supposed to create a paper less environment." "I know what you're driving at. We almost eliminated bond paper for typewriters, but we doubled our use of total paper - except it's computer paper now. Did you ever use one of the terminals in Munich?" "Never - I lost my position and retired before those damn things took over. I've used several in Hungary - at the restaurant and at the Villa. Damn things can retrieve all right, but someone has to dumb-finger information into them." "It will help the Chief's people correlate data on the bad guys. A simple match can save a lot of time." As their waiter brought in the main course - Pat asked, "What did you order?" "Roast pork with Fiji's famous pepper plant sauce."

Johnny pushed his chair back, "Don't think I can eat any more. What plans do you have for your catamaran?" "Haven't given it a thought. Got her on the cheap - at a fire sale in Honolulu. Shouldn't lose much if I sell her here." They remained silent as their waiter poured coffee. After he left Pat continued, "I'm living rent free at the dock. I would just as soon live aboard for now. I'm in the middle of Suva and connected - doesn't get any better. Folks around Suva's docks are pleasant and friendly - easy to talk to. We watch out for each other. Might even move here after this is over. How about you? Are you about ready to hang it up?" "Didn't know it showed. Don't tell Benny, but if my situation doesn't improve - I'll be gone by spring." "He's grooming you for better things." "Cold war is over and so are you Cold War warriors. Hard to tell who the enemy is today. Small countries know we won't nuke them - so they keep twisting our tail." "You're not certain if you want to be the tail." "Roger that. Time for me to hit the sack. I have an early flight out of here." "Give me a call when you get back in town. Things are beginning to boil. We may be out of here sooner than you think." "For it's Tommy this an Tommy that?" "An' chuck 'im out - the brute."

Outback - Australia

Johnny was out of bed and into the shower on the third ring of his wake-up call. After a quick shower and shave he packed his suitcase for what he hoped would be a five day trip to Canberra. "I'm late" He dressed and walked quickly to the lobby, "No time for breakfast. I hope Aussies can cook." His taxi was waiting at the hotel entrance, "Running late. Can you get me to the airport in time?" "No problem - Governor. I'll call ahead. Which airline?" "Quantas to Sydney. Chief Bau made reservations." "They won't close the door until you're aboard." Johnny ran across the tarmac and climbed on board. The stewardess closed the door with a smile, "G'day Love. So you're our VIP. Looks like you're shooting through this morning. No worries - we're only a few Roo hops from Sydney. Would you care for a cup of coffee or tea?" "Coffee - are you serving breakfast?" "You'll find a menu with a giant Roo on the cover inside the pouch on your seat back. Buckle in. I'll take your order when I bring your coffee. Our tucker is fair dinkum."

Johnny buckled in with a grin - thinking of an Irish author's comments about America - two peoples separated by a common language, "He missed Australia. However - if George Bernard Shaw understood Irish Celtic - he'd understand this strange language called Strine." He looked over the menu, "This is new - I have a choice." The stewardess brought his coffee, "I'll take your order and bring breakfast after the seat belt sign goes off." "Can I mix and match?" "As long as we have enough. If we don't - I'll have to substitute." "Great - I'll have bangers with Outback eggs and an English muffin." Johnny leaned back - sipped coffee and watched takeoff from his First Class seat - upgrade courtesy of Chief Bau. When the seat belt light went out - his breakfast was on the tray in front of him. He tasted a banger, "Excellent sausage, but spices give me heartburn." Johnny nibbled on

a fork full of Outback eggs. The stewardess stopped on her way back up the aisle to ask, "How do you like our eggs?" "Taste like you've mixed in a little bit of everything, but Roo." "Too right. Aussie swagmen mix whatever they have on hand and fry it in a pan over an open fire." "Next to their billy-boil?" "Don't come the raw prawn with me. You speak Strine." "Not really - I only know the words to Waltzing Matilda." She smiled, "Too right. You look like you need a magazine." "Before you leave what's a swagman and a coolibah tree." "You really don't know Strine. He's a tramp under the shade of a eucalyptus tree." She handed Johnny a copy of the London Economist, "After a vacation in Fiji - this will bring you back into the real world." Johnny read awhile and then folded the magazine on his lap, "Something about riding in an airplane that makes me want to close my eyes." He opened his eyes as the pilot extended airplane speed brakes marking the beginning of a gradual turning descent into Sidney's Airport.

Johnny thanked the stewardess for her attention - walked to the waiting room pay telephone and dialed the Intelligence Section at Richmond RAAF. The Intelligence Watch Officer answered with British Commonwealth correctness and courtesy, "Wing Commander Stubbington and Squadron Leader Glasgow? I'm sorry - they're no longer stationed here." "I'm on my way to your Defence Headquarters in Canberra. Will they know where they're stationed?" "Yes - that's their new assignment. Can I pass along your name?" "Tell Stubbs - Lieutenant Colonel Johnny Ropp will be in late this afternoon. I'll ring him up - tomorrow." "Will do - Sir. Are you flying - or driving?" "Driving." "You won't get in until late. I'll let Stubbs and Glider know you're on the way."

Johnny walked to the main terminal and checked in at the rental car counter. The promised two door sedan was waiting. He asked, "What's that metal guard across the front?" "A Roo

guard. They have a tendency to bounce off our radiators when we least expect them." He studied the map of Sydney - before driving out the gate. The attendant had assured him, "You'll have no trouble making it to Canberra before the restaurants close. Watch out for Roos." The airplane bangers were still weighing heavily on top of Johnny's stomach. It would be tea time before hunger struck again. Sydney - like most major metropolitan cities would not be easy to leave. A short distance from his location on Princes Highway - he had to turn west on Canterbury. After that it really got tricky. Canterbury had three names - including Milpera and Newbridge. Johnny smiled to himself, "123 in McLean all over again. First it's Chain Bridge - then Dolly Madison - then Maple Avenue - Chain Bridge again and finally Ox Road. Tucker Tubbs couldn't find Texas and will never find his way around Virginia. And I won't find my way out of Sydney if I don't keep my mind on where I'm going."

When Newbridge changed names to Hume Highway - Johnny knew he was on the outskirts of Sydney and at the beginning of the Outback. The next major town was Goulburn. The drive was uneventful - except for an occasional bounding marsupial. Johnny's mind wandered, "Wonder why I'm out here? Fiji certainly doesn't need me. Chief Bau is doing fine on his own. Fiji's socialists don't stand a chance with him at the helm. The new data automation system? More bells - whistles and smoke for Fiji. I hope Lieutenant Matuku uses our hierarchical algorithms for his indications and warning thresholds. He has all the data he needs to make it work. General Fallon will never understand. When we attempted to explain it to him - he wouldn't listen. Instead he asked for red - yellow and green lights. Red for war and green for peace. Wish it was that simple, but it's only an analyst's tool - to warn him - tell him to sit up - take notice and dig deeper. Whoops - I almost missed the road sign with the distance to Goulburn. Now I have to convert meters to miles.

At least another hour. Need to stop for a cup of coffee and stretch. Driving west into this afternoon sun is something else. Talk about crystal clear skies."

"I must be operating on two separate mental levels. Haven't paid a bit of attention to where I'm going. Now that's a mystery worth solving. How we're able to keep a car on the road when our mind is wandering all over creation. Well - I'm not concerned with Chief Bau's ability to quell an insurrection. It won't happen on his watch. He has the men - the equipment and the will. That's all anyone needs. If the Royal Fijian Military is anywhere near as well organized and lead - Fiji's socialists won't stand a chance. Wonder what happened to the gang of six? Lieutenant Matuku didn't say a word. And there's nothing in the local newspaper. How did Kalani know? And Pat Penny didn't deny his involvement - just brushed me off. There's no doubt in my mind. Bet he and Penelope had a field day, but when? Had to be on their Christmas voyage. Why hasn't a body washed up or a grave been found? If they did the deed - they're experts at their job. Why am I out here? No reason - unless it's another one of Benny's little tests."

As the sun dropped lower on the horizon and the heat grew in intensity - sun glasses helped. But not much - the sun's reflection off the hood was still blinding. Johnny followed the road signs into Goulburn. He stopped for petrol - coffee and a chat. Goulburn looked a lot like the villages of western Nebraska. Johnny felt like he was in a time warp. Returning to a small midwestern town in America - circa 1938. He breathed in the hot - smog free air, "Healthy - everyone must live to be ninety here." The Aussie rest stop attendant laughed, "We just look that way - livin' out here is one hot sun bake." "Might be true, but you folks are the friendliest people I've met outside of Nebraska." "Where is Nebraska?" "North of Kansas." "Wizard Yank - got to be apple if they're

living just north of Oz." Johnny asked, "How long will it take to get to Canberra?" "If you shoot through - you'll be there before the Pubs close." On the other side of Goulburn - the highway changed names again - to Federal Highway.

Johnny drove and drove and drove through brown scenery on a highway - reminiscent of Arizona Highways - with heat rising in waves above the asphalt. He remembered, "What were those comments written on a menu of that restaurant with the same name as the country I'm driving through? Went something like:"

"Blazing through the Outback - beyond 'the black stump - as they call it - a real sun bake. On the way to Canberra - saw two great gray Roos - one a real boomer - three wallabies and a dingo. All trying to catch a ride into town."

Johnny saw a Roo or two and his fair share of wallabies, but not one dingo dog. And he could see almost forever, "A lot like New Mexico - wide open with many shades of brown and damn little green except for the scrub.

Johnny tuned his mind to business, "Vacation is over. RAAF Electronic Warfare simulators? Wonder if the RAAF has any and if they do - are they like ours?" He switched gears - searching his memory banks, "Electronic Warfare simulators aren't that complicated. And the only ones I have to scout out are the ones used for live operations - when planes are flying active or passive EW gear. Makes sense - when an aircraft flies a missile - gunnery or bombing range mission it also tests its radar detection gear and its jamming systems. Pilots wouldn't slight a defensive advantage to save time and money - or would they? Fighter bombers carried their EW systems below the wings in bolt on pods. If the designer took EW into consideration - a smart mount would be

internal - so aircraft performance wouldn't be degraded. If I recall my B-52 days - we had radar simulators at our bomb plots. Fairly simple signal generators in those days. Has to be a lot more complicated today. If our Pacific Rim forces are going to use a joint range - we'd have to generate more complex wave forms. Still have to simulate radar pulses - continuous wave CW - amplitude modulation AM - frequency modulation - FM and more complex signals - like pulse Doppler - frequency agile - PRI agile - chirp and phase modulated signals. Not an easy task when we have to simulate antenna scans and patterns - such as circular - raster - conical - or electronic."

Johnny finished his carryout cup of coffee, "Glad I'm not in that business. Hardware is too hard to get right. That's why missiles have such a high failure rate. At least EW simulators are needed for only one simple requirement - to duplicate a threat system. One that's attempting to shoot us down. Maybe I'm not thinking right. It's not that simple. To do the complete job - a simulator has to generate signals at wartime density - simultaneous multiple threats." Johnny sat straight up - a big gray bomber Roo hopped in front of his car - just missing his Roo guard. He breathed easy, "Two simulators come to mind. I must be losing it if I can remember nomenclature like the AN/MPQ-T3A - multiple triple A threat simulator at the Eglin test range in Florida. And who could ever forget MUTES - the AN/MSTT1A multiple threat emitter system SAC used to test its bomber EW systems. Now that it's Air Combat Command - is it still around? What Ops has in mind may be something I've never heard of. Or on the drawing board. Or gone the way of the EW Aggressor Squadron. The one John Corder set up. Hope light the fires - kick the tires - fighter pilot mentality hasn't taken over again. Better make a mental note to wander down to the land of the Purple Water fountain and find out what gear they're using - if any." Johnny put his mind back to driving, "Sun is

setting. Canberra will probably look like Dallas on the horizon. Damn - forgot about the Surface to Air - SAM fire control emulator and the AN/MSQ-T43 modular threat emitter. How in the world can I remember all of this technical jargon and forget names?"

Johnny breathed a sigh, "Canberra's lights are up ahead. Looks like a lit up camel in the desert." He drove to the outskirts - stopping at a petrol station for gas and directions. The attendant answered, "Capitol Parkroyal? Good hotel - Mate. It's on Nourthbourne Avenue Braddon. Follow your nose to the tallest buildings downtown. Not many Yanks drive over from Sydney. Meet any Roos?" One almost got me outside of Goulburn." "Not bright around cars. Our Roos show no fear. Was he a boomer?" "He was a big one all right." The Parkroyal was right where the attendant said it would be. Johnny checked in, "When do you serve dinner?" "Tucker's in an hour. Our Pub's apple if you're not looking for something fancy." Johnny checked his watch, "Too late to call my contact at your Defence Headquarters." "Right you are - Mate. We're not at war." Johnny took the elevator to his room - unpacked his suitcase and hung up his clothes. He showered - set his alarm clock and hopped into bed, "An hour nap and I'll be ready to have a go again.

The Desk Clerk was right about the hotel PUB. It was filled with a rowdy bar crowd watching an Australian Rules football game on the telly. Australian Rules is an exotic mixture of Soccer - Rugby and Demolition Derby with bodies instead of wrecks - played without helmets - or pads. Rugged - more than a few teeth would be missing on both sides by the time this match would be decided. Johnny ordered Fish & Chips and a pint of Dominion Bitters to wash it down. One taste of the fish and Johnny gave it four Roos up. It was hard to leave his new found companions. It turned out to be great fun just watching and listening in. He turned down an

offer to play darts with, "I don't think your Publican wants any more holes in his walls. I'll buy a round if you'll just let me watch." Johnny finished a third pint and returned to his room. He new his limit and he had passed it. He looked at the phone, "Better call Bobbie Jean and let her know where I am or I'll be in hot water."

After last night's Fish & Chips at the Pub - Johnny was greeted this morning with a queasy stomach. Two aspirins later - he discovered that Wizard Yank was a complement. After a breakfast of Outback eggs - bangers and tomato juice - he was ready to drive to Defence Headquarters - where he was greeted at the door by none other than - Wing Commander Stubbington, "Lieutenant Matuku said you were on the way." "Its been a long time - Stubbs. Where's Glider?" "Back in Jolly Ol' attending RAF Staff College. If you're ready - I have a meeting set up with my Staff." "Hope it's a small audience." "You don't know how few people we have in EW. We can all sit around a small card table. Only time our pilots think about electronics is when they wonder if the ice box light stays on when the door is closed." "Got a whole list of folks who send their regards. Kalani and Matuku for starters and a whole slew of guys back at the Pentagon. You get around." "My wife says the same thing." "Have a bit of data to dump, but it won't take long. Ops asked me to do a preliminary. Won't trust me with sharp objects - or money." "If you're looking into what we have - it won't take thirty minutes. We've given up on live EW testing."

They were finished by noon. After a lot of give and take they came to preliminary agreement before noon. Stubbs was not happy, "Our current operational training tests every system - except EW. We need all the help you can give us." "What's the problem?" "Money - bloody money. My gear is the last on and the first off." "Until airplanes get shot out of the sky." "By then - it's too late. How would you like to

take a trip with me to our Electronics Research Laboratory?" "Where and when?" "Near Adelaide in an hour." "Where is Adelaide?" "It's a port city on our southern coast about five-hundred miles west of Melbourne. Only one problem this time of the year." "What's that." "Flies come in from the Outback and we're their tucker - eat you alive. I'll make arrangements for a flight over the Outback out of Laverton. Give you a bo-peep at our training areas." "How long will we be away?" "I've got a weeks worth of work at the Lab. You can get your bo-peep over in a day and fly back tomorrow."

Johnny looked out the back windows of Stubbs staff car as they drove to Salisbury, "Thought you said your Electronic Lab was Adelaide?" "Close - it's in Salisbury - outside of Adelaide. We call Salisbury the gateway to Woomera - Alice Springs and Ayer's Rock all of our favorite tourist areas. That's why almost all of our entire population lives on the coast. You'll enjoy seeing our lab. We've moved from wire wrap to microelectronics." Johnny enjoyed the visit, but was anxious to return to Fiji - complete his work and fly home. An overnight stay at Laverton RAAF - a round-robin out over the Outback to Aussie low level flight training areas with - as Stubbs would say - a bo-peep at Woomera and Alice Springs and Johnny had seen enough, "Your Outback has a lot in common with our deserts of California and Nevada. We can fly almost anywhere out here and not disturb a soul." "Not true - Yank. Our sheep Station folks might take exception to a buzzing or two by your airplanes. If we develop a joint training range - we'll have to negotiate with a few land owners."

Stubbs flew back to Salisbury and Johnny boarded a flight to Canberra. He looked over his notes and the packet of maps and conditions Stubbs had provided for him to take back to the Pentagon. Johnny wasn't sure if it would work, "Aussies are damned independent. It'll take the fog bound people at our State Department to work it out and they've

been known to screw up more than a peace or two. Aussies can provide a range - facilities and airspace. We'll have to come up with the gear and share the costs. My job was to see if it is doable and it is. Hope our Pentagon warriors don't screw this one up. It doesn't pay to rip off - or jerk our Aussie friends around. They're not a bunch of fools like their Kiwi neighbors. It's a refreshing change to work with rugged individualists instead of a nation full of antinuclear socialist sheep. Wonder why the Kiwis sold out. Maybe it's in their water. Well - if Australia is Oz - New Zealand is through the looking glass."

Johnny returned to his hotel before the Pub's kitchen closed down for the night. He had meat pie and beer before turning in - insuring a peaceful nights rest. He was on the road to Sydney long after daybreak - cursing himself for not flying in. He knew one thing for sure, "After I turn my data over to Ops - I'll never see this issue again. The only thing I'll be asked for is perfect Intelligence. Hope their Action Officer doesn't attempt to make a career out working this issue. And gold plating will kill it for sure. He drove into the rising sun - thinking, "My timing is all off. It's morning over - afternoon back."

Johnny called his airline - Qantas - to check on his flight before turning his rental car in. His flight had been scrubbed because of aircraft problems. He'd have to stay over until morning, "Good - I can try that hotel on the inner harbor and kick back." After checking in - his first call was to Bobbie Jean, "I'll return in less than three weeks." "Where are you now?" "At my hotel in Sydney. My flight was scrubbed due to maintenance problems." "Are you on the inner harbor? There is an excellent seafood restaurant there, but I can't remember its name." "That's a lot of help. How long is Nanny staying on?" "Until you return." "Isn't that an inconvenience." "Not really. She has her own business here

- don't you remember?" "The restaurant in DC?" "She has it almost straightened out and is thinking about expanding into Maryland."

Johnny's second call was to Tupelo, "I'm finished here. Does Ops want me to hand carry my report or send it in from Fiji?" "Mail it into me." "Will they want a verbal?" "No." "Suspicious confirmed. What did the Ops Colonel say?" "Butt out. Our mutual friend wanted me to warn you about a certain Grace Kelly look alike that might be in your area." "Is she after Three Penny?" "No - he's no longer an item of interest - for now. And you have a special visitor arriving." "Who?" "Don't ask." "Don't tell."

*"Once a jolly swagman camped by a billabong -
Under the shade of a coolibah tree -
And he sang as he waited for his billy-boil -
Who'll come a waltzing Matilda with me?"*

9

Norfolk Island

The *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection* plowed through elongated swells - bouncing around like a child riding a hobby horse on top of the Tasmanian Sea. Natasha caught herself as she lurched upward. She braced herself - hanging onto both sides of her bunk - swearing in Russian, "Who's driving this rust bucket?" She sat up and looked outside through her porthole, "I can't see a thing. It's pitch black - as black as a Siberian coal miners ass at midnight." She glanced at the ship's Chelsea clock on the wall, "Five a.m. and I can't get back to sleep. Even if this garbage scow lacks stabilization - I can take a freshwater shower. If I brace myself against the wall or is it called bulkhead?" She stepped into the shower, "One advantage to sleeping naked - among others." Natasha's hair was still damp after she towel dried it with a second towel. She combed it, "I'll let it air dry outside on deck," and dressed in dungarees and sweater.

Natasha stepped outside into a mild summer ocean breeze, "This is quite a change from Moscow's static electric dry winter air." Refreshed by the breeze - she stopped in the wardroom for a cup of tea. She poured from a pot - warming on a burner on the sideboard, "Ugh - this has been standing here too long." She added sugar and drank English Breakfast tea from her mug - etched deep with mahogany ribbon stains. She made a face after the second sip and emptied both the mug and pot. Natasha boiled water for a fresh brew, "Now this is a proper pot of Russian tea." She looked around the wardroom and noticed two rough looking deck hands staring at her. Her

eyes narrowed, "Have either one of you ever gone for an ocean swim in seas this rough." They both looked quickly away - leaving her alone. She poured another mug of tea, "Now this is the Russian way." She opened the door to the galley and Cook looked up, "Fresh bread and strawberry jam to tide you over until bangers are cooked." "Bangers?" "Sausage." "I'll have a platter full." As an afterthought, "With three eggs. I'm starved. It must be the sea air."

Natasha carried a plate of bread and jam to the wardroom and sat with the Captain. He looked up, "You're up early. Sorry about rough seas. I don't have very good stabilizers on my ship. I plan to drop anchor in Sydney Bay in a couple of hours." She looked puzzled, "Australia?" "They own it, but not the city. Sydney Bay off Norfolk Island. Mind if I have a mug of your tea?" She poured, "Cook's first pot of tea this morning took the enamel off my teeth." "It sets around too long. Most of our passengers drink coffee. Is our cabin to your liking?" "My accommodations are suitable. Is Max up?" "Hangin' his head over the rail. Max doesn't sail well. He's going to pilot my whale watchers ashore on a Zodiac this morning. Care to go along?" Natasha wanted too, but a voice inside her head said, "No." Cook brought her breakfast platter of sausage and eggs to the table. Captain Potz nodded in admiration, "You are a sailor."

Under the best of conditions - anchoring out in Sydney Bay requires first rank seamanship to keep a ship off the rocks. Captain Potz was at the helm - taking no chances. Natasha - warmed by her enormous breakfast and a brisk walk around the deck - poured a fresh mug of tea to carry to the rail. She stood amidships - the prime location to counter pitch and roll. Braced against the rail she watched as Captain Potz brought *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection* to anchor. She had hoped for a thunderous tropical dawn, but was greeted by low gray morning clouds - from horizon to horizon. The

ship slowed as it approached a speck under the forefinger of God. Norfolk Island - first a spit of land on the horizon - gradually growing into an island - barely visible through the morning mist.

Natasha closed her eyes - trying to remember - the scene unfolding in front of her was reminiscent of ... She opened her eyes, "Now I remember. I was on a fishing boat - sailing out of Komandorsky on the Bearing Sea to the Semichi Islands. It was a cold summer then - too. I was on a training mission for The Central Committee and a collection mission for KGB. A monotonous sail for most, but not for me. I wrapped my bare skin inside the cool fog filled days and nights like a Czarina wraps herself in furs." She smiled in satisfaction, "And the fishing boat Captain - he was my first - overboard at midnight - right after our embrace - his throat cut - unable to scream for help." Natasha had goose pimples - her memories - still a thrill.

Just below the surface of Sydney Harbor - looking up at the rail was a friendly competitor,

"So this is the famous Snow Shark. I wonder if she sees me? Quite a beauty. She reminds me of a famous actress. The one I saw on the screen - against the bulkhead of the Helo Pad - on that Destroyer outside Pearl Harbor. Cary Grant and ? No matter. Where is Max? I have not eaten in - how many days? Three - four - it feels like more - in anticipation. And I skipped a feeding frenzy - an ono Japanese fisherman. He dined on sushi and was soaked in soya. I hope my attack is clean and quick. Max deserves it. I have grown to like him - but orders are to be followed. They have Zodiacs! I'll be damned if I'll bust my teeth on one of those. A Dolphin attack - bump and run and then I'll organize a feeding frenzy."

Natasha held onto the rail - looking down at the giant *Tiger Shark*. "You are a big one my friend. Are you the one who visits me in my dreams?" A deck hand walked up, "Excuse me Ma'am. Captain sent me. Wanted to warn you to hold on tight to the rail. We'll be in rough seas for awhile. Did you see the dorsal fins?" "Why yes - thank you. What type of shark do you have in these waters?" "Mostly Tigers - Ma'am and on occasion - a Great White." "I noticed a large shark off our port bow that looked to be eighteen feet long. I didn't know that Tigers grew that large." "Had to be a Great White - Tigers don't grow that large - Ma'am." Natasha stayed at the rail as the ship slowed - edging closer to Norfolk Island until the black volcanic cliffs loomed above - out of the morning mist and fog. As the *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection* slowed - two dominate hills - three-hundred feet high came into view. Not mountains, but viewed from the deck of her ship - imposing none the less.

As Captain Potz brought *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection* to a full stop - Natasha turned away from the sea and looked in the direction of clanking anchor chains. She turned back toward starboard where the morning light seemed brighter. She judged correctly, "We have anchored off the southern end of Sydney Bay. His crew has improved - no one fell overboard today." She laughed, "If one did - he wouldn't last long. I have read of this place. Now I remember - when I was a young student studying English at the Andropov Institute - I read Mitchener's novel about the South Pacific. He mentioned the sharks - too. This bay is teeming with dorsal fins. More than I can count. I've never seen this many before. Maybe - I will push just one deck hand overboard - just for the sport of it - I could study how they kill their prey." Just then Max appeared from the wardroom - full of mutton sausage - with the smile of an innocent - looking for all the world like a sacrificial lamb.

The deck crew untied and dragged a large Zodiac to the port side elevator - its outboard motor flipped up toward the sky. Max entered - his fingers wrapped around the outboard motor handle. Four of the five whale watchers followed - two on each side. Captain Potz rejoined Natasha at the rail, "Sure you don't want to go ashore?" "Haven't you noticed all of those dorsal fins?" "They won't bother anyone in a Zodiac and I don't see any - now." "Which of the Green ones isn't going?" "My laundry person." Natasha looked out on Sydney Bay - once teeming with sharks - seemed now strangely empty of life. The elevator stopped when the Zodiac floated away in the bay. Max's outboard sprang to life as he pressed the electric starter.

Max maneuvered around the ship - getting a feel of his craft - before opening the outboard up and steering toward the concrete dock. At the halfway point - Natasha saw a giant dorsal fin - growing in size - gaining in speed - boring down on Max's Zodiac. Captain Potz called out, "Max! Look out - to your starboard," but Max could not hear above the noise of his outboard motor or see out of the side of his head. Natasha watched with professional admiration as the *Tiger Shark* swam toward the Zodiac at flank speed. Just before the collision - two of the Greens rose up and screamed - to no avail. The *Tiger Shark* drove the point of its nose into the starboard underside of the Zodiac flipping it up into the air - perpendicular above the waves. Five souls flew up - up - up into the air as a hundred dorsal fins converged. The giant Tiger Shark made a high speed turn - rolling on its back - leaping into the air - catching Max at his midsection in its jaws. The outboard prop - out of the water - screamed - as did Max. The outboard came to silence - without a hand on its tiller and the top half of Max continued to scream as it disappeared into a sea of red foam - surrounded by dorsal fins - a feeding frenzy.

Natasha rested her forearms on the rail - watching as one by one the other four passengers disappeared into a sea of red foam. Captain Potz whistled, "In all my years at sea - I've never seen anything like this." Natasha bubbling over with excitement was exhilarated, "A wonderful kill - quick - clean - efficient and the cleanup - as fast as any I've ever seen." Captain Potz wondered, "Did you notice? The giant Tiger Shark didn't join the others in devouring Max." "Very unusual, but Max had eaten mutton sausage for breakfast. Our Tiger may not have cared for fermented mutton." "He was pleased with his work - even did a victory roll. I have four letters to write to the survivors and a radio call to Ian." "Write your letters, but do not call Mr. Fleming - not right now. I will tell you when it is safe to do so." What she didn't say was, "Max was a dead man - anyway. One less to eliminate on this trip." She did say, "Watching this feeding frenzy has given me an appetite. I hope Cook has not run out of Italian sausage." "He knew your wishes. Mind if I join you?" "Not at all - this is our 'New World.'" Captain Potz answered, "'Order.'" "I'll meet you in the wardroom after I freshen up in my cabin."

Natasha walked into the wardroom greeted by the aroma of Italian sausage from the galley. She sat down - across from Captain Potz. She whispered, "Why have you attached yourself to the Greens?" "It was not my choosing. I was ordered to do so by your people - KGB. I am to be a governor on their socialist engine. My Control said - and I quote, 'Take this position or become a sleeper.' Since I wanted to sail - there was no other choice." "Do you have specific orders?" "Save the whales and support their socialist causes, but keep them under control." "And wait for orders?" "Yes - what are yours?" "We are no longer fueling the antinuclear movement." "My Green friends have a life of their own. And Fleming has commercial reasons to agitate them. Their idealism - stirred up - can become irrational and difficult to control. As long

as you let me sail under the Southern Cross and I'm allowed to run a little commercial enterprise now and then - I'm a happy man. With all of your oil and coal - why have you withdrawn support for the antinuclear activity?" "We are not opposed to it. I do not know or question. Do you have my weapons?" "They are strapped under your bunk." "Is that all?" "For now. Did you retrieve your Zodiac?" "Yes - will you need one?" "Yes and a bicycle."

Cook carried in a platter of sausages and a loaf of hot whole grain Russian black bread for Natasha. She buttered a slice of bread and speared the top link, "If he could only make them squirm - like Max's intestines - this would be the end of a perfect day." Natasha took a bite and then another - finishing the link before refilling her mug with tea, "With food like this - I could sail with you forever." Inside his head Potz was thinking, "Natasha is a conundrum inside an enigma. And colder than a shark's snout. She stood by the rail with that smile - full of joy as the sharks devoured four Greens and poor Max. It was almost as if she willed the sharks to finish Max. I'll miss him. Max is the only practical person I've dealt with in this God forsaken country of sheep and cowards. Why couldn't we align ourselves with the Aussies. Now there's a nation with a set of balls." Natasha asked, "Did you want something? I thought you said a set of balls?" "I was thinking of the Aussies. I'd rather work with them than Kiwis."

Natasha finished the last link - careful not to wallow in the grease as she wanted too, "How long do you plan to stay here?" "My plans are for two days." "I'm anxious to move on to Fiji. I don't have work to do on this island and my reason for being here is in the sharks' stomachs of Sydney Bay." "I have work to do in my stateroom. It is best that I keep a low profile until my work is done. Give me a good reason why we should not leave tomorrow morning." "Norfolk

Island is my cover - a diversionary tactic before I sail to Suva Bay. Both anchors are secure on the bottom and my ship is riding steady." "Your plans have changed. We will depart tomorrow before ten in the morning. The precise time is of your choosing. I will test fire my weapons tonight." "I must go ashore and explain our departure."

Captain Potz rode up the hillside - through the Norfolk Pines in an open jeep of World War II vintage to the island hut of his contact. He drank coffee and made small talk - as always, but with impatience. His contact finally spoke, "We are concerned. How many did you lose to the sharks?" "Five, but we saved the Zodiac." "I am sorry that Max Lax is dead, but there is nothing either of us can do about it." "Will your people mention this incident to the Australians?" "No - we have too many that are afraid to come here because of our sharks." "None of this will go into my Captain's Log." "We are hosts to a giant *Tiger Shark* in our Bay - off and on for over a month. He left after the attack." "Do you not think this is strange?" "Yes, but we do not dwell on it. The omens are not right. We will not do business on this trip." "I understand." As Captain Potz rode down the hillside - the evening fog moved in - from the ocean toward Norfolk Island. He boarded his Zodiac for the *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection*, "I'll be glad to leave in the morning. This island has the aroma of blue funk."

As the sun rose - Natasha entered the wardroom for breakfast. The aroma of Italian sausage from the galley was almost overpowering, "This trip is better than I envisioned. I have seen a competitor kill at close range and this Cook can cook!" She poured tea into an almost clean mug and sat down next to the Captain, "How soon will we get underway." He looked at his watch, "In an hour." "Have you eaten?" "I had breakfast with my Second while my Mate makes arrangements

for our departure. Were the weapons to your satisfaction?" "Yes - but I prefer you store them somewhere else." "I'll place them in the hold - on top of a beam where they will be safe." Cook carried in another platter of sausage and a loaf of fresh hot Russian black bread, "Is there anything else?" Natasha looked at the Captain. He nodded, "We'll have a pot of fresh tea and I'll have a small plate of sausage."

Suva - Fiji

Johnny didn't expect to be greeted at the airport, but he was. Lieutenant Matuku met him on the tarmac, "Small island community - Colonel and our new computer system." "It arrived?" "Two days back. Your folks did a good job. All we had to do was plug it in and load our data." "How did you know I was arriving on this flight?" "I stumbled across your name on the manifest. We're all ready running a check on arrivals - searching for revolutionaries and socialists." "And I fit in which category?" "The first. We have a common friend visiting us." "Is it our installer? Tupelo said he had a surprise." "Do you remember a Mr. Benny Barnes? He is your installer." Johnny placed his luggage in the open trunk and turned - his mouth open, "Where is he staying?" "Chief Bau thought you would be surprised - at your hotel - the Viti Levu. He's there now. We finished our final checkout early this morning. We worked most of the night. I have a letter for you." Lieutenant Matuku handed Johnny an envelope and walked to the drivers side. Johnny got in on the passenger's side - opening the envelope - wondering, "Why would CIA send Benny out here? A vacation? Or is something important going down out here?" The note was short,

"Meet me at the Verandah bar at four - Lucky. We'll talk over drinks,

Benny

Lieutenant Matuku asked, "Is it important?" "Only if you want to join us for drinks this evening." "Thanks for the offer, but I must decline - my wife has other plans." "Just as well. Benny turns walking the dog into a mystery. If you don't mind - may I see our computer install?" "My pleasure." "Any word about a weapons shipment coming in?" "Nothing positive, but we have a suspect ship - the *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection* departed New Zealand a little less than a week back." "Isn't that a Green ship?" "It is." "And you think they're running guns?" "Yes - you couldn't find better cover in the South Pacific." "They'll scream bloody murder if you interfere." "Therein lies our problem." "Can we drive past Motila's warehouse." "Not in this car - we are close to resolving our socialist problems. Chief Bau wants to keep them complacent."

Johnny looked at the boxes and crates stacked around Lieutenant Matuku's offices, "Benny didn't do a very good job. He should have cleaned up." "I asked him to leave the packing material until we made sure it works and we give your system our stamp of approval. And if we have to ship back parts for replacements." "Is it running?" "Like a charm." "If CIA did their job when they loaded data for you back in the States - your hardware should be burnt in. But - your right - never know for sure. Do you mind if I take a test drive on your keyboard?" "Be my guest." "I'll test a few of our programs and we'll see." Johnny ran through all of the programs in less than an hour, "Looks good to me. How about training?" "Works like the internet. My men are toying with your programs." "It looks like my job is finished in Fiji." "Not so fast. Chief Bau requests that you and Benny to hang around until I'm satisfied my men are ready to fly solo. You won't have to train, but you can answer questions when they come up." "I'll stay around, but from what I've seen your troops have our operating procedures down pat."

Lieutenant Matuku stopped Johnny as he walked out the door, "Chief Bau has a rental car for you and Benny parked out back." Johnny laughed out loud when he saw the car, "Where did Chief Bau get this relic? From rent-a-wreck?" It was Lieutenant Matuku's turn to laugh, "He knew you and Benny would stick your noses into sticky wickets - where they don't belong - so he decided to cloak you in anonymity." "I can drive past Motila's warehouse?" "Any time you want too, but don't make a habit of it." Johnny transferred his luggage from the trunk of Matuku's car to the back seat and started the engine, "Looks bad - runs great." Lieutenant Matuku stopped him before he drove away, "I forgot to tell you. The Viti Levu Resort has requested you park this vehicle in an inconspicuous place." Lieutenant Matuku was still laughing as Johnny drove away.

Old espionage habits die hard. Johnny drove south to the warehouse district by the docks and took a short jog by Motila's warehouse. He noticed a slight increase in activity and made a mental note to discuss it with Pat Penny. He thought about driving to the docks, but decided against it, "Someone might identify this car and associate Pat with me. Lets see if this wreck can make it back to my hotel." Johnny stopped in front of the Viti Levu and gave the keys to the Doorman, "Where do you park a junkyard classic?" "At another hotel," was not the answer he was looking for. "This car belongs to Chief Bau," did. "I'll park it out of sight. Stop by my desk and I'll let you know its hiding place when you want to use it. I'll have a bellhop get your luggage." He opened the trunk, "Where is it?" "In the back seat." As he checked into the resort - the Desk Clerk handed him an envelope from Benny. He opened it. The note inside was the same as the one given to him by Lieutenant Matuku. Johnny walked to his bungalow, "Not only is Benny shifty and crafty and bears watching - he is thorough - or else he's lonely for my company."

Johnny tipped the bellhop and began to unpack. He laid out his clothes for the evening - which was not difficult. Loose fitting tropical clothes were appropriate attire in the tropics and a necessity on Fiji. Especially when southern hemisphere trade winds failed to bring afternoon relief from the tropical heat and humidity. Johnny called Bobbie Jean in McLean, "Looks like I'll be coming home sooner than expected. I've wrapped up most of my work." "How soon?" "Ten days or less." "Have you run into an old friend?" "If it's the same one - I meet him on the verandah at four." "He called before he left here. Any message?" "He wanted to be the one to tell you." "Whatever it is - do you approve?" "It's your call. I can live with whatever decision you make." Johnny hung up after being brought up-to-date on their boys and the weather - which was typical of Virginia - winter rains - wet and cold. He showered - dressed for dinner and checked his watch, "I'm running late."

Johnny stopped inside the outside bar and looked out on the verandah. Benny was sitting at a table - his back to the hotel - staring out over the ocean. Johnny ordered a Swan Premium beer from Australia and carried it to the verandah. He tapped Benny on the shoulder, "Strange place for a you to call a meeting." Benny almost jumped out of his shoes, "I do need a vacation. Can't remember when someone snuck up on me without me hearing like you did." "The Koro Sea at sunset can be a mesmerizing experience." "And our standard dress - long sleeved white shirt and tie - dark blue trousers and English leather shoes are too warm for these tropics. I see you've gone native." "Not all the way - haven't had any long pig - yet. Loosen your regimental tie - or better yet take it off - along with your shoes and socks and you'll feel more comfortable." "How was your trip to Australia?" "Not bad - Aussies are great hosts - met some old friends and got a job done. As usual - not appreciated by my Ops counterparts." "Situation normal." "All messed up. I got back early and

you came in early and beat me here. How did the installation go?" "A piece of cake. Plug it in and turn it on."

Benny signaled for a waiter, "I'll have another Bloody Mary." He looked at Johnny, "And another one of those funny looking Aussie brews. Put it on his tab." Benny sighed, "Wish I'd brought along a pair of shorts. I'm cooking out here. Any air-conditioning inside?" "You'll adjust. Trade winds will strengthen as the sun goes down. Take off your shoes." "Think I will. Loading the remaining software took a bit of time, but Matuku's folks were a big help." "I'll bet. More like you plugged it in - turned it on and handed the system over. Your lucky if you don't get your fingers caught in the keyboard." "True, but I'm recommending your system for all of our field offices. The self contained uninterrupted power source is worth the price of admission." "Need it out here and in countries where Company people are stationed. Quality control at the power stations isn't an everyday thing. Smooths out the spikes and changing phases." "Did you test it?" "Ran all of the programs this afternoon. It's up and running. Our hosts should be pleased." "I think they are, but they don't trust the Company. Won't until they're sure we didn't imbed something inside the system." "Did you?" "In Fiji?" Johnny laughed, "Right - the correct answer is a question - 'what for?'"

They remained silent while their waiter delivered drinks. When he was out of hearing range - Johnny fished, "Bobbie Jean said you had a surprise for me." "That's not why I came out here, but yes. You're no longer attached to me - you're going to become one of us - at the Directors request." "I'm out of the Air Force?" "Active duty like me - you'll transfer to the Reserves." "What if I don't want it?" "Give it a trial spin. You can leave anytime - if you change your mind." "What did Bobbie Jean say?" "You've got a winner in that lady. She said it's up to you." "That

wasn't much of a surprise. What did you really come out here for?" "To see a Russian lady." "Natasha? Is she after Pat Penny?" "Yes and no." "Was that an answer?" "Yes. A blonde lady matching her description flew out of Moscow to Sydney - by way of New Delhi and Singapore. She was last seen boarding a Green ship in New Zealand." "I know the ship - the *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection*." "How did you discover her name?" "It wasn't me. Lieutenant Matuku did - using our merchant ship program. He said it's heading for Suva and running," Johnny looked around to see if they were being monitored, "Guns."

Benny nodded in the affirmative and changed the subject, "My ass is sore. Lets take a walk along the beach - where the surf will cover our voices." He stood up and led the way - barefoot, "I hopped the MAC flight that was bringing your computer system in. Got it to land here on a flight from American Samoa to Sydney - after a two hour stop in Honolulu. Not much sleep along the way." "That's because you're a pilot. Navs don't have that problem. We have enough surf noise. Now - what were you going to say?" "Natasha is heading for Suva." "Do you know why?" "Haven't the foggiest - unless it's a wet procedure on Pat Penny." "I don't think they know he's here." "They might - it was part of his programming, but I have to agree." "Chief Bau is expecting a shipment of replacement weapons from New Zealand." "Using a Green ship is pretty effective cover. But - I can't believe they'd waste their number one assassin on a simple weapons shipment. Our contact on Norfolk Island said they anchored out there and lost five passengers to sharks." "Natasha?" "Death follows her around, but our man said sharks. No foul play involved. Their Zodiac was attacked by a real giant of a Tiger and capsized. Said it was quite a feeding frenzy." "Does Chief Bau know your real purpose for being here?" "No and neither do you." "Don't ask?" "Don't tell. Natasha may be part of a cleanup effort. Might have sent her to take

care of out of control leftovers from the Comintern - or she may be in trouble back home." "You're going to turn her." "Always looking for a new insight."

Johnny's stomach clock went off, I'm hungry. Are you ready to dine?" "On the verandah?" "Excellent Chef here - Portuguese cooking - so don't ask for extra hot seasoning." "I made that mistake my first night here. Damn near burned my tongue off." They ordered another round of drinks while looking over the menu. Johnny asked, "Do you know anything about the gang of six?" "You mean the missing Fiji socialist middle managers?" "You know." "Only that they're away at an off site - or a visit to India." "Pat's family returned to Hungary." "Penelope - too?" "Especially Penelope. Are they connected with the disappearance?" "You want to know if I'm connected. Well - I'm not. I loaned Pat out to my friend - Chief Bau. I wouldn't ask him." "I won't. I still haven't figured out your involvement with the assassination of the JCS Chairman." "We weren't and I wasn't." "You didn't interfere." "Part of our Charter. We're not allowed too - so we didn't."

The waiter brought drinks and took their order. Benny smiled, "That was quite an open ocean sail - Pat Penny made. He hasn't lost it. He's helping Chief Bau on his socialist problem. Oh - do you still have my Tabua?" Johnny handed it back, "I have one of my own and so does Pat. Is Tupelo really a Sergeant?" "Yes - he was and he is now." "And he's one of yours." "I'll give you an answer you all ready know. He's ours and he's under cover. He took my place in your General's office." "Why were you there?" "To keep you Air Force types in line. Must be the water. Pin a star on one and they all go a little crazy."

The waiter brought their salads. Johnny asked, "Does the current General know?" "No - he does not, but it doesn't

matter. We're withdrawing Tupelo. Langley is no longer afraid of a rogue operation." "Where is he going?" "He'll be your boss." "Has the Company got both oars in the water?" "Cold War is over. We're still in search of guidance from our politicians. We're floundering - in search of our next Intelligence mission." "Thought it would be terrorists - that kind of thing." "If that was the case - I'd start by looking inside our State Department." "Or the White House." "The winds of change are a-blowing and we're left hanging without a weather vane. But - when I put on this suit I took an oath not to get into policy or politics. I give my input and go on about my business." "The cottage industry that grew up around our Foreign Policy establishment is flapping like flounder out of water. Must be a thousand four story red brick buildings just outside the beltway shaking these days. Lots of paper pushing Foreign Policy experts will be looking for work." "If we ever have an administration that makes its employees responsible for their own decisions all of those red brick buildings will collapse."

After their waiter left and they tasted the main course - Benny smiled, "He is an excellent cook. And you and me? We're so much in agreement we're beginning to sound like a Greek Chorus. For every decision we make today - we pay five consultants to certify what we are doing is the right thing. Which - since we are paying them - they do. Multiply each of our decisions by the cost of five man years and you have the income base for Northern Virginia - Maryland and Washington DC." "I always wondered why we pay for contractors and consultants to do our work when our job descriptions say we are the doers." "Inside and outside and all around the beltway lies a strange world. Have you run across a Kiwi called Max Lax?" "He was here - connected with Ian Fleming in New Zealand." "He was steering the Zodiac that capsized off Norfolk Island." "He's shark bait?" "The first one to go under during the feeding frenzy."

Pat Penny entered the outside bar and walked to the doorway leading out to the verandah. Johnny dropped his fork - waved and smiled at Benny, "We have a mutual friend. Do you mind if he joins us?" Benny had that pained expression on his face. He looked like someone caught in a crossfire without a bullet proof vest. He reluctantly stood up and called out, "Pat - Pat Penny. Why don't you join us. We're about finished with dinner and on our way to after dinner drinks." "By your pained expression - Benny - I can tell you didn't expect to see me here." "It's my turn. I deserve a surprise or two now and then. Johnny almost scared me out of my wits - sneaking up on me - earlier. I was going to stop by your boat tomorrow." "You are getting old - I remember when no one alive could creep up on you." Pat ordered a vodka martini - shaken - not stirred and sat down.

Benny asked, "What brings you to the Viti Levu?" "I had dinner with Johnny the night before he left for Australia. You were supposed to call me when you got back." "Matuku picked me up at the airport. Wanted to show off his new data automation system. Chief Bau loaned us a relic. Didn't want to get you identified with it and us at the docks. Might blow your cover. Benny left a message for me with Chief Bau to meet him here. I was going to stop by in the morning." "I called the Chief. He said you were here. Didn't mention Benny, but that's to be expected." Benny asked - again, "I'll start over. What brings you to the Viti Levu?" "I heard on the dock that a Green ship is coming in - minus five passengers. Max Lax - a Kiwi Johnny and I have been keeping track of was dinner for the Norfolk Island Sharks." Johnny asked, "Was one of them your *Tiger Shark*?" "He was the main instigator." "Is he still around?" "Don't ask me how I know, but he's on his way back to Hawaii at flank speed." Benny rolled his eyes upward, "You two have been out here too long. You're beginning to believe in Polynesian Myths." Pat looked at Johnny, "Don't ask." "Don't tell."

Pat stared at Benny, "Are we all square?" "Has Chief Bau released you?" "Not yet - will he turn on me?" "Never - play along. When the Green ship leaves - he'll request that we leave - too." Pat smiled, "Just as I expected. We're his insurance policy and your not answering my questions." Benny looked Pat and snarled, "We'll discuss our arrangements in private." Johnny got up, "Got to see a man about a horse. I'll be gone for ten minutes."

Benny looked at Max, "Are you ready to retire?" "To be honest - I'm not sure. Each time I try to kick back and drop a line in the water someone or something out of my past jerks it out and me back in. I have a problem." "What is it?" "My daughter - Penelope. She's beginning to enjoy our work." "That's not a good sign. I'm glad you informed me. When we leave here - take a year off. Get her involved in your Villa." "How about the Russians?" "Don't worry about them. They think you're dead, but." "But - what?" "There is a Russian lady aboard the Green Ship." "Is it the same one Johnny blocked into the Potomac?" "It is." "I should have eliminated that bitch on the spot." "No - she wasn't on your list and." "You're trying to turn her - aren't you?" "This discussion is above both our pay grades. I don't know why she is coming here. We do not have a meeting." "Are you certain she is not after me?" "Nothing is certain. When her ship comes in - you'll be at a safe house." "Is she that good?" "She's better than that."

Johnny returned with a fresh brew in his hand, "Okay to rejoin you old farts?" Benny nodded, "Yes and Colonel?" "I can only guess what's coming." "We were young once - too and you - you insolent bastard will be older than dirt in the not too distant future. Remember - we're not old we're vintage - well aged - a bit slower, but still on top of our game." "Touché!" Pat asked, "Mind if I order while you two fight. The Chef here is Cordon Bleu and I'm tired of my cooking."

Johnny answered, "Try the local lobster. It's first rate."
"Had enough of those crusty red things on my sail to the Yasawas to last a lifetime. I'll have Portuguese sausage. Keeps the red devils away." "Johnny asked, "What do you mean - keep the red devils away?" "Pat answered, "Don't ask," and Benny responded, "Don't tell."

Benny sipped on fifty year old cognac - the source of all knowledge and opined, "Pat - if I was the Black Widow's target - she'd arrive and be gone before me or anyone in our business knew about it." Pat answered, "Agree - if it was me doing the job - I wouldn't arrive on a slow boat from New Zealand." Johnny laughed, "You arrived on a slow boat from Hawaii." "But - my target or anyone living here wouldn't know I was coming. I didn't file an itinerary. And if I did file a route - I'd disguise myself as a transpacific sailor. How many notches does she have on her belt?" Benny answered, "We can only estimate. Our best guess is twenty-six." "You know - I can take her out before she attacks me." "We don't want her eliminated." "I've got a problem. Being on the defensive is not my cup of tea." "You may wish to visit another island when her Green ship anchors." "Bau - I'll visit the Chief's Father on Bau. He invited me to come visit - once my work was done. No one could arrive there - without being noticed."

Johnny asked Pat, "Did you discover anything new while I was away?" "More activity around Motila's warehouse and I mentioned the Green ship. I briefed Chief Bau yesterday." Benny asked, "Did he let you know his plans?" "He'll let the Greens transfer the Kiwi weapons to Motila's warehouse. Doesn't want to board a Green ship unless it's absolutely necessary. As soon as the weapons are secure and his Indian friends breath easy - Chief Bau will move in. My bet is - it will happen between midnight and two in the morning." Benny nodded, "Free weapons!"

Benny signaled to the waiter for more Cognac, "Another beer - Johnny?" "I'm going to switch to coffee." Benny asked, "Did you discover anything interesting about Fiji's Indian problem?" Johnny answered, "Fiji got lucky - they're fragmented by religious differences. The only glue is a common tie to socialism and their Indian homeland. Chief Bau is concerned they'll overcome their differences and present him with a unified front. Pat - what are your plans?" "As soon as Chief Bau releases us - I'll sell my Cat and return to Hungary." Johnny sensed he was no longer wanted - or needed, "I'm going to hit the sack. You two can swap spy stories without my company."

As Johnny walked back inside the hotel bar - Benny smiled, "He stuck us with the check. Tell me more about your daughter. What tipped you off?" "She was making plans to eliminate Johnny and his wife." "You're right - I would be concerned about her - too. Did she have a reason?" "A woman scorned is one hundred percent emotion and zero percent reason." "Ropp is a married man with a family. His wife is beautiful - pleasing and has more money than you and me put together and with your money - that's a lot." "Penelope was never turned down by anyone before. She couldn't handle it." "You ought to arrange a marriage." "Her Mother tried, but our girl is strong willed." "I'm glad you told me. No matter what happens - keep her on the shelf for awhile. When you think she has regained control - let me know. She's too valuable an asset too waste. How about a tour of your boat in the morning?" "Nine too early?" "See you then - I'm going to bed and work off my jet lag. My body is somewhere between here and San Francisco."

Johnny was on his second cup of coffee by the time Benny appeared for breakfast. Benny ordered and poured, "Didn't expect to see Pat Penny so early and on his terms. Did you make an appointment with Chief Bau?" "His Secretary said

he'll be in his office all day. Said to drop in - he'll see us. Do you want to come along?" "Promised Pat I'd take a look at his Cat this morning. Can you give me a ride to the docks in our rent-a-wreck?" "If I know you - you'll ask to be dropped off close, but not too close - so no one will see us together." "You're beginning to learn your craft." "Do you have plans for me after I finish here?" "School - then an assignment. I thought you said Tupelo was going to be my new boss?" "For now. Later - we'll see. This island called Bau - can Chief Bau control access?" "Where did you get your Tabua?" "In Europe - from the Chief's Father. It's a long story." "Bau is not only an island - it's a village - an extended family. No one person - or a brigade will get to Pat there." Benny gave the waiter his breakfast order.

Johnny waited until they were alone, "Will you stay on after we're done here?" "I'll leave with you. You and Pat watch the Kiwis - Indians and the Green Ship. My job is the Russian lady." "On the job training for me. Mind if I get hypothetical?" "It's the only way you are going to learn." "You're here to make sure Natasha doesn't eliminate Fiji's government leaders." "You're learning. They haven't gone after anyone since JFK - except the Pope and they botched that." "How about the sleeper program?" "Three Penny? Pat is the only one who escaped to execute his program and that was a mistake. They got sloppy and then they attempted to rectify a past error. Do you want to begin earning your pay and alert the Chief?" "I'll advise him of your concern. Does he need to do anything special?" "Tell him I recommend a guard on his key leaders as long as the Green ship is in port." "Will do - have you talked with him?" "Yes and his Father. You hit the sack early last night. You only gave me a partial on your view of Fiji. My Director wants a first hand report on how they're doing." "From my contact with the leaders and being out among the people - I'd say their government is pretty solid. It has the full support of the

Fijians. They aren't sacrificing their heritage for a Hershey bar and a Coke. To be honest - I expected a Third World banana republic dictatorship. That tells you how little I knew about Fiji and its people. From what I've seen - New Zealand is the Third World country - being run like a banana republic with a socialist dictatorship. If Fiji solves its ethnic Indian problem - they'll be the shining star of the South Pacific." "What about the Russians?" "Haven't seen any residual influence here. Got to see a man about a horse. I'm going to my room. Give me a call when you're ready to go to the dock."

The doorman rolled his eyes upward, "I'd prefer not to have our valet drive your wreck to our front entrance." He handed Johnny the keys, "It's parked under cover in our side lot - by the kitchen. Place the cover on the grass beside the car. I'll have someone pick it up. When you return - park it in the same place." Benny laughed, "It must be a piece of work." And when Johnny pulled the cover off - Benny laughed again, "It is a piece of work. Is it clean enough to sit in - or should I go back inside for a towel?" "Hop in - I'll have you at the docks before the mildew smell soaks through your clothes." Johnny stopped one street over, "What do you think of Chief Bau's car?" Benny hopped out smiling, "Looks like hell - runs great. I'll walk to Headquarters after I'm done here. Will you be there?" "In Lieutenant Matuku's office playing with his new toy - if he'll let me." Benny walked away whistling - down the street toward the docks as Johnny drove their rent-a-relic away.

Chief Bau's Secretary looked up from her desk, "He'll be with you in five minutes. Can I get you a cup of coffee?" "Yes Ma'am - plain if you don't mind." "Neat coming up." "I notice that you have one of the new computer terminals on your desk. Are you an analyst - too?" "I will be after I input all of the data I've been handed by the Chief. So far

it's been a lot of extra work. When does it save me time?" "Most systems are time consumers, but it has a great word processing function." "One out of five isn't bad." A light lit up on her phone, "You can go in - the Chief is ready for you now." Chief Bau motioned for Johnny to sit down, "How was your trip to Australia." "Wish I was younger - it would have been a lot of fun. Stubbs sends his regards." "A fine English type fellow - that Stubbington. Why do you want to see me?" "Benny wanted to make sure you knew about a Russian lady arriving on board *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection.*" "Should I be concerned?" "She is a known assassin with twenty-six kills to her credit." "What does Mr. Barnes recommend?" "As long as their ship is anchored in your harbor - a guard protecting your key leaders." "Do you know her intentions?" "No - we don't." "Let me refill your coffee."

Chief Bau signaled to his Secretary and she arrived with a carafe. Chief Bau thanked her and turned to Johnny, "We really appreciate our new computer system." His Secretary frowned and the Chief laughed, "Well almost all of us do." Chief Bau stood up, "We have an excellent list of Indian socialists and a good list of brigands in our area, but we know very little about Russian assassins. I can't believe they would send someone here to destabilize our government. Is Benny taking action?" "She is his responsibility. He recommends you protect your leaders - just in case." "Benny has always been prudent. What are our Russians selling that could be in conflict with our Kiwi's fossil fuel plants." "Graphite nuclear power reactors." "Like the ones at Chernobyl in the Ukraine?" "Crazy isn't it. Do you think she is after your socialist power structure?" "Maybe - how about Mr. Penny? Is he a target?" "He was, but Benny doesn't think he is now." "Where will Mr. Penny go when the Green ship comes in?" "He plans on accepting your Father's invitation to visit your ancestral island." "My Father will be honored. He will never allow anything to happen to Mr.

Penny on our land. It is a matter of honor to us and Pat Penny is a hero to our people." "How so?" "Two kegs of beer at our Christmas Meke," the Chief laughed, "If the Russian chooses to follow him to our homeland - my people will relish the hunt.

Chief Bau sat back down - rubbing his chin with his fingers, "My first priority is the weapons. I will let the Green ship unload and leave without interference." Johnny wondered, "You're going to let the Captain continue this activity here and elsewhere?" Detaining a Green ship is like eating an endangered species and throwing its skin in the face of society. It is not a good idea. I will handle this matter discreetly. He will come to an understanding if he wishes to continue sailing in the South Pacific. My Prime Minister will talk to the Kiwi government after we have all of the facts. Tell Mr. Penny I will call my Father this morning. He will expect Penny's catamaran this evening. The Green ship is on its way and might arrive early - late today. It's best that Mr. Penny is only a memory on Suva's docks. I would like you to stay close. I may need your services." "Do you mind if I ask a question about your socialists?" "I do not know where their six middle managers are." "No - Sir - I was wondering if you believed your Indians could come to power?" "Only at the ballot box. If they do achieve power and show they do not respect our hospitality - again - we'll send them packing to India." "Why are they foolish enough to plan a revolution?" "It's easier to establish a dictatorship after a revolution than after winning an election."

Benny stuck his head in the door, "Are you about finished. I'm ready to head back to the barn. Lieutenant Matuku said to get some rest. Tomorrow night could be a busy one." Johnny looked over at the Chief. He nodded, "Yes - stop by the docks and send Mr. Penny on his way. He needs to set sail if he plans on reaching my island before nightfall."

Johnny stood up, "Am I to contact Lieutenant Matuku for my instructions?" "Matuku will call you tomorrow." The Chief glanced at Benny, "Do you have everything you need?" "The only remaining item is the time - *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection* drops anchor. I'll be at my hotel. Pat Penny has quite a boat there - even installed air conditioning. Told me to ask you if your relatives are in the boat selling or buying business?" "Tell Mr. Penny he will receive a fair price when the time comes."

Johnny parked along a side street and Benny opened the rent-a-wreck passenger door, "You better stay with the car. I'll be right back." He walked along the dock, "Hello *Happy Hour* - mind if I come on board?" Pat stuck his head out of the cockpit, "You again? Is there a problem?" "How soon can you set sail?" "As soon as you get off my boat. Where am I heading?" "Bau - your expected this evening. Does your air conditioner work away from the plug?" "Only if I run her on diesel." Pat checked his watch, "I've got a few minutes. How about sharing a beer with me?" "Only if it isn't Primo." "Where did you here about Primo." "Half the dock is still suffering from cramps and nausea." "That's not true - I brought it in cold. I restocked with Triple X." "Is that an Aussie beer." "You got that right. Try it." "I'll like it?" "Of course." "Why are you hanging around talking to me?" "Waiting for my house guest gift for Chief Bau's Father." "Which is?" "Two kegs of beer." Benny swallowed half his can, "Not a bad brew." "Do you believe our Russian lady is after me?" "If I did - you'd be halfway to Hungry." "Then why am I sailing out of harms way?" "Nothing in life is certain."

Pat opened two more beers, "Where's Johnny?" "Waiting in the car - a block away from the docks." "Should have asked him to come along." "He needs to learn patience."

"Why won't you let me eliminate the Russian?" "If you do - more will follow. If she isn't after you - why stir up a hornets nest?" "And you want to turn her. Do me a favor. When she is out of here - give me a call. I want to put this boat up for sail and return to Hungary. Did you mention it to Chief Bau?" "He said you will receive a fair price." A shout from the dock let the whole world know Pat's beer had arrived. Benny climbed up the ladder, "I'll untie your lines as soon as your beer is stowed away." "Wait - you can help me ice it down. Nothing worse than a keg of warm beer in the tropics." The beer iced down - Benny untied the lines and said, "Think you can handle it," before remembering Pat had sailed it alone across the Pacific. Pat gave him one of those, "Which rock have you been under looks," as his diesel sprang to life.

Benny found Johnny standing next to their car, "Too hot to sit inside. That took more than a few minutes." "Had to help him get underway." "And drink a few beers." "What are friends for?" "Where to now?" "Home - Johnny - home to our hotel." Johnny drove out of Suva in silence - until they were halfway there, "Do you really believe Pat is free of his hunters?" "No, but they are not after him now." "But - if he is no longer a threat why try to eliminate him?" "They are like the Mafia. As an example for their own troops. It's a lesson you'll have to learn and most of our Foreign Service types out of Columbia forget." "I'm your student." "If you write from right to left and talk in a foreign language - you don't think or act the same way we do. So we have to look at the world through their eyes. For a starter - look at Fiji." "You mean the ethnic problem?" "Absolutely - the Indians arrived to work on the British plantations - took over Fiji's commerce and when self government came - the government. The Brits forgot about the Fijians, but the Fijians didn't. They decided to take their country back." "I see. That's the same ethnic problem as in the Balkans.

The Slavs are trying to eliminate nine-hundred years of Turkish occupation - religion and influence. They weren't able to kick the Turks out until 1913." "That conflict is continuing. It was interrupted by two world wars and a communist takeover, but the fires didn't go out - they were only banked. It can go up in smoke anytime. All it needs is a match. Meet me at the bar for lunch. I have one more item still open."

Johnny walked into the bar and looked around, "With Benny there is always one more item still open." He found Benny outside on the verandah - far away from the other patrons. Benny motioned for him to sit down, "Want to order - or wait?" "I'm hungry." Johnny signaled for the waiter and they both ordered link sausage sandwiches. After their waiter left - Johnny asked, "Tell me about your open item." "Are you going to stay committed?" "Until early summer is all I can promise." "Good enough for me. My instructions were to look at the lay of the land before telling you of your new assignment." "Which is?" "Europe - Bonn, Germany as an assistant to the Cultural Attaché." "Working for?" "Our Operations Directorate. You'll be trained and briefed after you return to McLean." "Can I tell anyone?" "Only your wife."

*"Hooray and up she rises
Hooray and up she rises
Hooray and up she rises -
Early in the morning."*

10

Koro Sea

Metal scraped on metal as the bow anchor chain clinked - clinked - clinked - rolling up on its spool. The scraping of metal on metal stopped when the anchor fluke came to rest in a notch on the bow. The *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection's* prop was engaged barely seconds after the stern anchor fluke cleared the last ocean swell. Natasha looked up from her place by the rail at the wheel house, "Our Captain is very anxious to sail away from Norfolk Island this morning, but so am I. The chop in Sydney Bay rocked his ship like a cork floating in a bathtub full of small children. As good a sailor as I am - bobbing on top of this ocean - on an unstabalized rust bucket is not my cup of tea." The ship gained speed. Unsynchronized bobbing turned to a gentle synchronized roll. Natasha stayed at the rail long after Norfolk Island disappeared into the late morning mist, but she did not see or care. Her mind was elsewhere.

Natasha had three wet procedures to complete, "It will not be easy. I will be on unfamiliar territory in a strange tropical land. The early morning hours will be my friend. Three victims will take how many hours? Three at the most - if all goes well. The best time will be between one and four a.m. Early morning hours are an assassins best cover. Most of my time will be spent riding a bicycle between houses. If I leave the ship at midnight I will have a cushion. I must study the maps again - visualize each procedure and memorize the roads I'll follow in-between. I must remember to ask the Captain for a topography map. And I will have to test fire

my weapon with the silencer attached. Where did he put it? Now I remember - in the hold." She looked at her watch, "It's noon. Have I been out here that long? It is time for lunch and I am famished."

Natasha could not disguise her delight as she entered the wardroom, "Wonderful - the aroma of pork sausage links." She peeked into the galley, "Do I smell sausage?" Cook answered, "Italian - medium hot and spicy, but not Portuguese hot - with new potatoes." He handed her a platter, "I'll have tea at your table in two minutes. Are you sitting with the Captain?" "Yes and thank you." Natasha placed her platter on the table, "You - my lovelies - remind me of Max and his intestines - the moment after the *Tiger Shark's* first bite. What a magnificent killing machine." She sat down to a lunch that included dark Russian bread and hot English tea. Natasha speared a sausage link with her fork - raised it to her lips - caressing the near end with her tongue. She pulled it out gently - examining every inch before inserting it between her teeth and taking a nibble. She whispered to her sausage, "This is for you my dear Max Lax - or should I say Ex Max Lax. Yours was a heroic death - one for all to envy and I too envy you."

She looked up - Captain Potz was standing at her side, "Do you mind if I join you?" Natasha wiped the grease from her chin, "Of course not - we have business to discuss." He sat down as Cook brought his plate - a carbon copy of the one he served Natasha. He nibbled on a sausage link, "I am at your command. I await your orders." "It feels wonderful to be at sea again." "If you are seaworthy enough to enjoy it. We'll have rough seas for the next twelve hours. She'll smooth out when we're out of the storms wake. I still await your orders." "You may continue - as planned. I will need a Zodiac - a ladies lightweight bicycle and a backpack for my equipment. What time do you plan to arrive?" "I'm adjusting

my arrival time so we'll anchor out in the bay after four in the afternoon." How long will it take for you to off load weapons?" "I'll use all three Zodiacs. We should be done before ten in the evening." "Good - I'll need a Zodiac at exactly twelve midnight - even if your weapons transfer is not complete." "You'll have it. How soon do you want to depart?" "As soon as I'm back on board and Captain?" "Yes?" "Flank speed to Wellington. Don't inform anyone of your change in plans until we are within line-of-sight radio contact with Wellington." "Is that all you need?" "Do you have a topography map of the Suva area?" "Yes." "I need it and my weapon after lunch." "I'll deliver both to your cabin - myself."

Captain Potz looked down at his plate of half eaten sausage and thought of Max, "I wonder if Max knew what hit him? I can still hear his scream." "The *Tiger Shark* was swift and efficient. Max died a quick - painless death - the same as a guillotine." "Does the head still think after it leaves the body?" "No - the blood supply is gone. It's like lack of gasoline to an engine. An engine cannot run on fumes - it would stop. I must go to my cabin. Stop by in an hour. I will be ready then." Natasha left the table as Potz finished dining on cold sausage and potatoes. He checked his watch, "Better check our position - get the map and visit the hold for her weapon. Wonder why she wants it now?"

Natasha opened the door, "Come in Captain. You can place the weapon on my desk. Good - I see you brought along a box of ammunition and a topography map." Potz knew better than to ask why she needed her weapon now and the map was obvious, "We're a little over two days out of Suva. I have a two hour cushion for arrival. I'll attempt to bring her in to anchor at four in the afternoon." Natasha took him by the arm and began to unbutton his shirt, "Lets see how well you are muscled. Now take off your undershirt." She stepped

back, "Turn around. I want to see your back." She ran her fingers lightly over his back - causing a gaggle of goose bumps to appear on his skin. When he turned around - Natasha was pulling the sweater over her head and undoing the buttons on her blouse. She laid both over the chair back and turned around, "Unsnap my bra." She removed her slacks as Captain Potz fumbled like a college freshman with the snaps. She placed the bra with her blouse and slipped into her bunk. She patted the side of her mattress, "Drop your trousers and keep me warm." "Is that an order?" "Are you at my command." Potz slid in beside her and waited - knowing what he would do, but not knowing what he should do. Natasha ran her fingers along his chest - playing his skin like an accordion player moves fingers across buttons - pushing one after another until the entire score was played and the audience rose to applaud. In control - she mounted his loins and the rhythm section joined in.

Natasha rose with the morning sun - creeping across the cabin floor to the edge of her bunk and stretched her arms. Potz's acrobatics the last two days brought needed relief - some satisfaction and a welcome diversion from her task at hand. The ringing she awoke too from a restful night's sleep was not the alarm clock she held in her hands. Pressing the plunger down did not halt the bells. She picked up the phone and the ringing stopped, "Who is it?" "First Mate - Ma'am. Captain said you wanted to be up before ten and it's almost that." "Thank you. I slept in longer than expected. We are sailing on smooth seas. What is your latest estimate for Fiji?" "We'll drop anchor in Suva Bay by four bells this afternoon." "Tell Cook I'll have the usual" - she looked at the clock on the wall, "in twenty minutes." Natasha walked over to the desk and picked up her weapon, "Wouldn't want to fire you over ten meters. I better pack an extra clip. Two might not be enough and if I do my job right - three bullets should be more than sufficient."

Natasha walked into the ward room with hair still damp from her shower. Cook was at the table with a platter of sausage and tea as she sat down. She asked, "Where are the others?" "It's ten-twenty Ma'am. They've eaten and gone. Tell your Captain I want to speak with him." She speared a sausage link and devoured it - as she had sexually devoured the Captain the last two afternoons. In three minutes her plate was empty of sausage - only dark Russian bread and Australian butter remained. Captain Potz opened the wardroom door and looked in - wishing she was gone, but resigned that she was still here. He pulled out a chair and sat down, "I hope your breakfast was satisfactory." "I have no complaints - you have an excellent Cook and his choice of sausage is faultless." "You are fortunate that we have five fewer passengers. You and I will have more than enough sausage. It will last until we return to Wellington." "Would you care for some tea?"

Natasha poured - filling his mug to the brim, "I am anxious for night to come. My planning is complete." "Is your weapon satisfactory?" "Only under ten meters, but it will do. I would not have chosen one of Russian manufacture. Tell me about your off-loading plans." "I will begin as soon as we arrive. The crates are marked - farm machinery. That should be cover enough. An early evening off-load will look less suspicious." "How many hours of fuel will I have in my Zodiac?" "Two, but I can add tanks." "No - you do not need too - two hours will be sufficient." "We must provide our departure estimate to the Harbormaster." "Is it better to leave later than earlier?" "Yes." "Tell him we'll be at anchor for about one week." "Do you still desire to depart before daybreak tomorrow?" "Yes." "I promised Ian that I would provide weapons training." "It will not be needed." "I'll have to call and inform him of your decision." "Are you still under my command?" "Yes." "You will not call him. I will accept no interference with my decisions." "Shall I

file a route change - from here to Wellington?" "No." Potz - his face red - not used to taking orders - stood up, "If you'll excuse me. I have work to do - if we are to safely transfer Ian's weapons."

As he turned to leave - Natasha stopped him, "I test fired my weapon into several pillows and a chair back. The bullets are lodged inside the chair cushions. I want you to dispose of the evidence before we enter Fiji's territorial waters." "They'll be gone before you return to your cabin." Potz turned and hurried outside, "When that lady decides to take charge - she takes charge. I wonder who her next victim will be? She tore my pecker out by the roots. If I have to face her sexual appetite again - It'll be like pushing a rope up a hill. She doesn't look like a killer, but I suspect she is. She can be quite pleasant, but her dark side is another matter. Cold - she looks like the devils handmaiden when her eyes narrow. Is it my imagination - or do they turn from ice blue to flaming red? Well - she's a man killer. Wiped me out all right. Where is our Russian lady sailing too after midnight. No one on Fiji will be awake." Potz stopped in his tracks - he knew.

Natasha opened the door to her cabin. Her chair and pillows had been replaced. She checked her telltales, "It is the same - nothing has been disturbed." She glanced at her Chelsea clock on the wall, "Eleven-thirty - more than twelve hours to wait. Rajiv Desaij will be the first to go. The one Max called Minnow - he will be the second to go and Jawa Motila will be the last. All of our ties to this movement will be severed. And after that - two more. I will count Max - even though the *Tiger Shark* did my work. Six in one mission package! I will be number one - queen of the hill. No other will come close. I need exercise - to put me to sleep. The Captain? No - it is too soon." She picked up the phone and called the bridge, "Yes - send down your First

Mate. I have work for him to do." She pulled the sweater over her head - unbuttoned her blouse - brushed her hair and turned sideways. Natasha arched her back until the tips of her nipples were covered with goose pimples. She turned to a knock on the door. Her breathing - quickened.

Suva Bay - Fiji

Natasha opened her eyes and turned over on her side - resting on her elbow, "What is it? I know - silence. The ocean is quiet." The clink - clink - clink of the anchor fluke descending woke her up - completely, "We are here!" She glanced at the Chelsea clock on the wall, "Four p.m. - he is good. And so was his First Mate." She glanced out the porthole. The first Zodiac was being loaded - just below on the starboard side elevator platform. Printed on each crate, 'New Zealand Farm Machinery.' "I wonder who is going to buy this ruse. Might as well add - 'Russian Weapons.' I have time for a shower. Dinner isn't until five. And I'll need sustenance, but right now I really need a shower. That First Mate was a randy one. What did his aroma remind me of? Now I remember - goat." Natasha stepped in the shower, "I will need a double order of sausage."

Captain Potz shook his head, "Second is so impatient. I hope Natasha calls for him tomorrow afternoon. That'll slow him down a step or two." He signaled for his Second Mate to come up to the rail, "I know you're anxious to get moving, but look out on the bay. What do you see?" "A fishing boat." "And what is he doing anchored out here instead of tied up at the dock - unloading his catch?" "Surveillance?" "Your learning. I won't release you until he weighs anchor and moves toward shore - or after sunset." "Whichever comes first?" "Your ready to move up to First. Get to the galley. There's movement onboard the fisher. You should be able to shove off in twenty or thirty minutes."

Natasha joined the Captain by the rail, "Why is your Zodiac loaded and still here?" "Surveillance ship on the port side." "That fishing boat?" "Believe it is. If it is a fisher - she'd be unloading her catch at the dock - or out to sea. Are you hungry?" "Famished - I have a long night's work ahead." "And so do I. Cook should have supper about ready. Join me in the wardroom." "Lead the way. How long did it take you to load the first Zodiac?" "Ten minutes. Crates are heavy. Too many will sink one of them." "How many trips?" "Between five and six per boat." "Pour me a cup of tea. I want to look in on the Cook." Natasha stuck her head through the galley door opening, "I hope you have sausage for me?" "Saving this batch just for you - Ma'am. The rest of the crew will have roast beef - tough enough to make shoe leather out of."

Natasha sat down and sipped her tea, "Do you think you will have trouble at the warehouse?" "I hope not, but with these Indians - who can tell. They lost my last shipment to the Fiji police. My job is to get the cargo safely to shore. After that it's up to Motila and his friends." Natasha shook her head, "Fiji's socialist revolutionaries do not always think with their brains. From what I've read - they are too emotional." Cook brought a platter of sausage and potatoes to Natasha and a beef plate to the Captain. Potz handed his plate back to the Cook, "Give this to our other passenger and cook some sausage for me. And a steak knife - or she'll never cut through this shoe leather." Cook walked away with a smile, "And I'll sharpen a steak knife for her. She's the best laundress we've ever had. Don't want to irritate that lady." "How about me?" "Where can you find a Cook as good as me? Not in New Zealand. There are none." Potz looked back at Natasha - her platter was half empty and grease dripped from her chin. He looked away - thinking, "So that's what a lioness looks like - dining on fresh kill." Oblivious to all around her - Natasha speared another link.

With the first Zodiac away - Potz had his First Mate standing by - Zodiac fully loaded and waiting. He called down, "Wait five minutes and keep her at six knots. We'll have three Zodiacs at a six minute intervals. I'll follow you in. When you return - load up and maintain a six minute interval with our Second." Natasha walked up to the rail, "Why do they move so slowly across the bay?" They're under orders to maintain a slow pace. Driving a Zodiac at high speed draws too much attention." "What's your separation?" "Six minutes." "Three Zodiacs at six minutes?" "I enjoy a bit of symbolism. Keeps us old salts sane." Natasha pointed toward the sea, "Is that a giant dorsal fin?" "Looks like we have company. Got to be on my way or I won't maintain pace and you won't have a Zodiac at midnight." Rolling over on its back - her competitor - the *Tiger Shark* - displayed row after row of teeth.

Bau Island

Chief Bau's Father stood waiting at the dock. He helped his youngest son tie down *Happy Hour's* lines, "You made it just in time for another Meke." Pat Penny laughed, "Good - my two kegs of Aussie beer won't go to waste. What are we celebrating?" "The return of our warrior. Four in one night and two the next - so widely separated. We are pleased to honor a - how do our Hawaiian brothers say it - an akami alihi." I'm far from Polynesian nobility - Chief. And I don't feel very smart. It almost wore me out." The Chief smiled, "Old age and treachery will always win out over youth and strength. My sons will bring up your kegs." He touched the first one as his son jumped to the dock with a keg on his shoulder, "And they are cold. We'll empty out your tubs. We have ice at our village. Come along - I have barbecued fish and pig ready to come out of the pit." "Have you heard from your son?" "The Green ship arrived and they are unloading." "The Russian lady?" "Yes - she was seen at the rail."

Suva Bay - Fiji

Johnny was adrift - wandering a Scioto River hillside - looking for his last two lost sheep. A dark gray sky turned black as clouds streamed in from the northeast. A skiff of snow blew across clumps of brown winter grass and bells began to ring. He stopped at the top of the hill and looked down - toward the old abandoned Oller Church, "It isn't Sunday - why are bells ringing." He opened his eyes - turned his head and looked out on the Koro Sea, "Christ - it's the phone." He picked up the hand set. It was Matuku, "Hello?" "You are a hard person to wake." "I'm in Fiji living on Virginia time." "*Rainbow Warrior Resurrection* just dropped anchor in Suva Bay." "Are they off loading weapons." "One Zodiac is fully loaded. It looks like they're waiting for our surveillance ship to depart." "What type of boat do you have out there?" "A fishing boat." "Doesn't look like it was the right choice." "We're moving it back to port now. Don't want to spook our weapons supplier." "Did our new warning system work?" "Like a charm. We tracked the Green ship all the way from New Zealand. Only one glitch - they left Norfolk Island early." "How did you resolve it?" "We have a friend on the island. Computers can't replace eyeballs. Can you come down to the station in an hour?" "Have they begun the transfer?" "They will - as soon as we move our boat." "You're dealing with professional smugglers. How about Benny?" "He's with the Chief. They just left for a warehouse adjoining Motila's." "If I know Benny he's going to count crates. What are your plans for me?" "You can be our audience. We have an old saying in the South Pacific - art cannot exist in a vacuum." "I thought Paul Gauguin lived in Tahiti?" "We are in the South Pacific." And I can spell one of your men." "As your analysts say - you broke the code." "I'll stop on my way and pick up dinner. How many are at the station?" "In my office - three." Johnny hung up - stretched his arms over his head and looked at the clock, "Four-thirty p.m."

Johnny showered - still groggy from an afternoon nap that had traveled way beyond a healthy twenty minutes. He dressed thinking, "Remind me not to take up smuggling in the South Pacific. Wonder why Benny didn't wake me before he left to help the Chief? Did he take our car? If he did it'll take me too long to rent one. The Chief and Benny are setting up surveillance on an illegal weapons transfer and I'm taking a nap in our hotel. Not a very good start for my CIA career." Johnny combed hair - still damp from the shower - picked up his wallet and closed the door to his room. He paused at the front desk and checked for messages. There were none. He stopped at the entrance and asked the doorman, "Is the Chief's relic still near the kitchen?" The doorman smiled, "Yes. I hope you plan to leave it in Suva. Place the cover in the grass - the same as last time." "Did Mr. Barnes drive downtown?" "Chief Bau sent his auto. Mr. Barnes must be a very important guest." Johnny walked to his rent-a-wreck - assured that he wasn't.

Johnny saw the fish and chips stand and couldn't resist, *The Best Fish and Chips in Fiji!* "Do you have a family pack?" "If you have five minutes - I can prepare a party pack. Who is it for?" "Lieutenant Matuku and several of his men at the police station." "They stop here often - how many?" "Four - or five including me." "Have you joined Chief Bau's force?" "No - I'm a visitor from Virginia." "Ah - your the second one from Virginia to shop here today." Johnny paid and waited. He was handed two large brown paper sacks, "Tell Lieutenant Matuku I cooked fresh Pacific Snapper today. They are his favorite." Johnny drove to the lot out back of the station - entered an almost empty headquarters building and walked to Lieutenant Matuku's desk, "Where is everybody?" "We're on shift duty. This episode could last until early tomorrow morning. I smell the aroma of fried pepper batter. What's in your two brown paper sacks." "Stopped for fish and chips on the way." "Excellent - did you get enough for

three?" "Five - you guys are big eaters. Owner said to tell you he cooked fresh Pacific Snapper today." "You stopped at our favorite stand. When we finish your dinner - how would you like to join me on our Patrol Boat?" "Are you going to make an arrest?" "No - it is our evening patrol - except tonight - it is far from routine." He opened the first sack, "You have chosen well."

Benny arrived at the warehouse - carrying a brown paper sack of fish and chips. He was escorted to a seventh floor waterfront room - across from and overlooking the dock of Motila's warehouse. Chief Bau sniffed the air, "Fish and chips from my favorite stand." Benny handed him the sack - which Chief Bau opened, "Why - there is enough for a family." He cleared a desk and placed the food around, "I have grown accustomed to my good friends pepper batter and his special vinegar sauce. You have chosen well. Sit down. I'll bring you up to date as we dine." He filled a plastic plate, "Do you see anything?" "Only a fishing boat coming in to dock." "That's our surveillance. Our Green friends would not unload while it was at anchor. Look - out on the horizon." Chief Bau handed Benny a pair of artillery binoculars. He focused, "A heavily loaded Zodiac - traveling no more than six knots and here comes another." "Our Green Captain's ship arrived with three large Zodiacs on deck. Can you see the Russian lady?" "No - the first two have men at the outboards. Here comes the third - still no lady."

Benny handed the binoculars back to the Chief - sat down and filled his plate. Chief Bau refilled his plate, "Do you want to take the first watch?" "What am I looking for?" "You are to make sure all the crates are unloaded at Motila's warehouse. I need an accurate count. The ammunition crates will be smaller and should arrive last. This is excellent. Did he say what type of fish he cooked today?" "Pacific Snapper." "It is delicious. When do you expect our Russian

lady to appear?" "Not here and not until after midnight."
"Why then?" "The cover of darkness is an assassins best friend." "Will you interfere?" "Only if she bothers your people. Did you place a guard?" "Better than that. All of our key people are attending a Meke on my ancestor's island - Bau." "What are they celebrating?" "A daring feat by one of the bravest of warriors." "Is this historical?" "For us - yes." Chief Bau reached inside a cooler - pulled out two beers and opened both caps with a flip of his thumbs, "We will drink to a great warrior."

Johnny followed as Lieutenant Matuku led the way, "We're only two blocks from our Patrol Boat's dock. Where did you park the Chief's relic." "Behind the station. Do you want the keys?" "Yes - you won't need it after tonight. If things go well you may return home." "I'll have to make reservations." "They're all ready made." Johnny smiled - thinking, "This will be the end of American influence on Fiji. Partners - yes, but only when necessary. Friends - always." The patrolman saluted Lieutenant Matuku as they boarded. Matuku asked, "Would you go below - out of sight until we are out in the channel? I want it to look like our normal uniformed evening patrol in uniform." Johnny nodded, "Yes" and went below.

Out in the channel - Matuku turned the wheel over to his patrolman and joined Johnny, "Sorry to keep you down here, but I know you will understand." "Roger that. Those Greens will spook real easy. Want me to stay below until after sunset?" "Yes - you can work with our on board computer terminal. Don't input anything. Stay in touch with Home Plate and give me a call if something goes wrong." "Home Plate is at your office?" "Yes. I have two cabin cruisers anchored out. They are hidden in a crowd of other ships. One near the last channel marker and the other along the way. Between them and our men on the dock transmitting information

to Home Plate - you'll have a better idea of what's going on than I will at the helm." "Any word on how Pat Penny is doing on Bau?" "He is safe. Quite a big Meke going on. He arrived at the same time as our leaders and is the toast of the island - very popular." "All because of two kegs of cold beer?" "Yes."

Johnny sat down at the terminal - monitoring radio calls and computer traffic to Home Plate, "Almost as exciting as watching sail boats race and grass grow. Those damn Zodiacs are traveling six knots. It'll take the Greens forever to transfer all of their weapons to shore." Matuku looked in from the deck, "Anything happening?" "Not on my watch. Have you seen our Russian lady?" "No - not from up here. How about Home Plate?" "Same for them." Johnny watched the screen as surveillance reported on the comings and goings of the *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection* Zodiacs. "Chief Bau's treating this intrusion on his territory like a spider in the middle of a web - waiting for flies to come to him. Must be pretty confident if he believes he can wrap this up tonight. He is! We have airline tickets for tomorrow afternoon."

Matuku poked his head in the hatch, "You can come up to the helm. It's after sunset." Johnny climbed out of the hatch, "When are you going to move in?" "Not until the last weapon is safely in the warehouse and the last Zodiac has returned to the Green ship. Not tonight." "Are your people inside the warehouse reporting to Home Plate?" "They have instructions to report only if something is wrong at their end. Chief Bau has decided not to move in until after the Green ship leaves. Our weapons are safe - he knows where they are and will take steps only if our Indian friends act in haste." "After the transfer is complete - will you continue to keep watch on *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection?*" "We will step up surveillance. We will know if your Russian

assassin comes ashore." "What are your plans if she does?" "All of our leaders are safe. Our instructions are to inform Mr. Barnes and stay out of his way. I'm taking our patrol boat in - we are no longer needed out here. After midnight it could be a different story. Why don't you return to your hotel and catch up on your sleep. You have a long flight ahead of you tomorrow." "You're telling me I'm no longer needed and that I may be in your way." "Yes - one of my men will drive you."

The doorman at the Viti Levu opened the passenger door, "I will have to treat you with more respect. You arrived in Chief Bau's personal staff car. I hope you left your relic downtown." "It is. I'll be leaving tomorrow." Johnny - remembering Bobbie Jean's advice on entering and exiting Five Star hotels handed him a twenty dollar bill. I'll call when I find out my departure time." "Colonel Ropp?" "I'd prefer that you didn't address me by rank." "As you wish. Mr. Barnes is waiting for you at the Verandah Bar. He wants to know if you will join him." "I will - as soon as I change out of these work clothes." Johnny walked to his cottage and changed into island dress - an Aloha shirt - comfortable shorts and Hawaiian slippers.

Benny stood up when he saw Johnny enter the room and waved to join him at the bar, "You're late - Chief Bau got rid of me an hour ago." "After you pulled your watch?" "Yes - how did it go?" "Lieutenant Matuku knows his job better than I do. He doesn't need me to watch over him. Looks like the Chief put us both out to pasture. I was told that we have airline tickets out of here tomorrow." "So was I. This trip is on the Fijians. They're sending us first class." "I take it - you have nothing new in mind for me. How about our Russian lady." "She's my problem. Anyone we're interested in is all ready out of harms way." "Can I call my wife?" "Not from Fiji. Not sure which way Chief Bau is sending us,

but wherever we land it will be soon enough. My guess is Hawaii." "Are you buying?" "New guys always pony up for the first round. Are you hungry?" "Could use an open faced sandwich." "Bartender will take your order. He's bringing me a platter of Portuguese sausage." "You'll be awake all night." "I'll take the chance." "Can you tell me why the Russians are sending an assassin to Fiji?" "Fiji's Indian socialists may not playing by the rules. Their Kiwi friends are getting cozy with the Chinese." "Do the Russians care about this part of the world?" "Pride and custom. What kind of sandwich do you want?" "An old fashioned ham and cheese with tomato. After I finish this beer I'm going to my room. Have room service bring it there."

As the last Zodiac returned to the starboard elevator - Natasha checked her watch, "Not bad. Almost eleven p.m. A little over six hours." She walked to the wardroom and looked in the galley, "Cook remembered." She removed the cover from a plate of cooked sausage - poured a cup of tea and sat down at the Captains table. She stabbed the top link with her fork and raised it to her lips - caressing it in her teeth. Natasha nibbled a piece off of one end and stopped, "Why didn't I see it. It was right in front of my eyes - in plain sight. This would have to be a country of the blind for that many Zodiac trips not to raise concern. At least by Customs. The Fijians know - they are allowing the weapons to come ashore. Who tipped them off? My people? No - that would be counterproductive. Fiji's police must have followed the New Zealanders - like a Judas goat - leading them to my Indian socialist friends. It's all beginning to make sense. I have to assume they know about me. I am beginning to feel like a bare light bulb in a privy. All eyes will be on me." She smiled, "Excellent - it will add spice to my work - to accomplish three wet procedures right under their noses." She looked down at her plate. All of the sausage was gone. Natasha wiped the grease from her chin, "Should I inform the

Captain of my change in plans? No - I will let him sleep. I will need him in to steer the ship out of here in the early morning hours - when I return before dawn."

Natasha called up to the First Mate on the bridge, "Is my Zodiac loaded and ready to go?" "It is loaded and ready - except for gas. We are filling the tank." "Good - make sure I have enough for four hours - I'll return in a few minutes." "Aren't you leaving early?" "A change in plans." "I'll inform the Captain." "No - let him sleep. I'll need his help when I return" - she looked at her watch, "around three-thirty." Natasha hurried to her cabin and packed her backpack with black slacks - long sleeved shirt and cap. She snapped a fresh magazine on her pistol - set the safety and placed it and two extra magazines inside the pack. Natasha smeared black grease paint on her face - washed her hands and selected two pairs of thin skin black leather gloves. She tried on a pair - took them off and placed them inside her pack. Then she removed her clothes and slipped into a two piece swimsuit.

Natasha walked to the elevator and slung her backpack on board the Zodiac. She checked the emergency medical kit and the bicycle - folded at the bow. The First Mate walked up to see if all was in order and jumped back, "Sorry Ma'am - all that white skin - blonde hair and black grease paint gave me quite a start. Is everything to your satisfaction?" "Are you sure this bicycle is fast enough?" "It's a modified English racer Ma'am - rebuilt to your specifications in our machine shop. She should be fast and sturdy." "Good - then I am ready. You may lower away." The elevator slid silently down the side of the ship - it's platform continuing until it was underwater. As soon as her Zodiac was clear - Natasha shifted her weight to port then to starboard. Satisfied she knew its balance point - she pressed the electric starter button and the outboard sprang to life.

Natasha opened the outboard motor up slowly - until she had a feel for steering and turning. She smiled, "It's like driving a surfboard. Now - where is my checkpoint? There it is - the Viti Levu resort. If my maps were right - my landfall is a small stream three miles east - on the other side of the resort." She cruised south out of Suva Bay - away from the coast. Natasha watched the lights of Suva grow dim. When she was certain she wasn't being followed - she turned east and opened up her outboard motor. She passed port of the Viti Levu resort - she began counting. When she reached sixty - Natasha turned to port - north toward the coast - on a direct course toward landfall.

Natasha sailed her Zodiac slowly - looking for an opening in the reef. She found it, "The stream is on a beeline - directly to the north." She took her night vision glasses from the pack and scanned the shoreline, "Got you - my lovely. Trees lining the bank gave you away." Slowing the Zodiac to three knots - she entered a shallow stream - hidden by a canopy of leaves and overhanging vines. When the stream became too shallow for the outboard - Natasha turned it off. She hopped out - grabbed the line attached to the bow and pulled the Zodiac upstream. In sight of the Coastal Highway bridge - Natasha pulled the Zodiac up through an opening onto the grassy bank and tied it to a tree. She searched her memory, "Low tide is?" She looked at her watch, "It's now - midnight the witching hour" and laughed.

Natasha touched the bottom of her two piece bathing suit, "Dry" and toweled off her legs and arms. She buttoned her blouse and pulled on slacks. Canvas sneakers completed her midnight black huntress outfit. She checked her weapon - made sure the safety was still on and slid the barrel into her waistband, "I only need one extra clip. My third victim is in Suva. I'll return to my Zodiac after the second." She pinned her hair up - tucking it inside her black cap, "Now

Cinderella is ready to go to the ball, but not until she takes her silencer out of her backpack. I almost rode away without it." She tapped the extra magazine with her fingers - made sure her night vision glasses were in one of her shirt pockets and placed the silencer in the other slack pocket, "Now I'm ready."

A Ride In Fiji Country

Natasha lifted her bicycle from the bow of the Zodiac - unfolded it - snapping and locking the frame into place. She carried and pushed it through the trees to the highway. Natasha looked both ways - mounted and rode east. She adjusted the gears as she relearned the trick of balance - slowly increasing speed until wind and sea breeze dried the perspiration from under her black grease paint. Three miles later - and five miles east of Viti Levu - Natasha turned north on a secondary road - away from the Koro Sea. She looked to the left for a coral gravel road and found it - shining alabaster white against a blend of charcoal and green canopied vegetation.

Natasha hopped off her bicycle and rolled it into the trees in one motion. She leaned the bicycle against a Monkey Pod tree - making sure it wouldn't be seen. She walked back to the driveway - crouched down and ran along the side grass - staying off the coral. She slowed to a walk when the drive-way grew too steep and climbed upward out of the forest canopy. In the clearing - Natasha paused and crouched even lower until - her knees were resting on a grassy knoll. She removed the night vision glasses from her shirt pocket and looked at the house, "My God - what a mansion! A guard on the back porch. I remember the diagram - this porch wraps around the house. And I didn't bring a knife. Slow down Natasha - your next move isn't removing this guard. Check around front - first."

Natasha crept back into the tree line and circled to the front of the house. She checked the front porch through her night vision glasses, "A guard on the front door - too and like the one out back - asleep in a rocking chair. I'll take this one out first. Damn - I'll have to creep across a coral path. A direct approach is my only choice." She placed her night vision glasses back inside her shirt pocket - took the weapon out of her waist band - snapped the silencer on its muzzle and unlocked the safety. Then crept lightly across the coral path - not moving a single piece. She checked both sides of the front porch steps for wires and found two. They were connected to the bottom two steps. She didn't know if these wires were active or passive - so she decided to leave them alone. With her weapon in her right hand - Natasha placed her left hand on the porch rail and vaulted over - landing as silently as a cat - when a canary is its quarry. Two quick steps - then she raised her weapon - positioning the muzzle behind the left ear and squeezed the trigger - all in one fluid motion. Her weapon fired with barely an audible 'poof.' The guard slumped - into the rocking chair. Natasha checked for his pulse with her left two forefingers and found none. She stood up and began to breath - again.

After she made sure the guard would not slide out of his rocking chair - Natasha placed her left hand on the porch rail and vaulted over. Gliding through the humid tropical air like a jungle cat leaping from tree to tree. She landed gently on the lawn - bending her legs to absorb the shock. Natasha stayed inside the coral path - working her way around the wraparound porch to the back of the house. As she turned the corner - the back door guard stood up out of his rocking chair and stretched. Natasha crouched lower - hugging the porch. The guard walked down the steps - stopping before his feet touched the bottom two. He placed his hand on the rail and swung out over the last two steps - landing on the coral path with a loud crunch. He paused and turned - facing

the mansion. Not seeing lights and satisfied that he had not disturbed anyone - he walked to the top of the grassy knoll and unzipped his fly. He reached inside his trousers and began to relieve himself. With his mind on other matters - he did not hear Natasha approach. Another well placed shot behind the left ear - a muffled 'poof' and a second guard fell before the yellow stream met grass.

Natasha knelt down and checked for pulse. Finding none she turned around and looked back toward the mansion. She paused, "There has to be more than just a porch alarm system. Should shut off the electricity before I make my next move? No - there might be a passive alarm. A pressure alarm on both sets of steps is more sophisticated than I expected. First things first - I'll check the outside of his bedroom." She searched her memory, "It's on the first floor - right front." Natasha walked upright to the back of the house and vaulted over the porch rail. Staying close to the outside wall - she edged her way around to the front. She smiled to herself, "All this security and the bedroom window is open." Natasha looked inside. Rajiv Desaij was on top a four poster bed in night clothes - sound asleep. She checked the window sill for alarm wires. Finding none - removed the window screen. Natasha did not hesitate. She jumped head first through the open window - turned her head under and landed on the back of her neck and shoulder blades in a tumbler's move. Rolling forward - she sprang to her feet - firing her weapon - 'poof' - into a mouth now open wide in surprise. Then - a quick coup de grace behind the left ear - a check for pulse and a pause to admire a good night's work, "A bit dramatic, but who said work can't be fun. And three all ready - and this night's work only a third done." Natasha pulled the covers gently over his lifeless form and then turned his head so his wound side would be on the pillow. Natasha unsnapped the silencer - locked the safety and placed her weapon back inside the waistband.

Natasha leapt back through the window - feet first - landing softly on the porch. She replaced the screen - vaulted over the rail and ran toward grassy knoll in a low crouch. Over the knoll and out of sight - Natasha stopped and turned around. All of the mansion's lights remained out and outside of her heavy breathing - all was quiet. She sat down to rest and compose herself. She looked at her watch, "One-thirty - I am running behind. However - what great luck. Three and the night is still young." She crouched low - running downhill alongside the coral lane to her bicycle. She retrieved it from the Monkey Pod and pushed it back onto the lane. Natasha stood next to it - catching her breath, "Slow down - Natasha. Look around and listen before you ride off. Is anyone near?" Satisfied that no one was - she mounted her bicycle and rode to the Coastal Highway - turning left and riding east. She removed the cap and let her hair down. The wind and sea breeze were cool to a face flushed with victory.

Natasha replaced her cap - growing cautious - entering a small seaside village. It was not more than six streets deep and six times six long. She looked for, but could not find visible surveillance. The night air was disturbed only by an occasional dog bark. They could smell a stranger's scent in their midst, but did not feel threatened. Natasha turned left at the sixth street and began to count crosswalks. When she reached six - she turned right and began to count houses. She slowed as she passed by the eighteenth, "Damn - he too has a guard on the front porch. And probably another one at the back door. His home is not as pretentious as Desjaiv's mansion. Krishna Minon - the leader of Fiji's socialists walks our talk." Natasha turned right at the intersection - rode south and turned west at the alley entrance - counting, "One - two - three - four - five house. There it is - his garage." She allowed her bicycle to coast to the back yard garage of the sixth house.

Natasha leaned her bicycle against the alley side garage door. She removed her weapon from her waistband and snapped on the silencer. Then replaced the half spent magazine with a fresh one. She unlocked the safety and peeked around the corner of the garage, "I wonder where his guard is?" She plastered herself to the side of the garage edging her way to the lawn between the garage and house. She put on her night vision glasses and peeked around the corner, "Small back porch and not a very alert guard. He's asleep in the swing. I wonder how he has it alarmed?" She crouched down and ran slowly across the back yard to the porch. She checked for wires and found none, "Anonymity must be Minon's security." She crept up the six steps - testing each board before giving it her full weight. Natasha stopped at the top, "Six paces and I'll be at his side. Three slowly and three quickly." He died before hearing the silencer's 'poof.' She locked the safety - on and returned the weapon to her waistband.

Natasha checked the back door, "A standard key lock and there are no visible wires - or alarms. Still - I'll cut through a window - to make sure." Using a glass cutter and a small suction cup - she removed a large circle of glass from the window in the door. She looked upward at the upper door sill, "A cowbell! How quaint - and effective." She reached up and disconnected it. Laying it on the porch floor - she reached inside and opened the door. Natasha searched her memory for locations, "Minon's bedroom is on the second floor - back right - facing the alley. I wonder - does he have a wife? There was nothing in my instructions, but there was nothing about guards - either."

Natasha crept up the back stairs slowly - step by step - placing her feet carefully near the wall where the boards were the most solid. At the top of the stairs - she turned left hugging the wall. She crouched down at his bedroom door - took the weapon from her waistband and unlocked the safety.

She pushed on the door - opening it inch by inch. She spun around the corner - through the opening on the balls of her feet - pausing in a weapons firing crouch. Minon - like Desaij was sound asleep on top of his bed. She smiled, "Alone. If he has a wife - she is in another room. Shall I wake him up - or dispatch him in his sleep?" She strode over to his bedside. Minon's eyes came open as her weapon fired - 'poof' and he was gone. Natasha checked for pulse and found none, "The guard out front - should I. I must - he may check on the other guard."

Natasha walked down the back stairs - one step at a time. She walked to the kitchen sink - turned on the cold water and washed the black grease paint from her face. She took off her cap- let down her hair and combed out the snags. She sat down at the kitchen table, "My God - why didn't I notice? The curry smell is overpowering. How can they stand to live this way? Give me Russian black bread and sausage any day. Now how am I going to get rid of the guard out front - without making a lot of noise? The best approach is to look out the front door and see where he is - then I can decide." Natasha crept to the front of the house and looked out the window. The guard was sitting on the top step with his back to the door - his head leaning against the post. Natasha silently unlocked the front door.

Natasha took her weapon from the waist band - unlocked the safety and slowly - inch by inch opened the front door - not taking her eyes off the guard. She thought, "This will have to be quick." She stepped out on the porch - her eyes on the back of his head. Three quick steps and 'poof' he was gone. She checked for pulse, "I can't leave him here and he's too heavy to carry into the house. The noise may wake up the maids and his wife - if he has one." She propped the guard against the porch railing and looked up and down the street, "Even the dogs are quiet. All is still clear." She

sat on the bottom front step - resting as she locked the safety on her weapon and removed the silencer. She checked the time, "Three-fifteen. Thirty minutes to the Zodiac and at least forty-five to Suva. I will not have time for my third wet procedure. He was of no consequence - as are most of the highly visible ones." Natasha rolled her bicycle down the alley at a walking trot - mounted at the entrance and turned south toward the Coastal Highway.

Suva Bay - Fiji

Natasha parked her bicycle against the closest tree and looked at her watch, "If I had any doubt before - I don't now. Over an hour to return to my starting point. I should have remembered - I must always expect the unexpected." She stripped off her black huntress outfit - rolled it up in a tight ball and placed it inside her backpack. Shoes came off next. She laid her weapon on a tree stump and began to let down her hair. As her fingers loosened the hairpins - a hand encircled her wrist and cold steel touched the back of her neck. She turned and faced the darkness, "Who are you and what do you want?" "My Dear - I am none other than Benny Barnes - from your old competitor." "CIA! What are you doing here?" "It looks like we're on the same mission - to eliminate an ethnic problem in Fiji. However - your method is a bit more final. You have one more to go before you're finished here, but I don't recommend it. Look to the east - you can see the beginnings of morning twilight. She twisted in his grasp. If you'll agree to a truce - I'll let go of your arm."

Natasha relaxed. This was a competitor - not a threat - not tonight anyway. She asked, "What are your plans?" "I have none that are of your concern, but my only concern is you. You will have to finish tonight's business in the light of day. I am here to warn you - not to continue." "I have

all ready decided to return to the safety of my ship." "And the third man?" "He is of no consequence - a barking dog who does not have appetite enough to bite." "A wise choice. You have only been successful - so far - because your mission coincides with Chief Bau's wishes." "Is Fiji's police force that good?" "Better than good. Have you seen any visible surveillance?" "No - have I been watched?" "Every single minute and every single move." Natasha's skin erupted in goose bumps. Suddenly as with the coming dawn - she felt a cold chill. "Was I that clumsy?" "No - not at all. The Chief's men are that good. You're playing a game on a field they know too well. Now - it's time for you to sail away." Benny handed her a card, "You'll find a set of telephone numbers on this. When you are ready - call from anywhere in the world. Ask for a mechanic. Tell the person answering hello that your Yugo needs repair." Natasha laughed, "All Yugos need repair." She stood up, "I must be on my way." "Pick up your weapon - slowly by the barrel and stow it butt first into your backpack." "I'm not going to shoot you. You're not on my list." Natasha stowed her weapon - untied the Zodiac from the tree and tossed the line to Benny, "Hold tight while I load."

She tossed her backpack into the Zodiac - folded her bicycle and lifted it over her head. Natasha waded out - placing it at the bow. She placed her left hand on the side and rolled over the side. She turned and looked at Benny, "If I come over will I receive the same treatment as Bulgar did in your hands?" "Of Course." "Your safe houses have the safety unlocked." Benny gripped the line - tightly enough to squeeze the hemp out of it, "Are you saying he didn't suffer a heart attack?" She smiled, but did not answer. She pressed the electric starter on the outboard and held her hand out for the line, "We'll meet again." The outboard sprang to life. Natasha maneuvered her craft into the middle of what was once a small stream and now - a tidal pool.

Navigating through the reef - Natasha continued south until she could no longer see the coastline and turned west. She opened the throttle halfway - pleasuring in the breeze - cool to her bare skin. It began with a nudge and then a bump, She looked to starboard, "My God - a giant dorsal fin." The *Tiger Shark's* next contact raised the starboard side of her Zodiac out of the water. Natasha braced herself - opened the throttle to three quarters and turned toward shore. Caught by surprise - the shark continued on. Natasha turned southwest and began a zigzag maneuver - similar to one Navy Destroyers use when avoiding submarines.

Natasha removed the weapon from her backpack and loaded a fresh magazine, "If you return my friend - you'll receive all of my hollow points." The *Tiger Shark* swam to a position fifty yards in front of the Zodiac and matched its speed and course. Natasha laughed, "The hollow points have changed your mind my dorsal finned friend. You know the accuracy of my weapon - you're out of range. Go home! My work on your ocean is finished. I will not eliminate the third man." The *Tiger Shark* - tired of anticipating her zigzag maneuvers swam a beeline toward the *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection*. "My God! He knows where I am going."

The First Mate saw the giant dorsal fin arrive before he heard the sound of Natasha's outboard motor. He waved and made a circle with his hand. Natasha waved back - nodding so he would know she understood. As he ran from port to the starboard side - she began her approach. As she drove along the port side - the *Tiger Shark* moved its tail from side to side - anticipating an attack. He streaked toward the Zodiac. Natasha veered right - away from the ship to escape his first charge - then circled around the bow hugging the starboard side of the ship traveling at flank speed. Natasha

drove her Zodiac up on the elevator platform and cut the outboard - its prop emitting a high pitched whine - entering less resistance when lifted out of the water. The First Mate hit the switch and the elevator moved upward. The *Tiger Shark* passed underneath on its back - mouth open - teeth ready. His jaws closed on air - then water. A swirl of water was the only evidence of his failed attack. Natasha looked for his dorsal fin. She wanted to shout taunts, but knew better. All evidence of this shark and his attack were gone.

Captain Potz met her at the rail, "Close call." He clapped his First Mate on the back, "Good job - sailor." He turned to Natasha, "Were you able to complete your mission - or do you want us to stay on?" "Weigh anchor and leave immediately! My work here is complete." "Your wish is my command. Are you hungry? Cook is in the galley preparing breakfast." "I'll be in the wardroom as soon as I shower and change clothes." "We should be outside Fiji's territorial waters before noon. I estimate it will take three days to Wellington." "Running from that *Tiger Shark* has made me very tired. As soon as I eat - I'm going to rest. If the Fiji authorities attempt to board your ship - wake me before they come on board."

Natasha stayed at the rail and watched as the crew tied her Zodiac to the deck and removed her bicycle. She called out, "Throw it over the side." As soon as it disappeared under the waves - she walked to her cabin. She undressed to the clink - clink - clink of two anchor chains winding up on their spools. Natasha heard the prop engage and the ship begin to move at the same time as warm water streamed down - onto her hair - wetly caressing her skin. She stood there - allowing the water to wash away the salt spray before soaping down her body. Natasha stepped out of the shower and toweled off the excess water from her skin, "There - that's better.

I must resign myself. The logistics were impossible and the delay - eliminating four guards. Killing the third man was an impossible dream." She smiled as she combed her hair, "Six in one evening. They will be singing my praises at The Central Committee. And if I count Max - seven. And I have two more on my schedule. But before I execute them - three more - the First and Second Mate and the Green lady. That will make six on shore and six at sea - or in Wellington. What is the saying? I know - be truthful and multiply. I might be overreaching. Twelve - out of country and on one mission? But I must. The First and Second Mates slept with me and the Green lady must know. It is an obvious Bolshevik pragmatism. Revolutionary idealists first and enterprising peasants as an example." Natasha dressed and carried her black outfit to the laundry. She handed her soiled clothes to the Green lady and smiled.

"Will you come into my parlor?"

- said the spider to the fly

"Tis the prettiest little parlor

that ever you did spy."

One Flew East

Johnny picked up the envelope - slipped under his door this morning and opened it." Inside - he found a First Class airline ticket to Hawaii. He checked the timetable, "I leave at four this afternoon. With a two day layover in Sydney? Chief Bau's folks must not have been able to make connections - or he's in a hurry to get me out of here." He looked at his clock, "Ten o'clock. I'm late. Have to pack - shower - shave. Get a move on. I'm supposed to meet Benny at eleven for a late breakfast."

Johnny found Benny on the Verandah, "Sorry I'm late. Had to pack. You look like you've been rode hard and put away wet." Benny nodded, "We had a busy night. Didn't get to sleep until four-thirty. I ordered for you." "SOS and eggs with black coffee." "How did you guess?" "I'm learning from you. Old OSS habits die hard. Why were you out so late?" "Trailed after our Russian lady. She had a busy night." "How many?" "Top two Indian socialist leaders. We have company." Chief Bau and his bodyguards approached, "Do you mind if I join you for lunch." His men sat down at the next table. A waiter appeared and the Chief ordered, "I'll have the same as my friend Mr. Barnes." Benny interrupted, "I'm not sure you'll care for my selection - a platter of the Chef's Portuguese sausage." "You're right. I'll have my usual." After the waiter left - Chief Bau announced, "Mr. Penny's Russian lady is no longer a problem. Her ship sailed at daybreak this morning. *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection* was one hundred miles out when she finally gave my Harbormaster a

departure call." He looked over at Benny, "Did you talk to her?" "Yes - I told her to leave." "She missed one." "What held her up?" "She had to eliminate two guards at each of her first two stops." "Six in one evening - spread so far apart. She is a Russian wonder horse."

The waiter brought Chief Bau a half a-dozen poached eggs resting on a bed of ham and toast - covered with a special Fijian pepper sauce. Two more waiters followed with Johnny and Benny's orders. The Chief rested briefly - when he was halfway through his meal, "The Kiwi weapons are safely in my hands. The third man is being detained in my jail and I radioed my Father. Mr. Penny is on his way back. He will be docking sometime after twelve noon. Is your luggage packed?" They both nodded - "Yes." "It will be sent on ahead to the airport. Benny - you and Colonel Ropp will have a two day layover in Sydney. Hotel and transportation are arranged for. Mr. Penny will continue on to Vienna. I want to thank you and my government thanks you for your assistance. If and when you decide to return - your accommodations will be on us. But for now - I believe it is best for you to leave - before someone in our press connects the dots and blames you - your government and mine."

Benny wiped the grease from his chin, "Appreciate your thanks - Chief, but Johnny and me didn't get our hands dirty." "Your computer system is a priceless gift." Benny sat back in his chair, "We were your insurance policy." "As always - Benny - you have - as you say - hit the nail on the head. Words are not sufficient to express our gratitude. Our Tabuas do. Wear them with pride. With your country's assistance - we now control our ancestors' land and we will hold on to it." Benny asked, "Is our luggage on the way to the airport?" Chief Bau stood up and smiled, "It left your rooms" he looked at his watch, "Ten minutes ago and I will - too. Even I must answer reporter's questions."

Benny returned to his platter of sausage while Johnny toyed with his SOS. Benny looked up, "Don't knock it. Two days rest in Sydney - a layover in Hawaii - it doesn't get any better than that." "That wasn't it. I was wondering about Natasha. You let her go - unscathed." "Professional courtesy. She wasn't going against us and you forget." "I do? About what?" "The Cold War is over. The Russians are our friends." "YGTBSM." "Very funny. What are your plans for Sydney?" "See the sights. Haven't been to the new Opera House." "The one with the bad acoustics?" "True, but it looks good on the harbor." Benny looked at his watch, "Time to pay our hotel bill and catch a ride to the docks. We have three hours to kill and Pat's catamaran is as good a place as any to do it."

Johnny picked up a newspaper on his way out of the lobby. The headline was two inches -

Two Indian Socialist Leaders Assassinated

As they entered the back-seat of Chief Bau's sedan - Benny asked, "What did they say about the third man?" "Chief Bau has a suspect in custody - a wealthy store owner named - Jawa Motila." Benny laughed, "Round up the usual suspects." "Are they going to hang it on him?" "I don't think so, but they have enough for a weapons smuggling charge. That should be all the Chief needs." "How about the Kiwi connection?" "It won't matter. The organization here has been gutted." "Who is it?" "A man by the name of Ian Fleming." "That's the one Kalani warned me about." "He was interested in moving a lot of cement and asphalt here. Looks like he'll have to earn an honest dollar - or find a new country to exploit."

Pat Penny threw the bow line to Benny and the stern line to Johnny, "Gently - she doesn't belong to me." Benny asked, "Who did you sell her - too?" "Don't know. The Chief's brother is my broker. All I know is it's paid for. Profit covers my trip here and stay." Johnny asked, "Does it pay for your wife and daughter?" "No one can afford those two - not even me. What are you two up too?" Benny answered, "We're being kicked off the island. You are - too. We leave for Sydney at four. You have a connecting flight to Vienna. Your tickets are at the Quanta's counter. Johnny and I are killing time until the flight." "I have beer in the ice chest. Help yourself while I bring up my luggage. Is that your car?" "Chief Bau sent it. His driver is waiting for your gera. He'll take it to the airport and come back for us at two-thirty." "Only take me a minute. I wondered why the Chief's Father insisted on cleaning all my clothes. All I have to do is change - I'm all packed and ready. Johnny - our friend Kalani will be one happy Kanaka. His *Tiger Shark* is heading home - his dorsal fin was last seen making a wake to the east."

One Sailed South

The First Mate stopped Captain Potz outside the wardroom after breakfast, "Mind if I ask you a question - Captain?" "No - go right ahead." "Our Russian lady passenger asked to see me and our Second after we dock. Do you know what she wants?" "Probably both of your bodies. Don't either one of you stay too long. I want you both to stay alert and on top of the ship while I'm ashore. Have you seen our last Green passenger?" "I looked in the Laundry this morning and no one was there." "Probably slept in. She's been working twelve hour days." "Hate to see her go. First laundry lady we've had that didn't mix white socks with navy blue denims and then add bleach." "She's held up real well - considering she lost all of her friends."

Natasha walked past the Captain and First Mate on her way to breakfast - without saying a word. She peeked into the galley. Cook handed her a platter of sausage and new potatoes. She stopped at the side board - made a pot of tea and carried her breakfast to a solitary table at the back of the room. She sat down alone - with no desire for company - nibbling on a link of sausage. She speared a new potato with her fork and smiled, "That was fun last night, but the dream came again. And Bulgar was at the front of his merry red band - turning the spit. Too bad my *Tiger Shark* wasn't around to enjoy the Green lady's remains. She didn't make a sound - not one squeal. Strange - it was as if she caressed my ice pick when I plunged it into her heart. That makes eight - if I count Max and I will. The next two will be tricky. I must think this one out. They are both too young for a heart attack." Natasha laughed out loud, "I know - my Captain will become a nautical serial killer. I will need the silencer and a full magazine." Natasha speared another potato and devoured it - her full attention now on breakfast. She finished the last potato and began to attack the sausage - link by link.

Fleming was irate, "Where have you been? I've been waiting patiently for your call." "I was under orders not to call until I was within line of sight of Wellington." "Do you know what happened on Fiji?" "We delivered our cargo and sailed away." "You didn't provide training?" "Our last passenger requested an early departure." "Can I talk to Max?" "Only if you travel to the great beyond. We lost him and all, but one of our Greens in an accident on Sydney Bay." "What happened? Was it the lady?" "No - Max was taking them to shore in one of our Zodiacs when it flipped over. Biggest shark feeding frenzy I've ever seen. Nothing was left - not even a pair of shoes." "Did you get a chance to talk with Jaws?" "No - I delivered the goods and sailed away." "Why didn't you call when you lost Max?" "Our passenger wouldn't

allow it." "It's just as well you didn't. I would have asked you to return to South Island. Have you considered Christchurch?" "I did, but our passenger insisted we come here. I imagine she wants a face to face with you." "Are you certain there isn't enough left of Max for proper burial? I owe him that. He was a loyal employee and friend. I'll miss the bastard." "I'm sorry - we looked. Do you know Sydney Bay?" "Never been there." "It's a breeding ground for sharks. The water is boiling with them. We should make port sometime after five this evening. Can I tie up at your construction dock?" "It's in the middle of nowhere." "It'll match this voyage - from nowhere to nowhere." "How soon can you make it to my office?" "Have to check in with the port authorities. No sooner than six." "I'll pick you up after six-thirty. No sooner - I'll be out to dinner."

Natasha packed her gear and called for a crewmember to take it to the deck. She donned a khaki colored raincoat and walked out into the evening mist. She had decided, "The Second shall be first and the First second. I shouldn't feel this way, but it is very difficult to conceal the pleasure of anticipating the look on their faces. I wish I had a film crew." She knocked on the Second Mate's door. He opened it and she almost laughed out loud. He was naked - ready for his sexual exercise. Natasha asked, "Will you help me out of my coat" and turned - removing her weapon with her back toward him. She turned and fired - 'poof' - into a surprised open mouth and again - 'poof' - to the heart. She picked up her trench coat, "I was right. The expression on your face was exquisite - well worth recording on film."

Natasha donned her trench coat and pocketed her weapon, "Oh - it is still warm from firing." She selected his door key from a pile of keys on the desk - opened the cabin door and locked it from outside. She pocketed the key, "You'll join your brother in the water in a few minutes." She ran

into a crewmember on her way to the First Mate's cabin, "Can you call a taxi for me?" "Yes Ma'am. You just missed a ride with the Captain. A friend picked him up not more than two minutes ago. And you almost missed me. I'm on my way out. Besides our First and Second - you and our Third Engineer are the only ones left on board. Have you heard anything about our laundry lady?" "No. Has she done something improper?" "No one can find her - must have fallen overboard." "You won't forget to call a taxi on your rush to leave the ship?" "No Ma'am - I won't."

Natasha knocked on the First Mate's door. He opened it and stood aside as Natasha entered the cabin. As he closed the door - she asked, "Will you help me take my coat off" and she turned. "Why don't you - while I undress." She turned with her weapon in hand - firing in one motion - into his crotch. As he doubled over - Natasha blew off the top of his head. "I don't often get mad. If I wasn't in a hurry - your death would have been monumental. I hope you have learned to assist a lady in the next world." Natasha shuffled through the papers on top of his desk until she found the room key. She stepped outside into the corridor - locked the door - walked to the top of the gangplank and looked down. A taxi was waiting. As Natasha stepped on the gangplank - she retrieved two keys from her coat pocket and dropped them over the side. The taxi driver opened the back left door, "Do you have luggage?" "At the top of the gangplank."

Ian Fleming drove slowly along the dock looking for the *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection*. He soon found it - rising out of the evening mist. Captain Potz emerged out of the evening fog, "Thanks for picking me up - Ian." "Get in. Is your lady passenger still on board?" "In her room - entertaining my First and Second Mates." "At the same time?" "No - one at a time. If I know her - she'll be busy until midnight." "When will she depart?" "She didn't say." "I have a meeting

scheduled with her in my office tomorrow evening." "My God! She'll kill my Mates." "You sound like you're speaking from experience." "I am - she is a real tigress in bed. Great the first time and the second, but after that she'll tear a pecker out by the roots." "How was your voyage?" "Not a very happy one. Did our Indian friends lose their weapons again?" "Not only their weapons. I can't account for eight key people. I have only one contact left and he's in jail. It looks like my Fiji effort has gone tits up." "Anything I can do?" "No - the last item is your final payment. I have it in my office." They continued on in silence.

Ian pulled his car into the underground garage and connected the fuel tank to natural gas line, "Won't go very far on a fill. I'll call a taxi for you when we're finished. I've got Max's files to clean out." As an after thought, "And those of my Indian associates." They rode the elevator to the seventh floor in silence - until Ian asked, "Did you say you didn't have a chance to speak to Jawa Motila?" "He's not a very brave man. He wasn't around when we delivered your weapons. Is he the one in jail?" "Yes." "He'll sing like a canary when the sun rises." The door opened and Ian said, "Well - if it looks like a wake - feels like a wake and smells like a wake - we're having a wake. I've got a full bar. What will you have?" "Scotch - do you have Pinch?" "A bar wouldn't be a bar without it. I'll have the same. Water or soda?" "Neat. What charges are they holding him on?" "Jawa? Murdering four guards and two leaders of his party." "Did he?" "Might have. He had the weapons. It would be a perfect time to take control. Freshen your drink? It'll take two or three more for a proper wake."

Four refills later - Ian and Captain Potz were standing in front of his window - looking out over the ocean as late twilight turned the sea into a misty orange glow. Potz was impressed, "Great view you have up here on the seventh

floor." "Most of the time our view is obscured - clouds and mist. All we can hope for is a little sunlight over Cook Strait. Our Maoris knew. They named their islands the land of one long cloud. We're still able to stand on our feet. Can't dishonor Max with an improper wake." Ian dimmed the room lights so they could see better through the window and returned with their fifth refill. Captain Potz asked, "How many have we had?" "This makes six."

Natasha exited the elevator at the sixth floor and climbed the fire stairs to the seventh. She deactivated the door alarm with a quick snip of an all purpose tool - which included wire cutters. She opened the door, "Good - I still remember - it opens to a hallway on the opposite side of the building. She removed the weapon from her coat pocket and dropped her coat on the floor - passing the office elevator, "Just as I thought - Ian has a private elevator that opens only into his office and garage." She walked through the Secretary's office - standing to one side of the door before peeking in. She almost laughed out loud, "They're having a wake! How appropriate." Neither one heard Natasha approach. She was on top of them before they could see her reflection in the window. Ian went first with a 'poof' - a bullet entered behind his left ear - leaving powder burns on the side of his head. Captain Potz - his Scotch whiskey reflexes lagging - turned in slow motion. Natasha fired - 'poof' - a bullet entered his crotch. Like his First Mate he doubled over. Natasha didn't fire a second shot - not yet. She waited until he forced his body into an upright position and fired - 'poof' - another bullet entered his abdomen. He rolled onto his back on the floor - looking up with his mouth open. 'Poof' - she dispatched him with a coup de grace into a mouth - now open in exquisite pain. "That's the proper way to eliminate a one time lover." She placed the weapon in Fleming's right hand - wrapping his index finger around the trigger, "It won't stand, but it will buy time."

Natasha paused at the door - and admired her handiwork, "What did the American lady say in the last Hollywood movie I saw, 'Way to go - girl!' Twelve - counting Max. No one can approach my totals. She clasped her hands over her head and shouted, "I am number one!" She turned out the lights and walked quickly through the Secretary's office to the fire stairs. Natasha exited on the sixth floor - as she came in and rode the elevator down to street level singing the words to an old Russian proverb -

"Live with wolves - howl like a wolf"

Natasha walked and walked - block after block until she arrived at a taxi stand in the middle of Wellington. She sat in the back seat - her collar pulled up - thinking, "Within twenty-four hours I have eliminated five more - on unfamiliar territory. I am at the top of my profession. There is no one better. Yes - for once I can truly say I am fulfilled." The taxi driver turned his head, "You did say airport - didn't you Ma'am?" "Yes - I sent my luggage on ahead." "So you're the one. My Mate said he gave a ride to the prettiest woman he's ever seen at the docks." Natasha smiled, but didn't respond. She cracked the window and breathed in the cool night air, "I can smell the flowers. I wonder why I didn't notice them before." She leaned back in her seat and opened the compartment in her mind. The one that contained memories of her children - and home.

Honolulu - Hawaii

The mist of a trade wind breeze - blowing across the jagged peaks of the Koolaus carried the scent of tropical flowers to Johnny. He caught up with Benny, "Smell those flowers - only place in the world I'd rather walk to the main terminal than ride." "And it isn't far. I've walked longer distances in San Francisco inside United's Terminal. Tell

you what - flying First Class on Singapore Airlines has spoiled me for anything else." "Even the Director's bird?" "He has a good cook, but nothing like the meals and service we received on this flight." "Are you staying over with me - or flying out?" "I can use a rest and my office doesn't know I'm on the way home. We'll meet tomorrow night. This is your turf - where?" "How about the Warriors Lounge in the Hale Koa Hotel. Company buys." "In a pigs eye. Wait a minute - you're one of us. Where is it?" "Fort DeRussy - downtown Waikiki - next to the Hilton Hawaiian Village." "Better rent a car." Benny handed Johnny a credit card and a thousand dollars in one hundred dollar bills, "Keep receipts. We're freer up front than your uniformed guys, but our money guys know how to squeeze a nickel. When you turn in your voucher - give an honest accounting."

Johnny almost called the Hickam VOQ, but stopped, "I won't need too. Don't work for those folks anymore. I made reservations at the Hawaiian Village. Only place I can find with close in parking. Then I better call Bobbie Jean and let her know I'll be home in two days. She won't be a happy camper. How long has it been? At least four days since I phoned." Benny smiled as he retrieved his luggage from the carousel, "Not gonna' miss your jabbering." He gave Johnny a wave and disappeared.

Johnny walked across the street to the parking garage and picked up his rental. He drove out on the airport roundabout - to the new Freeway - then to H1 and turned right at Punahoe. He looked at his watch, "It's eight p.m. - no wonder I'm hungry. Better check into my hotel first and then a meal." He drove over the speed bumps - past the geodesic dome to the main entrance of the Hawaiian Village. Strong trade winds blew a mist of rain into an open lobby. The desk clerk apologized, "We look on rain as a blessing, but not when we have a strong wind." "I'm visiting in your rainy

season. It's to be expected. Do you have my reservation?"
"Have you stayed here before?" "Last time at the Rainbow Tower." "And your name?" "Johnny Ropp." "Wait one minute." The clerk checked his computer and smiled, "Your wife is Bobbie Jean Langtry! I have a suite for you in the penthouse of our new Tapa Tower. How long will you be staying with us?" "Tonight and tomorrow night." The desk clerk rang for a bellhop, "We'll park your car."

Johnny followed the bellhop into a suite of rooms with a slightly lived in look, "Is someone else staying here?" The bellhop shrugged his shoulders and sat the suitcases down. Johnny handed him a twenty dollar bill, "I'll take it from here." He carried his luggage into the bedroom and stopped. Bobbie Jean looked up from the writing desk, "I've been waiting for you - Soldier." She handed him a glass of red wine, "We have dinner reservations at nine." Johnny lifted her up and held her closely in his arms, "You are wonderful." "And you have the strength of a bear." He let her down with a kiss, "How did you track me down?" "Chief Bau telephoned the day you left Fiji." "Is that why I had a two day layover in Sydney? So you could make arrangements for Nanny to take care of our sons and fly here. And why I was told not to call you?" "I plead guilty to all of it. I asked Chief Bau to let me know when you were leaving. I wanted to be here when you flew in - to surprise you." "That you did. When did you get in?" "Just a few hours before you. I had the use of a private jet." "Your Las Vegas connections?" "It was flying here to pick up a high roller. Don't worry - I'm in the seat next to you on your flight back." "Did Benny know about your charade?" "That's why you both went separate ways at the airport." Johnny looked at his watch, "Thirty minutes to shower and change clothes. Will you help me unpack?" "Undress and take a shower - I'll take care of your clothes." "Join me?" "We'll be late for dinner?" "Life is short - eat desert first." "I'll call."

Kalani was waiting at the counter of the Ilikai coffee shop when Johnny and Bobbie Jean walked in at eight o'clock in the morning. Johnny chided, "Hey Kalani - why you no bring da kine Ching-Chang with you?" "Remember what I told you when you phoned and asked about him from Fiji?" "He was at an off site at the Kuilima Resort on the North Shore with his Secretary." "His wife caught him." Kalani blushed, "Is this the lovely Bobbie Jean I've heard so much about?" Bobbie Jean took his hand, "You might be Hawaiian, but you do have Southern ways. I'm flattered to meet you Mr. Kalani. May I call you Aku." Kalani smiled, "Yes." "Did you reserve a table?" "Look around - no need too. Let's get our table and order breakfast. I'm in a hurry."

Johnny led the way as they followed their waiter, "Your *Tiger Shark* returned!" "The fishing is unbelievable. What did you feed him in the South Pacific?" "Six Indian socialists from Fiji - four Green whale watchers and one Kiwi." "Who was the Kiwi?" "Max Lax." "I know - he belong to one Ian Fleming. Did you know that Pat Penny's Russian hunter was a busy lady after you left." "She bagged six while we were there." "And before she flew away - Ian Fleming - the last Green on board the *Rainbow Warrior Resurrection* - its First Mate - Second Mate and Captain." "If you give her credit for Max - that makes twelve." "Max belongs to one Shark God. Who did in the six socialist middle men?" "I can only guess." "Pat Penny?" "That's my guess."

Bobbie Jean looked up from her menu, "Are you two going to order - or talk business while I starve." Johnny looked up, "Order now - talk later." Kalani waited until after the waiter left their table, "Bring me up to date on the South Pacific." "Fiji belongs to the Fijians. Between Pat and the Russian lady - the Indian socialist movement is no longer a threat. Chief Bau has all the bases covered. You won't see

a revolution down there in your lifetime." "How about New Zealand?" "I didn't have a chance to visit, but according to Lieutenant Matuku's people - they won't change." "Are they still sucking at the nipples of their insular cradle to the grave socialism?" "Yes, but their export business has been chopped off at the head." "Damn - we're going to have a power vacuum down under until the Kiwis begin to pull their own weight. Ought to change their national bird from the Kiwi to the ostrich. How was Australia?" "Independent as ever - not afraid to stand up and be counted and still in tune with the world." "Well - the Kiwis are a thousand miles away from Australia and a light-year away from a country with balls. Oh - I have a meet with Benny Barnes this afternoon." "Anything I should know about?" "No. Just another South Pacific update." "You're allowing Benny to interfere with your fishing?" Kalani laughed, "No way - if he wants to talk with me - Benny will find me on a rock near the Blow Hole on the side of Koko Crater."

Bobbie Jean filled her plate with vegetables from the Warriors Lounge Happy Hour Buffet and waited as Johnny filled his plate with barbecued chicken legs and wontons. As he poured soy sauce over the wontons - she grimaced, "How can you?" "Love soy sauce over wontons - it's as good as it gets." "How soon will Mr. Barnes be here?" "Should be here by now. Did you make reservations for dinner?" "You didn't tell me if you wanted to drive to the Swiss Inn in Niu Valley - Roy Yamaguchi's in Hawaii Kai - or the Golden Dragon." "I can't make up my mind. They're all favorites." "Then I'll decide. Good Chinese food is hard to find back home. We'll go to the Golden Dragon. I'll call and make reservations - while you fill your stomach with fried grease." "If I'm going to die - and we all will - I'll die with a stomach full of fried wontons dipped in soy sauce." Bobbie Jean laughed, "You're beginning to look like a fried wonton dipped in soy sauce." "Touché."

Benny walked into the lounge as Bobbie Jean walked out, "Hope I didn't scare your wife away." "My greasy fried food was the culprit. She's making dinner reservations at a Chinese restaurant - the Golden Dragon. Want to join us?" "No - can't - have several old friends I'm meeting. Retired out here from the Company. Kalini said he talked story with you over breakfast. We plowed the same ground." "Did he tell you about the mess our girl made in Wellington?" "She is something - isn't she?" "What do the authorities say in New Zealand?" "They're confused. Same weapon killed all four men. However - one was a suicide and he wasn't on the ship where the First and Second Mates were shot. Captain and the First Mate were shot in the groin - first. So - right now they're calling it a murder suicide - with Ian Fleming getting the credit." "She is good." Bobbie Jean returned to the table, "Reservations in an hour."

Benny stood up and helped Bobbie Jean with her chair, "I won't stay long. Meeting some old friends in an hour and flying back tonight." He looked at Johnny, "Call my office the day after you arrive. Now where were we." "New Zealand. What happened to Jawa Motila?" "You won't believe this. Chief Bau has him up on ten counts of murder." "He can't make that stick. There is no evidence." "He has him on weapons and plotting to overthrow the government. Add on the murder charges and the process will drag on and on. By the time the courts resolve it - the whole affair will be ancient history. The most that will happen to Jawa will be a one way ticket back to India after it's resolved. Don't think the Chief can make treason or a murder charge stick and I don't think he cares." "Jawa is the only one left who can tie the weapons to the Kiwis." "Doesn't matter. All the other major players are dead. Chief Bau eliminated his insurrectionists - defanged the Indian socialists and closed down an illegal smuggling operation." "Any turmoil in New Zealand." "A Kiwi can't see with its head in the sand."

Benny pointed at Johnny's plate, "If you're not going to eat those chicken legs - do you mind?" "They're yours. I'm tired of paying for drinks. This round is on you." Bobbie Jean persisted, "Are you sure you won't dine with us? The Chef at the Golden Dragon serves an unbelievable lobster dish served in a curry sauce with haupia." "No - I won't have time, but you tickled my interest. What is a haupia?" "One of three coconut condiments. It can be either coconut milk - a sauce - or shredded coconut." "If it's mixed with curry - my money is on the sauce." Benny paid for the drinks and lifted his Scotch and water, "A toast to our Russian hunter - 'Za Vacha Zdorovye!' She is one marvelous killing machine." He downed the rest of his drink, "Have to be on my way. Don't forget to call."

McLean - Virginia

On a dark - moonless night - Johnny Ropp wandered out the arrival doors of Dulles terminal - trying to remember where Bobbie Jean said she parked their car. He was greeted by ten degree temperatures - twenty knot northwest winds - gusting to thirty - and blowing snow. He smiled - pulled up his coat collar - turned around with his back to the wind and walked sideways across the street into the short term parking lot. He didn't ask or wonder why Bobbie Jean's Bentley was parked in the first row of the congressional parking area. He checked the window, "Good - she didn't get a ticket. Hope this heap starts" and scraped off the ice. On the first quarter turn of the starter - the Bentley's engine sprang to life. Johnny let the engine warm up and began to extract her car from a snow bank.

Bobbie Jean followed the sky cap out of the terminal, "What took you so long?" "Snow bank piled up behind your car. Running good. British may not know air-conditioning, but they sure know how to make a car start in cold weather."

The only problem I had was navigating out of a snow bank."
"That's not the only problem you have." "Where would you be if Ralph was alive?" "If Ralph was alive? And I knew what I know today? I would be one unhappy camper on my way to a divorce." "I would have guessed that you'd be managing the Broadwater Hotel in Biloxi - Mississippi." "The way my deceased husband gambled - we wouldn't have much of a hotel left for me to manage and you know me - I wouldn't bother to invest my inheritance in a loser. And I wouldn't have twin sons and a husband I love to needle." "Where did you get a congressional parking pass?" "Our business partner and your dear friend." "I should have known - Bidup Bidwell's finger prints are all over this one." Bobbie Jean placed her hand on Johnny's right arm, "Don't drive away - I forgot to tip the sky cap."

As Johnny turned onto the Dulles access road - on the way to their farmhouse in McLean - Bobbie Jean asked, "Kalani and you were talking about assassinations - weren't you?" "Yes, but not ours." "How many?" "Twelve in Fiji - five in New Zealand and one by a shark." "And Pat Penny and his daughter are the assassins?" "Don't know about Penelope, but he could have done six in Fiji. I'm talking out of school. It's only a wild guess - there is no hard evidence." "And Natasha?" "Six in Fiji and five in New Zealand." "Does this happen all the time?" "No - or at least not that I know of." "Is CIA involved?" "No - at least not directly. If you're wondering - I wasn't in any danger." "That's not it. I have to deal with a few unsavory characters in my businesses. However - as long as I play by the rules and stay on my own turf it's a fairly benign world. The St. Valentine's Day Massacre looks insignificant compared to sixteen - and you treat it as just another day at the office." "You said as long as you play by the rules and stay on your own turf - yours is a benign world. So is mine. These people broke the rules and attempted a takeover of another country's turf."

"You're saying that the practice of diplomacy and foreign relations is gangster politics?" "I haven't looked at it that way, but yes." "And CIA is the enforcer?" "No - we use military force for that. Look at CIA as the Untouchables - investigators and analysts with the capability to do Special Ops." "And your assignment is in?" "Operations." "I rest my case." "Not so fast - it's against the law for us to assassinate anyone." "But - you stand by and watch others do your dirty work." "Not our work and we're not in a position to interfere - unless we must protect our national interest." "Which is?" "I see your point."

The winter sun was breaking the horizon when Johnny awoke and brushed his hand against Bobbie Jean's hair. He smiled, but she didn't wake. She rolled up into a tight little ball. He tucked the covers around her and slipped out of bed. It wasn't cold, but it felt cold to him, "Seventy-two degrees should be warm enough. Must be the dry air." He washed his face - brushed his teeth and dressed. Nanny greeted him as he entered the kitchen, "Coffee is in the pot. You'll have to fix your own breakfast. My boys are off to school and I have a taxi waiting outside to take me to National Airport." "Business or pleasure?" "Always business - my restaurant manager passed away in Jackson." "Do you have anyone in mind?" "Are you interested?" "Not right now, but if Bobbie Jean has her way - I'll be looking for work." "You wouldn't like Jackson. Yankees never will understand Southern ways and you're not the right color to manage my restaurants here. But if I expand into Northern Virginia - I'll keep you in mind. Now help me carry my luggage to the taxi." Johnny smiled, "Now I am beginning to feel at home." "And you're learning Southern ways. Put on a coat. It must be zero outside and the wind - why anyone who wants to live here has to be crazy." Johnny opened the door to the mud room - removed a parka from a hook and carried Nanny's luggage to the taxi. She gave him a kiss and a hug.

Bobbie Jean flew out the front door in her robe and slippers. She hugged Nanny, "You're leaving before I have a chance to say good-by." "Ask your husband" and she winked at Johnny - hopped into her taxi and drove away. Bobbie Jean looked at Johnny and frowned, "Did you say something harmful to my Nanny?" Johnny laughed, "Lets go back inside before I have an icicle instead of a wife." He closed the door, "Her manager in Jackson passed away - so she had to hurry home. Guess what? She offered me the job." "You'll have to learn Southern ways before you'll ever manage a restaurant in Jackson." "Nanny said the same thing. Boys are off to school and coffee is in the pot. We have to make our own breakfast." "We always do. Nanny doesn't cook unless we're not here. And she is teaching our sons to cook - so they'll be self sufficient." The phone rang.

"Lieutenant Colonel Ropp?" "Roger that - what can I do for you?" "Don't you remember me?" "Voice sounds familiar." "It's Paddy Black." "Nick Nack - how the hell are you. Last time I heard about you - you were recovering your memory at Willford Hall in San Antonio." "They tried to kick me out of the service, but I beat the rap. I'm in your old job." "At the Paddock or in the General's office?" "At your old desk in the General's office." "Not the broom closet?" "It's now a broom closet - again. Who did you piss off?" "Just about all the powers that be inside the Pentagon. What do you want?" "I know you're out of here, but can you stop by and bring me up to date. When I asked what I'm supposed to do - all I get back is, 'Do the right thing.'"

Johnny hung up. Bobbie Jean asked, "Who was that?" "Nick Nack." "Paddy Black. What did he want?" "He has my old job. Wants me to stop by and brief him." "That's a long drive to town for a ten minute lecture." "Whoa - it was a much tougher job than that. If you don't have anything for me to do - I'll stop in and see him this afternoon." "Still

a fire horse - responding to the alarm bell. The work I have for you will have to wait until the snow melts. Nanny left a message for you. Bidwell wants you to call." "That figures. No way he can putt a golf ball on Burning Tree greens with this much snow on the ground."

Bidwell picked up on the second ring, "Welcome back to the world - Johnny. How was Fiji?" "Great place to visit - mostly unspoiled. Knowing you - you never call unless you have some kind of nefarious plan in the works." "This one is clean as a whistle. Do you think Bobbie Jean is ready to go into the real estate business?" "She all ready is. What do you have in mind?" "I'm holding a couple of markers." "What is a marker. Some kind of pen?" "Could be, but in this case - gambling debt notes. If you are willing - we can subdivide your property in half acre lots - all with a minimum of zoning fuss." "Bobbie Jean would jump at an opportunity, but we have two boys in school and she won't move." "Understand. How many acres do you need for your farmhouse and stable?" "I haven't given it much thought." "Talk to Bobbie Jean about it. You put up the land and I'll put up the houses. Do you remember that old guy selling real estate in Roswell?" "The one who finished his selling pitch with, 'There'll always be more people, but there'll never be more land.'" "Roger that." "Our day has arrived in McLean. It has more people than land." "We'll talk it over. What about my sheep?" "It's time to get rid of them. That ram of yours brings new meaning to worthless. I made arrangements to get him and his ladies into a petting zoo near Reston." "Before I forget - where did you get that congressional parking pass Bobbie Jean had on the dash of her Bentley?" "Don't ask." "Don't tell."

Bobbie Jean laughed, "Bidwell wouldn't tell you where he got the pass - would he. What devious plan has our business partner come up with this time?" "He wants to subdivide our

farm into half acre lots." "He wants to do what?" "Build houses on your land. You furnish the land - he builds the houses. Bidwell has several gambling markers we can trade in for land use and building permits." "I'm not selling my home!" "We won't have too. Decide what we want to keep and we can develop the rest." "I all ready have. I drew up the plan before we bought the farm. Hate to say it - Bidwell is right. Land value will probably go up, but development costs will too. And if he can grease our way through the permit process. Remember how long it took to get approvals for our Omaha restaurant? What about your sheep?" "Bidwell is thorough. He made arrangements for them to go to a petting zoo." "The courtyard inside the Pentagon?" "The one near Reston, but they did like the grass there." The phone rang, "The whole world must know we're back."

It was Tucker - calling from his office deep inside the bowels of the Washington Post, "Wherever you visit - you can sure stir up a mess of trouble." "Fiji? It's an unspoiled paradise." "Lets see - four Greens and a Kiwi fall out of a Zodiac and are devoured by sharks. Six mid-level socialists disappear from Fiji. Then two high level Fiji socialists and four guards are assassinated. A Green lady goes overboard and the First and Second Mate are shot to death. A leading Kiwi industrialist and the Green Captain are the last to go in a murder suicide. You return home and the South Pacific turns quiet." "You sure are connecting a lot of unlike dots." "Is there a story there?" "Could be, but I doubt if anyone cares except the Brits and the London Economist. Fiji now belongs to the Fijians." "Did you have something to do with it." "My job was to help them acquire a new computer system and to provide training, but they didn't need it." "The internet is everywhere. I'm the last of the computer illiterates. Mind if I give Benny a call?" "I'm not my Benny's keeper." "I'm feeding you straight lines." "Sam's tomorrow night at seven?" "Roger that."

Johnny groaned, "Wall to wall cars," as he turned off Boundary Drive into Pentagon North Parking. "I'll have to park way out in the north forty. At least the wind will be quartering on my walk in. Walking out? I hope the northwest wind turns more to the west." The right side of his face felt like an icicle as he opened the entrance door and showed his badge. Johnny went from too cold to too warm in an instant, "We can place a cruise missile through a window at five hundred miles and we can't adjust a building thermostat to control an even temperature." He attached the badge to the zipper on his leather flying jacket, "I'll have to turn this in. Whoops - almost forgot - I'll need a new ID. I'm not retired. Benny said Active Reserves when we were on Fiji. Wonder what that means?" Johnny just had to look in - to make sure. He opened the door to his old office and found mops - brooms and buckets, "Isn't the first time I had an office disappear. The last time it was an office and people - too. At least this time I won't have to hold court in a cafeteria for two weeks."

Johnny stepped through the door to the General's office. Paddy Black got up from behind his old desk, "Am I glad to see you. We've had quite a turnover here. Tupelo retired and followed Barnes up river to CIA. We have a new General." "Who's the new boss?" "Rockly T. Fellow." "Do you have guidance?" "Do the right thing. I want you to lead me down the path to righteousness?" "How good is your Top Sergeant?" "One of the best. Tupelo hand-picked him." "Work with him as an equal and you'll do just fine." "And if I insist on a strictly military rank basis?" "Bend down - place your ears between your legs and kiss your ass good-by." "Can you tell me where you're going?" "I'm out of the Air Force. Do you have anything for me?" "Sealed orders - quid pro quo - first you brief me on what I'm supposed to do." "Okay - we'll start at the beginning. Who signs your report?" "The Exec." "Do what he says. He's the boss. If you don't have guidance

- here's what I did." Johnny spent the next hour showing Paddy the ropes that would help him on his climb. Footholds and direction and climb were Paddy's responsibility.

Paddy shook his head, "That's more than I care to know. Your letter and personal items are in the vault." "I'm on my way." Johnny knocked on the vault door. Tupelo looked out through the opening with a grin, "I've been waiting for you." "What are you doing here?" "Cleaning up and briefing the new guy. Your situation is trickier than Personnel is used to handling. I was sent over to straighten it out." "You're still in uniform." "Won't be after today. I turned in all of your classified. Your accounts are clear. Packed all of your personal stuff in one box. You do travel light." "Been down this road before." Tupelo handed Johnny a sealed envelope, "Open this when you're at home alone. Have your wife place the contents in a safety deposit box. These are your protection. Sergeant in Officer's Assignments is waiting for you on the fifth floor." "Where am I going." "After you check in and sign out upstairs - stop back in and pick up your box." "Will I get an answer then?" "Yes and no." "They haven't moved Officer Assignments - have they?" "Same place - with Air Force blue footprints painted on the floor so the pilots can find it."

Johnny looked for footprints, but found none and smiled, "He had me looking." Johnny reported to the Sergeant manning the front desk, "Lieutenant Colonel Ropp. I'm checking out." "Been waiting on you." He handed Johnny an envelope, "Read and sign what's inside and get your picture taken for a new ID." Johnny sat in a hard wooden students chair - the type with a desk top on one armrest and read the cover letter. He signed at the signature block and sighed, "Benny led me astray - I'm not out of the Air Force. It's strange - though - don't think I've ever sen an indefinite assignment to a Post Office Box in McLean." "He looked at the next piece of

paper, "Orders promoting me to Colonel - dated today."
Attached was an agreement to remain on active duty for two more years. Johnny signed at the signature block, "Benny said I was going into the Reserves. Must have changed their minds." The next letter was brief -

Report for training at the Lonesome Pine Farm - in the Blue Ridge Mountains - follow Route #50 - see enclosed map.

Johnny opened the map. At the top he read -

Commit to memory and shred after reading.

Johnny handed the map to the desk sergeant and waited while he shredded it. Afterwards - he posed for a new ID in a borrowed jacket - shirt - tie and returned the rest of the items in the envelope. He waited, "Is that all?" "You're finished - Colonel." "How about my wife? She'll need a new dependent ID." "That wasn't covered in my instructions." He picked up the phone and punched in seven numbers, "What about his wife? She'll need a new ID card. Okay - will do." He pulled out the appropriate forms - typed in the information and handed them to Johnny, "Make sure she goes to Fort Myer next week."

Johnny wandered back to General Fellow's office suite. Tupelo met him at the door, "General Fellow wants to see you before you check out." Johnny followed him into the main office. General Fellow looked up and smiled, "Should have told Paddy to have you wear a uniform when you came in. No problem - we'll do a combat pinning - right on your flight jacket. Congratulations - Colonel." He pinned an eagle on one shoulder while Tupelo pinned one on the other and then they took them off. General Fellow shook his hand and

smiled, "Good luck at the Agency - Johnny. Hard to tell if you've been screwed or given a leg up. We'll keep track of you" and he smiled, "I know where you are. Benny will keep me informed of your progress. You're on the CIA payroll - so do us proud." "Will I return to the Air Force?" "You've never left it - so how can you return?" "Do you know where I'm assigned?" "CIA Operations." "Geography?" "Tupelo will let you know." "Don't ask?" "Don't tell."

Tupelo took Johnny into the vault and closed the door, "Your first assignment is temporary - in Germany. Your old outfit in Munich is closing down. All, but one of Paddock's detachments are closing. CIA is picking up the mission." "Is that why Benny Shanghaied me?" "General Fellow offered you up and Benny requested you." "Better the devil you know?" "You might say that, but if we didn't want you - you would still be in uniform. When you report to the farm - dress casual - sweaters - that kind of thing. Leave your leather flying jacket at home. No military apparel. You will need clothing for a week." "Outdoor activities?" "Not for you - except for small arms training. Strictly self defense. Report to your check point Monday morning at 10:00 a.m. on the dot."

Johnny walked into the kitchen through the mud room, "It took longer than I thought. I had to process out of the Pentagon and get a new ID." "Are you out of the Air Force?" "Sort of - I've been assigned to a Post Office Box in McLean and promoted to Colonel." "To Colonel?" "You'll have to get a new ID. They want you to stop in at Fort Myer next week." "Go back to where you said you were promoted. Why? What does it mean?" "Damned if I know - unless it's for my new job." "Benny and Tupelo were Sergeants." "They were under cover. Benny is a Colonel in the Reserves and I don't know about Tupelo." "And your new job?" "Damned if I know. I'm supposed to call Benny's office tomorrow morning. Should

find out soon. I have training scheduled Monday at the Farm. Tupelo said it would last a week." "Will you be home at night?" "I'm supposed to bring along enough clothes for a week - so I doubt that." "Is there anything else?" "I'll be assigned temporarily - somewhere in Germany." "And your family - will we go to Germany?" "I don't know." "I need time to think and you have to change clothes. We're meeting Tucker - Bidwell and their wives at Sam's." "How about the boys?" "They're old enough to be alone." Johnny opened the sealed envelope and handed it to Bobbie Jean.

Johnny noticed the sign as he drove into the underground parking, "Since when has the building been renamed - Sam's? I thought the owner didn't want to sell. Did we pay for the advertising space?" Bobbie Jean opened her car door and they walked to the private elevator. She pressed the button, "Our partner had an unusual run of luck with the dice." "Did he win the building?" "No - we paid market price and the old owner is carrying our note at six percent simple interest." "What about his marker?" "Bidwell is holding it until the building is free and clear. Then we'll forgive it."

As Johnny and Bobbie Jean stepped out of the elevator and into Sam's private dining room on the top floor - Tucker motioned for Johnny to come over to the bar, "Bidwell's down stairs - checking on business." "Did you get a hold of Benny?" "He wasn't anxious to talk. Tried to get him to stop in tonight - so we could talk in private. Didn't work, but he gave me enough insight for a background piece." "Not much interest in this town about Fiji?" "There isn't, but that's what newspapers are good at - drumming up interest." "Did Benny talk to you about me?" "No." "You've lost a confidential source at the Pentagon." "You were a dry hole anyway. Where are you going?" "I'm working full time for Benny." "About time you took your uniform off and went to work at a real job. Our wives are calling."

Bidwell exited the elevator, "Johnny! How soon can you get those damn sheep off our property." "Your idea - your problem and I'm leaving it up to you to explain why they're going to a petting zoo to my boys." "We can't move the heavy equipment in until after the ground dries out in late spring. Survey work begins as soon as the snow melts." "Are you going to build on spec or to order?" "First six on spec - after that we'll see." "Price range." "Three-hundred up. Won't be cheap." "How many?" "Sixty-six." "What are you going to name it?" "Langtree Estates." Bobbie Jean put her arm through Johnny's, "Don't worry - we live there. I'll be on top of each and every decision. And we're forming a new corporation called GSM." "What does GSM stand for?" "G is for Bidwell - Gambler. S is for you - spy and M is for Tucker." Tucker smiled his best what me worry smile, "M - don't you mean N for newspaper?" Bobbie Jean had reeled him in, "No - M for muckraker."

On their way home - Bobbie Jean finally opened up, "You signed up for two more years without asking me. You had to sign an agreement - didn't you?" "I promised - I'd stay on until late spring and then we'd talk. Don't worry - I can resign anytime, but I'll lose my new rank." "You didn't mention your promotion to our friends." "Best to keep it to ourselves. If I resign - I might not have it long." "Can I tell Mother. She never thought you'd amount to anything." Bobbie Jean blushed and added, "Important." "She's right, but keep it out of the newspapers." "Colonel - that will be a shock to mother. She's old South - where military careers and high rank are still held in high esteem. Don't you dare do anything rash without telling me. Two more years. It will take me that long to finish the subdivision. I don't want to go to Germany and I don't want you away all the time. There are no easy answers." "At least our boys will be able to enhance their education with a few trips to Europe." "We can visit!" "We're not in Kansas anymore - Dorothy."

Johnny phoned CIA Ops - a little after eight the next morning. Benny's Secretary answered, "Hello." "Johnny Ropp checking in." "Come in tomorrow. Stop at the front desk. I'll have your paperwork waiting for you. Did you receive your instructions?" "For training?" "Yes." "I'll fill you in on what's required."

*"From his brimstone bed - at the break of day
A-walking the Devil is gone -
To look at his snug little farm of the world
And see how his stock went on."*

CIA Operations

Johnny turned off the exit ramp of George Washington Parkway at the Fairbanks Highway Research Station Sign and pointed his car toward the geodesic dome. Where he parked in a visitor spot and walked a few short steps to the front door of CIA Headquarters. Inside - on the left - he stopped at the visitor desk and presented his military ID and drivers license. The civilian guard - dressed in a blue blazer sport coat and tan pants uniform looked both over, "Colonel Ropp - we were waiting for you. Come with me. First you'll need a photo ID and of course - there is paperwork for you to read and sign. And then an interview." "How long will it take?" "If things go right - you should be finished no later than noon. I'll make a photo ID first and you can fill out your paperwork while we laminate your pass."

Benny was waiting for Johnny as he came out of the interrogation room, "You passed. Now you can come into the office." "Why the sealed envelope and lock box?" "In case something happens to me - my boss - your General and most of all - in case something happens to you. It's for your wife's protection." "And for mine. Your idea?" "Yes - I've seen too many guys wiped out who didn't watch their six." Benny opened the door to a room full of desks stacked a foot deep in paper. Johnny looked around, "The empty one is mine?" "For as long as you work for us." "Where is everyone?" "On assignment or compensatory time off. Put your ass on the line here - when the job is done - vacation starts. Coffee or tea." "Coffee." Johnny sat down at a small conference

table at the far end of the room - thinking, "This could be a govy office anyplace. Furniture is new - though. Stacked space saving stuff."

Benny sat down with a carafe of coffee and poured, "So your going out to the Farm Monday." "Your Secretary said she'd leave instructions." "I'm it. You'll need money for the nightly poker games. When you were told casual - they meant casual. Jacket - sweaters - khakis - jeans - no ties - suits - or coats." "What about Germany?" "Our Embassy in Bonn. Don't take your family - it's too temporary." "Who do I report too." "We'll cover that when you get back from the Farm." "Does anyone work for me?" "Are you kidding? You're the new guy." "Fill me in on where I can go and what I can do." "You worked inside for the USIB Sigint Committee. Our rules haven't changed." "Committee name has changed - from United States Intelligence Board to the National Foreign Intelligence Board. You guys are no longer automatically in charge of each committee with an automatic two votes." "And the committees meet downtown near the White House - so you know who's in charge." "And why our Intelligence is all screwed up." "Yeah - it used to be an interagency squabble on who can do the best job and now it's a mud fight to see who can get on the street with a fast answer that fits the latest political spin. I'll take you on a tour."

Benny guided Johnny to the cafeteria, "Look the same?" "No - we're in a different building." "We added on." "The Peter Principle?" "That and computer technology. Used to have several analysts that knew everything about their area. Now we have a dozen or more - all backed up by computers and we can't come up with answers." "Same problem we have at the Pentagon. A lot of money for hardware and software and no money left over for thinkers." "All the doors here are still closed. Stay out unless you have business to conduct. You park out here - in back. Trees to provide screening." "And

the walk in is just as far away from the building as North Parking at the Pentagon." "Hey this is the government. At least we don't charge you to park here. Pick up your car pass at the visitors desk on the way out." "I'm finished?" "Johnny - we've been working together for quite a spell. It is pretty much the same - maybe a little quieter. We won't have Pat Penny and Natasha to liven up our lives."

Neither Johnny or Bobbie Jean slept well Thursday night. Johnny's mind was on his change of status and Bobbie Jean's thoughts were on adjusting the boundaries of their home and stables under their new subdivision plan. After the boys were off to school - Bobbie Jean went back to bed and Johnny went outside to check the surveyors flags and water his sheep. He looked at the flags near their drive, "Won't do - we'll lose too much of our privacy." He looked at the map Bobbie Jean had prepared, "No wonder - they lopped off two extra acres." The sheep were huddled under their lean-to at the back of the stables, "Hope you folks like a petting zoo. Ought to be a lot easier than having two boys and a Border collie chase you around." He patted his collie - Ralph, "Don't worry you can still herd us." When he returned to the farmhouse - Bobbie Jean was fast asleep.

The aroma of bacon cooking in the microwave - toast in the toaster - eggs frying and coffee percolating did their usual trick. Bobbie Jean appeared - like magic - in the kitchen - rubbing her eyes, "You certainly know how to wake a lady." "There is a connection between the senses and love." "Especially so if someone else is doing the cooking. Did you check the flags?" "Yes - I found the error. We lost the two acres in front of the house and stables." "That won't do - can it be fixed?" "They'll have to resurvey. They're coming for the sheep this morning." "Sad?" "Very." Did you tell our boys?" "Didn't have the heart. I'm going to take them to the Smithsonian tomorrow. Going to see the National Air

and space Museum - Hirshhorn - National Gallery - Industry and History. They want to see the mummies." "I'm not letting my men go out alone. Too many single women in this town. When does it open?" "At ten. We'll park at Sam's and take the subway into town."

Bobbie Jean opened the Post, "Did you read Tucker's article about Fiji in the international section?" "No - didn't get past the headlines - sports section and comics. What does he say?" "It's all about the rise and fall of socialism on Fiji. One of their leaders - Jawa Motila has pleaded guilty to importing guns and plotting to overthrow the government. Motila's - isn't that the General Store we were in?" "The same and he is the owner. What happened to him?" "He was allowed to return to India with a suspended life sentence. Tucker implies that he was behind the murder of two other Indian political leaders and four bodyguards. Can you tell me?" "I think it was the Russian - Natasha, but that's not proven." "Does Benny know?" "Yes, but he's not talking." "Well he must have talked to Tucker." "That as we say in the government is above my pay grade."

Smithsonian

Johnny laughed, "It's a miracle - we made it all the way to Arlington without RL and JR fighting in the back seat." Robert Livingston Langtry spoke up, "That's because you finally got it right." And Johnny Jr. added, "We're going to see the mummies and eat at Sam's. Do we have to go to the art museums?" Bobbie Jean answered, "I insist. We'll go to the American History Museum first - Natural History next and the three art museums last." Both RL and JR moaned when Bobbie Jean mentioned three art museums. But they were two steps ahead on the way to Arlington Metro Station. Johnny squeezed Bobbie Jean's hand, "Don't look behind, but we have someone following us." "Are you that important?" "Silly

isn't it? I don't believe we have anyone on our side who would think we're important enough to follow." "Did the agency send someone along for protection?" "A junior agent in training?" She began to giggle and sing, "Into the air junior bird man - into the air upside down." "Very funny. He could be one of ours on a training exercise."

The Rosslyn Metro station was so empty it echoed. Johnny kept an eye on the tagalong until the Orange Line subway train rolled to a stop. They waited and boarded the last car. The train stopped five times before a computer generated voice over a loudspeaker announced, "Smithsonian." The tagalong exited the car in front of them - following at least sixty paces behind on the way to the Jefferson Street exit. Johnny caught up with the boys, "Don't look around, but we have a tagalong following us." RL asked, "What's a tagalong?" "One of the bad guys. Pretend you don't see him. I don't think we're in any danger, but you can never tell. Better stay within hollering distance." He slowed down and rejoined Bobbie Jean, "It's a two block walk to the museums. I hope our friend brought along walking shoes." Bobbie Jean smiled, "He must be foreign - he's wearing leather soled shoes. You didn't scare our boys - did you?" "I gave them something to think about other than how much they hate visiting art museums. I asked them to stay close." "Is that why they're walking faster?" "Those rascals - it's all a game to them."

The American History Museum should be called the Museum of Science and Industry. Loaded with every item either invented or built in America since the Industrial Age. The big hit for the boys was the giant steam locomotive in the basement. Johnny looked for, but could not find the button that turned on the stereo engine sound. JR asked, "What are you looking for?" "Used to be a button to push here - whole room would fill with the sound of this locomotive starting up

and moving out at full speed." RL pointed to his headset, "It's still here." "Can't be the same as having the whole room fill with sound. Ready to see the elephant?" JR asked, "Where is it?" "In the entrance rotunda next door." "Before we get to the mummies." "They're on the second floor. Don't walk so fast this time. Our tagalong is having a hard time keeping up."

The elephant didn't hold the boys' attention for more than a moment. The whales and dinosaurs did. The biggest disappointment was the mummies - or lack of. Dug out of a latrine in Philadelphia - they had been on display on the second floor for years. They were relegated to storage - like most of the artifacts held by the Smithsonian. The faux art of Museum Science held sway. Instead of being a neat place to rummage around on a rainy day - the displays now reminded Johnny of Epcot at Disney World. He led his disappointed sons to the National Gallery. It alone - of all the Smithsonian buildings reminded him of a museum. Until they entered the new wing - where blank walls and a curator enamored of architecture broke the spell.

The Hirshhorn? Like the old National Gallery - hadn't changed. The best art was in the basement - produced by early American artists who had learned to paint - not roll tires over canvas. Their tagalong didn't enter the building with them. He sat down on a bench outside with the other statues. Bobbie Jean laughed, "Your friend doesn't care for Modern Art." "Or sore feet. We'll follow the ramp up and ride the elevator down to the basement." "Who selects these paintings?" "I don't know. Why do you ask?" "Aren't there classically trained artists in our country?" "We have art schools." "Why is their work not on display? All I see are huge paintings all white - or with one dot - or finger paint reminiscent of kindergarten." "Art is defined by politics and dealers. Ours lack taste."

Bobbie Jean looked up at the emptiness of the Air and Space Museum, "This building reminds me of an empty hanger. Don't they have anything to display?" "There is ten times more of everything on display at the Air Force Museum on Wright Field in Dayton," Johnny answered. "There used to be more out - when it was displayed in a Quonset hut next to the castle. At least they still display Lucky Lindy's airplane - the Spirit of Saint Louis." "It's a very impressive empty building. Where are all of the airplanes and rockets?" "In a hanger - stored out of sight somewhere beyond the beltway. Think it's at Dulles - but Maryland comes to mind - too." RL and JR stopped at the other end and waited. JR said, "We've seen everything except the movies. Can we eat?" Johnny answered, "Lead us back to a Metro Station. Not too fast. Our tagalong is having a hard time keeping up." He was over a hundred paces behind as they crossed the Mall on a crushed stone path. Bobbie Jean squeezed Johnny's arm, "I know he's Russian." "How can you tell?" "He's limping. His shoes don't fit and his feet are killing him."

"Museum Science must teach its students how not to display." "And from what I've seen here - teaching Modern Art means training students to drive a tractor over canvas." "I didn't think we could make it through all these museums and see everything in less than three days. We did it in less than five hours." "I used to be able to spend three days in one building. I'm disappointed. I wish our boys could have been here before the window dressers took over. The Smithsonian used to be a marvelous king sized attic. You could pick and choose what you wanted to see - not be spoon fed by idiots." "If it wasn't for the game our boys are playing with the tagalong they would be disappointed too. No more mummies means no more Smithsonian to them." "Isn't it a shame - an entire generation is being robbed of their past by window dressers." "I'm hungry - are we going to treat our tagalong to lunch at Sam's?" "Yes - he'll need it."

JR and RL led them northwest on Pennsylvania Avenue - turned north on 11th Street and took the escalator down to the Metro Center Station. They walked directly into a car on the Orange Line train going to Rosslyn. Their tagalong - more than a football field behind - was left stranded on the platform. Bobbie Jean nudged Johnny, "Don't you think he looked relieved?" "He was in pain." "Will someone else follow us in Arlington?" "Not if he calls in and tells his control about this experience." The lengthy escalator ride up - out of Rosslyn Station was longer than a ski lift in Vermont. Outside the Station Johnny tried to spot another tagalong, but there was none.

Lonesome Pine Farm

Johnny drove west on Leesburg Pike into the Virginia countryside on a cold - dark and windy winter morning. The Lonesome Pine Farm was hidden deep in the interior of a national forest where only a wilderness guide - or a lost flock of Bluebirds could find it. On a deeply rutted road over streams almost too deep to ford - Johnny wound over hill and dale through a forest - so dense - it's canopy covered the road from the sun - even without leaves. As he bounced along - Johnny muttered out loud, "Should have rented an off road vehicle to get here. Damn that Benny. He must be laughing himself silly. He should have warned me. Thank God - a fence."

Johnny looked out at a weathered sign - posted on the fence -

Lonesome Pine Farm
Posted - No Hunting
Trespassers Will Be
Shot On Sight!

"Thank God - I'm here." As instructed - he honked six times in short bursts. Out of nowhere - two guards dressed in Army forest fatigues appeared - weapons drawn, "Step out - face your car - place your hands on the roof and spread your legs. Where is your wallet?" "On the front seat." The guard reached in and opened it up, "Colonel Ropp - we have been expecting you. You can relax." "Why all the security when you can recognize who I am?" "Never can tell when a bad guy might try to penetrate our facility and it gives us training - too." "You guys are almost as thorough as my neighborhood grocery when I'm trying to cash a check on Sunday." "More - we need three IDs and a fingerprint scan - which you'll do right now." Johnny placed both hands on the screen of a laptop computer and waited. The biggest - ugliest of the two guards telephoned for transportation and an escort. The other one returned Johnny's wallet and made a request, "Give me your car keys - Colonel - you won't need them where you're going. Why didn't you drive an off road vehicle - or come on our bus with the others?" "My boss didn't tell me. All I got was a map and instructions on how to get here." "Who is your boss?" "Benny." The guard doubled over in laughter, "Ever been on a snipe hunt?" "No - is this one?" "No, but if we had one - Benny would be the instigator."

Johnny was escorted inside the fence - along a path through more dense forest to another road. When he turned around to thank his escort - they had vanished. He said - to himself, "Not another I love a mystery week! All I have to do now is wait for Jack - Doc and Reggie to show up." From the bowels of a forest primeval came the familiar roar of a HUMV - one without a usable muffler. It braked to a stop at his feet and two guards hopped out, "Wallet Colonel and place your hands on the computer screen for another fingerprint scan." Seconds later he said, "Pick up your gear and hop in back. They lurched ahead as soon as his rear end touched the seat, "Hang on - we've bounced more than a few out the back."

Johnny grabbed the overhead bar with both hands and hung on for dear life. The HUMV bounced and bounced and bounced over ruts on a much used path through the forest. As he pulled himself off the ceiling he shouted over the engine noise, "Didn't anyone tell you guys the Cold War is over?" "No - who would believe anyone spouting that kind of nonsense." The ride smoothed out when the HUMV rolled into and turned upstream - following a shale stream bed.

Two miles later - the HUMV climbed up out of the stream and entered an dense - old growth forest. Johnny asked, "How do you guys get around when you have spring rains?" The guard in the passenger seat turned around, "The same as we do during the summer when we have a gully washer thunder storm. We fly in by helicopter." The HUMV became airborne - flying out of the forest canopy - landing on a narrow crushed stone Colonial road. Johnny let go of the overhead bar, "Looks as solid and as narrow as the Appian Way." "Close. These were carved out by George Washington when he was a surveyor for the British Army. It was built to last. We added crushed stone. Always a little damp in this forest - so we get very little dust. And the stream bed is solid rock underneath the shale. Our roads are passable year round unless we have a flooding rain. And even then we're not isolated. We have a landing strip for small aircraft - a lake for amphibious planes and a helo pad. Pretty private here. We're in the middle of a national forest. The trees are second growth. The original forest was logged out to build Washington in the early nineteenth century. Hang on!"

The road turned sharply uphill on a circular path - following another stream bed - upstream. Although the ride was smooth - the turns weren't. They came out on top - in a meadow. The driver stopped, "You can see our farm." He pointed, "Over there - in the valley." "It looks just like a farm." "It is. Our compound is hidden halfway up on the

hillside behind the barns hidden under trees. We use the barns to store equipment. Looks close doesn't it? But we're still a good thirty minutes away. Hang on - it gets dicey going downhill." Johnny was wobbly legged when he exited the HUMV inside the compound. The guard on the passenger side tossed out his flight bag with a big grin, "Can I give you a piece of advice?" "As long as it's free." "Next time - fly in with the rest of your class."

Johnny walked into the reception area and set his bag down - looking directly into the eyes of a gruff old former OSS agent, "I'm Colonel Ropp." "And I'm smart enough to be out of this business, but not smart enough to distance myself from it." He tossed Johnny a room key, "Up the stairs and to the left. Lunch is in thirty minutes. Unpack and stow away your gear - then meet the rest of your class in the mess hall." "Do I need a badge?" "Not at this farm, but don't stray away from the compound without an escort." "You don't recommend solo walks in the forest?" "Only if you want to commit suicide." Johnny hauled his flight bag to the top of the stairs. His room was at the end of the hall.

He opened the door and looked inside, "Bunk bed - chair - desk and lamp - bureau for clothes - no closet - with one overhead ceiling light. Even have to make my bed. Sheets and blankets are stacked at the end. Latrines are on both sides of the stairs. Hell - I'm back in boy scout camp. What does this place remind me of? Now I remember - a CCC camp - Civilian Conservation Corps. So that's how they got all these buildings - roads and runway. It was all ready here." The mess hall used to be, but wasn't. Food was available, but Johnny had to prepare his own. He met and introduced himself to the other students - all as inept as he was at making deli sandwiches. He discovered that his classmates came from a variety of backgrounds - with one thing in common. None of them were professional agents and

with the limited amount of time available for training - in no in danger of becoming a one. One thing he did not share with them was their enthusiasm.

After lunch - Johnny's group settled in the mess hall for a series of movies about CIA. Fairly standard stuff. Its origins - from the OSS to today's multifaceted tasks. An hour later - after a coffee break - their instructor entered the room dressed in cowboy boots and hat - jeans and a western shirt. He sat down at the end of the table - placed his feet up on it and leaned back, "I'm your wrangler - in fact you can call me Pecos Pete. That's your first lesson. We don't use our real names when we're under cover. If you see me or any other covered employee at the bank or grocery store - don't bother to talk to us - recognize us or use the names you know us by. If we want to talk to you - we'll let you know. Notice my dress? Not the same as Hollywood would like you to believe. We don't wear black suits unless we're trying to blend in. That's your second lesson - we can look like anyone and so do the bad guys. The more we blend into the background - the more effective we'll be. So a bad or good guy can be anyone - anywhere - anyplace. But - most likely - not at all."

Pecos stood up, "My assistant is going to pass out a series of questionnaires for you to fill out. We are doing a psychological profile on each one of you. Two pronged - for us and you. We're probing for weakness'. Need to know your vulnerabilities. These will tell us where and when you can work for us. Last thing we need is for you to be compromised - that doesn't do either of us any good. Okay - what will the questionnaires do for you? For one thing - our profile will tell you where you're strong and where you're weak. And that's a handy thing to know when the unexpected occurs. And it will. Always does - know matter how well we plan. If you know how you'll respond - you can control or at least modify

your response. And most important - it will help you to stay away from situations where you can demonstrate your weakness. Now - I don't mean to frighten you. 99% of what you'll do is as exciting as watching grass grow. We're preparing you for that one percent. Don't try to outguess the questions. It won't help you and it sure as hell won't help us. Respond with the first thing that pops in your mind. And to help you be truthful - my assistant will attach a few wires to record your emotional response. I see three hands up. Put them down. I won't take questions. When you're done here - it will be time for you to prepare your own dinner. Best way to do that is to organize who'll do what. Steaks and greens are in the icebox - along with potatoes and vegetables. Big charcoal grill out on the patio. Use it - don't mess up the range - or you'll have to clean it. I'll see you tomorrow at breakfast. Seven o'clock in this room."

The assistant attached wires - bundled inside a wrist band to Johnny's writing arm, "Press the button once for one and twice for two etceteras. Answer the questionnaires in sequence. Read and respond - don't dawdle." Johnny finished the last question at exactly six p.m. He looked around. He was the first one done. He removed the wrist band and handed in his forms. He didn't say anything to the assistant and she didn't say anything to him. He walked out on the patio. Charcoal - matches and a lighter were on a table beside the grill, "Pretty fancy grill. Built out of river rock - must have been built in the thirties - during CCC days. Better take a look at the steaks before I start a fire." Johnny walked to the kitchen and opened the icebox, "Exact number of steaks as there are students." He picked one up, "Has to be at least twenty ounces without bone and an inch and a half thick. Wonder where the instructors eat?" He looked around - found a pan and entered the pantry - looking for soy sauce. Then he took a fork and tined the steaks before rubbing salt and pepper on both sides.

A second student joined him in the kitchen, "What are you doing?" "Marinating the steaks. Soak them in soy sauce pepper - salt and a little Worcestershire sauce. Why don't you wash the potatoes - roll them in butter - salt and pepper them and wrap the whole lot in foil." "Peel them first?" "No - wash them with cold water and put as many as you can into the foil. They aren't very big. Say at least three - or four per person." Johnny went outside to start the fire. When he returned - the rest of his class was in the kitchen. He organized a table setting - salad making and bread cutting brigade. He looked around, "Any wine? Someone check the bar in the dining room. If it's locked - break the lock. I'll pay for it." The potato man asked, "Where did you learn how to organize a large cookout?" "My wife owns a piece of Sam's in Arlington. I've received professional guidance." The wine guy returned with half a case of red and half a case of white, "It was open. I'll put the white in the freezer and we'll open the red. There's German beer on ice in the bar and hard stuff for those who care for it." "Johnny poured a glass of red and tasted it, "Not bad and a cork too. The kind we pour at weddings and funerals."

After dinner - Johnny went looking for a phone and found none, "Just as I suspected - no outside phone calls from the Loneseome Pine Farm. Bobbie Jean will understand - I hope." He wandered back into the mess hall, "OOPS - forgot to set up a dish washing crew. And I better have someone build a fire in the fireplace. I don't see a TV - radio or record player for entertainment - just six game tables - poker chips and sealed decks of cards." Volunteers for cleanup were not as easy to get as for cooking. The same crew that fixed dinner wound up in the cleaning detail. Johnny wiped his hands after the last dish was put away and spoke with the six slackers. Not to admonish them for not pulling their own weight, but to find out who they worked for. All six were associated with the State Department. He sat down in front

of the fire with one of the three novels he brought with him. He watched several of the poker games, but did not join in. Bobbie Jeans admonition was still ringing in his ears, "Never bet with anything that talks." And Bidwell's card dealing lessons when they served together in the Air Force. All six State Department affiliates were spread out one to a table - winning with poker hands that defied the law of probability. The games were over almost before they began. Johnny was the last to turn in and he climbed the stairs at ten.

The next morning at breakfast - their class had six fewer students. Before anyone could ask - Pecos Pete walked into the mess hall, "We're short six this morning. Can't abide with greenhorns from State lying on their psychological profiles. That's a clean sweep. Haven't had one of them make it past the first day since we began this course. I would have tossed them out for cheating at poker - anyway." He reached into his pocket - pulled out a wad of bills and set them on the table. Hope you remember how much you lost. If you don't - my assistant will tell you. That's your third lesson - never trust anyone associated with or working for our State Department. Use them, but don't confide in them or let them use you. Your CIA contacts will be identified to you before you go overseas. You all passed your first test. If you hadn't - you wouldn't be here. After you finish breakfast we'll cover the do's today."

Johnny almost moaned as another projector was set up by Pete's assistant, but he knew better. Pecos waited for them all to be seated, "This movie is a keeper. Watch and learn the secrets of our trade - observation techniques. Not as simple as you may think. What you see may be false - or it may be true. This will help you sort it out. The next one is on how you can see without being seen. Then we'll talk about it and I'll give you my insights. Colonel Ropp - step outside with me."

Johnny followed Pecos out on the patio, "What do you want?" "Benny really stuck it to you. Had you drive out here and attend a course you really don't need. You've been in the field - haven't you?" "If you can call Fiji a field." "And in Germany. I just found out you were captured and transported to Hungary. You've seen some of our best agents at work - up close." "I can still use the training. Besides - my fellow students need a Chef." "Okay - you can continue, but keep your mouth shut. The school solution doesn't always match up with what you saw in the field. Any questions?" "What's for dinner?" "Italian sausage and lots of it - with fresh peppers and pasta for the faint hearted. I watched you cook last night. I'm dining with you."

Wednesday's movies were filled with don'ts. Don't compromise your friends - your mission - your country - or the CIA. Thursday was spent at the firing range. Johnny was introduced to a variety of weapons - ours - theirs and others. He was taught how to use them all including silent weapons - or whatever came to hand. Hand to hand combat was demonstrated, but discouraged. If attacked he was to run away as his first defense - kill if need be - or surrender if outnumbered - out gunned - or overwhelmed. Thursday brought lessons on how the bad guys operate. This extended late into the evening and all of Friday morning. Bad guys now came in all sizes and shapes - from friend and foe alike. The heavy handed thugs of the Cold War had been replaced by faceless - nameless hordes. A very complicated set of circumstances. The school solution - look for the telltale signs of agent activity. The rules of engagement were drummed into their thick skulls early Saturday morning. Afterwards - two old OSS hands regaled them with tales of the good old days - all about real life scrapes from a pair who had been there and done that. Lunch was a festive affair. A repeat of their first dinner - steak and potatoes. After that - they packed and left - all by airplane except - Johnny.

Johnny had decided to pay closer attention on the drive out of Lonesome Pine Farm. He was flown away in a black helicopter with curtains drawn over the windows and deposited in a meadow - outside the fence line of the National Forest. He was given the keys to his car and directions, "Take the lane to the southeast - where it intersects with a gravel road. Go east and you'll see road signs leading to Leesburg Pike." Johnny opened the door to his car and checked the odometer, "Reads the same as when I handed over the keys." He drove away - wiser, but still undecided as to his future - humming a Dylan tune -

*"The order is
Rapidly fadin'.
And the first one now
Will later be last
For the times they are a-changing."*

Thirty minutes later - Johnny intersected Leesburg Pike and turned east toward McLean. Two hours later - when he turned into his driveway - snowflakes were marching in on a noreast wind - two by two.

Bobbie Jean met him at the door, "You didn't call - not once." He gave her a hug, "No outside lines." "Real secret squirrel stuff. Benny called and left a message." "What did he have to say?" "You report to the cafeteria in the second building Monday morning at eight. Have a cup of coffee at the first table and wait." "For him?" "No - he did say something about instructions for your next assignment." "Are you going over with me?" "I might - haven't made up my mind, but if you get anywhere near Budapest - I'll fly over and be at your side. Have to protect my investment." "Dinner in - or out?" "Falls Landing - I'm hungry for crab cakes."

Bobbie Jean called for reservations as Johnny showered away the dust from Lonesome Pine Farm. As he stepped out of the shower - Bobbie Jean met him - holding his clothes at arms length between the forefinger and thumbs in both hands, "Where in the world were you? "Your clothes smell like they were dropped into a muddy creek and hung over an open fire." "We were in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia on the trail of the lonesome pine." "Right - you and Arthur Godfrey. Can you tell me?" "I just did. What time is our reservation?" "Six - we have an early one." "What - no professional courtesy?" "That is professional courtesy. They are booked solid. Coat and tie tonight - my farm boy."

Bobbie Jean ordered the wine while Johnny looked over the menu, "I know what you want - crab cakes." "And you want the pepper steak." "No - I'll try the rock lobster tails this time. I had steak for lunch." "Did they tell you when you'll leave for Germany?" "No - I imagine that was what Benny's phone call was all about. I wouldn't be surprised if it was soon. Sure you won't go over with me?" "Did you forget? We're subdividing our farm and Bidwell is in charge. I have to hang around and make sure Bidwell doesn't build the access road through our house. You saw where he placed the survey flags." "Later - then?" "We'll see. I thought you said it was a short duration assignment?" "It is, but so was my trip to Fiji." "I see your point."

They bundled up and walked to the car. Snow flakes were no longer coming down in pairs. Johnny opened the passenger door of Bobbie Jean's Bentley, "We're in for another weekend storm." "The boys have a basketball game at the high school tomorrow morning." "That's why we bought a four wheel drive instead of the sports car I wanted. To navigate Virginia's roads when the weather turns bad." "I'm glad we ate early. Georgetown Pike from Great Falls to McLean will be a mess in another hour." "Right - all hills and no shoulders."

McLean Virginia

Johnny woke up to a bright - sunny winter morning. He looked outside and shaded his eyes from a sun reflecting off snow covered trees. Last night's storm had passed. The wind switched from the northeast to the northwest - water droplets freezing in mid fall. He dressed - put on a pot of coffee - threw on a coat and walked down the lane - looking for the Sunday Post. As usual it was in the ditch, but this time on top the frozen snow - not soaked through with muddy water as it usually was. He walked up the lane - making a detour to the stables. Last night's fire in the pot bellied stove was almost out. He stoked it with firewood made out of the lean-to that one time covered his sheep, "Sure miss those rascals - even that worthless old ram. That's what we can do today - go to the petting farm and check on our sheep." Johnny made sure the wood was burning before he set the lid back inside its hole on top the stove.

Bobbie Jean poured coffee, "Don't forget our boys have a basketball game at one this afternoon. What were you doing out there?" "Adding wood to the fire in the pot bellied stove in the stable. To keep the pipes from freezing. Paper isn't soaked through for a change. I was thinking about taking the family on a visit to the petting farm." "After the game. Should be over by two-thirty. The boys will want to visit their pets - too. You miss them don't you?" "We had them for quite a spell, but we can't afford to keep this many acres in McLean. Taxes will eat our lunch. Cold out there. What's the forecast?" "More of the same." And so was the rest of the day. Virginia's hilly roads and streets - covered with compacted snow and ice - as usual - were a driver's worst nightmare. Not the world's greatest drivers - the denizens of McLean played bumper cars on top of the snow. Johnny stopped six times to extract cars from the ditches beside Virginia's shoulderless roads.

By early Monday morning - the roads were clear - enough so that Johnny was able to make it to his assigned table in the second building's cafeteria on time. When he returned to the table with a large container of coffee - an envelope with his name on it was on the chair. He opened the envelope and read -

"Stay in the cafeteria until eight-fifteen. Go to room 212 on the second floor of this building. Enter at exactly eight-twenty. You'll receive further instructions there."

Johnny looked around the cafeteria to see if there was anyone he knew. There wasn't. CIA's cafeteria was reminiscent of one you would find at an Ivy League institution. A gaggle of left leaning intellectuals in tweeds and sweaters - sipping tea and black coffee. Not the OSS old soldiers home he would have pictured it to be and not the ultra right militaristic scene Hollywood painted. From experience - Johnny knew CIA was dominated by mild mannered moderates - hard to slot. If one must - CIA employees fit a category of left of center. CIA estimates were almost always more conservative than the military's and those of State Department. Johnny didn't know if policy makers at State were left or right, but he was certain they were totalitarian. He looked at his watch - it was eight-sixteen, "I'm late."

Johnny arrived at the door to room 212 at eight twenty-one - one minute late. He pushed the buzzer button, "Someone had this timed out to the second." The door opened - and a smiling young lady greeted him in a reception room, "ID please and place your left forefinger on the digital scan." Johnny handed her his military ID. She took it and kept it, "You won't need this anymore." "And my wife?" "She might need hers to shop. Follow me Colonel Ropp." She opened the third from the left of six interior doors. He followed her

inside a room that contained a desk - chair and four framed sailing prints on the walls. She held the chair for him, "You'll find several packages in the top middle drawer. When you complete the forms and understand the contents of the packages - buzz me with the button on top of your desk. Three short buzzes - please." She backed out of the room, "I'll be in the next room" and closed the door.

Johnny opened the middle drawer slowly - half expecting a jack-in-the-box surprise to jump out at him. Instead he found a manila envelope - looked it over and opened it with the letter opener he found in the desk tray. He read the cover letter, "I'm being assigned as an assistant economics diplomat in the Commerce section at our embassy in Bonn. Hmm - doesn't say anything about temporary. Better not mention that to Bobbie Jean." He looked at the accompanying map. His office building was circled in red, "Not in the embassy compound." He returned to the letter, "I'm assigned to the Operations Directorate and my immediate boss is Tom Tupelo. If he's not available - I'm to contact Benny Barnes." He memorized the two telephone numbers, "Strange - I'm not to return to CIA headquarters unless I receive instructions from one of them to do so."

Johnny opened a business letter sized envelope. Inside was a airline ticket from Dulles to Germany in Business Class. He looked at the date, "I leave in three days. So much for time off with my family. And I'll stick out like a sore thumb in Germany with this tan I picked up in Fiji." He moved on to the second page, "I'm to leave any ID that shows military affiliation at home and if Bobbie Jean or our boys travel overseas on a visit - they are to leave anything that will identify my military association at home. Must be because of terrorist activity." Johnny laughed, "They are thorough. I'm to replace my luggage ID with the new name tags enclosed in the little envelope." He opened the bank

envelope, "Six-thousand dollars in fifty dollar bills and a special credit card." He returned to the second page and dialed the telephone number listed there.

The voice at the other end was Benny's, "You got through to the second page - so we have to assume you can read - Colonel." Benny began to laugh at his own joke. He quit as soon as he began, "Take all of your credit cards - driver's license and organization cards out of your wallet and place them in the envelope you'll find in the drawer on your left. You'll find a second envelope with your new identity cards and driver's license. From now on all of your financial transactions will be controlled through our office. The instructions are laminated on one of the new bank cards we have provided. Read it - see if you understand. I'll wait." Johnny sifted through the cards, "Got it. How about Bobbie Jean and the boys?" "If they're coming over for a visit - we'll provide proper cards and identification. Make sure you let me know." "You realize my wife is independent and has her own business to care for. She won't take kindly to CIA managing her affairs." "We won't, but when she's overseas with you - she'll use our cards and identification." "Benny - when do I get a chance to volunteer?" "You don't - that's why we like hiring you military guys." "And you don't have to pay retirement." "Or medical after you retire." "Any instructions?" "When you arrive." Benny hung up and Johnny listened - to see if he could detect the recording device - which he knew was there. He couldn't.

Johnny made a quick check of the other desk drawers. They were empty. He stood up and pushed the desk chair back into its hole. He was about to push the buzzer - three times as instructed when the door opened. A smiling receptionist peered in, "You look surprised - Colonel. Your desk chair is pressure sensitive. Have you followed our instructions?" "I hope so. Is that all there is? I can leave now?" "Yes -

you're free until you report to your assignment. Return to this room when you return to the building. Don't return to your office unless instructed to do so." "I thought Benny or Tom would meet me." "They would have - if you turned down the assignment."

Outside - Johnny turned up his collar for protection against the northwest wind, "Brr - wind feels much colder than it was when I went in."

*"I'm off on the morning train
To cross the raging main -
I'm taking a trip on a government ship -
Ten thousand miles away!"*

Germany

Johnny walked down the arrival ramp - his eyes riveted on the door leading inside the terminal. Standing behind a row of theater chairs - leaning against the wall was someone he wasn't looking for - Tom Tupelo. Tupelo moved toward the center aisle as Johnny entered the terminal, "Welcome to Bonn - Johnny." "I'm glad there is someone here I know." "With that tan - you'll stick out like a sore thumb in this land of mist and fog. But don't worry - over five percent of the Deutsche population is returning from a vacation in Florida." "Are you my sponsor?" "After a year of taking care of you at the Pentagon - who else would they pick?" "Did you arrange quarters?" "You have a hotel suite near the embassy." "Very expensive treatment for a low level assistant Foreign Service type." "You'll learn. State treats employees like visiting royalty. Especially in a country we defeated. Don't you remember counterpart funds?" "Didn't we take payment in their currency after the war and we can only spend it in their country?" "We also took a few hotels and buildings. We're no longer conquering heroes - we're targets. Your hotel has security, but watch your six. When you clear customs - I'll meet you out front." "Customs? I thought I had diplomatic immunity?" "You do but you don't want to draw attention to yourself." "What car should I look for?" "A black Mercedes - over ten years old. It doesn't pay to stick out here." As Tupelo walked away - Johnny wondered, "Why all the concern? No one is watching. At least no one I can spot." He looked for his luggage tags, "Dummy - they're still attached to my ticket." He followed the signs to Customs.

Tupelo hopped out of his Mercedes and opened the trunk.. Speaking flawless German - he ordered the sky cap to place Johnny's suitcases inside. Johnny tipped him and opened the passenger side door. As they moved away from the terminal - Johnny said, "I have several questions for you." "Not here - we'll speak at your hotel." "About all the German I know is how to order a meal and ask where the bathroom is." "I thought you were fluent." "No one asked - so I didn't think it was a criteria." "Do you know enough to drive a car and read signs so you won't step in front of a tour bus?" "I do, but that doesn't make me fluent." Tupelo shrugged his shoulders, "It'll have to do. I'll wait as you check in at the hotel. Meet me in the bar after you unpack." They rode the rest of the way in silence. Johnny thought to himself, "This spy trade makes for long spells of quiet times." He looked out at the mist, "And moments of terror."

Johnny tipped the bellboy and waited for him to leave before checking out his suite, "Not bad. Has a refrigerator - a hot plate skillet and a coffee pot. I'll have to buy my own supplies. Can't use the military stores. Wonder if the embassy has a commissary? I'll ask Tupelo." From experience - Johnny unpacked his hang up clothes first and hung them in the wardrobe. "Have to get used to rooms without closets again." He carried his toilet case into the bathroom and rinsed his face, "Wonder if the water is good? Now that's a silly question. I'm in Germany - they take hygiene seriously here." He laughed, "and the beer is pure." Johnny closed the door to his suite and walked to the elevator, "Wonder where the security is? Haven't seen one guard." He rode the elevator down to the lobby - without stopping.

Tupelo had a half liter of the local lager waiting, "You sure took your time." "Learned my lesson. Hang my clothes as soon as the bellboy leaves. Where is all the security you talked about?" "Miniature TV cameras cover all the entrances

and exits. You can't get in here without coming through the front door. And we have a flying squad - ready to swarm where trouble happens. I won't take up much of your time. I'm the Cultural Attaché at the embassy - so we won't run into each other at work. I'll figure a way to get messages to you. What do you know about economics?" "Took a year in college and dropped it because I was bored silly." "Perfect - frigging perfect - you don't know a thing about economics and you don't speak German. You'll fit right in with our Foreign Service crowd. Here's one of your business cards. At least you'll look the part." "I have a few housekeeping questions." "Fire away." "Is there an embassy shop where I can buy food - beer and supplies?" "We have a small canteen for toilet articles - coffee and that kind of stuff. The rest you'll have to purchase on the economy. How are you doing on currency?" "Have enough to get by until I find a bank." "Lesson number one. Use embassy counterpart funds. Banks ask too many questions. When you report for work in the morning I'll have someone show you the ropes. Dine at the hotel until you know where you're going. Won't be easy if you don't speak German." "I know how to find a local Gast House." "You know more than you're letting on. Don't call me at work. If I need you - I'll call you." "What about an emergency situation?" "You won't have one. But if you do - call our Operation's watch officer." "In the States?" "The miracle of modern communications." "Do you have orders for me?" Tupelo stood up, "In time - we'll see." He walked out of the bar. Johnny took a sip of beer and set the stein down - smiling, "He stuck me with the bill!"

Bobbie Jean was curious, "Did you find out what you're supposed to do?" "Still working at the same job." "You're not going to tell me." "I don't know, but I'm getting tired of living out of a suitcase. Embassy put me up in a hotel suite." "Five star?" "More like two and a-half. Don't you remember our normal winter weather in Northern Virginia?"

"Somewhere in Virginia in the rain?" "That's Bonn squared - with the addition of fog." "Bet they have good home fries." "Very funny! The potatoes are excellent. Can't get a bad meal here." "Do you know when you'll return?" "If I'm over here more than thirty days will you visit?" "I have a better offer - Why don't I fly over in three weeks." "I accept and as usual your timing is absolutely perfect." "How so?" It will take me at least three weeks to find the local three and four star restaurants."

The Economics Officer was as perplexed as Johnny, "I would like to welcome you on board, but I can't. You don't work for me. I don't even know why you're assigned to me. You should be in Belgrade." "Yugoslavia? Where they build the Yugo?" The Economics Officer laughed, "You and I think alike. Your assignment is to review social - political - religious and economic data on Yugoslavia." "What is the product?" "Damned if I know unless it's a forecast." "Where do I begin?" "At the beginning. Try our library - first and the University after that. You do speak German - don't you." "Not very well. I'm not fluent, but I can read. Do you want to review my product." "No."

Johnny wasn't at his desk more than ten minutes when the phone rang. It was Benny, "Your area of expertise is going to be the Balkans." "I know very little about the area - except for Pat Penny's reports I read in Munich." "Good - you know where to begin. I retrieved their files. I'll have them on your desk in ten minutes." "Is that why I have a vault for an office?" "The building you're in used to be a bank." "What am I supposed to do?" "Become an expert and write an estimate. With Russia weakening the Balkans will explode again. Don't think of the Balkans as a collection of countries. Think of it as Africa - in tribal groups." "You said will explode not may." "Study the history of Bosnia - Serbia and Croatia. See what you think."

Johnny spent the next week reviewing information from The Farm in Munich. Then he reviewed all the data he could find on the Balkans in the embassy library. When his initial review was complete - he sat down and wrote a preliminary finding and estimate:

A Balkan Primer

(Or how to learn to love an ethnocentric conflict)

There are four elemental sources fundamental to the continuing conflict in the Balkans. And it is the mixture of all four that makes the Balkans a tinder box. The elemental sources of conflict is a synthesis of Tribalism - Economic - Religion and Nationalism. To begin at the beginning - the genesis of modern Balkan conflicts began when Constantine moved the Capitol of the Roman Empire east to what is now Turkey in 300 AD. In 395 the Roman Empire split into two parts with both Rome and Constantinople as capitols. In 1054 the Catholic Church split in two parts - Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic. During the same time fame Islam was on the rise. Mohammed flees from Mecca to Medina in 622 and the Muslim calendar begins. The Arabs conquer lands from China to Europe. Islam is firmly entrenched until 1492 when the Moors are finally conquered by Spain. In 1055 another ethnic group moves west from Asia - the Asian Seljuk Turks conquer Baghad - in 1064 Armenia - in 1075 Palestine - in 1453 Constantinople - and in 1517 the Turks capture Egypt and control all of Arabia.

It wasn't until 1572 at the peace of Constantinople that Turkish expansion into Europe and the Balkans was temporarily halted. It took six

years for the European powers to finally stop the Turks at Vienna - 1683 to 1689. This was the high watermark of the Turkish advance into the Balkans. In 1822 Greece declared its independence from Turkey. Turkey invades Greece and Russia declares war on Turkey. This war ends in 1829 when the Turks finally recognize Greek independence. Then in 1853 - the Crimean War begins when Turkey declares war on Russia. A year later - 1854 - Britain and France join Turkey as allies. This war ends in 1856. The decline of the Ottoman Empire becomes self evident when Italy defeats Turkey in 1911 and annexes Tripoli and Libya.

Bulgaria - Greece - Serbia and Montenegro take on Turkey in 1912 - in the Balkan Wars and defeat Turkey in 1913. European Turkey is split between the victors. The Balkan Wars flare up again in 1913 when Bulgaria attacks Serbia and Greece. Romania intervenes and Bulgaria is defeated. Turkish domination of the Balkans ends - however ethnic Turks and Islam remain.

World War I is ignited in 1914 when a Serbian terrorist assassinates Archduke Ferdinand in Bosnia. Turkey - Bulgaria - Austria - Hungary and Germany join in a war against Russia - England - France - Italy and Japan. The treaty of Versailles draws new Balkan boundaries in 1919. World War II begins in 1939. Germany invades the Balkans. After the war is over - new Balkan boundaries are drawn again. In 1991 the Yugoslavian war erupts. Slovenia - Macedonia and Croatia declare their independence from Yugoslavia. Germany recognizes Slovenia and Croatia. In 1992 the United Nations recognizes the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovia. Serbia (Yugoslavia) continues to battle the secessionists.

What we have today is a tinderbox of ethnocentric conflicts between tribal groups. Taking Yugoslavia as a whole (Slovenia - Serbia - Croatia - Macedonia - Kosovo and Montenegro) - Serbians (36%) - Croatians (20%) - Bosnians (10%) - Slovenes (8%) - Albanians (8%) - Macedonians (6%) - Montenegrins (3%) and others (9%). And the tinderbox of religious groups in conflict - Serbian Orthodox (41%) - Roman Catholic (32%) - Muslim (10%) and other Christian (11%). And a national geography of mountains and valleys that leads to isolation and a mentality of us against them not unlike our own Appalachia. And an economic conflict between emerging capitalism and a dictatorship of the proletariat. And who knows how many are Turks have remained behind in Kosovo - Albania - Macedonia and Montenegro.

Short of building a fence around Yugoslavia - dropping weapons in by air and waiting for the tribes to have at each other - there is no solution for a millennium of unresolved territorial and religious disputes. Alexander the Great and his armies came out of this region in 329 BC and conquered the known world - so these folks come from a long line of warriors. Another problem is determining who owns what and when did they own it. Think of Israel and Palestine and the territorial battles there. These disputes go back over a thousand years. Those that are closest to the area - Italy - Germany - Greece - Turkey - Romania - Bulgaria - etc. are reluctant to get involved. Those furthest away - Russia - Great Britain - France and the United States are not and may wind up stationing peace keepers (military troops) there to keep the various factions from killing each other - not unlike the legions of Rome - 2000 years ago. Forecast - if we get involved think of Brer Rabbit - tar baby and a potential for another World War.

Tupelo looked up - after reading the estimate Johnny handed him, "Do you know what information we need?" "Well - there's not much we can do to keep them from fighting. It must be essential for us to know when one of the tribes is going to have at it with another one." "And who best can do that?" "Pat Penny and his Balkan network."

Moscow

Natasha shivered - her apartment felt colder than a Siberian Husky caught outside in a winter snowstorm. At first she thought she felt cold because of her long stay in the South Pacific. Her Mother insisted otherwise, "I can't remember it ever being this cold in Moscow. Wait - now I remember. It was colder the year the Germans were at our gates. Was it 1941 - or 1942. Does it seem that long ago?" "Your memory is always right - Mother. The Germans invaded in 1941. It is only twenty below today, but the wind makes it feel colder. It will get better - soon. The Central Committee has promised a new apartment with my promotion to Colonel." Mother smiled, "A promotion to Colonel and you are so young, but a new apartment. When even our generals are not receiving pay." "It is different when one works directly for the head of state."

When Natasha returned from the South Pacific - The Chairman of The Central Committee called for her to come in to the Kremlin - so he could personally congratulate her. He pinned on three button Colonel shoulder boards to her uniform and kissed her on both cheeks. She received a substantial money bonus from The Central Committee Secretary in his office shortly afterwards. And she was now allowed to shop in a Central Committee private store. Her Mother - who refused to go to KGB stores - would no longer have to que up for food and clothes. And now she was allowed to stay home for her first vacation in years. However - even her new

exalted status could not overcome the chilling cold of one of Moscow's severest winters. And in the back of her doubting Russian peasant mind was a nagging thought, "When everything is right - misfortune is waiting around the corner."

Six weeks later - when the call came for Natasha to return to work - she was rested and ready - even if it meant more training - which she hated. A covered military vehicle came to her apartment in the dark of early morning. She was driven outside of Moscow to a compound surrounded by thick pines - a KGB training facility for special agents. Natasha knew what to expect - she had been through this drill many times before. First a complete medical examination and then the strength and flexibility tests. As usual - she passed these with the highest marks. Then - she received an update on the latest silent killing techniques followed by intense study on current terrorists - other country's agents and world activity. She was surprised, "They didn't cover my latest effort in the South Pacific." But she kept this thought to herself. Still - an alarm bell began to ring in the back of her mind. Weapons training was the last item - before she could return to Moscow. By the end of the week Natasha had requalified as a top weapons expert. She was pleased, but she knew shooting at paper targets meant little. She knew, "To shoot to kill at a live target - now that takes will not just skill."

Natasha returned to her apartment in the dead of night - as she left - in a covered military vehicle. Her Mother was waiting, "Do you want me to stay - or can I return home." "You may go home. When I am called - my belongings will be transferred to my new apartment." "Where is it?" "With the ministers - near the Kremlin. Have you shopped at the new store?" "No - I looked in, but it did not feel right. I was not dressed well enough." "Come back tomorrow. I will take you - so that you will feel comfortable."

The phone rang six times, but this time the call was not from The Central Committee. It was from a lady in the Moscow Housing Authority. And very pleasant - she announced, "Your apartment is available. We can move you in tomorrow morning. If you agree - I'll have your dishes packed today." Natasha was speechless, "Of course. Your people - are they reliable? Mother and I will be shopping this afternoon." "Your move is our top priority. I give you my personal guarantee - there will be no problems. This is a ministerial move." Natasha hung up and dialed her Mother, "I will be moving into my apartment tomorrow. While they are packing this afternoon - you and I will shop for food and to take it over there." "We can both see it." "You have not seen it?" "No - the minister still lived there." "What happened to him?" "He was transferred to the east." "Siberia?" "No - Kamchatka." "Will I be allowed to stay in your apartment when you are away?" "Of course - you are my Mother."

Her move was fast - clean - efficient - smoother than Natasha expected - in Moscow. Not one piece of furniture scratched - or dish broken. And her apartment! It was like one of the hotel suites in Hollywood movies - six spacious rooms - two bathrooms - a kitchen - a garage for her auto and warm - it even had a thermostat. Her Mother was in shock, "So this is how our government ministers live. Not even our Tsar had rooms this large. How much space do you have?" "I am told over three-thousand square meters." "Six families could live in here and not bump into each other. When will your children see it?" "Not until spring. Do you think they will like it?" "I'm not sure. It is so large. It will take getting used too."

This time when the telephone rang six times - Natasha knew it was a call from The Central Committee. And it was The Secretary, "How do you like your new home?" "I am very pleased. It is so large - and warm. Is it appropriate to

thank you and The Central Committee?" "I am happy to have been of service." "Is this a business call?" "Yes - a car will arrive in an hour." "Should I pack?" "No - you will have plenty of time for that." Her mental alarm bell rang again.

Natasha - dressed in a Colonel's uniform - her hair still damp from a quick bath - braved the northwest wind in the center courtyard. Not only did her new building have the very finest of Russian military guards - entrance could only be gained through the courtyard. A black limousine stood waiting. She entered the back seat wondering, "When did we switch to Mercedes?" And as an afterthought, "How many more rides will I take before my assassin comes in the night?" The limo moved silently over the snow - out onto Moscow's streets. She watched snowflake after snowflake stick and melt on her window, "When will I become a liability? Is it now? I could easily have become an albatross around the neck of my government. It is time for me to make plans - for my family and me - if we are to survive. I wonder why Bulgar did not? Hubris! It had to be blind pride. That would not happen to a Russian woman. We trust no one."

Natasha followed her two man military escort to The Secretary's office. She waited in the outer room - watching his military aid shuffle through a stack of papers and correspondence. Her military escort stayed on - standing at attention on both sides of her chair. Her mental alarm bell rang even louder, "I have never been kept waiting before. And meetings were always held in the inner conference room. The one between The Chairman and Secretary's offices." The Secretary's military aid stood up, "Colonel Natasha - The Secretary is ready." Natasha's escort led the way. One opened the door while the other stood at attention. She entered to The Secretary's greeting, "Welcome Colonel" and the door closed after her. He pointed to a chair, "Please

sit down. Will you join me in a cup of tea?" Natasha felt like a cow walking up the ramp to the slaughterhouse - at the moment in time it smelled death inside. She nodded, "Yes" demurely and sat down in an overstuffed chair. The Secretary poured tea into two golden cups and sat facing Natasha - a small tea table in-between - in a solid wood chair - looking down on her. Neither spoke for what seemed like two minutes to Natasha. She finally broke the silence, "How may I be of assistance to Mother Russia?" The Secretary reached inside his coat pocket and removed a white envelope. He slid it across the table. Natasha picked it up before it fell on the floor. He motioned with his hand for her not to open it, "You may open it" - he nodded toward the door to the inner conference room, "in there." When he stood up - she did - too. His eyes were vacant as he spoke, "Leave the envelope and its contents on the table when you leave." He kissed her on both cheeks, "Good hunting - Tovarishch!"

Natasha walked to the inner conference room door - her eyes straight ahead. Her military escort - now on the other side opened the door as she approached. She sat down at the conference table and opened the envelope:

Your targets are Pat Penny - his wife Patricia Penny and his Stepdaughter Penelope Penny. Their current location is Villa Penny outside of Budapest - Hungary. You are authorized to pursue at will. You may depart for Budapest in six days - no sooner. Until then - your time is your own.

Natasha folded her orders - placed them in the envelope - laid it on the table and stood up. She smoothed out her uniform skirt. One of her military escort opened the door to the hall and she followed - briskly to the hall outside. All

of the Kremlin doors opened as she approached - as if she was being rushed from one to another and out of the building. Outside - her limo door opened as she approached and closed as she entered. Inside she allowed herself to think, "Pat Penny? He is fish food in Hawaii. Are the orders real or a sham? If he is alive - he and his family will be impossible to approach at his Villa. And his wife and daughter - too. Why?" At that moment - her mental alarm bell drowned out all other thoughts. As the limo turned onto Moscow's streets - she slowly gathered her thoughts, "Very unusual - I was not given a time limit. And even more unusual - I was not given my usual support. I was not even given a name to contact at our Hungarian Embassy. Natasha - I believe it is time to begin planning a family escape. The bells of hell are going ring-a-ling for you, but not for them."

Her limo sped through the streets of Moscow to a very familiar haunt - the KGB special armory. The one reserved for agents - licensed to commit wet procedures. Where she met her husband and sharpened her sense of smell on the aroma of black powder. The limousine entered an empty underground parking garage - slowly approaching the far wall - blinking its headlights six times - then six times more and six times more. The cement wall moved upwards. The limo moved forward into an immense underground man made cavern and stopped at the far end. Her driver opened the door, "I will wait until you return - Colonel." "Go to the canteen and have tea. I will be awhile."

Natasha strode through empty corridors to her personal supply of weapons, "The silence is unnerving. I remember when this armory was alive with activity. I suspect I am the last of my kind - a dying breed - no longer needed by my Country." She unlocked her personal gun cabinet and selected a high powered rifle - two pistols and a silencer for each. She looked at the other cabinets. All were empty. An orderly

appeared. She handed him her weapons, "Take these to the firing range. Where are the others?" "There are no others - Colonel." "Is the canteen open?" "Yes - they are waiting - with your special order."

Natasha looked inside the canteen and smiled, "You remembered!" She carried away a platter filled high with Russian country sausage to a table behind a partition that was reserved for special agents. She sat down to strong - dark tea - buttered black Russian bread and a mound of greasy sausage links. She nibbled on a sausage end and looked around, "The condemned Colonel eats a hearty meal and for a change no one is around to watch." Natasha gorged herself. Droplets of grease dripped from her chin to the plate as she devoured sausage link - after sausage link - after sausage link. The glaze finally lifted from her eyes as she buttered a thick slice of black Russian bread. Alert again - she wiped the grease away from her fingers and from around her mouth. She sipped the last drop of tea from her teacup and pushed the chair away from the table.

Except for the single orderly - Natasha was alone at the range. She selected her ammunition - carefully weighing each bullet - discarding those that were more than a half a gram off her specified weight. She called for the orderly to come over, "I had to throw out half of these bullets. What is the problem?" We lack personnel. When you leave today and your weapons are shipped - the armory will close down." "How many are left?" "Me - the cook and a caretaker." "When I am finished - make sure my weapons and the bullets I select are sent to our embassy in Hungary. My life may depend on it" He nodded, "Yes" and backed away - returning to his spotter's station. Natasha loaded two rounds and fired - repeated this process until she had tested one weapon after another. There was only one hole in the center of her hand gun target and only one in the high powered rifle target. After cleaning

each weapon she handed all three to the orderly and waited. He sealed each weapon in plastic and placed them carefully in a sturdy wooden box. After the boxes were sealed - Natasha thanked him, "Remember - to our embassy in Budapest" She stopped at the Director's office to say goodbye.

The door was open. She looked inside - it was empty. She walked to her office to check for messages. It was empty - her desk and all of her personal belongings were gone. She walked across the hall and looked into Bulgar's old office. It was exactly as he had left it. Even the wall decorations were still up, "He has his memorial - will I have one? No - who would see it?" She walked quickly to the entrance and stepped outside into the parking garage. She breathed a sigh of relief, "At least my limousine is still here. Calm down Natasha - you are too nervous. Soon you will be jumping away from shadows." Her driver held the door open, "To your apartment - Colonel?" "Drive around the outskirts of Moscow. I need time to think and looking at fresh snowfall is the best tonic."

Natasha leaned back and closed her eyes, "I am the last of a new breed of assassins. We were trained to kill without remorse and without joy. Our training was complete. I feel no remorse and my only joy is in a flawless execution of my work. Therein lies the error my superiors made when they trained us. I will execute a flawless escape - not only for me, but for my family - too. But - I am late. My timetable was for next winter - when our borders will be more porous. Slow down Natasha - haste is an error waiting to happen." She opened her eyes - looked out at a countryside covered in white snow and closed them again. "I must not alert anyone above me - or those below. I must ignore the obvious - that the world around me has changed and give the appearance that all is normal. I have six days before I must leave. More than enough time for a warm vacation at a Black Sea dacha.

Will that raise a red flag? Each year we vacation on the Black Sea. This is earlier than normal, but not out of the ordinary. We can escape from there. I have a friend who will do anything for my affection. But to where? Slow down Natasha - you will find a place and a way. Take your time and think this through."

She opened her eyes again and signaled for the driver to return to Moscow. She looked out the window - counting snow flakes, "What did Bulgar do when he knew his time was coming? Nothing - if he knew he did nothing. He didn't know it was his time until he discovered that I was the one. He should have known when I was assigned to work with him. He always worked alone. And when he discovered it was me - all he did was replace the poison I carried in my purse with water. Was it pride - love of country - or stupidity that made him stay when it was time to go? No - it was none of those. It was loyalty that killed him. He was from the old school. I am not. Should I follow his example - remain loyal and die? I am from peasant stock. He was from the aristocracy. I will survive." She sat up as the limousine entered the center courtyard of her apartment building. The driver opened the door, "Will you need me - later?" "Not today - I will remain here. Tomorrow - yes."

As Natasha opened the door to her apartment - an escape plan unfolded in her mind. She closed the door and removed her coat, "I will call today. My children will leave school tomorrow and return home. If I am going to save them - I must act now. She picked up the phone and dialed MWR - the KGB Morale - Welfare and Recreation office. A fat - lazy sounding - pig of a bureaucrat answered, "It is late - call back tomorrow." "This is Colonel Natasha Noscent. If I call on you tomorrow it will be to kill you. Do you understand?" She could feel the hair rise on the pig's back. Within KGB her fame had spread. She could feel the fear in his voice as

it broke - when he responded in a fawning tone, "Your wish is my command - Colonel. Where do you want to go." "Do you have my file?" He reached into the VIP drawer, "Yes." "I will need a dacha on the Black Sea - the one I used last year - for six days. And arrange transportation for me - my two children and my Mother for tomorrow afternoon." "You are eligible for one much larger - with servants." "My children love this dacha. Maybe I will convince them of a minister's dacha the next time. Can we look at one while we are there?" "I will arrange it. Is there anything else?" "Have it ready - including food."

Natasha hung up - smiling to herself, "So far - so good. My pattern will look normal. A Black Sea vacation with my family - before going away on a mission fits my pattern. The Central Committee will not be concerned. I will be watched from now on. If so - I will use this surveillance to my advantage. I will use my watchers as they use me. It will be a fun game - and the stakes will be high - my life and there death." Natasha telephoned her children's academies and cleared the way for their return home. At first - the academies refused to cooperate. No one was allowed out in mid term except for a death in the family. Natasha gave them The Central Committee priority number and all resistance ceased. Natasha telephoned her Mother. A trip south after Father Frost had long overstayed his welcome was an eagerly awaited tonic. Natasha hung up and began to undress, "All that remains is for me to arrange the date and refuge for my family's departure to the west."

Natasha pulled the drapes. Her new apartment was to close to the street to display her body for all to see. She made tea and prepared a hot bath, "It is wonderful to have an apartment so warm. I can walk around without clothes - free at last. I am not hungry, but what is it I want? Now I remember - the drink Colonel Ropp made for me. Vodka and

ginger beer - a Moscow Mule. I do not have ginger beer. I do have vodka - tomato juice and hot pepper. I will make a Bloody Mary. It is time to get used to western ways. You will do fine - Natasha. You are trained in their language and customs. And we no longer train assassins. It will be difficult for them if they send an untrained one after me." She mixed her drink - pouring in two fingers of vodka. The hot pepper made her cough - and then smile. Natasha peeked out through the curtains and took one last look at the night snows of Moscow. She stared at the headlights on the street - shining like stars through a light snowfall, "I will miss your quiet nights - Mother of all the Russias. I will miss you even more if I am no longer alive. It is better to be a live expatriate than a dead loyalist. When the government changes - again - I may yet return. She slipped into her hot bath - slowly from the back of the sunken tub - her thoughts on her family - where they should go ashore after an escape across the Black Sea.

Natasha awoke early - to the aroma of spicy Russian sausage. Her children were being picked up at eight-thirty. She frowned, "They will never see our new apartment. Maybe it is better that they don't. Her Mother arrived last night and slept over. She looked at the clock, "Six in the morning and Mother has begun breakfast." Last night - Natasha was the one that insisted they pack light. Her Mother agreed but raised her eyebrows when she saw Natasha pack their most precious family mementos. As usual - she worried, "They may break on our flight." "Mother - until I'm certain about the security here - we must take them with us. We will be on our own private flight - we carry our luggage on board." Natasha smiled as she dressed, "Mother knows. She is a peasant like me. She can smell when there is a change of season in the air. Soon - I will tell her, but not until we arrive on the Black Sea. She would not go if I do. It will take all of our vacation to convince her."

Inside the limousine - on their way to Moscow's airport - Anna and Peter - Natasha's children - couldn't contain their excitement. A trip to the Black Sea in the middle of a cold Russian winter was a treat in itself. To vacation at their favorite dacha - was butter on the bread. They weren't even upset with their Mother when she made them carry their academy lessons. She did not let on that the lessons were a subterfuge. That would come later - at a family meeting. Anna - her daughter bubbled over, "Will we get to see the great Black Sea Fleet?" Natasha had been waiting for this opening, "Yes and if Oleg Mastrovsky's ship is in port - I will arrange a visit. Calm down you two. You're like an inmate celebrating early release from one of our Siberian gulags." Natasha smiled - even she was caught up in their holiday mood.

Her driver entered through the private gate at Moscow's airport and drove straight to their plane. Anna hopped out and looked it over. She called back excitedly, "It's an Ilyushin Il-18 turboprop. We must be traveling with a very important person. Who is it?" Her Grandmother beamed, "It is your Mother. She has been promoted and given the courtesy reserved only for government ministers." A steward walked down the entry ramp, "Colonel Noscent?" "Yes." "Where do you want your luggage?" "Is there anyone else traveling with us?" "No." "On board with us in the passenger compartment. My children have studies to complete."

The limousine driver drove a safe distance away from Il-18 and telephoned his control, "They are boarding now." "Anything unusual?" "No - they have luggage for only a short visit. They have the appearance of a happy family on their way to a Black Sea vacation. Colonel Noscent mentioned a Black Sea Fleet Captain - Oleg Mastrovsky. Her children want to see the Black Sea Fleet and the Colonel said they could visit the Captain's ship if he is in port." "Was Natasha's

Mother with her?" "Yes." "And you saw or heard nothing unusual?" "No - Colonel Noscent is as usual - not very talkative."

Sevastopol - Black Sea

Natasha telephoned The Central Committee Secretary's office from a secure military phone at the airport as soon as they landed in Sevastopol, "We are vacationing at a Black Sea dacha. I will leave from here on a direct flight to Hungary in five days. Can you make the arrangements?" His military aid asked, "For yourself or for you and your family?" "Only for me. My family will stay on for a week or two and return to Moscow. If things go right - I may be back at the same time as they are. Are there any changes to my instructions?" "No - continue on as you were directed." When she walked out on the tarmac - her limousine stood ready - packed and doors open. The driver asked, "To your dacha - Colonel. Yes - my children are anxious to begin their vacation. Has your weather been warm?" "For Moscow - yes. For our Black Sea resort - no. We have too many days below freezing, but a warm front is due tomorrow." "Then your weather will be better tomorrow. I order it to be so." And her children laughed. After they arrived - only Natasha noticed the watcher - his line in the water - fishing several hundred meters down the beach.

Natasha - her arms folded in front of her - clinging to an open cardigan sweater - stared out toward a sea matching its name. A cold forbidding water - painted black from the shade of low - thick - dark clouds. The dark skies and wind carried with them a cold afternoon mist. But this rain did not deter her children. As soon as the luggage was inside their dacha - they changed into swimsuits and dashed across the sand toward the sea. Natasha shivered from mental chill as she watched her children swim in Black Sea winter waters.

She turned away, "I wonder - would I have gone in water that cold when I was that young? Silly woman - don't you remember chopping through the ice on Moscow's river? You were the first to jump in and the last to climb out."

She picked up the phone and dialed the Black Sea Fleet headquarters and inquired, "Is Captain Oleg Mastrovsky's ship in port?" The duty officer replied, "I am not allowed to provide ship information." "I am Colonel Natasha Noscent. My Central Committee number is ...". There was only a slight delay before an answer came in a trembling voice, "Captain Mastrovsky's ship is the Grisha Corvette - *Orca*. His ship is first in line at our main dock. May I advise him of your inquiry?" Natasha looked at her watch, "Yes and send a car for me. I will visit his ship this afternoon." Natasha hung up, "A Grisha Corvette! My dear friend Oleg has moved up in his naval world."

Natasha was piped aboard Captain Mastrovsky's ship with the courtesy and flourish of a Russian Fleet Admiral. Oleg greeted her at the top of the gangplank - kissing her on both cheeks, "Welcome aboard - Colonel. I see we have reached the same rank, but you - you have the status of a minister. May I inquire why you are honoring my ship with a visit? Have you decided to accept my offer of marriage?" Natasha kissed Oleg on both cheeks, "It is the best offer I have received. Aren't you going to offer a lady the courtesy of tea?" "Of course." He dismissed his ceremonial sailors and took Natasha's arm in his - leading her to his cabin.

He opened the door, "Would you care for a drink stronger than tea?" Natasha smiled and held his hand, "Vodka and orange juice. I am on vacation here - with my family. This is not an official visit." Oleg poured two glasses - mixed to Natasha's specifications and sat down beside her. He raised his glass, "Za Vacha Zdorovye - my sweet one." "What

does your ship's name - *Orca* stand for. It is not Russian."
"*Orca* is Latin for killer whale. A very appropriate name for an antisubmarine warfare ship don't you think?" Natasha sipped the warm mixture of vodka and sweet orange liquid from her glass and placed her hand on Oleg's inner thigh - resting it there - gathering warmth. Oleg - visibly bothered and sexually aroused - stood up and refilled his glass to the brim with vodka. He drank half - locked his cabin door and removed his uniform coat. He drank the rest of the glass - refilled it with vodka - removed his tie - and unbuttoned his shirt. When he turned around - Natasha was resting on his bunk - her sweater and skirt on the floor - without clothes. Oleg drained his glass and removed the rest of his uniform. When he turned around - Natasha was under the sheets smiling - beckoning for him to approach with her forefinger. Oleg stumbled over his shorts as he attempted to remove them and hurried to Natasha's side - his shorts still hanging from one ankle. He collapsed in her arms.

Afterwards - Oleg rested his head on his hand - admiring Natasha's smooth skin - sleek lines and the perfect arch of her breasts, "If I had known we would be this good together - I would have continued my pursuit of you in spite of your objections. Have you decided to accept my proposal?" "Yes - we will be married - soon. But first we must speak" - she nodded with her head toward the speaker on the wall and Oleg nodded, "Yes." He sat up, "It is time for you to see my ship." "And Russian sausage and tea in your wardroom?" "I will arrange it. When will we be married. I wish to make an announcement of our intentions to my superiors." "Not now, but soon my love - soon." Natasha knew this conversation would be recorded. It was her wish that it be transmitted to Moscow. Only then would The Central Committee know of her passionate love affair. And it would give purpose to her choice of vacation.

Outside - on their tour of his ship - Oleg stopped below the navigation radar. He held her hand, "Now we can talk. I can't stop the rotation of this damn radar and it can't be repaired. We have no spare parts. The noise of its rotation will cover our conversation." Natasha spoke with directness - in full command of herself and Oleg, "Marriage was but one of the reasons I sought you out - I have come to collect a debt of honor." "I have not forgotten that I am indebted to your late husband. He saved my life. He pulled me down - out of the line of fire when we were in special KGB weapons training class." Natasha did not mention that it was she who was aiming at Oleg. She took his hand in hers, "It is time for you to save his family." "I will. What task do you have for me?" "I need transportation to a safe harbor for my Mother and children. Can your ship accommodate them?" "Are you defecting?" Natasha studied his face - looking for deceit. He continued, "If you are and we are to be married - I will not wither away in our homeland. I will go with you." "And my family?" "I will carry them like precious cargo - when and to wherever you wish." "Where do you recommend?" "The Bulgarian Coast - near Sabia - on the border of Romania. My ship is scheduled to sail in twelve days." "Will you come along?" "Of course. Where will you be?" "I have a mission in Hungary for The Central Committee. I will meet you on the coast. Can you give me a precise location and time." "We will make landfall on the beach six miles north of Sabia at six in the morning sixteen days from now. Can you have a car ready and safe passage arranged to the west for our escape?" "Yes - come to my dacha for dinner tonight. I will introduce you to my family. Can you stay for the night?" "Of course. Is it safe to talk there?" "I have at least one watcher and of course the dacha has microphones. We can speak as we walk along the beach - like two lovers should. And we'll have a full moon." "We can make our final arrangements as we walk." Natasha squeezed his hand, "Are you hungry? I am - for your sausage and tea."

Natasha turned - smiled and waved to Oleg from the dock at the bottom of the gangplank - then turned away and walked along the docks to her waiting limousine. As her driver opened the door - she entered - thinking, "I will never marry Captain Oleg Mastrovsky. The thought of going through life with such a brute makes me shudder. Oleg is a pig among pigs - a lout among louts. But - he is very athletic in bed - eager to perform his duty. What endurance! What stamina! It could have been the vodka. Natasha smiled to herself as her limousine left the naval yard, "The Central Committee will now believe I am in love. A Black Widow never loves its prey after she uses it. Devour - yes."

Captain Oleg Mastrovsky arrived at the dacha promptly at six. He brought along a sailor's uniform and two Sea Cadet uniforms in a Russian Navy duffel bag. He kissed Natasha on both cheeks, "These are for your children to wear when they visit my ship." He pointed to the sailor's uniform, "A gift for your Mother. She will need something to wear in the cold sea air." Natasha took the gifts and handed them to her daughter - Anna, "Why don't you and Peter run upstairs and try on these uniforms while Captain Mastrovsky and I take a walk on the beach." "Yes - Mother. What if they don't fit?" "Your Grandmother is an excellent seamstress."

As they walked along - Natasha spoke, "The clouds have covered a full moon. Have you made arrangements for your ship to be along the Bulgarian Coast at the prescribed time? And will you be able to carry my children?" "I have made all the arrangements. What about your Mother?" "She refuses to go. Mother will not leave her friends behind in Moscow for an uncertain future in a strange new world." "Isn't your Mother worried about what will happen to her if you defect?" "Not in our brave new world order. The Central Committee may come after you and me, but never an old woman. She will bring our children to your ship when the time comes and stay

behind - covering their departure. She will not return to Moscow until you and our children are safely ashore." They continued walking along the beach - carrying their shoes - in silence.

As they turned to walk back to the dacha - Natasha held Oleg's arm with her hand. She squeezed it, "How will I guide your boat to shore?" "We will use a simple code. You will have to buy a lantern. At exactly ten minutes to six in the morning - as I approach - I will blink my lantern six times. You will blink yours six in response - wait sixty seconds and blink six times again. I will blink mine six times. Then leave your lantern on steady - to guide my boat to shore." "Will your ship remain in port until you sail?" "Yes - our Black Sea Fleet is short of funds. Our time at sea has been severely restricted. I am under orders not to depart any sooner than twelve days from now." "The sea air has done wonders for my appetite. Mother has prepared beef and sausage for dinner and I have brought along French wine from The Central Committee store. You and I will celebrate our engagement in style - tonight." As they crossed the sand to her dacha - Natasha looked around for a watcher and saw none. She was about to mention how strange this was to Oleg, but decided not too. Instead - she laughed and ran on ahead - wet sand flying from the soles of her feet. She turned and mocked a much slower Oleg. As she sat next to him on the porch steps - wiping sand from their feet. Natasha looked out on the Black Sea - as calm and dark as its name. In the quiet of evening it came to her - like lightning in a bottle. She knew and hoped that Oleg did not.

When Oleg left Natasha's bed and returned to his ship in the dark of early morning - Natasha did not return to bed. She entered the kitchen and began to prepare a breakfast of sausage and black Russian bread for her family. When all was ready - she climbed the stairs and whispered to her sleeping

children, "Wash your faces and come downstairs for breakfast. I have an important matter to discuss with you. Be quiet. Do not wake your Grandmother." Anna whispered back, "Are you going to marry Captain Mastrovsky?" Natasha smiled, "Do you want me too?" "No - he smells and he is such a dolt. I do not want him for my father." "Can you keep a secret my little one?" "With my life." "I told Oleg I will marry him, but I will not. I need his assistance. Please - my darling - hold this secret as you would protect your life - it will depend on it."

Natasha decided to wait for Anna and Peter to finish their breakfast before beginning a family discussion. Peter stood up - ready to run out to the beach. Natasha stopped him by touching his arm, "Sit down. We must discuss your future - whether we will be together or apart. When I am finished - I will give you two choices. You must choose between leaving our country or staying with your Grandmother. I have been promoted and given the privileges of a minister. But - dear ones - that is but a ruse. If I stay in Russia - I will be eliminated. If I am to remain alive - I must flee our homeland. If you choose to stay - you will be thrown out of your academies. You will lose all of your privileges. You will live in Grandmother's one room apartment - or return with her to our ancestor's village. If you decide to go with me - we will make a new life in the west where we will have privileges that are beyond your wildest dreams. Your choice is this - to remain here in poverty or go with me to a land of opportunity. It is up to each of you to decide. I will respect your decision. I am going to sit out on the front porch and drink tea while you make up your minds."

Anna opened the front door, "Mother - we have decided. Come in and freshen up your tea." Natasha poured a fresh cup of tea and sat down at the kitchen table with her children, "What is your decision?" Anna spoke, "If we go with you -

how are we to leave and where will we go?" "You will depart on the Captain Oleg Mastrovsky's Grisha Corvette *Orka* in eleven days. He will carry you to shore in a long boat four days later. That is why he brought Sea Cadet uniforms. I have business in Hungary. I leave in four days. I will be waiting for you on the Bulgarian Coast and we will drive to Hungary. After that - I do not know. England or America - wherever I receive the best offer." Anna spoke for both of them, "We will go with you Mother." Natasha held them in her arms, "You have made me very happy. Now my little ones - do not tell anyone about our plans. Our lives depend on your silence. Obey Captain Mastrovsky, but if you think he is placing your lives in danger - save yourselves first and damn the consequences."

*"One if by land
and two if by sea -
And I on the opposite
shore shall be -"*

Budapest Hungary

Natasha breezed through airport security. And her bags sailed through unchecked - as befitted her new ministerial status. As she waited for her flight - Natasha looked for, but could not find the expected tagalong. She was relieved and worried at the same time, "There has always been one." She slapped her left fist against the right palm, "Natasha - calm down. You're letting emotions control your brain. Your driver reports to his control and his control reports to his superior and he does the same. The Central Committee knows your every move. Stay alert - if security is lax on this end death will certainly be waiting on the other."

Natasha's flight was not a pleasant one. Flying on a regional carrier meant her First Class seat was the same as Coach. The tea was as cold as the sausages. And it didn't get any better when she arrived at Budapest Airport. She was greeted by the lowest ranking member of the Cultural Attachés staff. He introduced himself with a tenor whine, "My name is David. You are to follow me." "I am Colonel Natasha Noscent and you will show my rank and ministerial status respect or you will be reassigned to an embassy in hell." David's dress was as scruffy as his demeanor. A mousy middle aged man - thin - with thick glasses and a permanently bent over gait - he refused to handle her luggage through customs. Natasha made a mental note, "If I must eliminate an assassin from among our embassy personnel - this David will join him in hell." As she entered the waiting embassy car - she slammed the door in David's face and rolled down the window, "You are

the lowest level of pond scum. You are ordered to return to the embassy on foot. Now - enjoy your walk home!" Natasha ordered the embassy driver - a Hungarian, "Drive on - we are leaving that impostor here. He cannot be Russian. He must be a Kosovar."

She leaned back - her head against the headrest - and closed her eyes, "Is this a premeditated effort to put me off guard? They must have known that wimp would irritate and distract me." Natasha focused her mind on nothingness and slowly her inner calm returned. She opened her eyes, "I must pay attention to the passing scenery. I may be on my own in this Budapest - much sooner than I expect. If my intuition is correct - they will believe I have all ready fallen into their trap. I thought they would send only one assassin. I am honored - The Central Committee may have sent an entire squad of assassins.

Natasha watched the passing scenery with admiration, "What an unusual town - with Buda on one side of the Danube and Pest on the other. It is much more alive than I expected - like the movies I saw of Paris when I was in Washington DC. Restaurants and Cafes dot the streets. They have repaired the damage our tanks did during the uprising. When was it? Think Natasha - remember your history lesson - it was 1956. Has it been that long? The Hungarian people certainly seem happy and free." Her limo passed by a restaurant that caught her eye, "Strange - a German restaurant? In Budapest." Her driver answered, "*Rhine Jager?* it is owned by the Penny family. It is our finest - they use only food grown at their Villa in the country outside of town. Would you like a reservation for dinner tonight?" Natasha covered a broadening smile with her hand, "I'm not certain - I'll think on it." She closed her eyes, "I can't believe my good fortune. I have found Three Penny Pat's Achilles' heel on my drive in from the airport." She asked, "How far away is the restaurant from

our embassy?" Her driver responded, "Less than two miles. Have you changed your mind about the restaurant reservation?" "Yes - for seven." "Will you dine alone?" "Yes."

Inside - in the courtyard of the embassy - the Cultural Attaché opened the door for Natasha, "Didn't my assistant greet you at the airport?" "Is that who he was? He decided to walk home. Can I get my clothes pressed by someone on the embassy staff? I just came from a vacation on the Black Sea and dampness has ruined the creases in my skirts." The attaché frowned, "David is one of my best men. We have valet service - Colonel. How long do you plan to stay?" "Until my mission is finished." "Can I or my staff be of assistance?" "Thank you. If I need you or your staff - I will give you ample notice. Did my box arrive from Moscow?" "It is in your room. You will need claw hammer and clippers to remove the metal straps and nails." "Have them sent up with the valet. Is the embassy kitchen open?" "It will be." "Have the cook prepare a sausages and black Russian bread and send it up to my room." "May I ask where my assistant is now?" "Between here and the airport."

Natasha followed the maid upstairs to her rooms - the VIP quarters reserved for one of her exalted ministerial rank - a bath - sitting room and bedroom. Natasha shooed the maid out of the room, "I do not need your assistance to unpack my things. Have the cook hurry with my order of sausages." She checked the sitting room. A wooden crate was in the center - on the floor. She returned to the bedroom and laid out the clothes she wanted pressed on the bed. The rest she placed in drawers - or hung up in the closet. Natasha turned on the hot water faucet and began to fill the tub. She frowned as brown water cascaded from rusty pipes. She removed the stopper and let the water run until it turned clear. The tub was halfway full when she heard a knock on the door. She turned the faucet off and shouted, "I'm coming."

Natasha called out, "Who is it?" A man answered, "The valet. I've come to pick up your clothes." Natasha placed her ear close to the door and listened - to determine if there was more than one. Satisfied - she turned the dead bolt and stepped to one side and threw open the door. A metallic object caught her eye - the silencer on the end of a pistol. Her defensive response was quicker than a lightning bolt strike on the Steppes. She grabbed the valet's elbow and hand with a vice like grip - turning the pistol inward - toward his stomach. The rapid fire pistol made muffled percussion sounds as its magazine emptied into the valet's abdomen. He collapsed on the floor with a groan. Natasha removed the pistol from his hand, "An excellent choice of weapon." The last words he heard were, "The damp air of Sevastopol really has wrinkled my woolens. They do need a good pressing."

Natasha laid the pistol down on the end table - grabbed the valet by his feet and drug his lifeless body into the sitting room. She placed it behind the couch - out of sight of the door. Then she checked his pockets and found a spare magazine for the pistol. She removed the empty magazine and replaced it with a new one - bolted the door - braced it with a chair and returned to the bathroom. Natasha turned on the faucet and filled the tub the rest of the way. She undressed - pinned her hair up so it wouldn't get wet and slid slowly into the tub - until she was fully immersed. She sat up and soaped her body, "If I was not concerned for my safety - I would have stormed out of her and taken a room at a Budapest hotel. A contract has been activated and here is where it has begun. I can control the beginning, but after that? Of course I can, but if there had been three at the door. I am not certain. So it begins. What will I do now? I will have to leave the embassy soon. Will they make another attempt here - and soon?" Natasha leaned back - staring at the ceiling until the answer came - as it always did.

Natasha toweled off - but did not unpin her hair. She arranged it with meticulous care until she looked more like a peasant than a princess. She was almost fully dressed when she heard another knock on the door, "Who is it?" "Your food from the kitchen." She picked up the weapon from the end table and hid it behind her back before opening the door. A kitchen helper pushed the cart in and began to uncover one of the plates. She brought her weapon forward and fired once into his forehead and rushed forward - making sure he did not fall onto her dinner. His hand carried the cover with it to the floor. On the platter - another pistol - a copy of the one she had just used. Natasha lifted the cover from the other plate and breathed a sigh of relief. Her sausage and bread were underneath. She picked up a link and put it right back down, "It looks clean, but I can't be too careful. The next effort might be poison."

Natasha found the spare magazine in the kitchen helper's pocket, "Now I have three magazines." She opened the crate and removed her weapons. She used the claw hammer to damage all of the firing mechanisms so that they would no longer function without major repair and kept the first weapon for her own use. She picked up a phone and called Security, "There has been two accidents. I will need a cleanup crew." Natasha phoned the Cultural attaché, "Have a car for my use in the courtyard in ten minutes." "Do you wish a driver?" "No - I have an international license." Natasha packed one bag with essentials, "I hate to leave the rest of my things, but I must travel light." Although she no longer felt safe here - Natasha knew that this would be the last attempt on her life at the embassy - today. She also knew, "It is time for me to find a hotel room."

Natasha placed all the unneeded and no longer working weapons inside the crate and resealed it. She placed the pistol and extra magazines inside her purse and waited. For

the third time in the last hour there was a knock on her door. She asked, "Who is it?" "Security cleanup crew." "Come in with your weapons holstered." This time - Natasha held her weapon in firing position and slowly opened the door. Four large Security thugs entered - staying a discreet distance away - nodding in her direction. As they entered she picked up her suitcase - shouldered her purse and left by the back stairs - through the kitchen. Her auto was waiting inside the courtyard - door open - keys inside. Natasha gave it a quick check. She found explosives inside the engine compartment. They were on a timer - set to go off fifteen minutes after she started the motor. She hopped inside and turned the key.

Five blocks from the embassy Natasha pulled off the road next to David - the asistant Cultural attaché - still walking back to the embassy. She opened the driver's door and hopped out - extracting her purse and suitcase. She smiled, "I have been thrown out of the embassy and ordered to find you. You are to return the car." David - out of breath and dog tired from a ten mile walk hopped in without a word and did a U turn - driving away at high speed away toward the embassy. Natasha flagged down the next trolley and climbed onboard. Three minutes later she heard a muffled explosion and looked back. A column of black smoke rose from the direction of the Russian Embassy. She smiled, "He made it inside the interior courtyard. That makes three down and with a little luck - a few more in the courtyard. What rank amateurs. The Central Committee is scraping the bottom of the barrel." Natasha patted her purse - her fingers tracing the outline of the weapon inside and felt secure.

The trolley rolled to a scheduled stop and the lady sitting next to Natasha walked out - leaving her newspaper behind. Natasha picked it up, "I must find a place to stay until I pick up my children. A hotel or anything short term

will send up a red flag. That is the third place they will look after the train station and airport. Indecision is not in my makeup - yet it is clouding my thoughts. I have enough money to live well for a year in my Swiss bank account. But - I have declared my freedom - too soon. Will my children escape from Sevastopol? And Three Penny Pat - is he really alive or is it all a ruse? It matters not. Alive or dead - I cannot and will not complete this mission. But - I must find work and save my funds for a rainy day."

Natasha looked out the window as her trolley stopped in downtown Budapest. It was there before her eyes - *Ruhe Jager* - Pat Penny's restaurant. She stood up and climbed down out of the trolley thinking, "This is a delicious thought." On a spur of the moment - she decided to seek employment at Three Penny Pat's restaurant. Natasha stopped in front of a store window - piled her hair up higher into a bun - removed a pair of large glasses from her purse and donned them. She patted her hair, "Natasha - you would fool your own children and you do speak an aristocratic form of Hungarian." She walked to the side door of *Ruhe Jager* and rang the bell. The Maitre d' opened the door and asked in French, "Are you inquiring about the receptionist position we have open?" Natasha could not believe her luck, "Yes" she replied in French, "I am running away from an abusive husband. I have just arrived in town from Pecs and heard of your opening." The Maitre d' looked her over and thought, "What luck - she speaks French - wears expensive clothes and her purse and suitcase are Italian leather. She is perfect." He asked in German, "How many languages do you speak?" She replied in Hungarian, "I am fluent in English - Russian - French - German - Hungarian and Spanish." "You are hired - follow me. Have you a place to stay and have you had dinner?" "No I do not and I am quite hungry." He took her to the storage room, "Leave your coat and luggage here and I will show you where you will work."

The Maitre d' spoke with the Chef, "I have found a receptionist who is too good to be true. Even you will like this one. She is beautiful - fluent in six languages and well dressed. I hired her on the spot." Who does she look like?" "Her hair is up in a bun - like a school teacher, but even that cannot hide her beauty. She looks like an American actress - Grace Kelly." "Is she hungry?" "Yes - will you have one of your cooks prepare a Wienerwurst plate with dark bread and butter?" "I all ready like her. How did she take to the receptionist desk?" "Like a swan to water. She is all ready taking dinner reservations." "I must see your catch. I will take her meal to her myself. Does she have a name?" "Gretchen Gaborisky." "Is she Polish?" "She looks Sweedish and acts Austrian."

The Chef carried a dinner plate to the receptionist desk. The Maitre d' joined him, "What do you think?" "She is gorgeous and your room - it is the best ever. She has dressed it like none other." "And Gretchen has memorized our seating - which guest goes where and when they will arrive." "She is too good to be true. Does she have a place to stay?" "I have given her a suite of rooms above the restaurant until she can find something more permanent." Natasha walked up and curtsied to the Chef. He kissed her hand, "Welcome to *Rhine Jager* - Gretchen." She asked, "Do you mind if I taste your sausage? It has such a marvelous aroma." She took a bite off of the end of a link, "It is wonderful. I am truly in heaven." The Chef blushed and returned to his kitchen. The Maitre d' asked, "Do you need any help?" "I might. Will you let me make a few mistakes?" He laughed, "For you - Gretchen - I will. So far you have been perfect."

As the time for her seven o'clock dinner reservation drew closer - Natasha kept a close watch on the entrance - her machine pistol - at hand. The phone rang. A deep base voice female asked, "Has Natasha Noscent arrived for dinner?"

"No - we have a table open. I can hold it for half an hour - if you will order now from our set menu." "I was looking for the lady. She has an emergency at home. Did she leave a telephone number?" "No she didn't. Wait a minute - it is not often someone cancels a reservation. I made a note. Here it is - she was called out of town on an emergency. She telephoned from her airplane. It was so unusual - I wrote it down for the Maitre d'. If one misses their reservation he wants to know why. If he does not approve - I am not allowed to provide another reservation when asked." "Did she say where she was flying too?" "No and I did not ask. The Maitre d' crossed her off for future reservations." Later - an obvious KGB agent dropped in for a drink at the bar. He did not stay.

Natasha climbed the stairs to the small apartment above the restaurant carrying her suitcase. She was tired but wide awake. Pleased that she had found work - so soon and when she needed it. She unlocked the door and turned on the light, "Spartan, but it will suit my needs." She closed the drapes and looked outside through a tiny opening, "What rank amateurs - no tagalong. The streets are empty. They are sucking up the dredges from the bottom of the barrel. Now that I have escaped their clutches - how will they come after me? With the patience of a wolf." Natasha unpacked - turned her bed down - turned on the radio at her bedside - listening to classical music as she undressed.

Natasha turned off the light - waited until her eyes adjusted to the darkness and walked slowly across the room to the bed. The sheets smelled fresh. As they touched her skin her body felt sensuous. Thoughts of her children cooled her sexual ardor away from pleasures of the flesh. "Is Mother prepared for their early departure - the unexpected? Tsar Nicholas's children were not spared. Natasha breathed a sigh, "Mother is Russian. She will be ready."

Black Sea

Natasha's Mother was prepared for surveillance, but she did not expect it to arrive this early. A tagalong appeared across the street the day after Natasha departed for Hungary. She was deeply concerned - overly so, "A watcher! This has never happened before when my Daughter was away. Natasha warned me that she was in trouble. Now I believe her. It is not like her to interfere with our planing. I wonder what happened?" Grandmother opened the curtain a sliver - so she could look out the street side window without being seen, "He is still there. If she was not alive - he would not be. What should I do?" She returned to the kitchen and wiped the crumbs from the table - cleaned the stove and swept the floor. As she put away the dinner dishes the answer came to her. She called the children, "Peter - Anna - it is time to leave. Pack your suitcases and put on your Sea Cadet uniforms. Anna - tuck your hair under your cap."

As Anna and Peter arrived downstairs in their Sea Cadet Uniforms - Anna did a twirl, "How do I look - Grandmother?" "You look exactly like one of our brave sailors. One of those who came forward to save our revolution in Saint Petersburg. Your hair - did you tuck it under your cap?" "I cut it off. It will grow back." "Peter - are you ready to go?" "Yes - Grandmother, but I thought we were going to stay three more days on the beach." "I did too - little one, but times have changed." Grandmother peeked through the curtain again. Their watcher was still there - huddled under a bush - staying out of the wind - trying to keep warm. Grandmother waited for the near full moon to go under the clouds before shoos her children out the door of the dacha on the beach side. Anna whispered, "Won't the watcher see?" Grandmother smiled - Anna was so like her Mother, "He is staying out of the wind across the street. He will not expect us to leave on the beach. Take off your shoes. We will walk along the

beach for a mile or two - before we use the road to the Naval Yard." Anna took Peter by the arm, "Stay down or the watcher will see us." They walked along the beach until Grandmother could no longer walk in the soft sand. Two hours later they arrived at the docks.

Captain Oleg Mastrovsky smiled - not displaying one bit of surprise at their early arrival. He greeted Peter and Anna with a salute, "My brave Sea Cadets. You two are solid Russian sailors - helping your Grandmother climb aboard our ship." Grandmother kissed Captain Mastrovsky on both cheeks, "My precious ones are in your hands. I must return to the dacha. We have a watcher. I will stay there until you have safely carried my little ones ashore." She turned and spoke to Anna and Peter, "Obey Captain Mastrovsky." With tears in streaming down her cheeks - she kissed them and said, "Good-by" - knowing she may never see them again. Peter and Anna ran to the rail and waved - as Grandmother walked away. Anna was happy, but tears flowed from Peter's eyes. It was only a little over a month ago - Grandmother had prepared her annual Grandfather Frost party. There were aunts - uncles - cousins - the whole family. The table was full of oranges - nuts - cakes and tea with sugar. Grandmother gave Peter the love his mother could not. The weight of knowing this life was over - pressed down on his shoulders. He turned away from the rail and took Anna's hand. She pulled away, "Peter - we are Sea Cadets and Sea Cadets do not hold hands. Wipe the tears from your eyes."

Oleg led them to their cabin, "You will stay together in one of my First Office's cabins. You are my honored guests. Sea Cadets normally sleep in Crew's Quarters. I will return in an hour to check on you. Do not leave your cabin." Peter followed Anna into the cabin - sobbing, "We have lost our home - Grandmother - everything." Anna scolded him, "You are twelve years old. When I was your age I went on trips by

myself. Look at me - wash your face. It is tear stained. I am thirteen - the oldest - so I am in charge. You must obey me. We must conceal our feelings. No one is to know I am a girl. That's why we were in a cabin by ourselves. Remember what Mother told us - trust no one - not even our host - Captain Mastrovsky. That's better. Control your emotions and stay alert. Now put away your clothes in the locker under your bunk." Peter inspected the shower, "Where is the tub. What is this?" "It is a shower. You turn on those round things. They are called faucets and the water streams down on your head. You turn it off - soap down your body and then you turn it on again to rinse off." "Where does the water go?" "Down the drain - holes in the floor."

Captain Mastrovsky knocked on the cabin door and then opened it, "Hello Peter - Anna. How do you like your cabin?" Anna answered, "It is like a gulag. This room is very small. We have to share a toilet and there is only one wash stand." "You are on board a Russian Navy ship. You will not have the conveniences of home." Anna asked - how long will we remain in port?" "Three more days. I have informed my officers that you are children of one of our ministers. This will be your first experience at sea. Since you are special guests - you will dine with me and my officers in our Ward Room. Show my Officers and Crew every courtesy. Do not converse with them. When asked a question - smile and answer only yes or no." Anna asked, "Can we see your Crew at work?" "Yes, but not until we are ready to go to sea. Most of my Crew is on shore leave. We will have the ship to ourselves before we sail. You may explore, but do not touch anything except the hand rails. You must stay on board." Anna asked, "Are there water restrictions?" "Not for you two." "Are there dining protocols?" "Yes - similar to the ones you follow at your Academies. Watch me and follow my lead. Now - off to bed with you." Oleg turned off the light and closed the cabin door. He stopped at the rail, "They are beautiful children."

His thoughts turned to Natasha and their meeting on the beaches of Bulgaria, "We too could make a family, but destiny has interfered." He returned to his cabin - thoughts of sex with Natasha clouding his mind. Oleg turned on the light over his desk and lit his pipe - then opened the envelope and reread his orders. His mission was clear.

Budapest Hungary

For Natasha - her days at *Ruhe Jager* were the best of times. But - nights away from her children were the worst of times. This was the first time. She was unable to lock her thoughts away in a corner of her mind. Her greatest surprise came at the beginning of the second week - when she learned that one of her targets - Three Penny Pat was still alive. Natasha rationalized it, "He must have made a pact with the giant *Tiger Shark* - the one in Sydney Bay at Norfolk Island in the South Pacific. Pat Penny lives and now? He is my new boss. I wonder if he knows I am working for his family? What he doesn't know - I am no longer a threat. Only I know - my mission is a ruse. Three assassination attempts on my day of my arrival! It was not meant for me to complete these wet procedures. What is the cruel game American children play on each other? A Snipe hunt! I have been sent on a mission to catch a fictitious animal. Well - my Snipe hunt ends in Budapest. I will not run from here. Now they will know I know. But - I will not be hunted here - not in the den of my prey."

Natasha was surprised - the Maitre d' understood, "Of course you may have two days off. If you need more time to bring back your children - take it. If your husband is typical of most Hungarian men - it may take you longer than you think. If it does - I will understand. Your job will be waiting for you when you return. And be careful. If your husband abused you when you were together - now that you have

your freedom he may turn violent. Do you need a car?" "No - I rented a closed van from one of the airport rental agencies - for privacy. I do not want my husband to see my children when I drive away." "Be careful - Hungarian husbands are not known for kindness to wives - or children who leave. Most of the abusers I know only want their families when they are deprived of them." "I will be careful. If I am not back in five days - will you notify the authorities? I may be held captive." "Of course. Has he done it before?" "Yes - more than once."

Natasha used a fake passport and driver's license to rent the van at the airport. She chose her disguise with care. Her hair up in a bun and wire framed glasses - she wore the disguise of an eccentric English school teacher on vacation - studying antiquities on the Black Sea shore in Rumania and Bulgaria. Inside her van was a picnic basket and a cooler of food and wine packed for her and the children - personally by the Chef - enough for three days. She wasn't hungry and never overindulged when she walked into danger. But - she knew, "I may have to bribe a border guard and our Chef's food would convert the devil." And the cooler was an excellent place to hide her weapon. Natasha wrapped her machine pistol and magazines in plastic and stored the pouch under the wine.

Natasha drove south out of Budapest and crossed over the border to Rumania at Nadlac. At the border - her disguise worked like a charm. An eccentric befuddled English teacher was more than any border guard would wish to challenge. And her papers appeared to be in order. She crossed over the Bulgarian border at Ruse. With only a cursory check of her papers - she was waved through. Natasha arrived in Varana at midnight - south of her meeting place on the Black Sea. She drove north to Sabia - arriving at her designated rendezvous at two a.m. Hiding her van behind a sand dune - she checked

the shoreline and beach as thoroughly as frogmen checked a beach before an invasion. Satisfied that a trap had not been laid - she returned to her van.

Natasha removed a six foot wood silhouette from under the cover of the van floor and carried it to the beach. She found a suitable location and propped it upright - twenty meters from the tide line. She walked to the surf and turned around, "It will do. In case it is too obvious - I will place my lantern in front of it. If Oleg is a foe instead of friend he will be instructed to shoot first and look second. My silhouette will be diversion enough." She returned to her van and poured coffee from the gallon thermos, "At least the caffeine in this American drink is good for something - to keep me awake." She sliced a thick piece of white Hungarian cheese - cut a chunk of thick dark bread and sat down on the bumper to dine - her first food in twelve hours.

Natasha removed the packet with her weapon in it from under the wine bottles in the cooler. She wiped the moisture off with a towel - loaded the magazine - thought for a minute and decided to attach the silencer, "If he attacks - Oleg must be dead before he hears the sound of my weapon." She checked her watch, "I have three hours until it is time." She tucked the weapon in her waist band and followed the path down the dune to where she propped her silhouette. She sat down on a blanket - her back to the silhouette and uncased a binoculars - focusing on the horizon, "Just enough moon to see well and still - I can barely make out Oleg's corvette. The sky is black - the sea is black - my God what a forsaken place this land is. A perfect place to land unseen. Captain Mastrovsky - you have chosen well - even God has deserted this land." She scanned the horizon - pausing for a few seconds at Oleg's ship. Her stomach was empty with worry for her children. Natasha cased her binoculars - set the alarm on her watch and closed her eyes.

The sound of Oleg's motor launch approaching shore woke Natasha. She turned on the lantern and blinked it six times. Her signal was not returned. She blinked it six more times with the same result. She looked out over the waves with her binoculars, "Their are three persons in the motor launch and it is heading my way. Why doesn't he return my signal?" She looked at her watch, "Oleg twenty minutes early" and knew the answer, "Oleg will be the one to make a fourth attempt on my life." Natasha covered the lantern and set it down in front of the silhouette - moved away - reached out from as far as she could and pulled the cover off. Natasha walked thirty paces to the south - turned and then walked to the surf line. Facing north she crouched down - almost touching the sand and extracted the pistol from her waistband. She inserted a magazine and took the safety off.

Captain Oleg Mastrovsky guided his motor launch from the stern - the bow moving up and down through the waves. He saw Natasha signal, but did not respond. In the black of night - the only object he could make out was a lantern and the outline of Natasha standing behind it. He warned Peter and Anna, "Stay down - children. When we land on the beach - I must scout the area and make sure all is safe." He uncased an automatic rifle - inserted a magazine and unlocked the safety. He drove his launch onto the beach - cut the engine - jumped out and ran toward the silhouette - raising his weapon - shouting, "Natasha my love - is that you?" Still running - Mastrovsky fired his weapon - raking the silhouette with a stream of bullets - bellybutton high. He did not hear the sound of Natasha's weapon being fired. A single bullet entered Oleg's temple as he ran toward the silhouette in front of the dune - his body unaware that his mind was now dead. Oleg fell face forward. Natasha walked up slowly - her weapon ready and stood over him, "It was a very short romance - Comrade." She checked for pulse, "A single shot kill. You have not lost your touch - Natasha."

Natasha placed the safety on and stowed the weapon inside her waistband. She turned and walked to the launch, "Peter - Anna - you can get out now." Peter - his eyes wide asked, "Did you shoot Captain Mastrovsky?" "I had too - he fired his weapon at me." Natasha did not say that she was going to kill him - regardless. She hugged her children - close and long, "I missed you so much. Do not mourn for Captain Mastrovsky. He attempted to assassinate your Mother and you would have been his next victims. Help me drag his body to the launch. For most of his life Oleg was a dear friend. He died following orders. It is only fitting that we return his lifeless body to the sea - a proper burial for a valiant sailor." Natasha turned Oleg's lifeless body over. She grasped both feet and motioned for Peter and Anna to take his hands. Together they drug his body to the launch. It took all three to lift his lifeless form over the side of the motor launch. Natasha directed Peter, "Find Rocks" and Anna, "Smooth the sand."

Natasha unbuttoned Oleg's sea jacket - pulled it open and made sure it was tight around the waist band. Peter ran up with an arm full of rocks. She inserted them inside Oleg's jacket, "I will need two more armloads." Anna then used the silhouette to smooth the sand after Peter carried the last of the rocks. Natasha buttoned Oleg's coat to the neck, "Hop in the launch children - we are going to give Captain Mastrovsky a fitting burial at sea." Natasha started the motor in neutral - then placed the prop in reverse. When the launch broke free of the sand - she turned it out to sea and opened the throttle. Peter asked, "How far out will we go?" Natasha responded, "Far enough - so he won't wash up on shore." Six miles out - Natasha removed the anchor and most of its chain. Anna helped her tie it around Oleg's feet. It took all three to push him over the side. As the anchor followed - Peter asked, "Are you going to say a few words - Mother?" Natasha nodded, "May red devils turn you on a spit

and burn your flesh before you are devoured." Natasha threw Oleg's weapon overboard, "You may need this to ward off the fish." She turned the launch toward shore and opened up the throttle.

Natasha stopped short of running the launch up on the beach, "Hop out children - we're going to get our feet wet. I want to turn the launch around and send it out to sea. When the authorities find an empty launch - they will know Captain Mastrovsky was lost at sea." Natasha opened up the throttle. The motor launch sailed true - out into the Black Sea. Natasha soaked her to her waist in the surf - laughed like a school girl who had been doused with a bucket of water in a water fight. Anna linked her arm with her Mother's as they climbed the dune from the beach. She was proud to be a part of Mother's adventure, "You must be very important - to have an assassination attempt by one of Captain Mastrovsky's rank. Where are we going - now." "Eventually - Budapest, but first we must build a fire to dry out our clothes. Then we will dine. The Chef at my restaurant prepared a feast for us. Natasha and Anna built a fire while Peter - impatient as ever - dined. He stepped outside the van, "This Hungarian food is wonderful."

Natasha had been awake too long, but she knew they must leave. Although all had gone exactly as planned - she knew too well that things could still go awry. As she drove away from the sand dunes - Anna asked, "What is our route." "We will cross over borders at new places. We can not use the ones I used yesterday. When I traveled here I was a single English school teacher on vacation. We will return as an American family on a visit with relatives in Bulgaria. So - we travel north to Constanta - Rumania and east to Polesti. Peter - are you awake?" He was not. Anna asked, "Do you work at the restaurant?" "Yes - I am the receptionist. For now - we will live in an apartment above it."

Natasha could continue no further. The adrenaline rush of the hunt and finality of the kill had drained her system. Awake and still under the ultimate stress a mother could bear - she needed to close her eyes and go to sleep. Natasha slowed her van to fifteen miles an hour - driving through Busteni - deep in the Transylvanian Alps. Anna woke up, where are we? We're in a town called Busteni in Romania. I can no longer drive. I have been up for thirty-three hours with only three hours sleep. I am hunting for a hotel." "On the right - over there. The one with all the gingerbread. It looks like a nice hotel." "It looks like it was built for Vlad the impaler, but I am so tired we will stop here." "Can we roam around town while you sleep?" "I know you are more than able for your age, but you do not speak Romanian. And your papers say you are American, but you're not fluent in English." "I understand - If Peter and I roam - we will stay within sight of our hotel." Natasha fell asleep as soon as her head touched the pillow, but she did not have to worry. Her children stayed within the hotel grounds. Her hotel was designed in early Victorian Dracula. There were plenty of hiding places and hidden corridors to occupy them until they too fell asleep early in the evening.

Natasha woke at midnight with sleep in her eyes. She tiptoed around her two sleeping children and immersed her body in a tub of hot - slightly rusty water. Natasha washed away the salt and sand of the Black Sea - still thinking of Oleg, "I know I would soon have to eliminate him. Or would I? He was so active in bed. No - Mastrovsky had to go. To keep him as a pet and then eliminate him later would be too complicated. It is a waste of time to think of hypothetical situations. Oleg was dead as soon as he fired his automatic rifle." Natasha dressed and woke her children, "Peter - Anna get up. We must be on our way. I want to cross over the border into Hungary at sunrise." She had to push Peter to wash and dress and then had to prod him all the way to the

van - he was so sleepy. Peter fell asleep as soon as Natasha started the motor. Anna - up - washed and dressed in five minutes - was at her side, "I will help keep you awake. I am anxious to see our new home."

Natasha drove carefully on the unfamiliar Transylvanian mountain roads - nervously tapping her fingers on the gear shift column. Anna wondered, "Why are you nervous - Mother?" "I will not be comfortable until we cross over the border into Hungary. If I was on my own - this would not be a problem. I am not accustomed to the responsibility of such valuable cargo - my own children. I know we won't have trouble. I have eliminated all margin of error. If things go wrong - I can handle a squad of border guards. But - I am not on my own. That's why I want to arrive at the border crossing a little after sunrise when the sun will be in the guards eyes. It will give me an additional edge. You have the map. How are we doing?" "Don't worry - Mother. According to my calculations we will arrive at the border an hour early." "I have to go to the bathroom. Find a suitable spot where we can stop - rest and have breakfast."

Natasha stretched her legs while Anna and Peter gathered wood for a fire. She sliced white Hungarian cheese to melt over slices of black bread in a skillet while Anna boiled water for tea. Peter asked, "Will we go to an Academy in Budapest?" Natasha had been so busy trying to survive - she had not given any thought to their schooling. "I am not certain. If you do - it won't be for several weeks. You must perfect your English and learn Hungarian. So - for the time being - you will study language in our apartment." Anna was pleased, "We can use tapes. My water is ready for tea. You can place your skillet over the fire. Will you share the sausage with us this morning?" "Remember - it is hot and spicy." She opened the cooler, "There is enough for all of us and the border guards."

Natasha approached the border crossing into Hungary with the sun low on the horizon - in the guards' eyes. This crossing was not as lucky as the last three. A guard waved her van over to the side of the road, "Just a short random inspection to see if you are carrying any illegal contraband into Hungary." She opened the rear doors so he could climb inside. The guard opened the lids to the cooler and picnic basket, "Where did you get the food and wine?" She answered, "*Rhue Jager* in Budapest. I have taken a position there as a receptionist." "But your passports are American?" "We have returned to Hungary. I had an abusive American husband. I have wine from Villa Penny that you may likee. I have gotten out of the habit." The guard climbed out of the van and Natasha retrieved two bottles of white wine from the cooler. "I am returning to work today. Our Chef prepared enough food for a week. Would you like to try some? He is one of the very best in Budapest." Natasha gave the guard enough food to feed his family for several days. To him she was not only a benefactor, but a contact to a world he could only dream about. Natasha succeeded in halting his search before he dumped the cooler and discovered her weapon. She drove into Hungary humming - able to cross four borders in forty-eight hours with her weapon untouched.

Natasha's van arrived at the airport before noon. She turned it in and hailed a cab for her family. They arrived at *Rhue Jager* early in the afternoon. While Natasha settled her children into their temporary home - she was unaware of a new visitor - a lady who occupied the suite across the hall. Penelope Penny had driven into Budapest from Villa Penny to discuss the spring menu and to see how the renovations were holding up. In New York - her two story apartment would be a town home or maybe a penthouse. Penny and her parents were able to access it by private elevator from her parking space in the basement under the restaurant. Pat had insisted on a

key operated lift for security. The Maitre d' was excited about his new receptionist, "She is a jewel. Hard working - beautiful and efficient. And she knows how to dress up our restaurant without guidance. She reminds me of an American actress - Grace Kelly." "Does she have a name?" "Gretchen Gaborsky." Pretty Penny smiled, "Is she Polish?" "No, but her husband might be. She is picking up her children in Pecs today. If Gretchen doesn't run into trouble she will return tomorrow." Penny nodded in agreement and walked to the Kitchen. She quizzed the Chef, "Our Maitre d' told me the new receptionist looks like Grace Kelly. Is this true?" "Yes - exactly. She is quite beautiful." Penelope excused herself and ran to the phone.

Her Stepfather asked, "Are you sure he said looked like Grace Kelly?" "I just heard her description from our Maitre d' and the Chef confirmed it. Are you thinking what I am." "Yes - it may be my Russian Hunter. Very clever of her to seek work as our employee. She has learned her lessons well - get as close as you can to your quarry and earn his trust. What else do you know about her?" "She has a thirteen year old daughter and a twelve year old son. The Maitre d' has put her up in the apartment across from ours until she can find one. Her story is - she is running away from an abusive husband and arrived with only a suitcase and purse." "If it is the same hunter and she has her children along - she may not be after me. Do you think she would bring her children along on a hunt?" "No, but can you afford to take a chance?" "If we can keep her under control - yes. Don't do anything. Do we have a photo of her?" "We always do - for our routine security check and we take one for our wall and another for our files." "This is not routine. I want it done as soon as she returns." "I will bring it with me. I am finished here - for now. By the way - our restaurant has been operating at full capacity since Gretchen arrived. Profits have improved. and our gross has jumped six percent."

Patricia Penny took the photo from her husband Pat and scanned it, "A very good disguise - piling her blonde hair up. Gretchen is your Russian Hunter. What is her real name?" Pat Penny took the photo back, "Natasha. What shall we do?" Penelope stepped in, "I will eliminate her for you." Pat laughed, "She is one of us - we owe her our professional courtesy." His wife touched Pat's arm, "But she tried to assassinate you." "Natasha was the weapon - her government wanted me dead. If she is no longer in their employe - she might decide to work for us. Natasha is a good worker and she is Russia's number one assassin. She will fit right in. And we have an insurance policy - her children. Penny - bring Natasha and her children here - alive." "She will not come willingly. How many notches do you think she has?" "At least thirty. Be careful. Put a Black Widow spider to sleep first before placing a glass jar over it."

The day after she returned - Natasha reported to her station at her scheduled time - three in the afternoon. One of the day waiters carried in a glass of ice water and placed the glass on the shelf behind her podium. The Chef arrived with an appetizer plate of thin sliced sausage topped with sharp melted cheese, "It is a new item. Try a few pieces and tell me what you think." "Must I say your sausage is good if it isn't?" "Of course not. If you don't care for it - our customers won't either. It is better to catch our mistakes before our customers do." Natasha took a bite and held it in her mouth. She swallowed, "This is wonderful. The spices in the sausage are just right. You are a master." She ate three more pieces, "I love the residual salt taste it leaves in my mouth. This will be my dinner tonight." Natasha finished the rest of the appetizers and handed the plate back to the Chef. She searched for the water glass behind the podium - found it and drank about half. As the Chef walked away - Natasha slumped to the floor. Penelope stepped out of the shadows, "It is time to cover you with a jar."

Penny knocked on the apartment door. Anna opened it a crack, "What do you want?" "I'm the owner of your Mother's restaurant. She has taken ill. I am driving her to my Villa in the country. Your Mother collapsed from overwork. She must rest until her health returns. The country air will be good for her. If you wish to go with her - pack your bags." "Is there room?" "I have ten empty bedrooms and a small house you may choose from." "How about Mother's things?" "Of course - pack her bag too. I'll have one of our waiters pick the bags up in fifteen minutes. He will escort you to my van." Penelope turned away and entered her suite on the other side of the hall.

Anna asked Peter, "Did you hear what the lady said to me?" "Yes, but I don't understand Hungarian." "She said Mother is ill. She is taking her to a Villa in the country so that Mother can regain her strength. We are to pack our bags if we want to go along. If not - we will stay here. Do you want to go?" "If Mother is going - I don't want to stay here without her. Then we will go with Mother. Help me pack her things and then we will pack ours."

Natasha opened her eyes slowly, "Have I been poisoned? She looked around, "What a strange room. Decorated in red and woods with a mirror in the ceiling." Anna came over and held her hand, "Good - you are awake. You collapsed at work. Miss Penelope said it must be from the strain of leaving your husband and overwork. I think they drugged you." "Is Peter all right?" "He is upstairs riding Mr. Penny's train in the attic. You should see this house - hidden passages - false walls - a wonderful place to explore. Mr. Penny asked that I bring you downstairs when you wake." "I will bathe first. Where are we?" "At Villa Penny in the country. He told me to tell you that you have found sanctuary and that they will not detain you against your own free will. He said it was out of professional courtesy."

Natasha sat up slowly, "If I was drugged - it was not one of ours. I am not dizzy - my head feels fine - like I had a good night's sleep." "You did - Mother it is nine in the morning." "Go - tell my hosts that I am awake. Is there a cook?" "Yes - the food is better than at the restaurant." "I will be down after I freshen up. I would like sausage and black bread with butter." "That is the same meal Mr. Penny and his daughter Penelope had last night for dinner and this morning at breakfast." Natasha called out to Anna before she closed the door, "What do you think of our hosts? Should we trust them?" "They have treated me like a princess and Peter like a child of the Tsar. If they were going to eliminate us - you would not have come out of your sleep." "Then why did they drug me?" "We would not have come voluntarily."

Natasha walked into the breakfast room and stopped. Pat and his family were at the table - drinking coffee. Pat stood up and held a chair for Natasha, "Would you like a cup of coffee or do you prefer tea." "Tea - if I am going to live in the west - I must learn western ways." She lifted the cover on her plate and gasped. It was piled high with link sausage. She nibbled on a link - controlling an urge to dive in and devour all in one breath. Pat began, "You must be hungry. Go ahead - we had breakfast earlier. You can answer most of my questions yes or no. I'm not certain how you conduct yourself when you have a mission to complete, but I doubt if you would infiltrate your target's business with your children along. Why are they with you?" She finished chewing on the last bit of sausage - before indicating that she was ready to speak.

"This sausage is the best I've ever had. My children are with me because it was time for me to flee. I saw the signs and followed them. A friend of mine carried them to a Black Sea shore where I met them. Unfortunately - he too was an assassin and I his intended victim. He is no longer with

us. When I arrived in Budapest - there were three attempts on my life before the afternoon sun grew warm. You probably read about the last one - a car exploded in the embassy courtyard. I was sent here on a ruse - you three were to be my victims. Of course you were never intended to die. I was the one. I have not defected - I have left my country and my employer." Natasha resumed dining.

Pat began again, "If you work for us - will you be loyal to my family?" Natasha nodded, "Yes." Good - then it is done - we will be loyal to your family. Your children will attend private school and you will work at our Villa. What was your formal training at the University?" "I was trained in chemistry." Penelope clapped her hands, "I will train you to be our Vintner. And we have opened a new brewery. You will be perfect." Natasha smiled, "I do not understand. I was sent to Washington DC and to Hawaii to eliminate you. Why are you so kind?" Pat answered, "We have a common enemy and a common profession. And you have proven to be a good worker at our restaurant. You know what you are doing - you are a self starter - you need refuge and we can use your talents. And in your short time with us - you have increased our profits." Natasha wiped sausage grease from her chin and set her napkin down, "All of my talents?" "If needed - yes." "You must know my former employer will continue his search for me." Pat answered, "He will not find you here at our Villa. In a year or two you will be old business." "What if they continue to come after you and find me?" "Has anyone succeeded yet?" "You're right. Bulgar and I were the best - both number ones and we did not succeed. No one else is in training - our facility has been closed down. They scrapped the bottom of the barrel in their selection of assassins to come after me." Pat sipped at his coffee, "You will have to be debriefed." "By the British or Americans." "CIA. I can arrange for it to be here." "Who is your contact." "Benny Barnes." "He is honest - I accept."

Penelope stood up, "Come with me. I'll show you to your new home." Natasha pushed her chair out, "Before I go - I need to know if I will keep my new identity?" Pat responded, "Gretchen is a fine name - but we should change it and your last name. Gretchen Gaborsky raises too many questions about your nationality and that of your abusive husband in Pecs. You look more Scandinavian than Hungarian. Borge is more suitable. You can drop the abusive husband cover. It is no longer needed. You will be a widow as I assume you are in real life." "I am - my husband was murdered in Afghanistan. What is my first name?" "Ingrid - Ingrid Borge. Very close to Hungarian, but most likely Danish." "Ingrid - I like it - most Russians have a little Swedish in them." Penny moved toward the door, "Your children are waiting."

On their way to Ingrid's cottage - Penny took Ingrid's arm, "I may need your assistance in the future." "Is it a wet procedure." "Yes." "Who is it to be?" "An American Colonel - Johnny Ropp." "Am I the one who will pull the trigger?" "No - that will be my pleasure. I only seek your expertise on how best to accomplish this exercise." "Where is he and who is he working for?" "He is in Bonn - Germany working for Benny Barnes and CIA." "Have you done this type of work before?" "Many times." "How many targets have you eliminated?" "My last four were in Fiji." "So it was you who restructured the socialist middle men." "Yes - and you did your work on Fiji and New Zealand." Ingrid squeezed Penny's hand, "I have found my kindred spirit."

Moscow

The Central Committee Secretary knocked on The Central Committee Chairman's door. He opened it to, "Come in Tvarish - what is it now?" "May I sit with you and drink a glass of Vodka. Of course - pour me one too. What is our problem." "The news is good and not so good. Our Black Widow is better

than any of those we trained for our most difficult missions. The bad news is - we have lost her replacement - Captain Oleg Mastrovsky." "Him too? And all of those poor souls at our embassy in Budapest. Our Black Widow has quite a sting. Is there another hunter qualified to join in the chase?" "No - we closed our facility down. Oleg was the last one. Comrade Chairman - I am without a plan." "Do we know where she is?" "No - our fox has gone to ground." "With her children?" "Yes." "Her mother - can she assist?" "She knows nothing and if she did she would die with her lips sealed." "Our only problem will be if she defects." "Can we use their Counter Intelligence Chief a second time?" "We might not have too. We are fortunate - their most senior debriefer belongs to us. If she defects - she is ours."

*As some day it may happen
That a victim must be found.
I've got a little list -
I've got a little list.
Of society offenders who
might well be underground -
Who never would be missed -
who never would be missed.*