

The Roadrunner

by Fleataxi

Kurt Sawyer was driving Big Bertha, his military surplus M54A3 off-road wrecker, down State Route 722 to an isolated corner of Lander County, NV. His shop was centrally located in Austin, NV on US-50 which gave him easy access to all of Central NV, and put his shop right on a truck route, which increased drive-in business for minor repairs. He could count on at least a half-dozen utility trucks getting really stuck each year, and needing him to take his heavy off-road towing rig to pull them back onto what passed for a road in those parts. Invariably, they'd get stuck in the mud, snow, or sand when they got called out to repair a power or phone line and some inexperienced driver got off the main road and went cross-country to save time, not knowing the reason the roads went the way they did was that Nevada was criss-crossed with salt pans which varied from hard pack to deep mud, to soft sand depending on the season and weather. The roads were built on the most stable sections. Every so often Kurt got called to pick up an 18-wheeler stranded due to a mechanical problem and either fix it by the roadside or tow it back to his shop for more extensive repairs.

Kurt was an expert in the law of Supply and Demand, and could charge whatever he wanted for towing and recovery since he was basically the only towing company in Central Nevada with a heavy-duty off-road wrecker. The big boys in the Kenworth and Peterbilt 18-wheeler wreckers couldn't go off-road, as the utility company found out when they hired a company with an 18-wheeler wrecker to pull them out when they got tired of paying Kurt's fees, only to get the wrecker stuck, and need Kurt to pull them both out for what they thought was an exorbitant fee of \$5,000 for 2 hours worth of work. Kurt called the president of the Utility back and explained the \$5 thousand was reasonable since he had to pull 2 rigs out, and if they hadn't been so cheap, they would have called him in the first place, so he tacked \$100 onto their bill as a "stupidity fee" for his time and trouble explaining his bill to the Company President.

Kurt and his wife Lisa ran Sawyer Towing, and they'd been married since he got out of the Army after 8 years in the Motor Pool. He wanted to join the Rangers, but when his recruiter found out that he and his dad ran a garage for the last 40 years, he decided Kurt was going to the Motor pool. To say Kurt was upset would be the same thing as saying Mt. St. Helens was a minor incident. Still he signed a contract for 8 years, so he did his hitch and got out, but never trusted anything to do with the Government after that. 6 months after they were married, his Grandfather died, and he inherited enough money to build an underground house with a huge earth-sheltered shop on top near Austin NV right off US-50.

His best friend since 9th grade, Val Johannsen, made it into the Rangers only to get sidelined due to a knee injury suffered in advanced parachute training when his main got hopelessly fouled during a High Altitude High Opening training mission, and he had to manually cut the

shrouds with his shroud cutter before he went “splat”. He finally got the main chute separated below minimum altitude, and pulled the reserve anyway. The reserve fully deployed just before he landed on his right leg, but the landing shock tore his knee. Still his shooting skills were good enough that he was accepted for SOG, and participated in DS #1. One night over a couple of beers, he told Kurt about one particularly harrowing night.

“My teammate and I were so far inside Iraq that we had line of sight on Saddam’s palace. We took 2 days to infiltrate overland after HaHo’ing in with the bare minimum of gear for a 4 week stay. We weren’t issued a long rifle, more’s the pity since we saw Saddam’s ugly mug several times, and if I’d had my rifle, I could have ended the war right then. Instead they wanted us to Observe and Report - they didn’t even give us a laser designator, which I would have loved to use. The war ended early, and they pulled us out after they reached Bagdad. One night I’ll never forget was when we started the bombing campaign. We had a front row seat, and if any of those bombs went off target, we’d be strumming harps. One of the JDAMs did go goofy, but landed safely away from our hide. The scariest part was the jets dropping the bombs were high up enough that we couldn’t hear them, and the first clue we had was when the bombs started exploding. Needless to say, we didn’t get any sleep that night! I got out after that, and returned Stateside. I learned the Reno, NV Police Department was hiring former Rangers and Scout/Snipers for their SWAT team, so I applied. We didn’t get much work for the next two years, and I was getting not so subtle hints that I was scaring the other guys in the team with my intensity. I’m not THAT intense, am I?”

Kurt looked at his friend, the new Sheriff of Lander County NV who had been off duty for over two hours and it was night already, yet he was still wearing his Gargoyle mirrored sunglasses, tactical boots with his uniform pants bloused into the boot top, and his LBV festooned with enough gear to start his own war. Val was 6 foot 3, about 260 pounds of solid muscle from lifting weights every day, and wore his blonde hair in a very short buzz cut. When he took off his mirrored Gargoyles, he had the most piercing blue eyes Kurt ever saw. He started to laugh, and said “No Val, you’re not intense, compared to Lyle Alzado!”

Val laughed at the image. The Oakland Raiders were his favorite team, and Lyle was one of his favorite players.

They both grew up in Austin and played football for their high school, which didn’t have enough students to field a normal team, so they played 8-man football. Val either played Middle Linebacker or Defensive End depending if the team they were playing against was better at running or passing. Either way, he was a dedicated headhunter, and the opposing QB soon realized that the quicker he could get rid of the football, the better his chances of survival. Kurt was usually either the QB or halfback with his smaller stature and quick feet. They’d both signed up for the Army out of high school, and both requested Rangers. Kurt got the shaft, and Val got the Rangers since he practically scared the crap out of the recruiter. Later, after he did a short stint with the Reno SWAT team, he got a job with the Lander Sheriff’s department, and

when the Sheriff retired several years later, he campaigned for Val in the election since he had the drive and intensity to go head to head with the burgeoning meth labs being set up in the desert. When Val met with the County Commissioners, they agreed he'd at least put the Fear of God into any druggies, then he won the election by a landslide. He hired a bunch of ex-military personnel, and upgraded their equipment through Department of Justice and Homeland Security Dept. grants to include a bunch of military hardware necessary for doing battle with the meth cookers.

As the Sheriff, he had a lot of leeway with weapons, and took it to the limit. All of his officers were equipped with 10mm Glock 20's with 6 15-round magazines full of Winchester 175 grain full-power Silvertips. They also carried a SPAS-15 with ten 6-round magazines full of Federal Tactical 00 Buck or 1oz Slug rounds, or an AR-15 with a dozen 20-rd magazines. His SWAT Team, and all the deputies that qualified with it carried a full-auto FN P-90 bullpup with integral red-dot sight and a Gemtech suppressor in their vehicle, and an LBV that included five loaded 50- round magazines for the subgun, including 4 magazines of 5.7x28mm SS-190 and 1 of the subsonic SB193 ammo for the suppressor. They really didn't need the subsonic ammo, but old habits died hard, and Val realized that they might need a really quiet shot to take out a guard dog at a meth lab. Val's long rifle was a custom built AR-10T with all the bells and whistles and a big Swarovski scope. He could shoot sub-moa groups all day long with the gun, and it was lighter than the M24.

Kurt and Val both belonged to the Desert Racers Association, a loose-knit group of illegal desert road racers that drove souped-up 1960's and 1970's muscle cars on the desolate isolated roads that criss-crossed Nevada and California late at night. Kurt owned a 1970 Plymouth SuperBird, with a 426 Hemi crate motor he modified to produce right around 600 horsepower. He painted it to match Richard Petty's 1970 Daytona 500 vehicle in "Richard Petty" blue. The coolest thing was the horn made a "Beep- Beep" sound just like the roadrunner. For years as a Deputy, Val spent the summers trying to catch the DRA racers, and after he became Sheriff, gave up and joined them, hoping to keep their excesses under control. Kurt helped him rebuild a rare 1968 Ford Shelby Mustang GT 500KR with a 351 Cleveland and twin turbochargers. Kurt's CB handle was "Roadrunner" since he drove a SuperBird, and naturally Val's handle as Kurt's nemesis was "Wile E. Coyote", or WC for short. He was known to occasionally say "Wile E. Coyote, Super Genius" just for laughs when the DRA got together for beers after a night of racing across the Central Nevada desert at ridiculously high speeds, sometimes exceeding 150 mph. Someone once said you could spot a DRA member by the crazed look, and the dozen powerful driving lights mounted inside the grill of their muscle car. Kurt mounted an auxiliary 100-amp alternator just to power the extra Hella driving lights he installed. 6 100-watt driving lights can eat up a lot of electricity!

Val liked the 351 Cleveland setup so well that when he found an early model full size Bronco body, he asked Kurt to help him build his personal Sheriff's vehicle. Kurt loved a challenge, and spent the next 6 months designing, fabricating parts, and installing them onto the Bronco.

By the time they were finished, the only body parts that remotely resembled the original Bronco were the doors and roof. To squeeze the 33-inch BF Goodrich KO Mud-terrain tires under the hood for winter driving, he had to radically radius the wheel wells, and wound up replacing both fenders as well as the hood with fiberglass parts. Kurt built a 6-point NASCAR roll cage, installed a Rancho 6-inch lift kit with extended radius arms, multiple shocks on each corner, and big huge disk brakes with drilled rotors. In order to hook up all that horsepower, they installed a heavily rebuilt and reinforced 4-speed C-6 transmission, a custom drive shaft, and a Ford 9-inch rear end with a Detroit Locker. Up front, he had a Dana 44 mated to a 3-speed transfer case with an ARB air locker and manually locking hubs. During the summer, he drove the Bronco with 33-inch BFG KO All-Terrain tires and took it easy in the turns. He had several special high-security locking storage boxes in the back of the Bronco that carried all his LEO gear, including a full Search and Rescue kit, a full recovery set for the 12K Warn receiver-mount winch with receivers front and rear, a major trauma first-aid kit, several hand-talkies that connected to the in-vehicle repeaters in the Bronco, and his personal support gear. His personal P-90 and a case of SS-190, and the AR-10T with a case of .308 Match ammo and his spare pistol and shotgun ammo were in another compartment for SWAT call-outs.

The third party in their group of close friends was Wade Williams, a retired High School teacher from the Sacramento County School District. Like most retired CA teachers, Wade decided to take the money and run. Taxes and housing costs had made retiring in CA not possible. He met Kurt at a Muscle Car show in Sacramento years ago right after Kurt built the SuperBird. When Kurt told him he had a shop in Austin, NV, he did some research, and realized the cost of living in Austin was about 1/3 what it was in Sacramento, sold his house, and had Kurt help build him an Earth Sheltered house to avoid the baking desert summer heat, and freezing winter cold. With a glassed-in front, it was lighter inside than Kurt's "cave" as he called it. What he did to keep the interior temperature from fluctuating wildly was to build a glassed-in front, then a 6-foot atrium with a huge solar mass floor, a second set of windows with IR film installed to reflect IR away from the interior and fans to either vent the excess heat outside, or transfer the heat inside the house. Wade's design was more energy efficient than Kurt's but less secure due to all the glass. Kurt got Wade to at least make the outer layer out of Lexan polycarbonate laminate instead of glass so it wouldn't get as badly damaged as it would otherwise by the wind-driven sand. Kurt had an ulterior motive to suggest the Lexan laminate since it was also bullet-resistant and would give him some level of protection against anything smaller than 50 caliber fire.

Wade worked with Kurt and Lisa at Sawyer Towing for pocket money, and for something to do - he loved cars and the people who built and raced them. The funniest thing about the three of them was Val was a Jeffersonian Conservative, Kurt was a Libertarian, and Wade was a former California Liberal, who didn't think that everyone needed all those guns. Val and Kurt were working on him, but they had a lot of work to do. When Kurt was out with the wrecker, Wade turned wrenches, or drove the 1995 F-450 diesel wrecker for simple jobs. Kurt tried to spend most of his time working on the diesel trucks that came in, and Wade handled the bread and

butter maintenance jobs and other light mechanical stuff. He had worked with Kurt for 5 years now, and Kurt felt comfortable letting Wade work on whatever he was comfortable with. Wade wasn't the fastest mechanic he had met, but he was thorough and rarely had a job come back on him because of something he caused. Eventually Wade decided he wanted to build a muscle car, so when a 1970 Dodge Challenger came up on the radar, he asked Kurt to help him, since it took the same 426 motor as his SuperBird. Kurt thought Wade was a little long in the tooth to be driving at 150 mph at midnight, but Wade was single, never married, and didn't really have a good reason not to. It wasn't like he'd leave a wife and kids behind if something happened to him. While they built his Challenger, he took Wade out for some midnight runs, and Wade was hooked, especially when he glanced at Kurt's speedometer, which was reading 160 mph.

When they were finished, Kurt and Val told Wade the initiation used to be they picked up a cop, let him chase them for a while, then lose them, but they decided that was too dangerous for the cops, so now they just stipulated a 10-mile run at 120 mph or better at midnight.

“Is that all, I can do that in my sleep!”

“It's different behind the wheel - at that speed, if you blink you could kill yourself. Are you sure you want to do this?”

“I wouldn't have spent all that money building the Challenger if I wasn't going to run it.” Kurt looked over at Wade's car, and thought the name Wade had selected was perfect. It was painted orange with a slight orange-peel effect, so he called it Orange Crush, and his handle would be The Juice. Wade thought that was hysterical when he found out after he came back from his 120 mph initiation run. He wanted to go faster, but the aerodynamics of the Challenger weren't as good as the SuperBird, and he couldn't go faster than 150, so he held that speed for 10 miles, watching his speedo and odometer like a hawk. Driving at night, heating up the engine was never a problem, especially with the huge NASCAR-spec radiator.

They spent the next hour or so BS'ing at Val's place over a 6-pack of Miller, then they drove carefully home and went to bed. The next morning, Kurt presented Wade with a bright orange hat with the initials OJ on it. He took off his John Deer hat, folded the brim, and put it on with a huge grin on his face.

Later that evening, Val was dreaming about his first argument with the Lander County Commissioners over his weapons choices. He went round and round with the Purchasing Department, and finally scheduled a closed-door meeting with the Commissioners. The most Liberal of the Commissioners was reading off a laundry list of the weapons he wanted to order with a look of disgust on her face.

“Mr. Johannsen, could you please explain to the Commission why you want to order almost a

quarter million dollars worth of Assault rifles, not to mention machine guns.”

“By Machine guns I’m guessing you’re asking about the FN P-90 full-auto 5.7x28mm subguns?”

“Exactly Mr. Johannsen, why in God’s name do you need Machine Guns?”

“Because I told him to buy them you Liberal Bliss Ninny!”

Commissioner Van Dyke looked like she was about to throw a fit “Who let him in here?”

“I asked him to come for obvious reasons.”

Ex-Sheriff Nichols continued where he left off. “You wanted someone to take out the meth labs - with what, a Popsicle Stick? The Meth cookers have full-auto weapons, and they’re wearing vests. The AR-15's we had in stock were only semi-auto, and were totally ineffective against a Level IIa vest with plates, or a Level III vest. That left us facing hardened criminals with nothing to lose armed with full auto machine guns as you call them, and all we had was some dinky 9mm pistols and shotguns in the rigs. You made me keep the AR-15's in my vehicle, and I could be clear across the county when the balloon went up. I’m not going to let you bliss ninnies kill officers in a misguided attempt at Political Correctness. Either you give Sheriff Johannsen the equipment he requests, or we’ll go to the press with our story, and I can guarantee a recall election and most of you will wind up losing your seats.”

That made Commissioner Van Dyke sit down, if she lost her seat, they might investigate some business dealings of her husband, and they could wind up in prison. Commissioner Parker stood up and said “Very well Sheriff Johannsen, you can order your toys, but we expect results.”

Right after Commissioner Parker’s speech, they quickly adjourned before Ex-Sheriff Nichols told the rest of the Commissioners what he really thought of them. Now that he was a private citizen, he felt he owed the County Commissioners a piece of his mind. Sheriff Johannsen ushered Steve Nichols back to his car, and thanked him for landing on the “wicked witch” as they referred to Commissioner Van Dyke. “Steve, thanks doesn’t cover it - you should have seen the look on Witchy-poo’s face when you opened your mouth - she darn near stroked out!”

“Don’t worry Val, I’ve been wanting to do that for years. Now you need to start making arrests and rounding up meth cookers, or else you’ll see the Commissioners going to the paper about the “ineffective Sheriff” - at the same time, you can’t bring them all out in body bags, or the Commissioners will claim that you’re bloodthirsty and a liability.”

“Why don’t we just shoot all the lawyers Steve?”

“Sometimes I wish we could - you know that the practice of Law is nothing more than Organized Crime? Politicians - Lawyers in Public Office, pass laws that benefit lawyers, or are so complex that compliance requires hiring a lawyer, then the judges - senior lawyers who hear cases, legislate from the bench by setting precedents so that more lawyers can “sue” anyone at the drop of a hat for any reason, requiring the sued party to pay for a lawyer to defend them from the other lawyer. What’s worse, is even if they do a horrible job and lose, they still get paid!”

“Steve, you realize that Jefferson advocated a revolution every 20 years? By my reckoning, we’re about 200 years overdue!”

“You might want to keep that under your hat, or you might not be wearing that badge - the Feds have snitches all over the place on the lookout for law enforcement officers who won’t follow orders, or are advocating the overthrow of the government.”

“Thanks Steve. As you can imagine, you’re about the 4th person that knows how I really feel. Kurt and Wade are the other two.”

“Kurt Sawyer - I knew you were hooked up with the DRA, just be careful!”

“We’ve not been caught yet!”

“Try to keep it that way - nice job with the Commission, I can’t wait to see those P-90's, maybe I can shoot 1?”

“Sure, just meet me at the range when we get them in. Even with a LEO Purchase Order, they’ll take a while to get.”

“I can’t wait - they’re great for other vested felons too if you catch my drift!”

“Exactly - a multi-purpose weapon!”

Steve got into his pickup and drove back to his ranch, and Val got into his Bronco and drove back to the station to put in the orders now that the Commissioners weren’t going to try and stop him anymore.

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Kurt arrived at the work site, and sure enough there was a F-450 diesel work truck stuck up to the fenders in the mud. Luckily he had 100 feet of 3/4" steel rope on his 40K PTO winch, and he could easily pull it back onto the roadway. Before he did anything, he got the driver to sign the work order authorizing him to pull the vehicle out, and bill the utility his usual rate. He put

the signed work order in his cab, gave a copy to the driver, and got to work. He backed up so he could pull the truck as straight as possible onto the road, and took two sheets of 1-inch OSB that were cut just wider than the front wheels, and another piece of wood that he used for a lifting base, and his air-powered 20-ton hydraulic bottle jack. He set the base down under the front bumper where the towing hook was attached, so he knew it was strong enough to lift the front end high enough to get the boards under the front tires. Next he set the jack on the base, connected the air supply, and turned a valve with a 6-foot extension, and slowly lifted the front end just high enough to slide the boards under the front wheels. With the boards creating a ramp, all he had to do was lower the truck gently onto the boards, connect the winch to the towing hook, and gently pull the truck out. He slowly lowered the truck onto the OSB, and removed the jack and the base, then connected the winch cable to the tow hook, and wrapped a safety strap around the cable about half-way in case the cable parted, then told the driver to get inside the vehicle, shift into neutral, take the brakes off and let him do the pulling. Kurt engaged the PTO winch and slowly took up tension on the cable. He could see the Utility truck move then roll forward right up the ramps like it was supposed to. Once all 4 wheels were unstuck, he kept pulling until the truck had all 4 wheels on the dirt road, then picked up the boards and stuff, then helped the driver check his rig for damage and make sure it was safe to drive. Once the driver got the mud un-caked from around the rear wheels, he checked the brakes, and they were fine, and the drive line seemed OK. The driver shook Kurt's hand, and Kurt said he'd follow him back to the main road to make sure he was ok, and hopped into Big Bertha, disengaged the PTO, and switched the transfer case into 4-wheel high, since he was unloaded and on a maintained road. Half an hour they were back on paved road, and the utility truck driver waved at him, and drove back to his depot in Las Vegas. Kurt grinned and drove back to Austin, not a bad 2 hours' work. He'd charge the utility \$2500 for the tow call as usual.

On the drive back, he thought of several projects he was thinking about building like a heliostat steam-turbine generator. He located several C-band microwave dishes that were about 15 feet in diameter, and a perfect parabolic reflector. The ranchers weren't using them anymore now that they had DirectTV and their 18-inch mini-dish, so he got them for free. He was in the process of designing a parabolic mirror heliostat to concentrate the sun's rays on a small target and heat the working fluid as hot as possible, then using a fluid heat exchanger, transfer the heat to a large tank of pure distilled water, and flash it to high-pressure steam to turn a small turbine spinning a 25KW generator. As sunny as it was in Austin, he could make electricity 10 months out of the year for 10 hours per day, and at least 4-5 hours per day the rest of the year unless it was snowing or raining. That could mean up to 250KWh of free electricity per day. The shop was a real power hog with all the compressors and stuff, and had a dual 200-amp service connected to it. If he could rig so way to connect his shop and house into the generator, and back-feed the extra to the meter, he might be a net producer of power during the summer. He'd have to check into connecting his wind turbines and inverter setup into the heliostat to control everything.

Kurt was a born tinkerer, and had bought 12 older small 400-watt wind turbines for less than \$100 each from someone who was upgrading to the Air-X and thought his turbines didn't work. All they needed were parts, and in 1 case a replacement alternator. He went ahead and rebuilt all 12 alternators since he had them apart, and put a better stator and regulator in them to generate more power. When he finished, he had right around 6,000 watts at 12vdc worth of wind turbines. Wade got the idea for his house from Kurt and Val's houses, which were buried deep underground. Kurt parked his shop, which was constructed from an Earth Sheltered Quonset hut covered with reinforced concrete and about 6 feet of dirt on top of his house, and Val parked his workshop on top of his. Wade built a cheaper Earth Sheltered house without the "basement" as he called it since he wasn't a Prepper. He really believed in his heart that the Government would take care of them. Kurt and Val tried to disabuse him of that notion, and it took the aftermath of Katrina to open Wade's eyes, still it was too late for his house, but he was starting to stock stuff in his spare bedroom.

Chapter 2

6 months after the meeting with the Commissioners, Val received a huge shipment from FN Herstal in Belgium. They shipped 36 FN P90's, and several crates full of ammo including several dozen cases of SS-190, 8 cases of SB-193 Subsonic ammo, as well as 36 Gemtech quick-detach suppressors. He read further down, and the smaller box contained 360 50-round magazines and 144 2-mag carriers. His Rebel Yell brought his undersheriff on the run "What's all the yelling about Val?"

"The P-90's came, now all we need to complete our order is the Glocks, magazines, and the shotguns - they should be here any day. How you coming with the fun house?"

"We decided it was better to build a mock-up in the desert since the SS-190 is armor piercing, and we can't afford armor heavy enough to act as a bullet stop, so we can't use our indoor range because there are too many buildings too close."

"I hope Simunitons makes a 5.7x28mm round for CQB practice!"

"Called them already, they should have several cases available in a week plus the adapters for our P-90's."

"How about the subgun instructor from Las Vegas?"

"He can be here 1 day after we call him. He's never shot the P-90, so he waived his fee if we'd let him shoot a bunch of ammo before the class."

"Good thing we ordered so much ammo!"

"So why did you order 36 P-90's, we've only got 30 sworn deputies?"

"We had to order in increments of 12 units to get the best pricing. With their 12-unit discount, I got the 6 guns for free compared to paying retail for the 6 extra guns from a 24-gun order. Besides, they're good for spares in case one goes down, and has to go to FN for repairs, it might take a while to get it back."

Over the next couple of days, the Glock 20's and the SPAS-15's arrived, along with his ammo order, and a huge order from Simunition that included marker rounds for the P-90, SPAS-15, and the Glock 20, along with adapters. They didn't need to do any CQB training on the AR-15's, they wouldn't be using them for room-clearing since they had the suppressed P-90 subguns. Two days later, Larry the subgun/CQB trainer showed up from Las Vegas, and spent the day with Val and Steve at the range. After a couple of mags downrange, he had an ear-to-

ear grin. “This is one sweet subgun. It’s got less recoil than the M4, and the bottom eject makes it fully ambidextrous. The Sci-fi ray gun look gives it major cool factor too. Let’s go check the targets.”

They walked downrange, and were amazed at how well the gun grouped in full-auto. Once Larry figured out the trigger, he was able to shoot 8-inch 5-shot bursts at 50 yards with or without the suppressor. The groups were fairly round with little or no vertical stringing. When they went back behind the shooting line, he told them “This gun is great for 50-yards on in at Full-Auto, but I wouldn’t use the FA setting outside 50 yards since the groups would be bigger than the Center of Mass of your average felon and you risk missing your target and striking something downrange. The way these bullets are designed to penetrate, I’d highly suggest shooting center of mass if you’re shooting full-auto so their body will absorb the bullet instead of the building, or what’s behind it.”

The next day, the Sheriff and all available deputies met at the desert training location where they had built a mock-up for training purposes. Before anyone went anywhere near the building, the trainer made sure they weren’t carrying any magazines that he hadn’t personally loaded with Simunitons, and that their gun had the Simunition insert installed. Once he checked their guns and ammo, he gave everyone the safety and security lecture, and had them put their protective gear on. They were using their suppressors for the training, so they omitted the hearing protection, but they were all wearing goggles, throat and groin protectors as well as their Level IIa vests under their LBV. Over the rest of the week, he ran them through various scenarios, repeating the course for people who were on-duty for the previous class. Once the week was over, he personally certified everyone for competency with the subgun, which allowed them to carry it in their cruiser with their SWAT load-out. The next week, he went over the same program with their Glocks and shotguns for those who would be using the SPAS-15 as their entry weapon. Larry liked the SPAS-15's removable mags, and had them load 1 mag full of door-breaching rounds, another full of Rubber pellets for Riot work, and the rest with Tactical 00 Buck. Val felt he was back in the Army at the end of the 2-week period. His deputies were thinking and acting like a team instead of individual officers. When the two weeks were over, he made his selections for an elite 6-man SWAT team in case they had a barricaded suspect, or a meth lab bust. Larry told them the suppressor was essential for working in Meth labs since a lot of the stuff in the labs was highly explosive like Ether, and muzzle flash could set it off. He also highly recommended they wear their gas masks when entering a meth lab, some of the stuff was toxic and easily inhaled. Val was glad that Homeland Security had recently upgraded all their gas masks to the new standard, and the canister could mount either on the right or left side of the officer’s face.

Much as it irked Val, he knew he couldn’t be the first man in the room with the SWAT team, and had to remain outside for Command and Control, but that didn’t mean he couldn’t still train with the team. They practiced room-clearing drills once a week in their “fun house” and Val spent another hour per week working with their designated sniper, comparing notes, trading

stories, and suggestions. Like Val, Gene, their designated sniper, preferred the AR-10T to any other Semi-auto 7.62 NATO rifle for the Police Sniper role, which usually meant head shots at 100-300 yards to take out an armed and dangerous criminal, or precision defensive firepower if the team came under fire. They shot on the range and always varied the drill, range, and depression angle they practiced at. Gene was capable of putting his first shot at any range inside 300 yards in the center of the x-ring, and was also able to shoot sub-moa groups out to 600 yards with the AR-10 and the Swarovski scope.

That evening Val got a call “We’re on!”

“The usual place?”

“And time.”

“See ya then!”

At 10:00, Val fired up his Shelby Mustang GT-500 and once the motor was warmed up, backed up and drove to the intersection of US-50 and State Route 376. They were planning a “Midnight Run” to Tonopah, about 100 miles to the south. No one drove that road much after dark, and it was one of three roads they scouted and mapped in advance for safety reasons. The only traffic on that road would be ranchers moving hay or cattle to market, and they didn’t work much after 9:00 at night, so it should be safe unless they ran into a escaped cow. If they hit a cow at anything over 150 mph, they’d never feel it since the cows were heavy enough that it was like hitting a brick wall at that speed. Their long-range high-powered driving lights lit the road like it was daylight for miles ahead of them, but even with an emergency drag chute, it took a while to slow down from those speeds, and they might not be able to stop in time. Val arrived in time to see Kurt and Wade pull up, and start kidding each other. Val knew that Kurt’s SuperBird was almost 50 miles per hour faster than his Mustang due to it’s superior aerodynamics, but his lighter car accelerated quicker, but quarter-mile times mattered not when they were racing 200 miles. They weren’t really racing, because it was just for bragging rights that week, and something they thought was fun. Val went along with it since his Dad explained something to him when he first became a Police Officer “Val, just because something’s legal don’t make it right, and just because something’s illegal doesn’t make it wrong. Remember the final arbitrator of Right and Wrong was your vow to support and defend the Constitution of Nevada. Just because some Stupid Judge says something’s legal or illegal doesn’t mean he’s right.” After chasing Kurt and the rest of the Desert Racing Association all over Lander County for years, he finally gave up and joined them once he was elected Sheriff. He was tagged with the moniker Wile E. Coyote from his days of chasing Kurt - the Roadrunner. Once he became a full-fledged member of the DRA, he kept his moniker with honor. He was still chasing the Roadrunner! Val got out, walked over to Wade and said “Allow me to introduce myself, My name is Wile E. Coyote, Super Genius!”

Wade heard that line so many times that it was hard not to laugh, Val got Mel Blanc's voice down perfect. Val's other favorite line was when they came back after having failed to catch the Roadrunner (again) Val quipped "Well, back to the ol' drawing board!"

15 minutes before their scheduled start time, 4 more vehicles showed up on trailers. Kurt grinned, the Western Contingent finally made it. He walked over to them, and greeted them. "Daffy, glad you could make it. Yosemite, hurry up and get that Charger off the trailer, it's almost time to start. Peppe, Glad you made it, did you get that timing problem solved? Taz, long time no see - Nice Barracuda!"

Nick "Daffy Duck" Carlson owned the local body and paint shop, and knew the rest of the Austin members of the DRA because he did all the body work for their racers. His personal ride was right out of the Sly Stallone movie "Cobra", a heavily customized, chopped, lowered, shaved, tweaked and deeply polished jet black 1950 Mercury built as close to the specs of the movie car including a blown 350 Chevy V-8, nitrous oxide, and every suspension trick he could use to make it ride as low and smooth as possible on the rough Nevada roads. His attention to detail included such touches as a modern windshield made to look exactly like the old split windshield, and all the original chrome. Looking at the vehicle, the paint and body work was so black and smooth that light just seemed to fall into it, and you couldn't help yourself, and when you touched it, the surface appeared frictionless, but it was just an illusion. The car itself had won numerous awards at various car shows, and Nick had a steady clientele of hot rod enthusiasts with enough money to afford his services. Nick was a real character, much like Daffy, and loved getting into heated debates, sometimes he'd get so into the debate that he'd lose just like Daffy always did when a shrewd "Bugs" type would switch sides, and have Nick arguing his side.

While Nick was rolling his supercharged 1950 Mercury off the trailer, Mike "Yosemite Sam" Lee was unhitching and unloading his 1969 Orange Dodge Charger "General Lee" that looked like it rolled off the set of "Dukes of Hazzard" even down to the Rebel flag on the roof and the "Dixie" air horns. Kurt was glad he skipped the 01 on the doors. It had the same supercharged 426 Hemi motor that Kurt did. His vehicle was almost as fast as Kurt's Superbird, but superior aerodynamics gave Kurt enough edge to clock quicker times when they decided to do timed runs. While he was unloading, Jacques "Peppe le Pew" Dubois was rolling his French 1968 Alpine 220 purpose-built racing coupe out of his toy trailer that doubled as a home away from home when he was racing Pro Solo II around the US. Jacques was a French Canadian ex-pat who worked as a Mine Geologist in Nevada and Montana until his Maternal Grandfather died leaving him several million dollars. He retired at 40, and was spending his Second Childhood living the life of a rich French Playboy including a very rare French 1968 Alpine 220 3-liter V-8, purpose-built race car with fuel injection and 350 hp that always leaked oil for that distinctive "Peppe le Pew" smell!

Next to him, Jason "Taz" Hamilton was backing his fire engine red 1968 Plymouth

Barracuda out of the enclosed car trailer that he towed behind his huge bus-conversion motorhome that he shared with his live-in girlfriend Nichole. Jason was independently wealthy and a former professional Big Wave surfer who retired in his 40's and was bored with surfing the small waves along the Pacific Coast. Nicole saw the movie "Cannonball Run" and commented that it looked fun, and over the years, Jason located the Desert Racing Association through several resourceful and tight-lipped friends. His Barracuda was another 426 Hemi powered Plymouth muscle car. Most Barracudas wound up as bracket drag racers, but he decided to re-build one for long-distance illegal open-road racing. Between his Barracuda, Nick's Charger, Wade's Challenger, and Kurt's SuperBird, there were 4 vehicles equipped with the same motor, and their times were within a couple of minutes of each other. If it weren't for the aerodynamic nose of the Superbird reducing his drag, the 4 of them would finish in a dead heat, but the aerodynamics were just enough of an advantage to give Kurt the edge on the long straight runs like tonight.

Tonight Lisa was driving the Chevy rollback carrier they had purchased years ago when Kurt realized the new car manufacturers and auto insurance carriers were stipulating 4-wheel tows except for emergency clearance, and he was missing out on a lot of profitable auto-tows with his conventional wrecker. He was making money hand over fist, so he paid cash for the Chevy C-5500 diesel rollback carrier with a 21-foot aluminum bed and a wheel lift to carry another car by the front wheels if necessary. With the A/C and automatic transmission, even Lisa liked driving the rig, and would often accompany Kurt on his "midnight rides" so if Peppe showed up, and invariably broke down, she could haul his sorry French car back to the trailer. Kurt tried to talk some sense into Jacques, but being a typically arrogant Frenchman, assumed the vehicle was perfect from the factory since French craftsman had built and designed it. Kurt tried to explain that his spring setup was all wrong for the rough and bumpy roads in NV, and if he went to softer springs, he might finish a race and actually beat him. Kurt had finally settled on a set of springs that worked well on the road, yet didn't leave any handling behind. A good friend of his found out the spring rates they used in the Superbird in Daytona, and he kept lightening the springs until he got it right. They turned out to be about 30% softer than the Daytona setup, but the ride was comfortable and it handled as well as the big long chassis allowed. It turned out that they all bought the same tires, except Peppe, who insisted on running some European racing slicks. They were all using 17x 10-inch rims, and made a group buy on some Eagle F1 Supercar 275/40 YR17 tires which were street-legal for the 3 NV guys who didn't tow their vehicles.

Finally they all had their vehicles off their trailers, and were performing their mandatory safety checks, then they met for their pre-run briefing, led by Val Johansson. "Tonight is a fun run - so NO passing. We're starting at 10 minute intervals for safety, and keep Channel 1 clear for emergency traffic." He looked right at Jacques when he said, "Lisa is driving the wrecker in case we need it." which brought a Gallic shrug from Peppe, and restrained chuckles from the rest of the racers. Val handed out copies of the race course map with the turns indicated, and any potential hazards. "You guys know this is a free-range area, but the road is protected by an

NDOT fence so you should be alert for a cow on the road.” Kurt smiled and remembered why he’d installed the drag chutes on the back of his Superbird after narrowly missing a cow, and glazing the rear drums on his car when he hit the brakes at over 150 mph. He tested the drag chutes once, and was glad he was wearing a 6-point racing belt - the chute slowed him down like he’d caught the 3-wire. Finally the briefing was over, and they started their 5-minute warm-up period. Kurt was the first to start his engine. The big 426 Hemi cranked for 30 seconds, then fired with a roar, and settled down to a whine from the belt-driven supercharger and rumble from the custom 3-inch exhaust.

When he got the 2-minute warning from Lisa, he turned on his driving lights, idled forward to the starting line, and checked his belts. When he got the 30-second warning, he revved the throttle to red line, then settled back to his ideal launch rpm of 1500 rpm, and as soon as the flag waved, he dumped the clutch, stuffed the throttle to the floor, took off in a scream of tortured rubber and the banshee wail of a supercharger at full speed, and quickly worked his way through the 4-speed stick shift. The 6 Hella driving lights combined to turn night into day 2 miles in front of his car, and he was wearing his amber visor on his racing helmet to cut down any reflected glare. 5 miles down the road, he reached his max speed, and settled in for the long nervous drive. 1 hour at over 150 miles per hour required extreme concentration. His eyes constantly swept the instrument panel, the mirrors, and his view out front, which rarely changed. He had his commercial radio on and tuned to the emergency frequency as did all the racers. He’d performed a radio check as part of his safety inspection, and knew the radio was working fine. All the racers had mounted a 1/4-wave rubber ducky antenna inside the car with them, attached to the rear cross-member of the roll cage where most of the signal would get past the sheet metal body. They all had a spare mag-mount antenna for emergency use that would go on top of the roof and quadruple their range over the rubber ducky.

10 minutes later, Wade took off with similar results, then he was followed by Yosemite Sam, Daffy Duck, Taz, Wile E. Coyote, and Peppe at 10-minute intervals, which resulted in Kurt finishing the course right as Peppe took off. Kurt had parked a fuel and parts trailer at a Self-Storage in Ely, and was busy setting up their refueling and recuperating stop. Since this was a fun run, there were no restrictions as to what he could do once he got set up, but for a formal time trial, he’d be restricted to 30 minutes to refuel and make any repairs needed. His time would have been the average of both runs to negate any wind-induced speed differences.

Wade’s run was a little more hair-raising than Kurt’s due to his inexperience. Right as he reached Round Mountain, the road went from long boring straights to a section of curvy road, but not excessively curvy. Wade almost missed the first turn in his lights, and had to get on the brakes harder than he wanted to, and barely made it through the turn in a 4-wheel drift. The following left-hander was easier since he had already slowed down considerably, but he was still out of shape, and slid around the turn, heating his tires, which wasn’t a good thing. Once he cleared Round Mountain, the road straightened out for another 30 miles, and he accelerated to top speed again to make up time, watching the road like a hawk for cows and other

obstacles. More than once they'd squashed jack rabbits, snakes and other small animals. Val was a total smart-alec, and in true Wile E. Coyote form, every time he ran over a bunny, he added a bunny sticker to his door like the way fighter pilots adorned the side of the cockpit with Japanese or German flags every time they shot down another plane.

Yosemite was a more experienced driver than Wade, and had little difficulty with the course, but did manage to run over 3 jack rabbits and a snake, but no lawyers. Daffy's Mercury was totally outclassed by the big 426 Hemi motors, but still turned in a respectable time, and was grinning like an idiot when he arrived in Ely. Taz was the most aggressive driver on the course, and cooked his tires showboating for his girlfriend, who was watching, and as a result, he almost got caught by Val's Shelby Mustang GT-500 with the much smaller motor. Poor Peppe's little French purpose-built track racing car got beat to death on the rough back roads, and halfway through, broke a rear shock mount, requiring Lisa to come get him with the rollback carrier. Kurt was fuming when he got back. Peppe's little excursion cost them a return run at speed since they had gone past their maximum start time for the return trip of 2:00 am to prevent the next NHP cruiser that patrolled that area from catching them. Later that morning, Kurt and Val met for breakfast.

"I'm tired of that little arrogant Frenchman ruining all our fun. If he had enough brains to blow his nose, he'd realize he needs to soften his suspension for these rougher roads. I swear Peppe is the kind of driver that belongs in a Porsche!"

Val remembered the old joke about Porcupines and Porsches, and had to admit that Peppe could be a little prick sometimes, and was 3 for 3 with race-ending breakdowns. He said he'd talk to Yosemite and Daffy about pulling Peppe's membership if he broke on the next race, or just going ahead and pulling it for an unsafe vehicle. That mollified Kurt, who said he had to get to work, he had a truck to fix, and was pretty sure he'd get some business from off-roaders this weekend since the weather was so nice. After Kurt drove home, Val changed into his uniform and headed to the range for some shooting practice. He was now able to shoot short accurate bursts with his P-90, and he was running neck and neck for the smallest group at 600 yards each week with his designated sniper. Val was the #2 sniper because he had to be near a radio to direct traffic, which could be distracting to a sniper. Still, he was grateful that he hadn't become a suit yet.

Chapter 3

Six months later, Val got his first break in the Meth lab case when an informant came forward with information about the location of a meth lab. Val got a records warrant based on the informant's information, checked the power company records, and they were using 3 times as much electricity as their neighbors. He took the power company records back to the judge, and got permission to do a fly-over with an IR camera mounted on an RPV, and put the house under surveillance. The IR camera indicated the house was way warmer than normal all day and night long, with a significant hot spot in the kitchen, which further indicated they were cooking meth. Their ground-level surveillance showed zero outside activity, and the thermal imaging camera showed a hot kitchen 24 hours per day, and intermittent use of the master bedroom. Val knew he probably was looking at a meth lab, and took his evidence to the DA, who agreed, and asked the Judge for a no-knock warrant. The evidence was overwhelming, and the judge was a friend of the DA, and knew that he wouldn't ask for a no-knock without a good reason, so he granted the warrant. Val called his undersheriff, who was staking out the house, and asked when he thought they should execute the no-knock.

"I'd do it tonight, judging by the activity level, they've almost got this batch finished."

"I'll assemble the team."

At 5pm, they gathered at the OP, which was the closest secure location to the house. The good news was they were in the middle of nowhere, and the nearest neighbor was a mile away, and they didn't have any guard dogs outside. Gene was going to set up as the team sniper from a spot about 300 yards away from the house, and once he was set, he'd call the arrest team in. Once Val finished the team briefing, he wished Gene good luck, who grabbed his gear and his drag bag, and started the quarter-mile stalk. At 9 pm he called Val saying he was in position, and starting his surveillance with the thermal imaging scope. When he finished, he pointed a Big Ear at the house, and heard loud heavy metal music. He reported the loud music, and Val knew they made his job much easier. At 9:45, he told Val he was ready to go at 10:00 and to get the team into position. Since there weren't any good roads, and 1 long driveway leading to the property, they were mounted on heavily muffled 2wd ATV's, so they could get as close to the door as quickly as possible. At 10:00, all 6 ATV's started engines at once in a shallow draw out of sight of the house. Gene started calling in any activity in the house, and so far they didn't hear anything.

The 6 ATV's charged the house as fast as they could drive using their NVG's, and surrounded the house 1 minute later. They didn't use a flash-bang due to the probability of explosive gas in the house, so instead they took out the front and back doors with sledgehammers simultaneously, yelling "Sheriff's Department Search Warrant, Down...Down...Down." One guy made the mistake of pointing a sawed-off 12-gauge at the team leader, who fired a burst

from his P-90, putting 3 rounds in his chest, and two in his head, blowing his brains all over the bedroom wall behind him. They must have looked like Imperial Storm Troopers to the inhabitants of the house in their all-black SWAT gear and gas masks. They quickly secured and arrested the remaining people in the house including an infant in the far back bedroom, and turned off the stove, then opened all the windows to vent the house. The doors were knocked off their hinges by the sledge hammers, so they were already wide open. 2 minutes later once the suspects were secured outside, Val called in some DEA experts wearing hazmat gear to secure the drugs and ingredients, most of which were dangerous and required experts to handle them. Two hours later, Val received the good news. They had seized almost a pound of meth, and enough components to make another 5 pounds. Val was glad they got that much off the streets, but knew the big bust would help him with the commissioners, who would be impressed by the dollar value of the bust. He hated thinking like that, but he had to bring in the dope if he wanted to keep on the commission's good side.

The next day the local paper trumpeted the big drug bust with a headline "There's a New Sheriff in Town!" When Kurt read the article, he realized why Val wore his Level IIa vest everywhere he went, and sometimes inside the house. Val for 1 just chalked it up to another busy day at the office. Over the next 6 months, the word went out on the street that Sheriff Johansson was interested in information, and was willing to trade. Several small-time crooks traded reduced sentences for locations and other information of meth labs, and he also had his usual supply of paid informants. This resulted in several more major drug busts without any officers getting injured by the suspects, and a minimum number of dead suspects. Once the word got out, they realized that the new Sheriff wouldn't give them a chance to shoot his deputies, and came down firmly on the side of Officer Safety in all shooting incidents. If you were armed in the middle of a drug bust, you were fair game. As a result, several hardened criminals were throwing their shotguns down and surrendering as soon as they heard the words "Sheriff, Search Warrant!"

While things were going well in Austin, the rest of the United States was facing shocking revelations from a 60-Minutes expose of a White House memo with George W. Bush's signature on it, telling the Joint Chiefs to do whatever they had to and win the war as quickly as possible without regard for casualties. Of course, the talking head neglected to say that GW was referring to Iraqi casualties, and they alluded to him meaning US casualties. Since the media hated the Republicans, and GW in particular, they went out of their way to railroad him, and VP Cheney stabbed him in the back when he was called into a Congressional Hearing on the matter, and testified to the accuracy of the memo without rebutting the fact that GW was referring to Iraqi casualties. The next day, Rush Limbaugh compared Cheney to the traitor Brutus on his next radio show, and gave the White House's version of the story, but the damage had already been done. CNN published poll after poll showing the American People were 100% against the war in Iraq, yet they failed to mention that the wording of the question, and their reporting of the response were totally in opposition. What the question asked was "Should GW bring the troops home?" which to an intelligent person would mean exactly what

it said, and GW's intention anyway, yet the Liberal media had learned that ratings mattered more than Truth, and continued the smear campaign.

As a result, Senator Kerry was asked to run for President again by the chairman of the Democratic National Committee, and was told that Senator Reid of Nevada would be his running mate. They personally couldn't stand each other, but Kerry understood that he needed a West Coast Senator to win West Coast votes, and that Diane Feinstein was too old and ugly for a running mate of someone with his looks and status. As the papers trumpeted the imminent election of President Kerry and VP Reid, Val, Kurt, and a whole bunch of people around the US saw the writing on the wall, and stocked up on guns, ammunition, food, and supplies. Val was now a Senior and very well-liked Sheriff, and was able to offer Kurt and Wade Reservist positions in the Lander County Sheriff's department. Val was using the positions to allow friends of his to purchase weapons and keep them despite any draconian Federal laws that Kerry was sure to get past a very Liberal Congress, since the same news reports were also predicting a major shift in the balance of power in the House and Senate to the far left.

On January 20, 2009, Senator Kerry became President Kerry, and Senator Reid became Vice President Reid. Within a week of their inauguration, the House and Senate passed virtually identical bills that the press was calling Patriot Act III, but in reality it eliminated all 2nd Amendment rights to carry any gun in the US, and restricted the right to be armed to Law Enforcement and Active Duty Military only. It also greatly expanded the definition of Terrorist to include anyone who spoke out against the government, and expanded the "No Fly" list to match. It also put FEMA in charge of "National Defense" which really meant Internal Security like the KGB or the Gestapo, and placed them under the jurisdiction of a UN Commission on International Security, violating US Sovereignty. There were a few Republicans who objected, but they were out-voted by a bunch of "Chicken in Every Pot" Welfare State Liberal Democrats, who after they were elected, discovered there weren't enough chickens to fill every pot, and promptly raised income taxes and business taxes.

When it became obvious that the Federal Government had basically destroyed what little Constitutional Rights we had left, Governor Tom Craddick addressed the Texas State House shortly after the votes were tallied, and Patriot Act III became law.

"My fellow Texans, today we face a terrible decision. We either sacrifice our hard won liberty on the altar of Federalism, or declare our Sovereignty as a Republic and tell the Federal Government to withdraw from the Republic of Texas and to once again become a separate country. Let the United States do there worst. Frankly I'd rather die fighting as the Texans at the Alamo did, than die a slave in the New World Order. What Congress has done by it's vote is to effectively remove our individual rights guaranteed in that great document called our Constitution. It is now illegal to own or carry ANY firearm. The Anti-gunners, or more accurately the Ultra-liberal Anti-Freedom forces have finally succeeded in legally disarming

the American Populace. Texans have never run from a fight when their liberty was at stake, and we don't intend to back down now. I'm asking for a voice vote for a motion for Succession."

The Honorable Ralph Beauregard, the Speaker of the House stood and said "Ladies and Gentlemen, this is a life and death decision we face, either way Texans will die, but I for one agree with Governor Craddick and Second the Motion. I would rather die a Free Texan than live as a slave of the Federal Government. Once they succeed in disarming us, there's nothing to stop them from completing the slide into Communism and Collectivism - Absolutely Nothing! The first thing a Tyrannical Government does when it takes power is to disarm the people. Well them Damn Yankees in DC have finally succeeded in bringing out the big guns in disarming us all. Tom and I have already spoken to the Governors of Arizona, Nevada, Idaho and Utah, who have sworn to join us in defeating this Federal Monster, but we have to make the first move. I have assurances from several other Southern Governors as well that they'd join the Secessionist movement once it got started."

The Democratic Whip stood up next and said "I agree things are grave for the State of Texas, and I join the Governor and the Speaker in calling for a vote reclaim our Sovereignty."

When he sat down, Governor Craddick stood and said "Thanks Bill, I'm going to ask all the Legislators in this room to stand with me instead of voting electronically for Secession. You realize that we could also be signing our death warrants, but I'd rather Live Free or Die a Texan."

At his final statement, the entire Legislature stood as 1 person cheering wildly. Tom, Bill, and Ralph stood together in the center of the floor applauding the Texans, then Tom walked over to a table, and signed the Texas Declaration with a flourish. Hours later, the document was sent electronically to President Kerry, and to all the Governors who said they'd join the Secession. To their credit, hours later, most of the Southern States, Nevada, Arizona, Idaho, Utah, and Alaska added their names to the list, and deluged the White House with copies of the Secession documents.

The Democrats were lucky that President Kerry was a young man in good health, or he might have died from a heart attack or stroke that day when he received 35 documents signed by the Governors of 35 states, each declaring their own Sovereignty and seceding from the Union. The cleaning crew had their work cut out for them cleaning up the mess he made of the Oval Office that evening. Kerry immediately nationalized the National Guard, but very few guard units actually reported for duty when their CO's were told what was going on, that the Second Civil War was about to start, and they needed to pick a side. To their everlasting shame, the Joint Chiefs ordered the military to back the Union, or what was left of it. Still there was a large desertion rate when word got out and several units switched sides as a unit. To their credit, very few Marines found themselves supporting the Union, usually the younger ones from East Coast states that were 100% behind the President's "Peace at any Cost" initiatives.

For the next week or so, nothing happened, and the US population collectively held it's breath. Finally President Kerry ordered the ATF and FEMA to take action, and arrest people in California in possession of illegal arms. Governor Finestein was more than willing to assist, and went on TV statewide, ordering the peaceful surrender of all guns, claiming the Police would protect them. Behind her were the Chiefs of Police of every major city in California. Prominently absent were several Chiefs and Sheriffs from Conservative bastions in California, who had not so diplomatically told the Governor to stick it where the sun didn't shine! Right after the announcement, Liberal idiots from all over the Bay area and Los Angeles were turning in their weapons en masse to the police station, usually in exchange for a Wal-mart I-pod worth a fraction of what they paid for their guns. The governor met with the head of FEMA and ATF, and told them to go get the guns from the @#\$#@## Conservatives in Orange County that dared defy her. They convoyed down I-5, only to be met by a hail of heavy firepower at the county limits of Orange County. Seems HSD forgot to tell the new FEMA director that they had issued surplus weaponry to the various California departments after 09/11, and they had never returned it. A mile-long stretch of I-5, which was deserted except for the federal convoy was turned into a killing field as Bradleys and LAV-25's fired their Bushmasters from the overlooking hills turning the Hummers and Bradleys carrying the Federal Jack Booted Thugs into hamburger. Several Federal agents that made it out of their vehicles were shot down in cold blood, even while attempting to surrender. Evidently this was going to be a particularly bloody and vicious Civil War.

When Governor Finestein heard about the slaughter of Federal troops, she called the head of the CA National Guard and ordered him to take care of it. He was a total brown-noser, and got his generalship by being willing to take orders without question.

“Yes Governor, I'll take care of it right away!”

‘See that you do!’

When General LaFolliete got back to his office, every one of his Aviation CO's begged off complaining about not enough airworthy aircraft to take care of the job. Finally he ordered them to cobble together four flight worthy Apaches and a Kiowa Warrior as a scout. The CO's couldn't refuse a direct order without risking their jobs and their lives, so they said “Yes Sir” and assigned the lowest dregs of their barely qualified pilots and crews to the task. They gave the bomb handlers specific orders to load nothing but Zuni rockets on the helicopters, they weren't going to shoot up tanks, and he didn't want them wasting precious and expensive Hellfire or TOW missiles on a bunch of rebellious hick cops. Several hours later, after much screaming and yelling, he finally got them in the air headed to Orange County. Right as the Kiowa Warrior crossed Orange County's limit, they heard on Guard “California National Guard Flight, this is Lieutenant Colonel Jackson United States Marine Corps on GUARD ordering you to turn around and return to base or be fired upon.”

Warrant Officer Leroy Brown answered him “Who the hell are you dude?”

“I’m the flight leader of 2 squadrons of Marine Corp FA-18's to your East. You’re following illegal orders to shoot US civilians who aren’t breaking any laws. Either return to base, or we’ll be forced to shoot you down!”

“You stupid Uncle Tom, don’t you see the Man is messing with you?”

“You Damn Yankee, you don’t get it - President Kerry doesn’t give a Rat’s butt if you live or die, all he wants is to be President For Life. Now turn around for the last time. Your Threat receivers ought to be screaming by now - our radars have you locked up and we’re seconds from shooting, don’t make me shoot a US soldier, even one as worthless as you!”

“All Right, Don’t shoot! Warrant Officer Brown to Alpha Flight, we’ve been intercepted by a superior force and forced to return to base or get shot out of the sky, As the commander in the field, I’m ordering Alpha Flight to Return to Base, Acknowledge.”

“One..Two...Three...Four”

“Very well, execute break-away and return to base.”

Lieutenant Colonel Jackson watched them turn around and head for base. They loitered until they were forced to return to Twentynine Palms to refuel and rearm.

Five minutes after the USMC FA-18's landed at Twentynine Palms, General Mike Hagee, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, got an encrypted e-mail at his desk in the Pentagon from the CO of Twentynine Palms, when he decrypted and read it, he grabbed his jacket, and his personal 1911 in it’s holster, and walked out his office door. 5 minutes later, he was on his way to the Marine Barracks at 8th and I in DC.

Chapter 4

Two days later, Governor Craddick asked the Republic of Texas Legislature to vote on replacing the old State of Texas Flag with either a new Republic of Texas flag with a yellow star in place of the white one in the existing State of Texas Flag, or else go back to the old Burnet flag. He held up an example which had a single yellow star in the center of a blue field. The Legislature debated the choices for days, including leaving the existing state flag alone, using the old Burnet, or various modifications to the State Flag, including adding the inscription “Molon Labe” or “Live Free or Die”. At the end of the day, the most popular flag was the existing State of Texas flag with a yellow star, and the inscription “Live Free or Die” added to the bottom of the flag in yellow script inside the red field. While the Legislature was debating, Governor Craddick was on the phone to Congressman Doggett to negotiate the surrender of the Federal Building in Austin. “Lloyd, we’ve been friends for years. There’s no need for bloodshed, but we want the Federal Building evacuated of all Federal Employees, and the Federal Law enforcement officials to either depart the state, or swear allegiance to the Republic of Texas, and join the Texas Rangers.”

“Tom, what have we gotten ourselves into - why did you have to go and secede?”

“Lloyd, let me be frank for a minute here. The Federal Government has dropped the ball for the last 20 years, passing the buck to the next generation. I know you personally tried to balance the budget, but you were fighting 50 years of entrenched bureaucracy that wanted to keep their cushy jobs and perks even if it meant the destruction of the Country. Now when the country is almost bankrupt, Kerry goes and tries to disarm the people. The only reason for disarming the people is he wanted to be President for Life. We couldn’t sit by and let that happen to this once great nation. Texas was a Sovereign Republic, and recognized by the US for almost 10 years. All we did was re-establish the legitimate Republic. We’ve got sufficient firepower to repulse any attempt by Kerry and his minions to force us to rejoin the Union. Besides, 35 other states declared their independence at the same time, leaving Kerry isolated and without the bulk of his military power, which as we speak is siding with their home states.”

“The Union has to stick together - if we go our own ways and become 50 independent Republics, the Chinese or the Russians will be able to take over in a heartbeat.”

“Lloyd, you’re wrong there - we fully intend to form a new government once this is over, but we’ll go back to the original Constitution, with the states having the bulk of the power, and the federal government responsible for solving border and trade disputes between the Sovereign Republics and protecting the Republics in time of war. We’re done being the World’s Policemen, and the UN is finished. The Third World will have to find another Santa Claus!”

“Ok, Tom, I’ll talk to the SAC’s of the FBI and ATF, and the heads of the rest of the departments here. If you could give me 24 hours to let you know, I’d appreciate it.”

“Lloyd, we’re monitoring all transmissions, and if we hear you guys calling for help, we’ll level the place - make sure they know that.”

“@#\$#@%#@# Tom, I thought we were friends!”

“That’s why I haven’t already leveled the building. We’re serious here Lloyd, don’t test our patience.”

“Ok Tom, I’ll do my best.”

“I’ll be praying for you Lloyd.”

“Vaya Con Dios Tom.”

When he disconnected, Tom prayed that Lloyd could reason with the heads of the agencies, and make them see reason. They couldn’t be a Sovereign Republic as long as the Federal Government had armed Federal Law Enforcement agents on its soil. He was hoping most of the FBI agents and deputy US Marshals would cross over, they were way short of experienced Law Enforcement agents. Most of the existing Rangers had been recalled to their Texas State guard posts to defend Texas against attack from the Union.

When the Governor got off the phone, he sent an E-mail to the rest of the secessionist states, recommending they evict or incorporate any Federal Law Enforcement agents in their state, and his reasoning behind it. He got several replies hours later from 30 state governors, who said they were implementing his suggestion. Governor Guinn of Nevada called the SAC’s of the FBI and ATF in Reno, and told them word for word what Governor Craddick suggested. They agreed in a heartbeat to switch sides when faced with the alternatives. They liked living in Nevada, and had no intention of moving their families to California, which was the closest state that was still a member of the Union. With that out of the way, he called all his sheriffs, and told them to do whatever they had to in order to protect the citizens of their county from illegal Federal activities. Val Johannsen smiled when he heard Governor Guinn’s orders, and had a couple of ideas he wanted to implement. He called Kurt and Wade, and asked them to meet him at his place. When they got there, he said “Sit down, I’ve got a surprise for you.” Once they were seated he began. “Governor Guinn called and ordered me to take any measures necessary to protect the citizens of Lander County. Under authority of his emergency orders, I’m deputizing both of you. You aren’t expected to patrol, but it allows me to equip you with County equipment. I’ll have radios in your vehicles and houses in a matter of days, but there’s some stuff I can give you right now. First I need you to stand up, raise your right hand, and repeat after me.

“I, _____, do solemnly swear that I will support, protect and defend the Constitution and Government of the State of Nevada, against all enemies, whether domestic or foreign, and that I will bear true faith, allegiance and loyalty to the same, and that I will well and faithfully perform all the duties of the office of Deputy Sheriff of Lander County Nevada on which I am about to enter; so help me God.”

Kurt immediately noticed the absence of the US and US Constitution, but didn't have any problem with it. Wade was too stunned by the sudden activity to do anything but meekly repeat the oath. When they finished, Val handed them both silver Deputy badges and said “follow me!” He led them downstairs, across his basement shelter to his Armory, and entered a code on the keypad lock on the door. As the door swung open, Kurt thought Santa Claus had come early, and Wade thought this was his worst nightmare. There were racks upon racks of military weapons on all 4 walls, stacks of ammo, vests, and other weapons. He reached over and pulled several weapons off racks, and stacked them on a table in the center of the armory. Kurt looked at Wade, who was positively bug-eyed and looked like he was about to stroke out. Finally he blurted out “where'd you get all those machine guns?”

Val gave Wade his Stern Look, and said “I'm the Sheriff of Lander County. This is the county armory, and everything in this room has been approved for use by Homeland Security - heck, they gave us most of the stuff. It's all surplus military hardware, and LEO-only gear.”

Wade stood there with his mouth gaping open, so Val continued, “I just swore the both of you in as Lander County Deputies for the duration of this emergency, as authorized by Governor Guinn. It seems the Feds aren't taking our secession lying down, and might start trouble. The Governor told me to do anything I felt I needed to protect the citizens of Lander County. The first thing I did was upgrade all my Reservists to Deputies, and issue them spare County equipment. Later, I'll be building a 6-man posse around you for defense of the county if necessary. Neither of you will have any duties outside of training for the defense of the county, meaning you need to get up to speed on these weapons as fast as possible. My SWAT team members will act as trainers at the alternate county range here in Austin until all the Austin-based Reservists are qualified with their weapons, then we'll train the Reservists in Battle Mountain. We don't have enough vehicles to go around, so I'd highly suggest you install a secure means of transporting this gear in your DRA racing cars since you can be anywhere in the county within an hour with your muscle cars. I'll get some emergency lights for you so people will yield right-of-way in an emergency.”

Kurt looked like he'd just been asked to the Prom by a Supermodel, and they were driving her fire-engine red Ferrari Boxer V-12, and had a penthouse suite reserved for the night at a swanky hotel. He stared drooling at the FN P-90 with 10 50-round mags, M4 SOPMOD w/M203 and 10 20-round mags, Glock 20 with 5 magazines, and a SPAS-15 with 5 6-round magazines. Wade shook his head and looked like he was going to faint, so they set him into a chair until his system rebooted. Finally Wade realized he was a Deputy Sheriff, and that made

all those weapons legal. As that thought percolated his cranium, his grin matched Kurt's. Val thought to himself "Dr. Frankenstein, you've created a monster!"

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Later that afternoon, Congressman Lloyd Doggett called Governor Craddick. "Tom, I managed to get the FBI and US Marshals office and some smaller agencies to come on over to the State as Texas Rangers. The SAC of the ATF refused, as did the Department of Interior."

"Ok Lloyd, get your people out, and we'll deal with them. You'll be given safe passage to wherever you want to go."

"Tom, if it's OK with you, I'd like an unofficial post on your cabinet to act as a liaison with some other Congressmen who agree with us. Maybe we can keep this from becoming an open Civil War."

"Lloyd, I'd be eternally grateful if you could pull that off, with the understanding that the existing Union is no more, and we'll reconstitute some government after we've got this crisis resolved."

"I agree with you Tom, I can see now that the Federal Government grabbed powers it was never intended to have, and look at the results. We're within a heartbeat of the Second Civil War, and I don't want any Americans to die."

"I'll send my limo for you. Ask the heads of the FBI and US Marshals Office to join you. I'll send vans for the rest of their agents for the swearing-in ceremony at 6 o'clock tonight."

Once Tom hung up, he called the Commander of the Texas National Guard, and told him what was going on, and to let anyone who wanted to leave the building do so, but not to let anyone back in without his say-so. He then called his director of Transportation, and had all their available vans and busses drive to the Federal building, and had his personal limo pick up the Congressman and the Directors and bring them back to his office. He then called his Media liaison and speech writer, and gave them a heads-up that he was going live at 6 o'clock that night with an important announcement for all Texans. His Media person immediately contacted the media, and arranged live TV and radio coverage inside the Capitol rotunda at 6 o'clock pm while his speech writer wrote a simple speech that included the Oath of Office. Next he called the Head of the Texas Rangers, and gave him the good news, and asked him to come over to his office right away, and bring 6 Rangers with him for a security detail.

When Congressman Doggett and the Directors of the FBI and Marshals arrived, they were escorted by 2 Texas Rangers to a secure area, where they were very gently searched, and when the Rangers asked the Directors to surrender their sidearms, they complied. The senior Ranger

said “Thank you Gentlemen, you’ll be given your sidearms back as soon as you’re sworn in and leave the Capitol grounds.”

When the busses and vans arrived, they were met by a contingent of 6 senior Rangers, who asked the agents to form a line, and surrender their sidearms. They had several collection boxes, and a metal detector that they were obviously going to have to pass through to get inside the Capitol building. Governor Craddick was taking no chances that there might be a Judas among the agents. Once they were all past the barriers, they were escorted to the Rotunda where the swearing-in ceremony was to be held. They were arranged by height in a horseshoe group, and then their Directors walked in followed by Governor Craddick and Congressman Doggett. At 6 o’clock exactly, the TV lights went on, and Governor Craddick started.

“Fellow Texans. We’ve managed to avoid bloodshed so far, and we have some good news. These Federal Officers have agreed to resign from Federal Employment and join the Texas Rangers. I now have the privilege of administering the oath of office.”

Directors Nielsen and Lopez were standing in front of their agents when Governor Craddick turned around and said “Ladies and Gentlemen, do you freely and without reservation resign as Federal Officers and agree to serve the State of Texas as Texas Rangers?”

As one voice, they boomed “We Do!”

“Very Well, raise your right hands and repeat after me. I - state your name - do solemnly swear to support, protect and defend the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Texas, against all enemies, whether domestic or foreign, to obey the lawful orders of those appointed above me, and that I will faithfully discharge the duties of a Texas Ranger, so help me God.”

Once the oath was administered, an aide handed out their Ranger badges, then the Governor shook their hands, and they were escorted back to the busses and vans. Once they were outside the Capitol building, they were given their sidearms back, and driven to their new quarters. Once everyone had evacuated the Federal Building, it was sealed and a guard force was posted to protect the building. The people who didn’t want to become agents of the Republic of Texas who were armed Federal Law enforcement were given the choice of surrendering their sidearms and badges, or being escorted to their homes, allowed to pack, and escorted to the border. Some surrendered their badges, but several were escorted to their homes, then 3 hours later, were driven to the border and dropped off and told not to come back. Their firearms were returned to them field stripped in a paper bag so they couldn’t use them against the people escorting them to the border.

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Over the next couple of days, Wade found out he actually liked shooting full-auto, and learned the difference between subguns, carbines, assault rifles, pistols, revolvers, and grenade launchers. He took to shooting like a duck to water, and was soon shooting as well as Kurt. He wasn't too crazy about the grenade launcher until Val explained most of their load was riot control agents, and they had very few HE and HEDP rounds for defense against tanks. Val told a white lie, he had tons of HE and HEDP rounds, but what Wade didn't know wouldn't hurt him. Eventually they built 6-man posses around every Lander County Deputy, which greatly expanded the force available to defend the county. Most posse members already owned an AR-15 or an M1 Garand and enough ammo to keep themselves in bullets for a decent firefight. Val had dozens of crates of ammo in storage thanks to HSD disbursements of surplus ammo to Law Enforcement entities. Since Val lived in Austin, he made his undersheriff who lived in Battle Mountain in charge of the defense of Battle Mountain, and his SWAT team leader was Val's #2 in Austin. Kurt and Wade were responsible for defending the shelters in Austin, namely Val's and Kurt's underground houses. Right now, Wade was wishing he'd listened to Kurt and built his house with a basement. He realized just how vulnerable an above-ground building was to enemy fire when Val showed them how destructive the HEDP rounds were during a demonstration and fired one at an abandoned truck, shredding it. Later, Kurt told him the lexan windows he installed were bullet-resistant up to 30-caliber, but if someone had a Ma Deuce, he was in trouble. Wade decided to remedy that situation, and bought some ½" armor plate to make shutters for his windows, which wouldn't stop the BMG-50 rounds all by themselves, but between the plate and the lexan, they should stop most of them.

Chapter 5

Larry Jones and his family were watching Jeopardy when the front door of their 4 bedroom ranch-style Maryland house busted inward, and four masked men yelling “ATF Search Warrant” busted through the remaining splinters of the door. Larry went to reach for the TV remote, and got butt stroked in the chin with the butt of an M4. He groaned and slumped to the floor, where one of the ATF agents cuffed him with a pair of flexi-cuffs. Sandy chose that moment to walk in to the living room in her nightshirt yelling “What’s going on?”

“Where’s the Guns?”

“We don’t own any?”

“Right, according to the list, you’re a Class III dealer.”

“There must be a mistake, my husband’s an accountant.”

“We can do this the easy way or the hard way.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

The biggest of the agents was eyeing Sandy like a piece of meat while licking his lips. “OK, we do it the hard way - grab her!”

The 3 other black agents grabbed Sandy, ripped her clothes off, and threw her on the floor. Her screams woke Larry, who started yelling. Their 16 year-old daughter Lisa finally heard something from her bedroom, took her headphones off, and went into the living room to find out what was going on. She walked in on 4 black men wearing shirts with ATF on the front and back trying to gang-rape her mom. She screamed, and the senior agent grabbed her, and held a gun to her head, yelling at her mom, “Submit b#tch, or I’ll splatter her brains all over the wall.”

Sandy stopped fighting, and the nightmare started.

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When she heard the gunshots, Kelly came running in to find her father with his brain splattered all over the Lay-z-boy recliner, and her mom’s nude body laying on the carpet with a bullet hole in her chest and blood coming from her mouth, and some guy screaming and holding his crotch. The senior agent pointed his Smith & Wesson at her and said “Lay on the ground, face down, and don’t move.”

Kelly was unarmed, and seeing the 4 armed men pointing guns at her and Lisa, she laid down knowing that she didn't have a chance. She wished her boyfriend was here - he was into guns, and was in the Army ROTC. Maybe he could help get them out of this jam. Once they were cuffed, the agents started groping them, then ripped their clothes off, and hauled them outside. Kelly knew that these men were going to rape her, she just hoped she'd survive.

The agents carried them outside, then spoke to each other. One of them said "Dang, I love this job! I wonder what my High School Guidance Counselor would say now?"

"Wasn't that the guy you stuck the pencil in his back?"

"Yeah, he told me I'd be lucky to get a job at Mickey D's. Now look, I'm an ATF agent!"

"You want to bring these bitches back to headquarters, or do them here, then kill them?"

"Let's do them here, there's more of them were they came from."

They walked over to their bound and helpless victims, and right as they were going to rape them, a shot rang out, blowing the lead agent's head off - the one who stabbed his Guidance Counselor. The other 3 were slow to react, and each got a round in the chest. One of them showed some sign of life a minute later, which resulted in a follow-up shot to the head.

Kelly and Lisa laid there on their backs crying, not knowing what happened, naked and cold on the ground. After what seemed to be an eternity, their neighbor, Gunny Wilson, the retired Marine Vietnam Vet, threw a jacket over each of them to cover their nakedness, then found the cutters, and first cut Kelly loose, then Lisa, who was sobbing hysterically, and seemed to be going into shock.

"Kelly, you've got to help me, we've got maybe 2 hours to get out of here before the ATF sends someone out here to find out what happened."

"My parents are dead. I need to get hold of my boyfriend Mike. He lives just a mile away, and should be home on break from school."

"We can't use your phone, it's probably bugged."

"I've got a cell phone in my purse. It's a pre-paid phone that I keep in there for emergencies."

"Go get it, and call him. Get some good heavy clothes on, boots if you have them, and pack all the clothes you can. No frilly fancy stuff, just jeans, tee shirts, jackets, sweaters, that kind of stuff - we're going to have to bug out to my retreat in the mountains."

With that the two of them went into controlled panic while Lisa sobbed hysterically on the ground. Gunny went through the ATF agents' gear, stripping the quickly cooling bodies of anything useful. He was glad to see Uncle Sam gave his Jack Booted Thugs the best gear. All 4 agents had a Smith and Wesson .40 caliber pistol and 6 mags. They had H&K MP-5's with 6 30-round magazines each in their LBVs, and he added them to the pile. The biggest one of them, probably the guy responsible for kicking in the doors, had a nice Mossberg shotgun still strapped to his back. He cut off their boots, he had plenty of lace, and stacked their LBV's, boots, and gear in a pile. A dirty beat-up Ford pickup skidded to a stop, and Gunny almost shot it until he saw Kelly running out fully dressed to greet her boyfriend. She held him like a Python, then when Gunny walked over, she released him just long enough for introductions. "Gunny, this is my Boyfriend Mike - Mike Gunny."

"Kelly, you need to finish packing and take care of your sister while Mike and I do what we can, Ok?"

She saw her sister was still sobbing on the ground, and realized she was hysterical, took a big chance, and slapped her hard. "What the hell did you do that for?"

"Works in the movies, you were hysterical. We need you to help get us out of here to Gunny's retreat, and we don't have much time. Come on inside with me, and get cleaned up and dressed quick."

"What about Mom and Dad?"

"They're dead, and unless we're out of here before the ATF sends someone to find out what happened to their Jack Booted thugs, we'll join them."

Kelly helped her sister to her feet, and Lisa gave her big sister a powerful hug despite the fact she was still naked, then realized she was naked, wrapped the jacket around herself as best as possible, and they ran in the house. Meanwhile Gunny said "Mike, Lisa and Kelly's parents are dead. The ATF came here looking for guns for some reason, and when they didn't find them, decided to have themselves a little party. I kind of broke up their plans, but that means we have to flee. If you're really in love with Kelly, and want to spend the rest of your life with her, we need to get packed and out of here. Realize now if you do go with us, you'll probably be on the run for the rest of your life unless the rest of the military reins in this out-of-control government."

"Gunny, thanks for saving their lives. Kelly and I were going to be married as soon as I graduated college, so I guess this pushed things up a little. What should we do?"

"They've got some pretty nice wheels - a full-size Suburban and a ballistically armored Hummer with a roof mount for a machine gun. Too bad they didn't mount the machine gun,

but I can remedy that. I've got a nice big trailer at my place fully loaded, let's see what the Jones' have."

Gunny called out for Kelly, who stuck her head out the door. "You guys got a trailer by any chance?"

"Sure a huge one out back, why?"

"Hopefully it's empty, we need to fill it with food, clothing, supplies, and anything else you'll need from the house."

"I've got Lisa dressed and packing like mad."

"Just take canned or boxed food, leave the rest - make sure you've got plenty of TP and girl stuff - I didn't pack none of that. Bring any medicines you need to take."

Kelly ran back in the house to tell Lisa, and they started packing their heavier clothes and hiking boots. Once they finished with their clothes, Lisa started on the bathroom medicine cabinet, then their Hall closet full of TP and sanitary supplies.

They filled up dozens of smaller shipping boxes full of stuff, and by the time Gunny and Mike got the Suburban hitched to their trailer and backed up to their back door, they were just about finished. Gunny located a couple of dollies, a bunch of camping stuff and some other useful stuff in the garage, and added it to the trailer, which turned out to be a nice fully-enclosed dual axle 20-foot box trailer. He connected the trailer hitch and the electrical connections, and they were good to go. Once they had loaded the trailer, Gunny conferred with Mike, and they agreed the best way to hide the evidence of what happened at the Jones' place was to set the place on fire. Gunny was their nearest neighbor, and burning the house down wouldn't risk spreading the fire since they had a huge well maintained lawn with nothing burnable for 100 yards. While Mike dragged the bodies into the house, Gunny made up a Molotov Cocktail, and told the girls what he had to do to keep the ATF from coming after them. Lisa wanted her parents buried, but Kelly said there wasn't time.

Kelly climbed into the Suburban with Mike, and Lisa climbed into the Hummer with Gunny, then Gunny got out of the Hummer once it was a safe distance away, walked back to the house, praying for the souls of Larry and Sandy, then lit the rag on the bottle with his USMC zippo and tossed it into the house. The bottle broke, spreading the gasoline all over the floor, and the rag ignited the gasoline. As soon as he could see the house burning, he climbed back into the Hummer, and drove over to his place. He quickly hitched up a huge pre-loaded military trailer to the pintle hitch of the Hummer, pulled the trailer out of the garage, then opened a trap door in his garage floor and asked the kids to help him with some stuff. They hauled boxes and crates of stuff up out of the basement, and loaded most of them into what little space was in their trailers. He gave each of them one of the JBT's MP-5's, 6 30-round magazines, a Smith

and Wesson .40 caliber auto with 4 magazines and a book bag to put everything in. He took out 4 military surplus pistol belts, put the guns in the holsters, and the mags in the canvas magazine carriers, then had them belt them around their waists.

Next he took his USMC Kabar and opened two crates. One held an ancient 1919A4 30-06 machine gun from WWII, the gun mount, and an ammo carrier. The other crate held 6 ammo boxes full of 250-round belts of linked Combat load. He had Mike help him quickly mount the machine gun to the mount on the top of the Hummer, and then locked an ammo can with a belt of ammo to the left side of the receiver, inserted the belt, and pulled back on the bolt handle on the right side, which half-loaded the gun. Gunny told Lisa to drive, and he'd man the machine gun. He'd tell her when to turn. They drove over to Mike's place first, and packed his few belongings, mostly clothes, a couple of rifles and ammunition, and some camping gear. Gunny's retreat was in the mountains near Westernport MD, and if they took Interstate 70, they could be there in just under 4 hours. He'd rather take surface streets, except he didn't want to go through any bad neighborhoods, so he was damned if he did, and damned if he didn't. In that case, they'd make better time on I-70.

He picked up his FRS radio, and called Mike, and asked him if his vehicle had a switch to turn on his bubble gum lights. Mike grinned when he realized what Gunny was up to, and flipped the bubble gum lights on, and watched while traffic got out of their way. Maryland drivers were so used to seeing black Suburbans and Hummers with red and blue flashing lights that they got out of the way without thinking, and didn't even register that they were doing it. They drove fast, but really didn't speed as much as they could - they didn't want to attract the wrong kind of attention. When they saw the armed Hummer escorting the Black Suburban, any police officers assumed it was on ATF business, and left them alone. Besides, the windows were tinted, and they couldn't see the occupants anyway.

A little over 2 hours later, they arrived at Gunny's retreat, and drove the vehicles into a secure garage. They climbed out, and Gunny showed them his retreat. Above ground was a huge pine lodge like the rich people used for hunting lodges, but over 6 feet below ground was a complete NBC bunker with enough room and food for 20 people for 6 months. Gunny cooked and heated his water with wood, but he had flush toilets and showers, which the girls quickly took advantage of. After what they had been through, he couldn't blame them. He sat down and told Mike what he knew while they were showering. Mike breathed a sigh of relief when Gunny told him Kelly wasn't raped, then felt bad for the selfish thought. Then Gunny dropped a bombshell on Mike. "If you two want to get married now, my neighbor is a retired Methodist minister."

"Let's see what Kelly says, after what happened to her, marriage, sex and children might be the last thing on her mind."

“Kelly’s tough Mike - don’t sell her short. Lisa on the other hand still seems to be in shock, and is acting robotically - I’ll keep an eye on her.”

Once the girls came out of the shower, they felt much better, and Lisa was acting more like a teenager. Kelly sat down next to Mike, and gave him a hug. Mike looked at her and said “I love you Kelly, thanks for calling me - I want to spend the rest of my life with you.” Kelly responded with a kiss, and Gunny, being a hopeless Romantic said, “If you two want to get married, my next door neighbor is a retired Methodist Minister. I can call him and see if he can come over and marry you two whenever you want.”

Kelly looked at Mike and said “I know this is awfully sudden, but would tomorrow be too soon? I don’t know how much time we’ll have together, but I want to spend every minute possible with you!”

Mike smiled, and said “Of course dear.”

Gunny picked up his telephone, and dialed a number from memory. After a brief conversation he gave the two lovebirds the good news. “He said he can be over tomorrow at noon if you can wait that long. Lisa, his 17-year old nephew is visiting, and I thought you might want a friend, is it OK if he comes over too?”

“Is he cute?”

“Well, I can assure you that he hasn’t scared anyone lately, other than that, I don’t know since I don’t really look at guys.”

Lisa laughed when she understood Gunny’s sense of humor and said “Sure, the more the merrier.”

Chapter 6

Dateline: February 16, 2009 near Palmdale CA.

Over the last 6 months, Gary, Ron and Clarence had been busy. Once they were sure Kerry was going to be the next President, they started stocking up and preparing. Sandy had a “going out of business” sale, but really it was an inventory reduction so she could get the remaining guns and ammo aboard a large U-haul and drag it to her cousin’s place about 20 miles west of Austin, NV. She had already sold her house, and the business location was a rental. It would be a long drive up 14 to US-395 to Bishop, then northeast on 361 to US-50. He had already purchased a huge Earth-sheltered 2-story Quonset hut for her so she could have her business in the front half, and her house in the back half, leaving the whole basement for storage, and her “bunker” as he called it. Between the 8 inches of reinforced concrete, and 12 feet of dirt piled on top, the interior temperature never got much above 70, or below 60 even during the summer when the daytime temperatures got over 100. Sandy was amazed when her brother told her how cheap it was to live in Austin. All you needed was a well and a septic field, and you could either tie into the Sierra Pacific power grid at less than 6 cents per kilowatt hour, or you could invest 20-50 thousand dollars into an Alternative Energy system.

Gary and Ron both bought National Match M-1a’s with Swarovski scopes, and they each got an off-the-books SRT suppressor Sandy had in inventory for “just in case” but she had to sell since she was going legit. She found out there was a demand for Class III FFL’s in that section of Nevada since the Governor waived all the ATF/NFA requirements for the duration, and once she had settled there, she met Sheriff Johannsen in the course of business (he was there to conduct her Class III interview) and she thought he was pretty good looking, and he thought she wasn’t so bad herself. She smiled when he mentioned he had a P-90 in his vehicle. She asked to see it, and he carried it into her shop. Sandy was practically drooling all over herself. Even as a Class III she couldn’t buy the full-auto P-90 for some really stupid reason. Her guess was the restriction was from FN themselves. They talked shop for another hour, then Val said he had to go, but not before he left his card.

Gary and Ron got an unexpected bonus when they found out that Geraldo Rivera was going to do a live transmission from the parking lot around City Hall about the great success of Palmdale’s Toys for Guns program. Gary knew of a spot on the other side of the tracks, it would be a long shot, but he had confidence he could make the shot. They went up to the desert north of Palmdale to practice, and two days before the address, Gary could put 3 rounds into a 8-inch group at 300 yards, which would have to be good enough. Ron could shoot a 6-inch group, but didn’t want Geraldo dead as badly as Gary did. The day of the Live remote, Ron drove them to a parking lot on the other side of the tracks. Gary struggled to get from the

parking lot to their hide, but knew he couldn't bring his electric wheelchair since it would stick out like a sore thumb. Ron helped Gary get into position an hour before Geraldo was supposed to show up, and manned the spotting scope. Gary was glad it was February, otherwise he'd be baking in the cardboard box they were using for a hide. Finally, Geraldo showed up, and as soon as he had a clean shot, Gary fired 3 quick shots, and then waited until a train passed 2 minutes later. They used the long train to block the view from the city hall parking lot, and they took their time getting back to the car. Ron barely got Gary back home, then they both collapsed in their chairs. Sharon brought them some iced tea, and wondered what they were up to that got them so tired when the news broke the story that Geraldo had been hit by 3 bullets and was dead. Sharon smiled, knowing that Gary couldn't stand the SOB, not realizing that Gary was the shooter.

Once they recuperated Ron, Gary and Clarence met in Gary's office. He wasn't feeling too good, and in deference to his health, the met at Gary's place.

"Ron, Clarence, I've had it with California. I got a call from Damon this morning from Iowa with some great news. A 100-acre farm in Cherokee, Iowa is being sold by the County for back taxes. Seems the previous owners died without heirs or a will, and the County is in the process of seizing it for taxes. Damon thinks we can put in a bid and buy the place cheap."

"How are we going to do that Gar-bear?"

"I called Chris down the street who works for the Studio, and he called back this morning. Three friends of his want to buy our places for cash - they need to get out of downtown LA bad - the rioting is getting worse. The area around the studios is fine, but their neighborhoods are starting to resemble war zones. They offered \$300 thousand cash each with no escrow if we're willing to sell right now, and be out within a week."

Ron spoke next, "Gary, take care of the details, we're out of here. I know a guy who can sell me his 20 year-old Cadillac limousine cheap. We can drive to Las Vegas, stay a couple of days to get NV ID's, and buy anything we need then drive to Iowa."

"Ron, we'd be better off shipping anything we want in Iowa in case we get busted with the stuff at a border crossing checkpoint. I'm sure we can ship the stuff via common carrier to Damon's attention. Any objections to giving Damon limited power of attorney to buy the property for us?"

“How tough is it to incorporate in Iowa?”

“Not too bad if you know a lawyer that has a shell corporation all set up - maybe 5-10 grand to buy the shell.”

“Why, you know someone Gary?”

“You could say that, it’s the same lawyer Damon used to get his kids back after his ex’s new husband shot her. She’s in the graveyard, he’s doing life without parole, and Damon got sole legal and physical custody. The kids are happier than pigs in slop to be living with their Dad. He’s on his meds, and cut back to a half-pack of smokes per day.”

Ron looked to Clarence, who nodded. “Ok Gary, let’s make this happen.”

Gary picked up the phone, called his neighbor, gave him the routing information to his bank, and told him as soon as a wire transfer for \$1 Million was verified by the Bank President, he’d have Ron hand deliver title to the 3 houses with 48 hours to pack and move. Ron knew that with the extra money, they could hire a moving company, have them pack all the heavy stuff, and be on the road to Vegas within 48 hours. 1 hour later, the Bank President called, saying the strangest thing just happened, he received a wire transfer for \$1 million to Gary’s account. Gary thanked him, and moments later, Ron and Clarence were back with their wives and their title to their houses. Gary gave them the good news, and they signed their titles over, put the whole thing in a manilla envelope, and Gary enclosed an agreement giving them 48 hours to vacate the premises. The insurance was already paid for the next 30 days, as well as the utilities, which would be turned off by the end of the week unless they put them in their names. Ron walked 2 doors down, knocked on the door, and handed him the package. When he got back, Gary had already arranged a moving company with 3 trucks, and a bunch of helpers to load and pack for 10 grand. Ron told Gary he had to get home, buy the limousine, and start packing. He hoped the guys at the moving company had some heavy-duty dollies, or else they’d need a truss when they got done moving all of Ron’s gun safes.

Once Ron and Clarence left, Gary called Damon, who called the lawyer, purchased a shell Limited Liability Corporation for 10 grand, and put in the winning bid for the farm under the corporate name for \$100 grand. Damon knew that a couple of people in the county would be steamed since they wanted the property. He was glad they were cheap, and bid the minimum bid. All they had to do was bid \$5 thousand over the minimum, and it was theirs. Later that afternoon, Damon called his Dad with the good news. “Dad, the farm’s all ours. It has a huge farm house with a basement and everything. It’s connected to the county power grid, it’s got

phone service, a huge propane tank, and best of all, the water comes from a deep well with 3 windmills pumping water into 1,000 gallon cisterns.”

“Great Damon, Move yourself and the 3 kids into the farmhouse, and buy 3 nice double-wides using the corporate name, and get them set up including at least 500 gallon propane tanks ASAP. We’ll be there in a week.”

Gary called Ron and gave him the good news. “Everything’s good to go, we got the winning bid of \$100 grand. With each of us owning our own house free and clear, our cost to set up 3 double-wides plus 1/3 of the cost of the farm should be less than \$120 thousand each, leaving us over \$150 thousand in the bank each. What should we do with it?”

“I always wanted an AR-10T, and I wanted to buy a bunch of ammo for all our guns, and have it shipped to the farm by common carrier. Once we have our Nevada Driver’s licenses, we can buy whatever we want in Nevada. There’s no waiting period in NV, as long as the instant check clears, and you’re not buying any Title III stuff, we can take it with us. I bought the limo, and he even threw in a chauffeur’s uniform. I’ll wear it when I’m driving and Clarence is in the back, he’ll get a kick out of it!”

“You better make sure he’s up on his meds, or the laughter might kill him!”

“What are we going to do about luggage?”

“One suitcase each, and 1 carry-on including the women’s purses. In your case, you might let Sharon carry an extra carry-on and you carry your wallet.”

Gary got a good chuckle, the Sharon yelled from the other room. “I just forgot what a pain in the butt moving is! Sharon’s yelling at me about something. Gotta go!”

“Ciao!”

Gary and Sharon packed their 1 suitcase each, and organized the stuff for the movers the next day. Right at 6 o’clock, the doorbell rang, and a bunch of guys wearing uniforms from the moving company showed up. By 5 pm, they were done packing, and the entire house was loaded into an 18-wheeler trailer. Ron showed up at 6pm with the limo, and everyone was ready to go. They locked their front door, dropped the keys off, and climbed into the limo for

the drive to Las Vegas. Ron told them he booked 3 rooms at The Mirage Hotel/Casino for 3 nights, which should be long enough to give the girls some time to sightsee, and everyone to get Nevada Drivers Licenses thanks to some information Sandy gave Ron before she left. During the 4 hour trip, they laughed and talked. Ron kept the divider down so he could hear the conversation, then they pulled into the main entrance to The Mirage Hotel, and Ron stepped out wearing his Chauffeur's Uniform, and played it to the hilt. Clarence was about to bust a gut when he saw the doorman treating them like VIP's.

Clarence kidded Ron when he said "Make sure you park the car in a good spot there Ron." Instead Ron took off his Chauffeur's hat, handed the keys to the very confused Valet who parked the car after the trunk was emptied onto several bell desk carts. The doorman stood there holding the door open with a look of surprise on his face. Ron laughed and walked inside to catch up with his friends. They checked out their rooms, then they met in the hall and decided which restaurant to go to. They decided to go to the inexpensive American style restaurant since that was the food they were the most familiar with, and they all had dietary restrictions. 10 minutes later, they walked down to the restaurant, and were seated immediately since they were dining right before closing time. The waitress helped them order, and took their very specific order. They sipped water, and waited for their food. Gary had checked his blood sugar, and it was low, so he ordered the potatoes with the steak. After dinner they were so tired they went back up to their rooms and went to sleep.

The next morning, Gary told Ron he got a full charge on his scooter, so they were good to go. They ate breakfast in the American style restaurant again, and then went out to go get into the Limo for a ride around town. Their first stop was a Private Mailbox place Sandy had told Ron about that rented boxes and forwarded mail. Once they rented the box in the corporate name, they drove to the Post Office, and used the rental box address to buy a small PO Box in the corporate name paid a year in advance, and put all their names on the box so they could receive mail there, which was the minimum the Nevada Law required for an address for a Driver's License. Next they drove to the DMV, surrendered their California Driver's licenses, and got new driving licenses using the Nevada PO Box as their legal address. Gary was surprised when they took his picture and 10 minutes later, handed him his new license. While he was at it, Ron registered the Limo in NV using the PO Box, and applied for a Handicapped license plate. Since Gary was in a scooter, the clerk gave them one without the usual doctor's note.

Once they were finished there, Clarence and the girls wanted to go back to the Mirage. The Girls wanted to check out the rest of the hotel/casino, and Clarence wanted a nap. Once they were dropped off, Gary got up front with his friend, and they drove to a gun shop Sandy had recommended. They were like kids in a candy store. Gary's trust fund payment had just cleared the bank before they left, and he had an additional \$150 thousand left over from the

sale of the house. Sharon had already told him to take it easy, and he tried - and failed miserably!

Gary walked out of there with a full Cowboy Rig including a pair of Color Case Blued Ruger Vaqueros with 5 ½" barrels in .357 Magnum and a Marlin 1894C in .357 Magnum. He wound up buying an El Paso Saddlery rig for the Vaqueros even though he didn't own a horse. The proprietor pointed out a Sheffield Bowie he had for sale with a leather holster that matched his El Paso "Shootist" rig. Gary was practically drooling, and he bought the knife without even looking at the price. He bought several cases of .357 ammo and handed the owner his credit card and his new NV driver's license. He ran Gary's credit card, and Gary signed the invoice. He asked the owner about the Instant Check, and he reminded Gary that NV was a Sovereign State now, and not bound by the ATF's stupid rules, and he could buy anything in the store right now, including Full Auto if he could afford it, as long as he had a NV driver's license. Meanwhile Ron was buying a really cool AR-10T with a custom nitride chromed stainless steel barrel, a huge Swarovski tactical scope, several cases of Black Hills .308 Match ammo, and 10 extra 20-rd magazines since they had them in stock. He picked up a nice Pelican case and a drag bag/case for it as well. Ron and Gary talked, and decided to buy 4 Bushmaster AR-15's with the flat top, heavy barrel, a Simmons 3x12x50 scope, and 10 20-round mags each, plus 4 cases of SS-109 penetrator ammo and 4 Pelican cases.

They got help loading the trunk of the limo, and drove it over to a trucking company that Sandy recommended. The owner was a good friend of Sandy's, and didn't hassle them about the interstate shipment of firearms since they were shipping them to their Corporate address in Iowa. They boxed up the shipment, prepaid the shipping including insurance and special handling, then they went back to the hotel to locate Clarence and their wives. Gary checked his room, and decided to plug his chair in and take a nap. Two hours later, Sharon woke him and told him it was time for dinner. After dinner, Gary wanted to go back to sleep, all the excitement took a lot out of him. The next morning, Sharon said she'd seen all of the Casino she wanted to see, so they checked out a day early and got on the road to Iowa. The road map said it was 1400 miles, and 3 of them were good enough drivers to take turns, which made things more comfortable. They scheduled rest stops every couple of hours and made between 500-600 miles per day. They stayed overnight in Grand Junction Colorado, and got an early start the next morning after an early breakfast. Gary preferred traveling in a nice air conditioned Cadillac Limo compared to his last two trips, and was much happier. They made it through Denver with a minimum of hassle while they stopped and got gas, then quickly got back on the road. Later that evening, they arrived in Lexington Nebraska, found a Super 8 with 3 vacancies, and took it. They ate dinner in the diner next door, and got to bed early. It was only another 350 miles or so to Cherokee, Iowa and their new farm. Gary called Damon from the motel, and he said the 3 double-wides were already set up, and he got 1,000 gallon propane

tanks just in case. The rest would have to wait until they could get there and decide what they wanted to do.

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Dateline: Austin NV, later that day.

Val remembered that Sandy was interested in being a Class III dealer, and knew that most of his militia members were woefully under-gunned if the Chinese should attack, which he was starting to hear rumors about. Seems Governor Fineswine might have made a secret agreement to let the People's Liberation Army storm right through California without opposition, as long as they agreed not to occupy California. Val swore, that would be just the kind of chickenshit deal a sleazy politician would go for, and she was one of the sleaziest. He called Sandy, and she said she couldn't get hold of more than a couple dozen M-16's and other obsolete full-auto weapons since Kerry banned the interstate transfer of firearms. Most of her distributors were in the Secessionist areas, but the manufacturing plants were stuck behind enemy lines, and they weren't letting any trucks in or out. What few full-auto weapons the distributors had were going for a premium. Val said to himself, "Well back to the Old Drawing Board!" then called the former Sheriff Nichols who suggested they contact Governor Guinn's office.

"Governor Guinn's office, Mr. Smith Speaking."

"Good day sir, this is Sheriff Johansson and former Sheriff Nichols of Lander County, we're on speaker phone."

"What can I do for you gentlemen?"

"We need some better weapons for our County Militia. Most of the ranchers have Mini-14's and AR-15. We've been hearing some rumors of a possible Chinese invasion, and I talked to my local Class III dealer, and she said there isn't any Class III LEO or civilian stuff available thanks to President Kerry banning the interstate transfer of Full-auto weapons. We were hoping Governor Guinn could contact the CO's of some local military bases like the depot at Hawthorne and find out if they're storing any surplus or obsolete weapons, and what we'd have to do to be able to use them to defend the county. I'm hearing rumors that California might allow the Chinese to invade through California as long as they don't seize any California land."

“I know, I’ve been hearing those rumors too. Either myself or the Governor will get back to you as soon as we’ve heard something.”

“Thanks.”

The phone hummed on the speaker, and Val knew that Governor Guinn’s aide had hung up on them, he was probably very busy right then.

Two days later, Val was in his office when the phone rang “Sheriff Johansson?”

“Speaking.”

“This is Governor Guinn.” Val immediately stood and said “Yes Governor, what may I do for you?”

“Mr. Smith told me of your conversation, then I talked to Governor Craddick and several other governors. I’ve decided to implement your idea statewide, and order any military weapons storage depots to deliver surplus or obsolete but useable equipment to the county sheriffs or the CO of various state guard units. You’re not the only one who’s heard of the rumors of a Chinese invasion, and the best guess is sometime in the next 6 months. I don’t have any manpower to send you, but I can send you a train full of rail cars full of surplus equipment from the depot at Hawthorne. I understand your militia is organized around sworn regular and reserve deputies?”

“Yes Governor, we started training several months ago. We were going to defend our county with what we had, but any surplus military weapons might save lives.”

“How many of your militia members have military training?”

“Most of them sir.”

“Great, maybe they’ll be able to use what I’m shipping you. Be expecting a trainload of stuff in the next couple of days from Hawthorne.”

“Thank you Governor, we’ll do our best.”

“Godspeed Sheriff.”

Later that day, Val got a call from the CO of the Hawthorne depot, telling him to prepare to receive a trainload of stuff. They were going to demill and destroy all this stuff, but it was perfectly usable military gear - they might want to scrounge up a huge commercial building to put it all in, and they might consider building a huge armory for all the ammo they were shipping. Val thanked him, made some phone calls, and located a bunch of empty buildings they could use. The next day, the entire 150-car train pulled into Battle Mountain, and Val went through the manifest. Seems they had combat loaded the cars, and they had 2 of everything. He asked the engineer if they could deliver the other 75 cars to the depot in Austin since he didn't have enough trucking to transfer it himself. Luckily the Governor's order was pretty vague, and told the military to offer “Whatever assistance the Sheriff's needed within reason.” Obviously delivering the rail cars to Austin was reasonable, so they unhitched the cars that were staying in Battle Mountain and re-formed the train and drove the rest of it to Austin. Meanwhile Val supervised the unloading of the cars. He had contacted the local mines, who immediately offered the use of their heavy equipment once Val explained that he needed it to repel a possible Chinese invasion. The mine owners wanted to keep their very valuable assets, so they quickly offered Val any help he needed. They used all their available forklifts and lowboys to empty and transfer boxcars full of ammunition, small arms, mines, grenades, rockets, and miscellaneous gear. The remainder of the train consisted of ro-ro cars containing wheeled or tracked equipment including 6 M-113's, 6 M-60A3 Patton tanks, 6 M109 Self-propelled 155mm Howitzers, 6 M42 Dusters with dual L/60 40mm Bofors cannons, and 2 M163 VADS for air defense.

One car looked like a bunch of circus elephants with their front legs on the elephant in front until he read the manifest. “Holy Cr@p, those would be d@mned useful in the right scenario!” He read that they had shipped 2 dozen Bofors 40mm L/60 guns mounted on anti-aircraft trailers, which were highly portable, quick to set up, and had a maximum slant range of over 4,000 meters at over 2,000 feet per second, yet still delivered a potent high-explosive round using either a VT air-burst or a Common contact fuse. The contact fuse with the hardened nose could punch through light armor, and detonate inside, wrecking most APC's with 1 hit. The VT round could burst over troops on the ground, showering them with lethal fragments. Best of all, each gun was capable of firing 200 rounds per minute if the loader could keep it fed with 5-round clips of ammo. Best of all the whole assembly only required 3 people to run once it was set up. If they could get enough range finding binoculars, and borrow some survey-grade GPS units from the mines, they could register and pre-plot a 4,000 meter area around each gun, and they could control a huge amount of space. With a 6-foot berm protecting them, they could shoot over it and be protected from visual observation or small arms fire. He'd need to come up with a radio link between the spotter and the gunner, better yet, all 3 crew members should be connected by radio so the spotter/commander could call out the target, and while the gunner

was laying the gun, the loader could be loading either marker, VT or Common rounds into the 5-round magazine. At that range, they'd be using indirect fire, and the spotter would have to spot and adjust fire, but the results downrange could be devastating. Val thought about various comments about fixed defenses, but realized all they had to do was convince the Chinese to try to attack elsewhere, and it would be someone else's problem. The Air Force had plenty of bombs to destroy the Chinese invasion if they ever got into the act. Hopefully between the USMC and their militia, they could give the Chinese a bellyache and make them wish they'd stayed home. Thinking quickly, he called Governor Guinn's office on his cell phone, and talked to Mr. Smith again.

"I hope we're getting some professional support if the Chinese invade?"

"I've already talked to the CO's of the Navy and USMC bases, and they're 100% ready to help defend the US. I'll have the General who's coordinating the defense contact you, so you can tell him about your defenses and avoid friendly fire."

"Make sure you thank the Governor for me - those weapons the guys at Hawthorne delivered might be enough to make a whole division of Chinks think they walked into a hornet's nest."

"Will do Sheriff, anything else?"

"If you guys could give me a heads-up when the Chinese invade, it will save me keeping people in the desert in bunkers for weeks at a time."

"We should be able to pick up their invasion fleet, if the Navy gets on the stick, they should be able to sink most of it - for the life of me, I can't figure out how the Chinese think they're even going to make it to California, let alone through."

"I wouldn't put it past Kerry to order the Military to another part of the world while the invasion fleet is steaming across the Pacific."

"That would be treason!"

"Yeah, but trying to get Congress to impeach Kerry would be next to impossible, they're even more Liberal than he is! Some of those SOB's might even welcome the Chinese since they're Communists."

Val heard some muttering on the other end, and he could tell Mr. Smith was swearing a blue streak, and covering the phone to keep the recorders from recording the string of oaths. Judging by what he heard, he guessed Mr. Smith might have been a Navy Chief. When he stopped, Val asked him “You weren’t a Navy Chief at one time, weren’t you?”

“Was it that bad? Sorry about that!”

“Don’t mention it, some SEALs in SOG swore like that from time to time.”

“That’s right, you’re SOG! Any Chinks that run into your bunch better have their life insurance paid up, you guys played dirty!”

“That was the whole idea - Just Win Baby!”

Finally Mr. Smith had to go - he had to get some work done, and he was running out of time.

While he was on the phone, Val’s second in command was starting to implement his plan. The mine started rolling heavy equipment on lowboys, tanks of diesel fuel for them, and all their GPS-based surveying equipment. Val met with the supervisor of the heavy equipment operators, and told him his plan for defending Battle Mountain and I-80, which was the prime invasion route. They were going to dig multiple revetments for all their equipment for as long as they had time and fuel. He hoped the Chinks would waste ammo on empty revetments once they came under fire. Each revetment would have a slit trench in case they came under artillery fire and they were out in the open. They couldn’t do anything about a direct hit, but if they dug a 6-foot deep pit about 3 feet wide and 10 feet long, it would take a very direct hit to hurt them if they could get into the pit before the incoming round landed. Val thought about that, and made a note to take out the Chinese fire-finder radars with his first volley of artillery fire. Their self-propelled 155mm Howitzers had a range between 18 and 20 kilometers, which meant that they had to let the Chinese get closer than he wanted before they could open fire, but it beat let them get into knife-fighting range like they would have without the long-range artillery. He wasn’t happy using the Bofors cannons as artillery, but he didn’t have a choice, they only had so many M42 Dusters available, and the armor on them was tissue-paper thin compared to a modern APC or Main Battle Tank. He hoped his gun crews knew exactly how vulnerable they were, and used cover and concealment as best as they could. The revetments might hold up to a couple of near-misses, but a main battle tank round could go right through it and wreck the tank or gun crew behind it.

Val thought about this, and the more he thought, the less he liked the conventional approach. He looked at his map again, and decided that he'd be better off using Guerilla tactics. The guns would be sited where they could fire 5-6 quick rounds and be gone before the Chinese could call in counterbattery fire. He'd mine the roads, set up hunter/killer teams in spider holes, and other dirty tricks he could think of. He called his second in command, told him his idea, and got them surveying likely shooting sites within 4,000 meters of the roadway for the Bofors guns, and plugging the coordinates into the GPS units. Once they had all the best sites located, they started surveying the roadway to use it as an offset or aiming point if the Chinese stayed on or near I-80. He still had the heavy equipment make revetments, but most were dummy revetments, so they could be built quicker. They spent a lot of time digging 2-man spider holes closer to the road for 2-man hunter/killer teams armed with machine guns, missiles and rockets to shoot up the column. One of the mine supervisors called Val and said that several of his powder monkeys had some ideas for some nefarious devices that the Chinese would just love since they invented gun powder. Val told him that they wanted a bunch of remote radio-detonated stuff to supplement the Claymores and other stuff the government had given them. Val knew some of those guys and shuddered when he thought of what they might come up with - the Chinese were in for a rough time if they decided to invade!

Dateline: Cherokee Iowa, 3 days after the 3 Amigos left Las Vegas.

“Well what do you think Ronald McDonald?”

“It's a dump, but it's got potential. The ranch house is in decent shape, but it needs a paint job and basic maintenance. The fields have lain fallow for years, so they should be OK. The tractor is going to need some work, and we're probably going to have to spend the rest of our money from selling our houses to get this place where we want it. I don't think we could afford one of your fancy bomb shelters you write about, plus everything else we need. Is there any way to do it on the cheap?”

“Fleataxi's always writing about Earth Sheltered Quonset huts. Maybe we could bury 1 6-foot deep. They're way bigger than the biggest shelter in my story at about 60x120 feet, and we could even make it two story with the living areas upstairs and storage downstairs. He even mentioned a cheap freight elevator to move pallets up and down. Lemme talk to Damon, then I'll call Fleataxi if Damon can't remember.”

Right then Damon walked up and said “Talk to me about what Pop?”

“How many times have I told you not to call me that?”

“Right - what were you guys talking about, I heard my name, and you weren’t swearing, so I guess I wasn’t in trouble, or at least not yet.”

“You remember those Quonset huts Fleataxi wrote about?”

“Sort of, I was too busy writing stories and trying to keep up with you.”

“Could you call him and see if we could bury 16 feet deep and use it for a shelter?”

“Dad, those Quonset huts are 60x120, and the roof is an arch, meaning the roof height is 15 feet at least. You go over 20 feet deep around here, you’ll need heavy equipment.”

“Would it be cheaper to build using concrete?”

“No, what you save on labor, you eat in materials. Why do you want an underground shelter anyway?”

“It’s always what we do in my stories.”

“Real funny dad, come on - give!”

“Ok, my trick knee is telling me the Chinese are fixing to invade the US.”

“Why would they do that?”

“Because they’re a bunch of greedy SOB’s who think they’re superior to us, and because Kerry has weakened the country to the point where they think they can succeed. Besides, I wouldn’t be surprised if Kerry didn’t covertly help them invade.”

“Yeah, anyone who would put themselves in for 3 Purple Hearts for band-aid wounds is a SOB in my book, and a sleazy one at that! I wouldn’t put it past him.”

“Ok, we’re too old to fight, and we’ve already run from California, so that leaves evade. If we go underground, maybe they won’t realize we’re here until we pop up like a bunch of Psycho bunny rabbits and kill the lot of them.”

Damon had a surprise for his dad, Erin drove up in a John Deere 4x6 Gator, and parked it in front of them and handed his grandpa the keys. “If you want to get around the farm, your wheelchair isn’t going to cut it, so I bought you this. It’s used, but in good shape, but don’t you dare call it Selena!”

“Moi, I wouldn’t dare.”

Gary was ogling the John Deere green ATV. The paint and body were in excellent shape, and it looked like whoever bought it put everything on it they could, including an enclosed cab, lights, a powered tilt cargo bed, nice adjustable seats, a full light kit, a winch, and a mounting bracket for what looked to be a snowplow, which could also double for chores like mucking out the stalls if they ever got horses. He doubted they would, Ron and Clarence were too old to ride as well. He noticed the rifle scabbard, and thought his Marlin .357 lever action would fit in there nicely. He noticed the 3-point hitch in the back, and realized that this was way more than just his personal ride - he could use it to work around the farm if he wanted. Trying not to tear up, he shook Damon’s hand and said “Thanks.” For years he’d been a virtual prisoner in his own house, and now he could get out and check out the neighborhood, as long as he had gas since the Gator could go just about anywhere.

Damon pulled his cell phone out of his pocket, dialed a number from memory and said “Woof”

“Meow.”

“Can you tell me everything you know about using a Quonset hut for a shelter, Dad’s here and he wants to bury 1 6 feet deep.

“Ok, that’s the same difference as piling stuff on top, except you have to fill the sides of the trench from the bottom of the hole to the top of the Quonset hut with rock and gravel to keep the trench from collapsing and better distribute the load. You’re going to have to dig deeper and wider than you need, compact the base, and secure the walls of the trench until the Quonset hut is in place and it’s backfilled. Check the surplus market for Quonset huts, or sometimes your city or county might have spare unused ones they might sell cheap. Buy enough bolts to fill each hole on the base and use embedded bolts to secure the Quonset hut pieces to the

footings. Pour the floor separate from the footings. Talk to an architect or structural engineer about what structural steel you'll need for the second floor. If you want to use it for an NBC shelter, make sure there's a Sally port (double 90-degree bend) to the entrance to keep the radiation out."

"Dad mentioned something about a lift."

"I just made that up, but it's doable. The 4 support columns contain a rack, and the electric motors are fitted with pinion gears. With a couple of safety dogs, and strong enough motors, you should be able to lift the whole cargo floor up to the top. Size the cargo floor 30% bigger than your biggest pallet to give you some maneuvering room and room for the pallet jack, and you should be good to go. Store the cargo floor on the top floor with safety pins to hold it in place."

"That's it?"

"I never worked out the details, that's for you lateral thinkers."

"Ok Flea, if I come up with anything else, I'll give you a call."

"Hasta La Vista Baby!"

Damon flipped his phone closed, and told his dad what Fleataxi had told him.

Gary was scratching his head, he didn't like leaving out details like Fleataxi did. He hoped Damon had his computer hooked up - he needed to do some Internet research. Gary got behind the wheel of the Gator, and Damon got into the passenger seat, and they drove slowly back to his house (The Gator's top speed was only 20 miles per hour, which was plenty fast for Gary, whose wheelchair topped out at 5mph.) When they got there, Damon got on the phone and made some phone calls, while Gary did some Internet research. Damon located a surplus 60x120 Quonset hut the County had needed to tear down and move anyway since they needed the land it was sitting on, so he got it for \$200 plus shipping costs to their farm. He called the local Concrete yard, and ordered enough 3500 psi concrete to cover the dome of the Quonset hut 6 inches deep, and pour 12-inch footings and a 6-inch reinforced floor. He ordered enough 4-inch mesh concrete reinforcing wire to cover the dome, then called a friend of his that hired illegals to do construction jobs cheap. While he was on the phone, the Structural Engineer called back, and e-mailed a list of the structural steel they'd need to build a 2-story shelter. Gary forwarded it to the steel dealer and asked for a quote. 2 hours later, the quote came in for

what they expected, and Damon gave his dad the good news. “We’d come in under budget thanks to the county basically giving us a 60x120 Quonset hut torn down and shipped for \$300. Including Concrete, Steel and other stuff, we’re looking at \$20 grand in materials. I need to get a quote from my friend on the labor to build it. We’ll probably get a built shelter for around \$200 grand.”

“I think we can swing that, and it leaves money left over for food and supplies.”

Damon and Gary spent the rest of the day getting things ready to build their shelter.

Chapter 7

The next day, Damon woke up around noon, then went to find his dad. “I’ve got a splitting headache, and a brilliant idea. We can save money by drilling and blasting, instead of hiring an excavator. Once the soil’s all loose, we can use a front-end loader to load it into a dump truck then they won’t have to do as much compacting since the loader will be packing the bottom as it drives around.”

Gary realized that to fit a 60x120 Quonset hut in a hole, you have to dig the hole bigger, and any loader they could get could easily maneuver in a 60x120 rectangle. He turned on Damon’s computer, pulled up his plans and spreadsheet, and once he crunched the numbers, he had an ear-to-ear grin. Blasting would cost half what excavating would with that big of a hole. Damon made a couple of calls, and arranged everything starting tomorrow.

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Somewhere near Westernport, MD the day after they escaped from the ATF.

“Dearly Beloved...”

Mike and Kelly stood in the living room of Gunny Wilson’s lodge. His neighbor Earl was wearing his vestments, and holding a Bible. Lisa and Larry, Earl’s 17-year old nephew, who Lisa thought was a total hunk, were the bridesmaid and best man respectively. Kelly lucked out when Mike had the presence of mind to bring Kelly’s engagement ring and their wedding rings he had just got back from the jewelers when they bugged out, and she was able to wear her engagement diamond and wedding ring for the first time. Kelly cried when she saw her engagement ring, and was grateful Mike didn’t give it to her earlier, since she knew her mom always wore her diamond, yet she was positive the ring was missing when she walked in on the attack. Earl got to the vows, and Kelly was looking into Mike’s eyes, and knew that whatever happened, Mike would die protecting her, and she felt safe for the first time in a long time. Mike was looking into the eyes of his beautiful bride. This wasn’t how he envisioned their wedding, Kelly wanted a huge church wedding, and in some corner of his mind, he was grateful they didn’t have a huge wedding since he hated crowds. He looked at Kelly while he recited his vows, then it was Kelly’s turn. She choked up a little, and Mike squeezed her hand as if to say “It’s OK dear.” Finally they got to the good part, and after a soulful kiss, Earl pronounced them husband and wife. They had a simple subdued lunch, then Gunny told Mike that if they wanted to get an early start on their honeymoon, it was OK with him, the back

bedroom was theirs. Kelly bounded to her feet, and Mike swept her up and carried her down the hall. Gunny took everyone else out front so they could have some privacy. While they were outside, he asked Lisa if she wanted to learn how to shoot.

“Sure, my Daddy never let us handle guns, and thought they were evil. I guess he paid for that mistake with his life. Sure, lead on MacDuff!”

Both Earl and Larry were accomplished shooters, so he could work with Lisa. They carried a couple of AR-15's and 1911's out to the range since Gunny thought they'd be the easiest to teach Lisa how to shoot. Her MP-5 could wait until later. Gunny had a 300-yard range out back, and he set up 6 lanes, 4 for rifle, and 2 for pistol. He started Lisa on the rifle first since it would be the least intimidating. He sat her down, gave her the basic safety lecture, showed her how to field-strip the AR-15 and how all the controls worked. Next he showed her the prone position, and the reasons behind the position. Finally he had her get down in a good stable prone position and do twenty dry fires, watching where the crosshairs in her scope were when the trigger broke. He explained it didn't really break, but she could feel the trigger snap and the hammer fall when she didn't have a round in the chamber. When he was confident she was doing everything right, he handed her a loaded magazine. She stuck the magazine in the well, locked the mag, then pulled back on the cocking lever. Once the sight settled on the X-ring, she squeezed the trigger like she had before, and there was a bang, and when she checked the scope, her first round was right through the X-ring. Gunny smiled and told her to keep doing exactly what she did, and when the gun ran dry 20 rounds later, Gunny was impressed. None of her rounds at 100 yards had drifted out of the 9 ring, meaning all her rounds were within a 2-inch circle. He knew the scope helped, but he also knew most Marine Recruits couldn't shoot a 2-inch group at 100 yards their first time behind the M16. True, his AR-15 was an accurized match-grade HBAR variant with a flat top and scope, but Lisa was still a pretty good shot. He handed her another mag, and told her to try and shoot a smaller group. Evidently her powers of concentration were pretty good, and she'd done an excellent job of listening to Gunny, since her next group was almost 30% smaller.

Gunny didn't want to push his luck, and decided to switch to pistol while Lisa was feeling confident and fresh. As they walked over to the pistol range, Larry got up and told Lisa he thought she was an excellent shot. She tried not to blush, but failed miserably. They walked over to the pistol range, saving Lisa any further embarrassment. Gunny went through the same routine with the 1911 as he did with the AR-15, and finally handed her a loaded mag when she was ready. She stuffed the magazine into the grip then grabbed the slide, hauled back on it and let it fly forward, chambering a round. She swept the safety up, leaving the gun at low ready while she looked to Gunny for permission to fire. He looked left and right, saw the range was clear, and gave her a thumbs up. She nodded, took a firing grip, swept the safety down, and raised the gun to the firing position in a Modified Weaver stance. As soon as the sights lined

up for a 6 o'clock bull's-eye, she squeezed the trigger, and the gun went off with a roar. Despite what she saw in the movies, the gun only pushed back and up gently, and she was easily able to recover and fire again quickly. She emptied the magazine into the center of the target, then once the gun locked empty, she lowered it to low ready and looked at Gunny, who was grinning from ear to ear. Lisa was definitely a natural shooter. At 15 feet, all her rounds were in the center of the target, and you could have covered her group with the palm of her hand. They spent the rest of the afternoon shooting the pistol as Gunny taught her different drills, then finally the Failure to Stop, which was how he wanted her to shoot a pistol from now on, unless the target was obviously wearing a vest. Lisa's eyes clouded, then blazed when Gunny said that, and realized that there were monsters that Lisa needed to slay, and that might explain her intensity.

Gunny called it quits for the day, and once everyone packed up, Larry started talking to Lisa, who became a teenager again, except this time she was enjoying the attention. They sat down on the porch swing to talk for a while.

"Hi Lisa, let's sit and talk a while. My Uncle said you guys were driven out of your house and barely survived."

"That's definitely the Reader's Digest Version. If you've got the time, I can tell you since I really need to tell someone. I'll warn you, it's kind of violent and graphic."

"This will be good practice for me - I'm in the Theology/Ministry program at Loyola Maryland."

"I thought you were Methodist, that's a Catholic University?"

"According to my uncle, they've got the best Theology program on the East coast, besides, he's paying for it - so who am I to complain?"

"OK, you've been warned. I was sitting in my room when all hell broke loose, I went out to the living room to check, and 4 big black guys wearing ATF shirts were trying to rape mom. Dad was struggling in his recliner trying to get loose, and I could see his hands were cuffed behind him, and his face looked like someone hit him with something. One of them grabbed me, held a gun to my head, and told mom to quit fighting, or they'd blow my head off. For the next two hours, they did everything imaginable to Mom. She was screaming in pain. The guy who was holding me was twisting and pulling everything he could get his hands on, trying to make me

scream. Finally they rolled Mom over, and when mom screamed, Dad went nuts and they shot him. Mom bit one of them, and he shot her in the chest. Kelly walked in shortly thereafter, and they dragged us out onto the lawn naked and cuffed. Right when they were about to rape us, Gunny shot them, then came to get us. Kelly slapped me, then we packed as quickly as possible, set the house on fire, and came here.”

“That explains a couple of things. I read about it in the paper, and they described the scene as a home invasion gone wrong. They never mentioned the ATF or anything.”

“How many “Home invasions” have there been recently?”

“That’s really the strange thing, they’ve had maybe 1 or 3 per year make the news for the last couple of years, and they’ve had 3 so far this month.”

“They’re not home invasions, the ATF has gone renegade, and are using force to seize firearms. They must be working from a bad list since we didn’t own any guns.”

“Odds are it was a clerical error. Someone in Maryland might have a Social Security Number that’s 1 digit off your dad’s, and some lazy clerk wasn’t too careful typing the numbers. It happens all the time, except this time the ATF didn’t verify their information, and sent a bunch of thugs to your house. My guess is things are going to get way worse before they get better.”

“Gunny told us we could live up here with him for as long as we need to.”

“That’s a great idea. If I didn’t know my Uncle’s cabin was here, I wouldn’t know there was anyone living here at all.”

“Where are you staying?”

“I’ve got to be back at school Monday morning. My parents house is less than an hour away from Loyola, so I’m living there and saving money.”

“Why can’t you stay with your uncle - it’s too dangerous out there.”

“We’re not on any lists, what do I have to worry about?”

“We weren’t on any lists, yet a clerical error brought the ATF thugs to our doorway and killed my parents.”

“Ok, if it makes you feel better, I’ll bring my rifle and pistol back with me.”

“That’s at least a start, but my feeling is if they attack your house and you start shooting, all you’ll do is take some of them with you. They’re not going to attack during broad daylight. Please stay here!”

“Much as I’d love to, I’ve got a calling to the Ministry, and I can’t deny that, even to save my own life.”

“Ok Larry, I’ll pray for you!”

“Me too - I hope I get to see you again.”

“We’ll be right here!”

Larry stood up, gave Lisa a hug and a kiss on the cheek, then turned to find his uncle - he had to be back home before the 6pm curfew.

Larry found Earl inside talking to Gunny, and reminded him that he had a 6pm curfew, and they barely had enough time to make it back before curfew. They walked out to Larry’s Jeep, and he put his Pelican case in the back with 6 loaded 20-round magazines, and his 1911 with 4 magazines. Earl didn’t say anything, and after he dropped his uncle off at his cabin, he drove back to his parents house, and made it back inside right before dark. His neighbor Charlie who lived down the block across the street was out watering the lawn and spotted the case, and ran in the house right after Larry went inside.

One week Later, Earl came up to their cabin, and he looked like he’d been crying. He handed Gunny a newspaper clipping. It described a Home Invasion Robbery gone bad, and the neighbors mentioned they heard rapid rifle fire, which was never reported before. The reporter commented that there were rifle casings scattered all around the scene, and the crime lab detectives were bagging them, and carried several bodies out in body bags. When he finished, Gunny broke the news to Lisa with tears in his eyes.

“Lisa, you need to sit down. I’ve got some very bad news.” Lisa nearly collapsed in a chair, and all the color drained from her face. “Lisa, Larry’s Dead.”

She screamed, “NO, How did it happen?”

“I think it was another ATF raid, since the newspaper described it as a Home Invasion gone bad, yet this time, they were taking bodies out in body bags and there were rifle casings all over the crime scene. If you remember, the ATF goons don’t use AR-15’s, they’re into pistols and subguns, so any expended rounds had to be Larry or his family defending themselves. The reporter counted 6 body bags going into the Coroner’s van, which meant that Larry at least took 3 of the SOB’s with him.”

Lisa fell to the ground sobbing hysterically. Earl came over and tried to console her, but she was disconsolate. The last person that should have wound up dead was now laying in a casket somewhere thanks to those ATF b@stards. She resolved then and there if she got a chance, she’d trade her life for eradicating the ATF. Once she made that decision, she seemed to get better, and while she seemed to be OK, inwardly she was envisioning the ATF building in DC going up in a huge fireball.

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Somewhere West of Battle Mountain, NV overlooking Interstate 80.

“Well, what do you think Val?”

“Perfect, the GPS says this spot is well within range of the 155 howitzer, and it’s perfectly sited to lay fire all along the interstate for almost 10 miles.”

“Great, there’s another site on the opposite side that’s just like this.”

“Fantastic, we’ll have those damned Chinks in a cross-fire, and everything between the mountains is within reach of one of the guns. How are you coming up for sites for the 40mm Bofors guns?”

“We’ve got 10 revetments per gun, and 10 fake ones per gun. The odds of the chinks hitting a revetment that contains a real gun during any pre-attack bombardment is less than 1 percent. The first thing the howitzers are going to hit is their fire-finder radar and artillery tubes. With them out of business, the Bofors guns will have a field day sniping at the column from 2 kilometers away.”

“You told me we’ve got 12 Bofors guns here, plus another 12 in Austin?”

“Plus the Dusters with 2 40mm Bofors cannons each, which have the same range, but are way more maneuverable.”

“Just make sure the Dusters stay out of range of their main battle tanks and the heavy guns on their APC’s. One round from 1 of those could destroy them easily.”

“That’s what we’ve got the guys in the spider holes for, and all the anti-tank mines and missiles.”

“I wish we had some TOW missiles and launchers.”

“Me too, but they’re not available at Hawthorne, and the Marines are holding onto every one they have, they might need them if the Chinese invade. They did give us a couple of dozen older Dragon Anti-tank missiles, which will help even with a maximum range of 1500 meters. I talked to the CO of Twentynine Palms, and our job is to slow down the chinks attacking up Interstate 80 until they can move some combat troops up here. You guessed correctly, Kerry’s busy dismantling the military, and sending the remainder overseas on “peacekeeping” missions. The only way the CO’s are keeping their forces together is to use the system against itself, but sooner or later, the paperwork is catching up with them. They can’t actively train or move, since that would be a dead giveaway to the dirtbags in DC that they’re ignoring their orders to stand down and prepare to be demobilized.”

“If I ever get my hands on that dirtbag!”

“You and me too sir, matter of fact the entire USMC would like to do nothing better than march on DC, take out the trash, then tell the rest of the world to get lost, but Kerry’s got troops loyal to him surrounding DC to prevent that exact occurrence, and he hasn’t left the White House since Texas declared their independence.”

“Damn, never a Disgruntled Postal Employee when you need one!”

“Excuse me sir?”

“Nothing, just musing that there’s never a Disgruntled Postal Employee when you need 1!”

“Ok, I get it - too bad we couldn’t get a sniper team in close to do the deed.”

“Wouldn’t work, you’d need to kill most of the people in DC and a bunch of people on the East Coast to really solve the problem.”

“And the problem is?”

“Too many D@mn Liberals!”

Val’s undersheriff laughed his head off, he had to agree. They had more Liberals than they wanted in Battle Mountain, and two of them even managed to get seats on the County Commission. Thank God Humboldt and Elko counties had finally elected a bunch of arch-conservatives to their County Board.

“Cr@p!”

“What?”

“I forgot about building a range, and giving the gun crews practice.”

“All ready took care of it Val. They shipped us a couple of boxcars full of 40mm shells, 30% of them were Common fused, and the rest were VT. They also included a whole bunch of marker rounds. My guess is that they emptied the munitions igloo and shipped us whatever they had. We’re talking around 100K rounds of 40mm, plus all the other ammo they shipped us.”

“How come the 5.56 and 7.62 didn’t get shot up in Iraq?”

“Good question, these were mostly 1980's manufacture, and for some stupid reason, the Army shoots the freshest stuff first in wartime, which stresses the manufacturers and leaves the civilian market short. I mean for crying out loud, I was shooting some WWII vintage 8mm out of my Turkish Mauser last week, and I never had a failure to fire.”

“Well, their loss is our gain. Tell them they can shoot up to 50% of the stocks in practice, but I want the gun crews to be able to fire for effect with that first volley. They'll be lucky to get 20 quick rounds out before the Chinese start to counter-battery them. Also, save most of the Common fuses for the Dusters since the 40mm rounds with contact fuses might have some anti-tank capability, and the Dusters would more likely be used in direct fire mode than the single 40mm guns. See if you can arrange some moving target practice for the duster and tank gunners, try towing a plywood target behind a jeep, hopefully on a really long rope.”

“How about the 40mm single-gun crews?”

“I was going to use them as improvised artillery. Imagine a quick 5-round burst going out 2,000 yards. The dispersion due to the wheeled trailer mount means that it should cover between 100 and 500 square yards with shrapnel with air bursts.”

“Sounds like an idea. The loader loads 5 rounds, and the gunner fires the whole clip in 1 burst at 1 target - that would saturate the area with shrapnel and hopefully kill any troops in the open, or thin-skinned vehicles. The only time they'd need to fire a Common fuse was if they had a BMP sitting there fat dumb and happy within 2,000 yards. I hope we come up with enough laser range finders for all the spotters.”

“I ordered a bunch, they should be here tomorrow. They're really cool. They're made by Newcon, with a built-in compass and speed feature. They can range 100-2,000 yards plus or minus 1 yard. Between the laser rangefinders and a range table one of the guys who was in artillery is building for us, if the spotter knows the range and bearing, he just looks it up on the range card, and calls the settings to the gunner, who lays the gun, then once the loader has it loaded, he fires. Hopefully we can get the engagement time down to where they're firing for effect within 30 seconds of the spotter acquiring the target.”

The next day the rangefinders showed up, and they started using them at the range to engage targets out to 2,000 yards. By the end of the day, they were getting pretty quick, and with more practice, they should be able to manage a 30-second or better engagement time. Several days later, Val set up a demonstration of the down-range effects of a 4-shot volley of 40mm shells with VT fuses. They got hold of several hundred over-ripe melons, and scattered them in the

field out at 1500 yards in a square 100 yards on a side. The gunner laid the gun, and fired a 4-shot burst aimed at the center of the square, and seconds later, the impact zone was turned into a light pink dust cloud because of all the watermelon they had put out there. They examined the area once the gun was safed, and not 1 watermelon survived the barrage. Once Val saw the damage, he quipped “Stir Fry anyone?” Once they saw the damage a 4-shot barrage made, they changed the SOP to sector firing a 4-shot burst center of sector/target. They had ammo to burn, and this way they could guarantee any Chinese troops not inside an artillery-proof bunker wouldn’t survive the barrage. It also made the spotter and gunner’s jobs much easier.

Chapter 8

The next day, Val and his undersheriff were going over the testing, and were puzzled by the results. They drove over to the armory, and checked the 40mm rounds. They looked like they all were from the same manufacturer, yet the date of manufacture was 1990. Val was curious, and got hold of the CO of the depot in Hawthorne, who made a couple of calls, and solved his dilemma for him. “Val, they shipped you rounds they had in stock for our C-130 based Spectre gunships that used the old L/60. You have 2 types of shells there. The VT shells are designed for air burst with a HE shrapnel burst, and the other ones with the contact detonators use a shaped charge to defeat armor, or a bunker. With the pinpoint accuracy of the C-130 Spectre gunship, they decided they should have some shaped charge ammo to hit tanks and bust bunkers with. The contact fuse is green, and the VT fuse is red. The VT fuse detonates about 50 feet above ground, and saturates a 50-foot radius with fragments. The contact fuse initiates a short delay, and a shaped-charge detonation to penetrate any armor that wasn’t defeated by the hardened AP nosecone. It would probably be lethal to anything less than a Abrams, and could probably destroy a Bradley.”

“Thanks Jim, that changes things.”

Val called several deputies and militia leaders into his office. “Guys, we’ve got an unexpected bonus with those Bofors L-60's. The guys at Hawthorne shipped modern AC-130 gunship ammo instead of obsolete WWII ammo I thought we were getting. The green fuse is a contact detonator with a shaped charge designed to defeat armor, and the red fuse is a 50-foot VT fuse and you already saw the effects of that. We still need to give the bulk of the contact fused stuff to the Duster crews, but I want each gun crew to have enough contact fuse stuff so if they come up against APC’s or light tanks, they can take them out before they get dangerously close.”

Wade spoke up “Val, what if the Chinese do something stupid like trying to come up I-15 between Twenty-nine Palms and Fort Irwin? Once the Marines get done chewing on them, the logical route to US-50 would be through Tonopah, then either to Austin or Ely depending on whether they take 376 or stay on 6.”

“If they go that way, we’d have to split our forces. I can’t leave 50 wide open in case they come up 395 to Bishop and cut over from there.”

“Val, they’d be nuts to go that way, the mountain passes would make perfect ambush spots!”

“So would driving past a couple of Marine Bases. Either way we have to split our forces or leave one route uncovered. I hate to do this to you buddy, but I need you to be in charge of Tonopah, while I stay in Austin, and Gene runs things in Battle Mountain. We’ve a lot of territory to cover, and we’re way short on Manpower.”

“Ok, can I make Wade my 2nd in command? If they are headed to Austin from Tonopah, I might need to make a speed run to let you know - I doubt if you want that going out over the radio?”

“Good idea Kurt, bring your Superbird with you, and if the Chinks show up, bug out and let me know so we can get set up to greet them properly.”

“Ok, I’ll do it - what can you give me?”

“The tanks and howitzers are too slow to transport that far off their lowboys, so they’re staying in Austin. I can give you 6 of the 40mm L/60 Bofors Anti-aircraft guns with as much ammo as you’ll need for harassing attacks, an M113 ITV, and an M113 ACAV, and an M163 VADS for air defense. I need the rest of it to defend Austin and our homes. Your job is to observe and report, and if they come up 376, I need you to use the 40mm guns to slow them down, but do not, I repeat do not engage the Chinese in a pitched battle, they’ll hand you your head on a platter. Fire no more than 8 quick rounds from each position in case they have fire-finder radar, and counterbattery capability, then be prepared to scoot out of there in a hurry to your next revetment. The ITV is in case the chink column is lead by a main battle tank since we don’t have the time or manpower to mine the road. Chinese doctrine has them putting their most capable equipment on the front line, and the follow-on forces are on trailers and less capable. If they do go that way, hopefully the Marines will have whittled them down to size. Once they’re committed to taking 376 or staying on 6, I need you to break your existing speed record and get up here and tell me which way they’re coming.”

“Kind of like Paul Revere?”

“Except this time you won’t be riding a horse, and it won’t be the British invading.”

“I better get down there, and start planning positions and getting things organized. If I don’t see you again Val, it was nice knowing you!”

Val hated himself, but he had to put his best friend in a very dangerous position to save civilians who would be defenseless without them. He shook Kurt's hand, which evolved into a "mountain man" hug, and Kurt left before he could see the tears in Val's eyes behind his mirrored Gargoyles. "Vaya Con Dios, Mi Amigo!" Val whispered to Kurt's retreating back. He prayed he'd see his best friend again, and cursed all Chinese into the hottest section of Hell.

By the time Kurt got to the Armory, the loaders had already attached 6 40mm Bofors guns on their trailers to 6 4wd pickups, and filled the beds full of stacked ammo, food, and supplies. Next to them stood 30 Militia Volunteers and Wade, who was going to be Kurt's second in command.

"Gentlemen, thanks for volunteering. You understand that some of us might not be coming home after this, but we have to defend our homes and loved ones. Thanks to the Wicked Witch of the West, we're not going to get much warning about which route the Chinks are going to take, so we have to relocate to Tonopah and roast our butts off in the middle of the desert waiting for an enemy that might never come. If they do, it will be one heck of a battle, but our job is to observe and report. Once they're committed to either Austin or Ely, I have to get back to Austin as fast as possible, leaving Wade in charge of the defense. If they do come up 6, you're to only engage in harassing attacks, and fire no more than 8 quick shots from each position in case they had fire finder radar and counterbattery capability, then you need to bug out to your next revetment. OK, let's load'em up, and move'em out!"

When they got to Tonopah, several ranchers volunteered their ranches as bivouac sites, and several volunteered their tractors and loaders to dig revetments for the guns. Wade and Kurt were busy mapping out gun emplacements that were within range of the road, yet had easy access, and hopefully their escape route was at least partly hidden from the road. They set the ITV in a location that could cover the junction of 6 and 376 in case Val was right and they were being led by a main battle tank. Next they spaced the 40mm Bofors guns covering Route 376 so they could shell the road, bug out, and the next one in line could shell the road while the first one was relocating, keeping the Chinese under continuous bombardment. They had a mixed bag of contact and VT fused rounds in the bed of their trucks, but were under orders to use the contact rounds sparingly, and only on a tank or APC if they had a clear shot. They didn't have enough to waste. They did have thousands of round of VT airburst rounds, and were encouraged to lay down 4-8 round barrages, doing as much damage as they could as quickly as possible. The gun had a 200 round per minute rate of fire, which meant if the loader had 8 rounds (2 clips) in the 10-round magazine, it would take roughly 4 seconds to fire 8 shots, and 1 minute to get the gun back on it's wheels and start relocating. Unless the counterbattery forces were set up with rounds in the chambers, they'd be shooting at empty revetments. The gun crews trained incessantly, and they could all fire 8 rounds, and be set up to tow in less than

a minute. Kurt knew most of the militia members, and their families, and prayed that would be quick enough.

***Dateline Beijing, Peoples Republic of China ***

Marshall Yeng was briefing his generals on Golden Dragon, their long-awaited attack to seize the US wheat fields. The plan was designed during the Clinton Administration, but the Planning Committee had decided that the Kerry Administration would work just as well, plus they had secret agreements with President Kerry and Governor Fineswine not to interfere with the invasion. Marshall Yeng was confused - the President of the United States was basically inviting them to invade. He was wary, thinking this might be a double-cross. A sizable amount of cash, and a promise to leave her in charge of California once they were through was all they needed to get assurances from Governor Fineswine. He didn't put a lot of stock in her assurances, but so far she had been willing to cooperate, and they had already activated their port in Long Beach, fired all the non-Chinese dock workers, and leased huge dock space in San Francisco Bay and Seattle Washington. They leased the space using a shell corporation and a corrupt attorney who thought they were using it for smuggling, and didn't care what they were doing as long as their million-dollar check cleared. He was amazed that these capitalists could be bought off for trinkets and paper.

General Fang was in the front row listening to the Marshall with half his attention. The other half was fretting over his assignment. He was assigned the Southern Group, which would either be a feint or the main attack if they were successful and the Central Army's attack failed. He didn't like splitting their forces like this, but understood the reasoning. If they all came down Interstate 80, they could blow up any number of bridges, or mine the pass through the Sierras, and they'd be stuck in California. He wished he were going in with the pathfinders, but as usual Marshall Yeng was correct, he belonged with his troops where he could coordinate the attack. He didn't like the lack of air cover, but Marshall Yeng explained that a political agreement negated their need. The President of the US had assured Chairman Li that the US Military wouldn't be in position to repel the invasion. General Fang wasn't happy, but knew he didn't have to be happy, he just had to follow orders. He was grateful that he wasn't leading the Northern Group, whose job it was to trail their coats up the Russian Coast, then make for Seattle, hopefully pulling the remaining Pacific Fleet North to attack the diversionary forces, and leaving the southern route past Hawaii clear for the retrofitted Merchant Ships they were traveling in. General Fang really wasn't happy about having to leave all their warships behind, but Marshall Yeng explained that if there was any warships in the convoy, they'd immediately be suspect, since no other Chinese merchant ships had a military escort before. All their warships were going North anyway, so they weren't available.

The next day the Chinese invasion fleet sailed with little or no obvious preparation. The Merchant Vessels had been carefully selected, pulled out of service, retrofitted to house either troops, weapons, vehicles, or a combination of each. Only the top container was actually a container, and the rest were facades for huge berthing and storage spaces which could quickly be loaded and off-loaded once the top containers were removed. Thanks to huge budget cuts due to “domestic spying scandals” the CIA and DIA didn’t have any operatives any where near the harbors while the Chinese were loading their invasion fleet, and didn’t know about the imminent Trojan Horse Attack. Our satellites did pick up the surge of shipping, but it was explained away by huge orders for Chinese junk for Wal-mart. The Northern Group was quickly picked up, and the Russians began shadowing it as soon as it left Chinese territorial waters. Meanwhile, what was left of the Pacific Surface fleet was surged out of their harbors up and down the West Coast to meet them in case it was an invasion fleet. The Russian President admitted on National TV that he didn’t know what the Chinese were up to, and didn’t like it one bit.

All of the US 688i Attack Submarines had been leased to Greenpeace since Kerry took office for Whale research projects. As research vessels, they were supposed to be disarmed, but the Captains got “wink and nod” permission from their CO, and carried 6 Mk48 ADCAP wire guided torpedoes and 4 Harpoon Anti-ship missiles since they refused to sail totally defenseless.

While they were doing this, the remainder of the Chinese Navy continued to stream Northward just barely outside Russian territorial waters. The Russians never trusted the Chinese, and sent a heavy defensive fleet to shadow the Chinese fleet as long as it was that close to Russian waters. The Premier was confused by the lack of response and coordination by the US Navy, which would ordinarily be shadowing the Chinese fleet themselves, and had done so every time the Chinese fleet left their home waters. They kept going North at 10 knots, and eventually the US Navy showed up right when the Chinese Fleet would either have to turn around or turn East toward US waters. It was brutally cold in the extreme northern Pacific, and the US commanders were worried about cold casualties and a possible sneak attack. As the Carrier Battle Groups showed up, the situation escalated when the Chinese chose that moment to turn toward the US coast. They would be inside US Territorial waters within 12 miles, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs had ordered the CO of the Carrier Battle Group to prevent the Chinese fleet from entering US waters by any means necessary. The FA-18's flew daily harassing flights right over the decks of the Chinese fleet until 1 day, Hammerhead Flight, a flight of 4 FA-18 Super Hornets flying off the USS Reagan overflew a Chinese destroyer. Suddenly a small SAM flew off the deck of the ship right as they were making a low-level high speed pass to encourage them to leave. The missile streaked into the left engine of Hammerhead lead, and exploded, destroying the aircraft. Immediately his wingman called

“Mayday...Mayday...Mayday, Shark flight, Hammerhead lead has been shot down by a Surface to air missile. No chute, repeat no chute. Request weapons free.”

“Hammerhead 2, evade wait one.”

Hammerhead 2 dove for the deck, and went to full military while Hammerheads 3 and 4 extended and orbited at a safe distance. Seconds later, he heard “Hammerhead 2, you are weapons free.”

Hammerhead 2 reefed the FA-18 into a high-gee climbing turn, and locked his radar on the Chinese ship. As soon as he got a lock, he fired 2 AGM-84 Harpoons. Seconds later, the missiles struck the Chinese ship amidship on the port side, blowing a huge hole in the ship and sinking it. He turned for home, and as soon as he left the area, his annunciator called “Bingo fuel”. He called “Control Hammerhead 2 bingo fuel.”

“Texaco is unavailable, Can you make it back to the carrier?”

“Affirmative, have a ready deck, ETA 10.”

Hammerhead 2 immediately reset his throttles to their maximum range setting, and limped toward the carrier with barely enough fuel to make it. He knew that if he missed, he wasn't going to get a second chance.

Aboard the Reagan, a frantic ballet ensued as they launched the alert aircraft, and cleared the deck and made ready for recovery. Less than a minute after they cleared the flight deck, he called “Hammerhead 2 Inbound.”

“Hammerhead, call the ball.”

“Roger, I have the ball.”

Lieutenant Gene “Fishbait” Nichols stared at his display, and willed the fighter down. He was on glide slope all the way, and was thankful this was a daylight clear weather landing. He remembered the last 2 times he had to punch out, the last one was at night just east of the Philippines during a typhoon in the South China Sea. After spending 12 hours in a raft puking his guts out because of the sea state, his CAG stuck the moniker of Fish Bait on him. He

quickly got back to the here and now as his FA-18 started to sink below glide slope, and he added throttle. When he crossed the landing threshold, and caught a wire, he was slammed into his harness, said a brief prayer of thanks, then remembered his lead was dead, and almost started crying.

Half an hour later, Lieutenant Nichols and the CAG met with the Admiral in his ready room.

“Lieutenant, you could have caused an international incident out there. What were you thinking?”

Before he could answer, the CAG spoke up. “Admiral, the Chinese fired first, destroying Hammerhead Lead. You were unavailable, so I made the call to fire.”

“Gene, it’s a good thing I just got this message over Navy Red. The Chinese have staged a no-shit invasion of the US. Evidently they used our own port agreements against us, and landed troops, tanks, and heavy weapons at Long Beach and San Francisco while we’re out here chasing these outdated rust buckets. I don’t know where the President is, and right now I don’t care. We’re at war, and I’m using my authority as commander on the scene to authorize an Alpha strike, and sink every Chinese vessel between us and the Russians. I’ve already called the Russian fleet, and they said they’d stay out of it unless the Chinese headed for Russian waters, at which point, they’d sink them on general principles.”

Captain LeFevre breathed a sigh of relief. He was expecting to get written up at least for sinking the Chinese ship, now it turns out they were already at war, making the sinking legal. Once the Admiral finished talking, he turned to them and said “Dismissed.” They both saluted and left his office. On the way back, Captain LeFevre asked Fishbait if he were OK leading another flight of FA-18's to sink the rest of the Chinese Fleet. He realized he had just received a battlefield promotion to flight lead, but wasn’t happy when he remembered why. “Sure Captain, I can handle it. Let’s go sink some Chinks.”

The commander of the Chinese Diversion force had a surprise for the arrogant Americans. While they were busy blowing obsolete ships out of the water, he had managed to sneak a half-dozen Kilos and 2 Han nuclear submarines within striking distance of the US Carrier, and they were under orders to remain hidden until they were guaranteed success. Their target was the US Ronald Reagan, named after that pompous megalomaniac, and the Nimitz, named after the notorious War Criminal.

Aboard Kilo 6, their most experienced submarine commander who wasn't assigned to a Special Ops mission had spent the last 24 hours getting into position to strike the Reagan. He received his last unrep 24 hours ago when they met a fishing trawler in the Siberian Sea late at night, and quickly filled their diesel tanks, took on a load of food and supplies, and the most important items, several bottles of oxygen and cases of CO2 scrubbers. He had planned to get as close as he could, shut everything down, and drift with the current that would bring him closer to the US fleet. With his boat dead in the water, he'd deny the Americans any noise to locate him with. The Russian Kilo diesel powered submarine was the only current submarine that could be quieter than a US boomer by shutting everything down including their air handling equipment. That was where the O2 and CO2 scrubbers came in. He'd carefully monitor the oxygen and carbon dioxide levels in the submarine, and release oxygen as necessary. The experts assured him they had enough oxygen and CO2 scrubbers to last 48 hours with the volume of the boat and the size of the crew. Once they started their drift, he ordered all non-essential personnel to their bunks, and forbade any smoking, which immediately dropped his popularity a couple of notches with the crew, who were all nicotine addicts. The Political Officer would earn his keep on this trip, trying to keep a bunch of nicotine addicts going through withdrawal and confined to their bunks from mutinying. The Captain, his first officer, and the other officers made sure they wore their sidearms for the remainder of the mission just in case.

Based on dead reckoning, he was traveling 5 nautical miles closer to the American Fleet each hour he drifted. They started their drift 10 miles away from the defensive ring of submarines that surrounded the CBG in a 100-mile protective ring just to be on the safe side. 20 hours later, they were preparing to launch their attack when a orbiting ASW aircraft got a MAD spike as he flew overhead. He immediately called the Reagan and warned them. They dispatched 2 helicopters to localize and destroy the Chinese sub. At this point the CO of the Reagan didn't care who owned the submarine which was dangerously close to his ship - it was going to the bottom. While the Reagan secured from flight ops, and started evasive maneuvers, the two Seahawks flew to the last know position of the intruder, and started using their dipping sonar while the S-3 Viking started laying lines of sonobuoys. The sonar operator in the back of the Viking was watching his monitor while the controller next to him was relaying data to the Seahawks and the Reagan. Meanwhile, the Submarine Coordinator was alerting all US subs in the area to the presence of Chinese subs who were lying doggo and waiting to spring ambushes. That piece of information caused several submarine captains to do something they were told never to do, using their active sonar in sector searches. Several more Chinese diesels were spotted and taken out, but two slipped through. One of them was stalking the SSN 770 USS Tucson. Commander Wayne Pitts, her CO, was a graduate of Annapolis with a degree in Engineering, like most sub drivers. What set him apart from the rest of his class was his ability to keep a complex 3-dimensional map of the surroundings in his head, and keep track of dozens of simultaneous contacts. He excelled in Submarine School, and quickly rose through the ranks, and finally earned command of the Tucson where he had been since 2002. The Tucson

had been deep and not received the updated information until they got a message over the VLF. Once he came shallow, the floating wire copied the urgent traffic, and after confirming receipt of the message, they headed deep again. He read the message in his stateroom, called his XO, and tried to make the best of a bad situation. He walked into the control room, called his Sonar Supervisor, and told him that there was a Kilo out there drifting, which was a threat to their ship and possibly the carrier. He concurred with the Captain's assessment, and the plan of action. They powered the active sonar, and scanned by sectors. Minutes later came the dreaded call - "Conn, Sonar. Underwater contact bearing 270, range 10,000, designate Master 100. They're opening outer doors."

"Snapshot tubes 1 and 2, Bearing 270, Master 100 "

Seconds later, the rams pushed the heavy ADCAP MK-48 torpedoes out of their tubes, and their motors spun up. Sonar reported "Conn, Tubes 1 and 2 fired electrically."

Minutes later, Sonar reported the ID of the Chinese Sub. "Conn, Sonar, we're pretty sure Master 100 is a Chinese Kilo making turns for 7 knots. We got a blade count and electrical noises once they started moving to avoid the torpedoes."

"Sonar, Conn, Aye."

Just as they settled in to wait the results of their attack, Commander Pitts heard, "Conn, Sonar, Master 100 just launched 2 torpedoes at us."

Commander Pitts wasn't too worried, the reported maximum range for the SET-53 was 10,000 yards. The next report was from Fire Control. "Conn, range to Kilo 9,500 yards."

When he heard that number, he decided to let the MK-48's take care of the Kilo, and at least make sure they were out of range in case the Kilo sent any more torpedoes his way.

"Cut the wires, reload tubes 1 and 2. Ahead Full, do not cavitate, right rudder, make your depth 400, steady on course 100." With the two torpedoes in the water, he wanted to move further away from the Kilo, but not so far that he couldn't re-attack if the 2 MK-48's missed. 2

minutes later, Sonar reported “Conn, Sonar. 2 explosions bearing 180. Several minutes later, they heard the “beer can” noises of the Kilo’s hull as it exceeded crush depth.

“Sonar, Conn. Report all Contacts.”

“Conn, Sonar has no contacts to report.”

“Very well, come to periscope depth carefully.”

Instead of making a bunch of noise and blowing ballast, Commander Pitts decided on the slower but safer means of surfacing the boat and reporting back to the Reagan. The diving control officer ordered a 10-degree rise on bow planes, and the engine room kept the speed at a leisurely 10 knots. While they continued to ascend, the Sonar techs listened carefully for any sign of company, and when they got close to periscope depth, the commander and his XO manned the periscopes, and checked for any drifting obstructions on the surface. This far north, there was always the risk of an iceberg. Seeing none, they ascended to 60 feet, and deployed the communications mast. Once their report was received and acknowledged, they proceeded back down to 400 feet to get under the layer and await any further contacts.

Chapter 9

While the Northern Diversion fleet steamed up the coast of China and Russia, another fleet of what appeared to be merchant vessels steamed for the west coast of the United States and the Panama Canal zone. The Chinese had taken years and millions of dollars gained from their US trade imbalance to build a fleet of troop and cargo ships that resembled container ships to satellites and the naked eye, but held either supplies, equipment, or soldiers, or all 3 in some cases. They even retrofitted several smaller tankers as mother ships for mini-sub. Their plan was an operational nightmare, but was pure genius if they could pull it off. With the Pacific fleet busy shadowing the Northern fleet, the merchants steamed unmolested and unchallenged right into the harbors at Long Beach and San Francisco. Each part of the fleet had a mini-sub mother ship, which held up to 6 mini-sub in a sealed compartment in the center of the ship. The Zhongdui were used to Spartan conditions, and appreciated the extra room of the compartment even if it meant no outside activity for the duration of the mission. During the transit, the hatch was sealed, and fresh air was allowed to circulate into the compartment. Once they reached the harbors, the air vents were sealed, the internal compartments pressurized, and the mini-sub, whose batteries had been fully charged during the long voyage and their equipment serviced, were launched 1 at a time out the bottom hatch. They were wet subs like the Seal Delivery Vehicles, and the occupants wore Draegers, except the driver/navigator, who was connected into the sub's closed-circuit air supply. His job was to get the sub to the exact point specified in the mission plans, release the Zhongdui to complete their missions, then to wait for their return, or if they were all caught or died, to return to the mother ship solo after a set amount of time.

The missions of the Zhongdui varied from securing harbors and access points for the invasion forces, to sabotage and other nefarious tasks they were suited for. The Zhongdui that arrived off the coast of Panama were supposed to sabotage the locks, rendering the Canal useless in case the US regained control of the Canal Zone. The tanker dropped 2 teams off on the Pacific side of the locks, and 2 more on the Caribbean side. They set their charges, connected the remote detonators, then stood off to await orders. Another Chinese tanker steamed into San Diego Harbor with a special mission, to destroy any naval assets remaining in the harbor. All 6 of its minisubs were deployed at the mouth of the harbor, and one made its way as close to the sub pens at Ballast Point as it could to attack the subs and the Navy Fuel Pier, while others drove further on in to attack the carriers docked at North Island or any ships docked at the 32nd Street Naval Station. The Zhongdui teams safely exited the tanker without being discovered, and started their slow approach to the harbor. Several hours later, at midnight, the first group reached their objective right outside Ballast point. The driver carefully bottomed the mini sub, and waited while the Zhongdui swimmers opened their hatches, grabbed their weapons and equipment bags, took their bearings to their targets, and started swimming in the murky water.

Aboard the SSN-771 Columbia Junior Sonarman Jim Kinsley was manning the sonar suite despite the fact they were inside a “secure” harbor. He used this downtime to practice his listening skills on the old BQQ-5E instead of the towed sonar array. He was getting to the point where he could identify individual ships entering and leaving the harbor without using the towed array. He was listening when he heard a faint sound of a electrical motor approaching the boat. He checked the HULTEC and it didn’t come up as any listed boat. He immediately called the Chief Sonarman, who listened for a while, and heard the same noise. He verified that the sound signature wasn’t registered, and called the Watch and asked them to page the Officer of the Day. “What’s going on?”

“Sonarman Kinsley heard a submerged 60hz noise from out in the harbor approaching the boat that’s not on our HULTEC list.”

The Officer of the Day said “I’ll be right down”

2 minutes later, he showed up in the sonar suite with the Chief of the Boat, who happened to be aboard. He asked if there were any exercises going on. Chief Anderson said “Not that I know of.” Chief Anderson used to be a sonarman before he became the COB, so they handed him a headset, and while his hearing wasn’t as sharp as it used to be, he clearly heard a 60Hz noise with a positive Doppler shift, meaning it was headed toward the boat. He quickly set his headphones down, called “Captain to the Conn” on the 1MC, and once the Captain got to the sonar suite, Chiefs Anderson and Michaels gave him the lowdown.

“Sonarman Kinsley was practicing on the BQQ-5E while we were docked, and heard the sound of electric motors headed toward the boat. He called me, and I confirmed it, then called Chief Anderson. We need to do a diver search in case what we heard was a minisub or a Swimmer Delivery Vehicle.”

“Could the SEALS be playing with us?”

Chief Anderson replied, “They’d need to notify me that they were conducting drills.”

“Very well, Set Battle Stations, and send sailors topside as lookouts until the SEALS get here to check the harbor. I’m going to call in a favor, and get the SEALS over here, plus a couple of Seahawks to sanitize the area.” Captain Dixon grabbed the ship to shore phone, and dialed a number from memory. 2 minutes later, the CO of the SEAL Naval Special Warfare Center was wide awake and spreading the alarm. Minutes later, they were in their diving gear aboard a

Super Stallion from NAS North Island. During the few minutes it took to fly across the bay, he filled the SEALs in. “Gentlemen. I’ve been given reason to believe there are hostile divers in the bay attempting to sabotage US Navy assets. It’s your job to find these divers, and eliminate them. Several Seahawks will be working the bay attempting to locate their transportation. Make sure that you and your buddy are wearing open circuit gear since the Columbia didn’t report hearing or seeing any bubbles. That is all.”

The SEALs took the rest of the time checking their gear, and their swim buddy’s gear. They were going to jump two at a time from a moving helicopter and check for enemy divers. They’d done this before as a drill, but they could tell from their CO’s demeanor that this was the real thing, not a full-mission profile. They were all issued underwater CO2 rifles that shot steel bolts with broadheads at a distance of up to 50 feet underwater, and their regular above-water gear. As the first team got ready, they stood in the doorway, and when the crew chief yelled “GO” they stepped out the doorway and dropped 5 feet to the water, and went under. Snake and Pooter, the first and most experienced swim team, swam toward the Columbia with their rifles pointed ahead of them. When they reached the Columbia, they spotted a diver working near the keel. Snake stopped in midstroke, aimed the rifle at the diver, and fired. The bolt flew out of the barrel and imbedded itself into the chest of the Zhongdui, who was mortally wounded but not out of the fight. Pooter came up on his blind side while he was struggling to remove the bolt and cut his air hose then his throat, finishing the job. They surfaced, and called out for Chief Anderson, then gave him a sitrep. He thanked the SEALs then ran back inside to tell his captain what the SEALs told him. When he found Captain Dixon, what he told him made him call the CO of the Sub base and inform him that they found a Chinese diver trying to attach a Limpet mine to the Columbia. 5 seconds after their brief conversation, the CO hit the “panic button”. The Marine Security Detachment Commander for the base realized the base was under attack, and it wasn’t a drill, and immediately executed his Threatcon Delta SOP. His entire detachment was sent to the armory, and then to their battle stations. 15 minutes later, the Submarine base was under lock-down, and the CO of the base was on the phone with the CO’s of the other San Diego commands that bordered the harbor. They immediately went to Threatcon Delta. While they were doing that, he sent FLASH traffic to the CNO regarding the attempted attack and the harbor going to Delta.

While all people were scurrying around, the Zhongdui took advantage of the confusion and made their way to the fuel farm. They were setting their charges when a sharp-eyed Marine spotted them in a restricted area, and opened fire. He got the first two, and the third one was able to return fire with a Czech Skorpion subgun before he died. The purpose-built armor-piercing 9mm rounds shredded the Marine’s vest, killing him as well. Right as the reaction force reached the fuel depot, the charges blew, killing most of the squad of Marines, and damaged but failed to destroy the fuel farm since they weren’t attached to the critical valves when they detonated.

All over the Western US, base CO's were rudely awakened to by their bedside phones ringing, and their duty chief at the comms desk alerting them to the commando attacks at San Diego Harbor. That is everyone except for the CO in charge of the Alameda Point base near San Francisco Harbor, who had a Chinese 9mm round through his head. When the duty chief couldn't raise his CO, he called his XO, who didn't answer either. Finally he called the Sergeant of the Guard, and alerted him. With the CO and his XO incommunicado, he assumed the worst, and went to Threatcon Delta, but it was too late, the Zhongdui had already killed most of the Command personnel of the base, and were busy setting various explosives to render the entire base combat ineffective. Once the bombs were set, they headed back to the water and regrouped. Alameda Point might have once been a powerful naval air station, but the Zhongdui finished the job that Congress started, permanently closing the base for any military use. The Ready Reserve Fleet was sunk at their piers. When they returned to their mother ship, they learned that all remaining military installations in San Francisco Bay were either destroyed, or so heavily damaged that they weren't going to be a factor in the upcoming battle.

Back in San Diego Harbor, the Zhongdui were having a field day setting charges and destroying naval vessels. They wasted a lot of time and effort blowing up the Mothball Fleet south of 32nd Street, and they were in for a rude shock when they tried to blow up the Aircraft carriers stationed at North Island Naval Air Station. The Connie and Nimitz were out to sea, and the CVN-74 USS John Stennis was in the Nimitz's usual berth, which confused the Zhongdui until they realized they still had a target, and swam toward the Stennis. They had a long underwater swim and they were fighting the current, which further slowed them down. On board the Stennis, their CO got the DELTA alert, and went to Dark Ship and quiet alert. They had a few surprises for any underwater commandos. The Navy had secretly installed powerful underwater lights that bathed the area around the carrier berths in bright white light, giving the divers no where to run, and no where to hide. Moments after the SEALs jumped from the helicopter, the CO ordered the underwater lights turned on, and the Zhongdui were caught like flies in amber in the floodlights, which turned the murky dark water into a brightly lit underwater arena. 6 SEALs quickly surrounded the 2 hapless Zhongdui, who decided to surrender. They were secured with zip ties, carefully searched, and loaded aboard a pair of RHIBs for the ride back to the SEAL base. They were met by Chinese linguists, and someone from the JAG's office to make sure everything was legal. They were taken in separate Hummers by Base Security to their high-security detention facility to await their interrogation and fate.

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Northern Diversionary Fleet, Somewhere off the Alaskan Coast

Lieutenant Gene “Fishbait” Nichols met his FA-18 pilots in his Squadron’s ready room aboard the Reagan. He felt funny being promoted to Flight Leader, especially the way he received his promotion. The absence of his best friend and flight leader in the room was palatable. Finally when he could stand it no more, he spoke. “Hammerhead Flight, we have a job to do, let’s get it done.” With that, they rose and walked somberly to their planes without the normal tomfoolery and wisecracks. When they reached their planes, they each were carrying 2 Harpoons and 2 330 gallon fuel tanks, and their wingtip stations held AIM-9 Sidewinders for self-defense, even though the Chinese fleet had no air assets, since the wingtip stations could only hold the Sidewinders, and they never went into battle totally defenseless just in case. Gene wished they could carry more Harpoons, but realized the FA-18 needed the fuel to get back to the boat, and they could always reload if there were more ships than missiles since the Chinese were like sitting ducks. As he walked to his aircraft, the weapons handlers gave him a thumbs up, and the Crew Chief said “Go get them Fishbait!” then climbed down the ladder, and gave him a very respectful salute. Gene motored the canopy closed, and completed the preflight sequence as he followed the plane director’s directions to the catapult and the jet blast deflector was raised. Once he was connected to the catapult, he spun the engines up to 100% military, then to Zone 5, while he watched the Cat Officer. He saluted the Cat Officer, gripped the bar with his throttle hand, and put his head back into the headrest, and waited for the cat shot. Just over a second later, he got the expected kick in the butt, and he was off the deck. A quick sweep of his instrument panel showed everything in the green, and he climbed to his assigned altitude, and waited until the rest of his flight joined up on him. A minute later, he spoke into his microphone “Hammerhead Flight, check in.”

“2...3...4”

With his flight checked in, Fishbait called the E2-C Hawkeye orbiting the CBG.

“Cyclops this is Hammerhead Flight with 4 FA-18's carrying 2 Harpoons each - where do you want us?”

“Hammerhead wait one.”

“Hammerhead, come right to 270, maintain speed and altitude.”

“Roger Cyclops.”

Lt. “Fishbait” Nichols put his FA-18 into a gentle right bank to conserve fuel, and headed toward the Chinese fleet. 10 minutes later, Cyclops called him.

“Hammerhead flight, We’ve got a Seahawk orbiting the Chinese fleet providing final radar steering. Launch bearing 000 anytime you’re ready.”

“Roger Cyclops.”

“Hammerhead flight, weapons hot.”

“Hammerhead flight, launch in pairs bearing 000, we’ve got final guidance assistance from a Seahawk orbiting the Chinese fleet.”

Gene was really grateful for the Seahawk illuminating the Chinese fleet - that meant they could launch at maximum range, and use the Seahawk’s long-range radar to guide the missiles to their targets and return to the carrier with more fuel in their tanks, which was much safer for them, but riskier for the helicopter, who had to stay out of SAM range of the Chinese fleet. As soon as he was ready, he checked his wingman, called “Fox 3 times 2” and squeezed the “pickle” twice, firing both missiles. He watched them leave the rails and climb, then he turned for home as the rest of Hammerhead flight launched and headed back for the carrier.

The Chinese fleet was a hellish nightmare of explosions, noise, flames and smoke as the Harpoons started impacting their ships. They tried every trick in the book including firing their AA guns in the air to create a “wall of lead”, but the Carrier Battle Group had more missiles than the Chinese had ships, and it was just a matter of time. One of the first ships struck was the flagship of the fleet, which received 3 Harpoons to the portside waterline, and sank with all hands, taking the commanding officer and their leadership with them. Without their leadership, the fleet milled about aimlessly and unorganized, dooming them to their eventual fate. On his flight back to the ship, Fishbait had a twinge of sympathy for the poor Chinese sailors who died without knowing what hit them, then immediately remembered they started it by shooting down his Flight Leader, and suddenly didn’t feel as sympathetic. They landed on the carrier, went to their debrief while their planes were refueled and rearmed, and flew back out to the Chinese fleet. By evening, every ship in the Chinese fleet was either burning or sunk. Gene thought there might have been a more one-sided naval battle in history, but he doubted it. When they were finished that evening, the crew chief told him “Lieutenant, the CAG wants to see you.”

“Thanks Chief. Where is he?”

“In the Ready Room Sir, ready for Debrief.”

Fishbait returned the Crew Chief’s salute and an airman escorted him off the flight deck, and he made his way to the ready room for the pilot’s debrief. After the debriefing, Captain LeFevre told him to wait, and they sat down together.

“Lieutenant, you’ve done a good job as flight leader today. I spoke to the Admiral, and he recommended making the position permanent. That also means a field promotion to Lieutenant Commander.”

“Sir, I don’t know what to say. I’ve always wanted to be a Flight Leader, but I’d rather have Nick back.”

Captain LeFevre motioned Gene to sit. “Son, better get used to it, in war we lose good men. Sometimes by accident, and sometimes by enemy action. I started out as an Ensign in the late 1980’s, when we were technically at peace, but we lost fighters every year to training accidents, and incidents caused by shadowing the Soviet Fleet. I’ve had to say goodbye to several friends, and help their wives and families mourn, but it doesn’t get any easier. Nick was one of the best and brightest, and was destined for my job. You guys did every thing right, and Charlie just got lucky, and bushwacked you with a handheld SAM. As you know, there’s no defense for 1 of those unless you see it launch. Right now I could be telling this to Nick since it could have easily been you the missile had locked on.”

“Ok, CAG, but why did we sink their whole fleet?”

“Once they fired the SAM, our ELINT lit up like a Christmas tree. Seconds before that, they were not emitting a peep. When they ended EMCON, they ended it in a big way. Their fleet had several guided missile boats with them, and they were way too close for comfort. With the war warning, we had to assume they weren’t doing a Right of Navigation exercise, and had to assume they were hostile. The Admiral decided to sink their fleet where it was, then steam back to port at Flank to defend the rest of the US.”

“Ok, that makes sense. I’ll take the job.”

“Very well. Lieutenant, as of this moment, you’ll be frocked to Lieutenant Commander, and as soon as the paperwork gets processed stateside, it will be official. Don’t let me down.”

Lieutenant Commander Gene “Fishbait” Nichols stood at attention while Captain LeFevre handed him the gold oak cluster, then said “Dismissed.” Gene saluted the captain, and once it was returned, he turned, opened the door, and left.

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San Diego Harbor, 24 hours after the start of the Zhongdui attack.

Snake and Pooter were as tired as they had ever been since Hell Week. They spent the last 24 hours sanitizing the harbor, locating and killing any Zhongdui swimmers they located. They heard the Seahawk had located 2 Chinese Swimmer Delivery Vehicles using a prototype towed Magnetic Anomaly Detector. Some bright engineer realized the Seahawk could benefit from a MAD detector, and several Pacific Fleet Seahawks were fitted with the detector and the detection gear, which allowed a slow deliberate search for underwater Magnetic Anomalies. Over the years, they had made detailed MAD maps of the harbor, and any new anomalies stood out like a sore thumb, which resulted in the capture of 2 Chinese SDV’s with their driver/navigators who were suddenly surrounded by a dozen very determined, grim-faced and well armed SEALs. When the SEAL CO’s report made it up the chain of command, every command in the US went to Threatcon Delta, and all over the US, officer’s wives were wondering why armed guards were turning them away or searching their vehicles when they drove up to the base to pick up their husbands. As word of the sabotage attempts spread, various groups that had planned and prepared for such an incident activated their plans to defend their homes and communities with or without the help of the US Military.

Up till now, the Chinese plan to take over the US was working perfectly. They unloaded all their container vessels in Long Beach and San Francisco harbor virtually un-molested since the Zhongdui had killed or captured any means of organized resistance to their landings in the immediate vicinity of the harbors, and the panic caused by the word of the Chinese invasion leaking out to the media slowed the response from outside agencies, who had to fight against massive traffic jams of panicked civilians fleeing the area around the harbor and the immediate area.

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Later that day near Austin, NV

Sheriff Johannsen got an e-mail from his contact at the Governor's office with the attack warning and called all his leadership. "Ok guys, this has gone from an exercise to a no-shit invasion. I just got word from the Governor's office that Chinese forces have landed at Long Beach and San Francisco. As we expected, their most likely route will be Interstate 80 into the breadbasket, so they will probably come through Sacramento and Reno, then past Battle Mountain. Their alternate route is 210 to Interstate 15 past Twentynine Palms and Fort Irwin. The Navy was caught flat-footed, but they were able to intercept several Chinese Commandos sent to destroy the Naval assets in San Diego Harbor. The Reagan and Nimitz Carrier Battle Groups are steaming back to their home ports as fast as they can to hopefully intercept any Chinese second wave, and defend the coast of the United States. The California National Guard units that haven't been demobilized have been sent overseas on Peacekeeping missions, and are unavailable to help defend California. Luckily the Marine Corps still knows how to fight, and even though they've been recently demobilized and stripped of most of their combat units, the CO's of the various units have been using every trick in the book to slow down the bleeding, so they're about 75-80% combat ready, but they'll fight even if it means sending cooks and clerks up against battle-hardened troops. The good news is they'll slow the Chinese down, and hopefully wear them down to the point where it won't be suicide to engage them. The situation is grim, and I don't know if we'll live or die. When you get back to your commands, make sure you ask them 1 last time if they're sure they want to do this."

"Val old buddy, I know we're going to take casualties, there's no way around that, but I'm pretty sure Patrick Henry summed it up best when he said "I regret that I have but 1 life to give for my Country." I don't agree with what those Yahoos in DC are doing, but dagnabbit, this is MY country they're invading! I can't imagine anyone stepping down now."

"Sorry Kurt - the number of casualties we're probably going to take is weighing heavily on my Spirit."

"I know how you feel bro - I know that not all of the people I'm taking to Tonopah are going to come back. Still it's us or innocent women and children, and I'd rather it be us."

"Just remember what General Patton said, ""No b@stard ever won a war by dying for his country. He won it by making the other poor dumb b@stard die for his country."

"Don't do anything stupid, I'd really like to see you all again before we meet in Heaven."

That gave them all an idea, and they knelt together in a circle, and said a silent prayer. With that over, the meeting broke up, but not before Kurt and Val bid each other a tearful goodbye.

Chapter 10

All over California, Military commands that still had personnel and equipment were going into Hyperdrive to get as many armed personnel ready to repel the invasion. Flash traffic was exchanged between commands, the Joint Chiefs, and the National Command Authority, which was strangely silent. Without NCA orders, the Joint Chiefs hands were tied, and couldn't order the federalizing of critical National Guard troops and equipment from out of state or deployment of Active Military personnel. Governor Fineswine was incommunicado somewhere on a "fact finding mission" and they were unable to call up the California National Guard. Fortunately for the US, the local commanders didn't need orders for base defense, and quickly mobilized and shared forces. Camp Pendleton quickly offered to take over security for all Naval bases in Southern California, which relieved the CO's of the bases, who had already ordered all their remaining ships to sea where they were safe. The USS Stennis led a rag-tag armada of ships that hadn't worked together in decades, and some that weren't supposed to be working period. Some of the destroyers were commissioned before the Stennis's CO was born. Still they had a full loadout of weapons and fuel, stripping the storehouse and fuel depot at 32nd Street before they sailed. No ship had its' full compliment of sailors for 1 reason or another, but they were Navy fighting ships, and they weren't going down without a fight. Once the Stennis cleared the harbor, she started Flight Operations to receive any fighters, attack craft, and any other useful planes North Island could spare regardless of command that were qualified for aircraft carrier landing.

Their Hawkeyes were the oldest ones in the fleet, yet they still worked, and the pilots were the most experienced, so he hoped that would help balance off the rest of his aircraft. He almost danced a jig when he heard that a full squadron of the old and supposedly obsolete but highly effective F-14D Tomcats were aboard, and he had a armory full of long-range AIM-54C Phoenix missiles for the Tomcats that they hadn't removed yet plus a bunch of Sparrows and Sidewinders. He'd let the cats fly CAP and let the FA-18's take care of any surface threats, and the ASW aircraft take care of any submarine threats. He immediately launched one of the Hoovers, and a full ASW group as soon as he had finished recovering and refueling aircraft. He was grateful they had 2 fleet oilers assigned to him that were full of fuel, and was even happier when he was assigned the inshore defense role. The Nimitz and Reagan were steaming back to San Diego as fast as they could without leaving the rest of their CBG behind. They considered breaking off from the slower fleet oilers and other support ships, but realized if they got into a shooting war, they might need the supplies aboard those ships, which would be basically defenseless without the carrier and her faster escorts. Once they arrived on scene, they'd patrol the blue-water zone from Hawaii to the coast, and destroy anything flying a Chinese flag.

Meanwhile, word finally reached the US boomers and attack subs that had been leased to Greenpeace, and once the WAL's on board found out they had been recalled to active duty and threw a hissy fit, the Captains confined them to quarters, turned their submarines toward the war zones, and put the pedal to the metal. They were traveling in their fastest "safe" mode of sprint and drift, which meant they were averaging 13 knots, and would stop every hour or so to listen for hostile contacts. They were short torpedoes and missiles, and were hoping to quickly reload in Bremerton or Hawaii as quickly as possible, but first they wanted to expend a couple of missiles or torpedoes into the hulls of the @#\$\$@ Chinese! Several 688i commanders were in touch with their command, and realized there were no submerged contacts within several hundred miles of them according to SOSUS data, and decided to risk traveling at flank speed to get to the fighting quicker.

They set course to get ahead of the Chinese fleet, which was headed back to China to load the second wave, and when they got close enough to pick up the surface fleet on their TB-23 towed array, they were puzzled that they hadn't picked up any underwater contacts. The closer they got, the more detail Sonar was able to provide, and eventually they were able to type the vessels from Hultec data, and none of the contacts matched any known warships. One 688i captain realized the merchants were unescorted, and had an idea. He sent a message over Navy Red suggesting that the rest of the fleet should fire a single torpedo or Harpoon into each ship to disable it, then come back later when they had a full weapons loadout to finish them off. Several CO's thought his idea was ingenious - they were short weapons, and didn't have enough to sink them all, but they could seriously damage and possibly sink each one of the cargo carriers with a single torpedo or a Harpoon, leaving them dead in the water in the middle of the Pacific where they were no threat. All over the Pacific, Submarine captains were engaging in a Turkey shoot, firing a single torpedo at each Chinese vessel, and once the torpedo had acquired, cut the wires, and engaged the next vessel in line. One lucky ship located a Chinese Tanker, and decided to fire a Harpoon at it. The missile detonated midships, and ruptured two adjacent tanks. The resulting explosion and fire lit up the night sky as the ball of fire raced skyward, signaling the funeral pyre of another doomed Chinese ship.

Once Marshall Yi got word of the sinking of his container vessels before they picked up the second wave, he was furious and ordered his entire submarine and ASW fleet to set sail with orders to sink the "barbarians" that would attack unarmed vessels. The US CINCPAC, Admiral Kinder, was in his office when the flash traffic message hit his desk that the remaining Chinese ASW forces were lighting boilers at their piers and getting ready to set sail. He could read as well as the next sailor, and realized they were going to attempt to get revenge for us sinking their merchant fleet. He grinned gleefully, since the Chinese ASW fleet had about as much chance of succeeding as a baby did against a battleship going up against 12 American 688i's in their home waters where the water was greater than 400 meters deep, and they could take full advantage of their long-range sensors. Still, he didn't want to give them even that

chance, and ordered all the US Naval forces in Hawaii to full alert, and to be manned and ready for extended ASW activity in 24 hours, which would be 6-12 hours before the fastest Chinese submarine could be anywhere near Hawaii. He invoked a 200-mile exclusion zone around the Hawaiian Islands with the exception of a narrow corridor for resupply transits and essential commercial/military aircraft that would be heavily monitored. Any unidentified vessel would be sunk without warning, and any aircraft violating the exclusion zone would be diverted or fired upon.

Several 688i's that were headed to Hawaii in the more conservative Sprint and Drift mode at 13 knots decided to make the rest of the transit at 26 knots when they got the message that the entire Chinese ASW fleet was headed to the Pacific loaded for bear. At 26 knots, they'd reach Hawaii a couple of days before the Chinese fleet, quickly reload and rearm, then surge out to meet the Chinese in deep water where we had the greatest advantage, and leave the damaged Chinese Merchant vessels for later. They contacted COMSUBPAC and made arrangements to get resupplied, rearmed, and transit the exclusion zone safely. The boomers were ordered back to their old patrol areas, and received orders to activate their missile delivery systems and check that everything worked just in case - they might be back in the thermonuclear weapons delivery business if the Chinese got stupid. One by one, all the Pacific 688i's transited the exclusion zone under escort, and were immediately provisioned and rearmed. COMSUBPAC ordered all the subs to be loaded with max loadouts of torpedoes and Harpoons, and their vertical launch tubes to filled with anti-shipping Tomahawks. After the fastest reload/rearm they had ever experienced, they were back at sea 24 hours later with a full load of weapons including 20 Mk-48 ADCAP torpedoes, 4 Harpoon Anti-Ship missiles in their launch containers, a full loadout of Tomahawk Anti-ship missiles in their VLS tubes, and enough food and supplies to stay submerged as long as they needed to. Two 688i's were sent to a different dock guarded by Marines to get their VLS tubes loaded, but the rest of the sailors didn't say anything since those subs were routinely assigned to patrol the Chinese Coast.

Prior to setting sail, the Captains and XO's met in the conference room for a pre-mission briefing. They decided to save their Harpoons for any submarine tenders or fleet oilers they came across, with the idea of causing massive secondaries that would be visible for miles if they blew them up at night, hopefully convincing the rest of the Chinese fleet to turn and run home with their tails between their legs. One of the Executive Officers laughed and said that the "Chinese Navy was as big of an Oxymoron as the Mexican Army", that resulted in gales of laughter until the Admiral pointed out that even though the Chinese Navy might be a joke as a Blue Water Navy, they still might get lucky, and not to underestimate them. With that note, the meeting broke up since they all had to get back to their commands and prepare to sail immediately. The channel out of Pearl Harbor was crowded with a long procession of 688i's sailing in a row. Security was draconian, and anyone that didn't have a good reason to be near the harbor was held miles back by armed Marines manning barricades. Anyone with a camera

or video camera was either held back at the barricades, or quickly detained and held for questioning.

Once they reached deeper water, they submerged and split up and made their best speed to their assigned kill box. They had divided the Chinese Navy's most likely route into thousand square mile kill boxes 3 wide and 6 deep to eliminate blue on blue incidents. With 18 subs assigned to the interception mission, the crews that were stationed closer to the US coast hoped that the subs closer to China would leave some for them. Once the Chinese fleet was located, the submarine in the kill box they were headed to would have primary responsibility for that engagement until they left his box, and he could call and ask for help if needed, and he would be responsible for coordinating any attacks. Most of the Pacific ASW fleet was strung out to keep the Chinese Navy from getting within missile range of Hawaii, and any remaining assets were told to assist any US subs prosecuting any Chinese contacts.

While the submarines were laying their trap for the Chinese Navy, the Carrier Battle Groups had received word about the imminent Chinese attack, and diverted to meet it. They arrived in Hawaiian waters, and decided to coordinate their attacks with COMSUBPAC, who seemed to be coordinating the upcoming battle. He was about ready to dance a jig and sing a sea shanty when the Reagan and Nimitz CBG's showed up. What was previously a one-sided battle would now be a Chinese Massacre! Hopefully the Chinese would realize how hopeless their situation was and turn for home before the 7th Fleet blew them out of the water. All of their effective large warships were on the bottom of the Bering Sea, and the only ships the Chinese had left were some guided missile vessels, light frigates, plus their ancient ASW destroyers and Romeos. With their reliance on numbers, there were over 50 ships left in the fleet, but they virtually no anti-air capability, and between the Reagan and Nimitz, they had over 6 squadrons of FA-18's and plenty of Harpoon anti-ship missiles left. Admiral Lester called his SUBRON commander, and changed his plans. The FA-18's could take care of the surface contacts, and the subs could take out the submarines. He detached half his 688i's to their respective fleets, and they went back to their regular wartime missions. While they were ashore, the Greenpeace representatives were put ashore and confined to the brig for the duration of the battle to prevent them from divulging Military Secrets.

Aboard the USS Ronald Reagan, Lieutenant Commander Gene "Fishbait" Nichols fingered the gold oak leaf cluster on his collar, and thought of his flight leader. He was getting used to the position of flight leader, still he missed his best friend. The raging fury that blazed hot at the loss of his best friend and flight leader LCDR Nick "Jaws" Romero had been replaced by cold resolve to see this war through to it's end, destroy the enemy, and get his pilots home to their loved ones. As he realized he was responsible for the lives of the rest of his flight, the weight of Command descended on his shoulders, but he knew the CAG had confidence in him. He flicked his cigarette overboard, and headed to the pre-mission briefing in the ready room.

While LCDR Nichols got ready to attack the remnants of the Chinese fleet, the Nimitz and Reagan were already conducting flight ops, and were steaming in a racetrack to alternately launch and recover aircraft. The CBG's were surrounded by successive rings of ships to service and defend it from attack. Outside the furthestmost ring, two 688i's were attached to the CBG to defend against any submarines that got past the other 688i's. With the majority of the Pacific Fleet steaming off the coast of Hawaii, they realized the chances of any submarine getting through were exactly two - Slim or None, still, you always followed SOP, and that meant having 2 688i's riding shotgun on every deployed CBG. The CAP aircraft weren't really needed either, since the Chinese didn't have aircraft carriers, but the Admiral wanted to make sure he died in bed of old age, and didn't take any unnecessary chances.

The Hawkeyes commanded a 200-mile range with their powerful radars, and the Hoovers were sweeping the seas for surface and undersea contacts to prosecute. The CBG had dozens of ASW helicopters available, and some of them were close-aboard the carriers, while others were further out to assist the 688i's both with defending the CBG, and prosecuting any Chinese subs that approached the US Fleet. Once the Hawkeyes got positive radar contact with the Chinese surface fleet, the FA-18's that were armed with anti-ship Harpoons were launched as they reached optimum range. The Admiral decided to risk another Seahawk to provide final guidance to the Harpoons, and the CO of the ASW Helicopter group made sure his pilots understood exactly how risky it was to approach a Chinese warship armed with Surface to Air Missiles, and told them to stay 150% of the maximum listed range of the SAMs away from any Chinese ship. It would slightly degrade their radar performance, but it was better than either sending a Hawkeye closer, or having the FA-18's guiding their own missiles.

In the pilot's ready room, the CAG was finishing his briefing "Gentlemen, the sooner these Chinese rust buckets are in Davy Jones Locker, the sooner we can go home. We've got a Seahawk providing final steering again, so launch at maximum range. Cyclops will be coordinating strikes on Alpha Prime, so monitor Alpha and Guard. Good Luck, and Good Hunting, That is All!" With the end of the CAG's briefing, the room returned to its normal locker room atmosphere as pilots good-naturedly kidded each other. One of the senior flight leaders approached LCDR Fishbait, who saluted him then they shook hands. "Good job Gene - too bad about Nick. Just do it like you did before, and you'll be fine."

"Thank ya kindly Commander. I aims to please!"

Commander Reynolds, who was about one of the darkest fighter pilots on the Reagan, had to laugh at Fishbait's lame attempt at humor, then they shook hands and parted ways - he had to see to his pilots. Gene picked up his flight bag and his helmet, and collected his pilots, then they marched as a group up to the flight deck where their planes were ready. Gene climbed

aboard his plane with the crew chief's help, then as he was ready to start engines, he said "Well done Chief."

"Go get some Chinks Fishbait Sir!" The chief saluted LCDR Gene "Fishbait" Nichols, who returned the salute smartly, then the Chief removed the accommodation ladder, and Gene followed the directions of the plane director over to the #1 Cat. He finished his pre-flight right as the deck crew got him connected to the catapult, and raised the JBD. He spooled the engines up to 100% Military, then Zone 5, saluted the Cat Officer, grabbed the launch handle, put his head back in the headrest, and got ready for a kick in the butt as the catapult threw his plane off the Aircraft Carrier. Seconds later, he was airborne. A quick sweep of his instruments indicated everything was in the green. He looked to his right, and his wingman was right where he belonged. 2 minutes later, he called "Hammerhead Flight, check in."

"2...3..4"

Once he knew the whole 4-plane flight was together, he called Cyclops. "Cyclops Hammerhead Flight with 4 FA-18's each with 2 Harpoons. 540 knots at Angels 20 at 270"

"Hammerhead turn east to 187 and maintain altitude, heading and speed. Optimum launch range in 10 minutes. Sky is clear."

"Roger Cyclops, Hammerhead flight, turn to 187 and trail formation."

"2...3...4"

The 4 FA-18's lined up 2 miles apart. 8 minutes later, Cyclops called "Hammerhead, weapons free."

"Roger Cyclops, weapons free."

"Hammerhead, we are weapons free at this time, prepare to launch 2 Harpoons and return to base."

"2...3...4"

Gene reached over, and flipped his armament switch to armed, and selected Harpoon. Once the system confirmed everything was good to go, he called "Fox 3 times 2" and squeezed the pickle twice, launching both his Harpoons. Once they cleared the rails, and he saw them clearing his aircraft, he banked around to the left to clear his wingman to launch. 2 minutes later, 8 Harpoons were flying toward the Chinese Fleet. The pilot of the Seahawk elected to target the SAM equipped ships first, as a matter of self-preservation. The first 4 missiles came in at wave top height, and struck the 4 guided missile fast attack boats amidships right above the waterline. The warhead detonated inside the small ship, and the resulting explosions reduced the ship to a debris field and an oil slick. The remaining 4 missiles targeted the remaining 4 Chinese Type 57 frigates, which were some of the most versatile ships left in the Chinese fleet. They carried 2 ASW helicopters, anti-ship and anti-air guided missiles. The missiles detonated amidships and quickly resulted in massive secondary explosions as the warhead penetrated several bulkheads before detonating, which set fires, and caused missiles and munitions stored below decks to burn or explode, adding to the death and destruction. The loss of the 4 frigates doomed the rest of the fleet, which only had handheld SAMS to defend against aircraft and anti-ship missiles. The Seahawk moved in closer to the Chinese Fleet for better accuracy once they determined all the air-search radars were down. The co-pilot quickly scanned the surface with his powerful binoculars, and determined that the Chinese air-defense vessels were either sunk or sinking fast, and no threat to the fleet. He called back, and gave the US fleet the good news - from here on out, it was a turkey shoot. The next two volleys of missiles destroyed their submarine tenders, fleet oilers, and their remaining ASW destroyers. Finally the Chinese Fleet had enough, and the most senior surviving officer called on the radio, and asked to surrender. The US fleet spent the rest of the day rescuing Chinese sailors and transporting them to Hawaii.

Meanwhile, the Chinese Submarine commanders didn't get the word, and were approaching the US subs, which were silently ghosting along, listening for their opposition. The snorkeling Romeo diesels were so loud that the Sonarman had to turn down their headphones to save their hearing. Once they got within range, the US subs each fired 2 ADCAP torpedoes at each Chinese submarine, with predictable results. All the Chinese subs were lost with all hands, having never gotten off a shot in return. With the destruction and surrender of the Chinese fleet, the two Carrier Battle Groups set sail for the home port in San Diego. The admiral in charge of the Reagan CBG was in a hurry to get home so the FA-18's could join in the fight to defeat the Chinese invaders that had come ashore all over California. He was sadly disappointed to hear the California National Guard wasn't busy defending California, but the Marines and Navy were doing what they could. He called the Chief of Naval Operations to give him a debriefing, and once the CNO got the whole picture from his Fleet Admiral, he contacted the other Joint Chiefs and set up a clandestine meeting that afternoon.

***Dateline Southern California, Day One of US Invasion ***

General Fang was pleased with the progress his subordinates were reporting to Headquarters, they were ahead of schedule and meeting light resistance. Thanks to draconian anti-gun laws recently enacted in California, most of the inner city population had been effectively disarmed, and only owned pistols, shotguns, and the occasional hunting rifle, except for the Criminal Gangs, who had full auto AK-47's and other weapons, but they weren't interested in stopping the Chinese as long as they left their neighborhoods alone. The few militias that still existed were doing their best, and all over Los Angeles, men with hunting rifles and other small arms were sniping at the Chinese formations, but it was as effective as flies against an elephant, a minor irritant, and not much more. The Chinese tanks, and Armored Personnel Carriers used their machine guns to clear out any pockets of resistance. If the militias used a tractor/trailer to block the road, the Chinese lead tank fired a High Explosive round into it, and pushed the remains out of the way. With their orders to blow through any resistance and not stop, they quickly steam rolled over what opposition there was. Between the Chinese invaders and the panicked sheeple driving down both sides of the freeway to escape the Chinese, the Marines couldn't get their heavy armor near the Chinese beachhead, and the Marines had to make a tough decision. Col. Jim Kerns, the CO of Camp Pendleton, decided to set up further East where they could have all his assets available to fight the Chinese, instead of sacrificing them piecemeal in a confused and chaotic defense of the beachhead. He had 2 Predator UAV's aloft keeping an eye on the Chinese advance, and once they turned onto Interstate 605 North, he guessed their route, and decided to set a tank trap alongside the intersection of the 605 and 210 freeways using TOW armed Hummers and tank-killer teams armed with AT-4 and Javelin missiles. Their job was simple - knock the leading Chinese tank corps down to a manageable size, slow the Chinese advance down, and retreat to another spot, and start all over again until they could get some air support and heavy armor in contact with the Chinese.

Col. Kerns was proud that his entire command volunteered for duty, and he selected his most experienced anti-tank missile teams, and flew them north to Long Beach in a Chinook with a pair of armed choppers in escort. The Chinook set down just long enough to unload the tank killer teams, their Hummers, and their weapons, then lifted off again to orbit a safe distance away from the fighting since it was an unarmed transport chopper. The tank killer teams quickly broke up into two-man teams that were dropped off at selected locations with a full load of missiles each. They quickly dug fighting holes, and camouflaged their locations as best as possible. They were set up along the Eastern side of the 605/210 junction and were in radio contact with headquarters, which was giving them minute-by-minute updates of the Chinese positions and rate of advance. Sergeants Mendez and Lopez were at the point of the spear where they always wanted to be ever since they served in Falujiah, Iraq. They were closer than brothers, and had shared many a "pucker factor 10" incident and survived. Each knew the other's families, and spent their weekends they had off working with the local Scout troop as

Troop Leaders. Several of their oldest Scouts had attained Eagle Scout Rank, and had also been accepted for the Naval Academy and wanted to be Marine Officers. Enrique and Manuel were proud of every Scout in their troop, several of which had overcome almost insurmountable odds to not only graduate high school at the top of their class, but go on to higher education, good paying jobs, and families. They told their Scouts that there was nothing wrong with being raised in the Barrios, as long as you understood you weren't supposed to stay there all your life. With proper motivation, you could, to quote an old Army recruiting slogan, "be all that you can be." If it was one thing the USMC Sergeants could do, it was motivate youth to perform beyond their wildest dreams.

As the Chinese got closer, Enrique stopped "woolgathering" and settled down behind the sight of his Javelin missile launcher. They had over a dozen missile teams scattered throughout the park, and all were within range of the freeway. They were all within half a mile of the freeway, with the exception of the TOW equipped Hummers, which were further back, and hopefully found a natural depression to get as much of their vulnerable vehicle into as possible. While Enrique got ready to shoot his first missile, Manuel was busy setting up his next couple of missiles so he could quickly get him ready to fire again. They had 6 missiles with them, and hopefully that meant 6 dead Chink tanks. Once they fired their missiles, they were to "strategically withdraw" to the opposite side of the park, where they would be met by any surviving Hummers, and driven to their next ambush site. Enrique hoped they could hassle the damn chinks all the way up 210 until the Marines at Twentynine Palms could start dropping CBU's and JSOW's on them. He couldn't believe the Chinese leaders would be crazy enough to route a major invasion right past Twentynine Palms and Fort Irwin. He hoped the US Army had plenty of tanks available, from what he heard, the Chinese had stripped their Army and Navy, and smuggled almost half their Army across the Pacific, and landed it right under our noses in Long Beach Harbor. As the first Chinese tanks came into view, he identified them as Type 90's, and knew his Javelin missiles fired top-down to defeat the thin armor of the tank's turret, so he aimed at that spot on the lead tank. He touched the trigger, and the missile flew right over the turret of the Chinese tank and detonated. Less than a second later, the hatches blew off, and smoke poured out of the tank, so he quickly attached the sight to his second missile, and targeted the tank behind him.

While Enrique and Manuel were busy, the other tank killer teams were experiencing great initial success as the Chinese were slow to react to the surprise anti-tank missile attack from their flank. Enrique killed a second type 90 when he saw the turret of a Chinese APC turning toward their position. In a race against Death, death often won. Saying a quick prayer, Enrique grabbed their 3rd Javelin Missile and mounted the Command Launch Unit to it like he had done hundreds of times before, except this time, his heart was pounding. Right before the Chinese turret finished traversing all the way to their position, he got down behind the sight, picked a vulnerable spot on the APC, and fired. Seconds later, there were flames coming out of the

hatches of the Chinese troop carrier, and he breathed a sigh of relief. Right after he fired, 12.7mm rounds buzzed overhead like angry bees, and he dove down into their fighting hole. He didn't dare look up, but quickly was saying every prayer he knew, and wished he'd gone to Mass Sunday. He knew if someone didn't quickly take out that machine gun, their next burst would kill him and Manuel. Suddenly, as soon as it started, the sound of bullets buzzing overhead stopped, and he said "Gracias a Dios!" and looked to Manuel. One look was all he needed to realize his friend was dead and beyond help. Either he wasn't as fast as Enrique was getting into the fighting hole, or he was just unlucky. His friend's body had 2 big holes in the chest, and half his face was missing were a big machine gun round had blown his head apart. He lowered Manuel's body down into the fighting hole as gently as possible, and did what he could for the body. He wrote down the UTM coordinates of the fighting hole on his notepad so Graves Registration could come back later and claim the body. He picked up his gear, and anything of Manuel's he'd need or didn't want the Chinese to get, and carried his last 3 missiles with him as he low-crawled to the rear. Once he had a couple of small knolls between him and the fighting, he stood up and started hiking to his pickup spot on the far side of the park.

After the longest walk of his life, Enrique arrived at the rendezvous point, and was grateful that most of the tank killer teams made it back alive, including 2 of the TOW armed Hummers, so they could ride instead of walk to their next ambush location. While they rode, Enrique told the rest of the Marines about what happened. One of the teams whose gunner was too badly wounded to keep fighting offered Enrique his loader. Enrique nodded and said "Gracias Ernesto." and they started reloading and rearming. Once they reached their next location, they each drank as much water as they could, then wandered off into the bushes to relieve themselves, then picked up their gear and carefully walked to their ambush spots, then started digging.

Chapter 11

The USMC anti-tank missile attacks were having the desired effect, and the Chinese had to slow down, and stop to clear the wrecked tanks off the road and tend to the wounded. They were expecting losses, but at this rate, their best main battle tanks would be wiped out before they made it out of California - so much for Governor Fineswine's assurances. Gen. Fang was surprised at the lack of tank vs. tank battles, and didn't know that the USMC couldn't get tanks close enough to engage them because of the massive traffic jams on every California freeway, and the only way they got the tank killer teams in to ambush them was because they were light enough to airlift in. While all this was going on, Colonel Kerns was on the phone with the CO of Twentynine Palms Marine Corps Base, arranging a hot reception for any Chinese troops that made it that far. The Marines had cleared the roads around Twentynine Palms and Barstow of all civilian traffic and were rushing to get tanks into position. The Army training base at Fort Irwin was also getting ready to send their best tanks and helicopters against the Chinese armor. The Army was coming up short of warshots since they were a training base, but luckily MCLB Barstow had huge igloos full of rounds for the Abrams tanks and Hellfire missiles for the Apaches. They delivered several 18-wheelers full of ammo to Fort Irwin so they could combat load it, and carry it with their armored divisions.

As soon as they finished digging, Enrique heard what sounded like thousands of diesel engines, and knew the Chinese were close. He knew he'd have to be careful firing his missiles since there were houses right on the other side of the freeway. He hoped they had already evacuated, but he had other things to worry about. He focused on the lead tank, and squeezed the trigger. The Javelin flew out of the tube, tracked the infrared laser to its target, and detonated right over the turret, in its "top down" detonation like it was designed. The tank blew sky high, and he quickly reloaded. He fired at the next tank in line, then kept reloading until he was out of missiles. He couldn't understand the lack of defensive fire until he noticed there weren't any APC's mixed in with the tanks this time. He was grateful for the oversight, but was hopeful the rest of the tank-killer teams had as good luck as they did. They low-crawled behind a berm carrying their gear, then duck-walked to the next one, and once they were securely behind 3 tall berms, they stood up and hiked back to their rendezvous site. When they got there, the rest of the teams were jubilant like they'd won the Superbowl, and described firing all 6 missiles, and getting 6 kills with no opposition. Ernesto said "Anyone else notice there weren't any APC's with the tanks? I wonder where they went?" They heard the noise of diesels approaching, and thinking it was their Hummers, let their guards down. The Chinese APCs found the Marines and slaughtered them before any of them could reach a weapon. Enrique's last thoughts were of his wife and kids he left at home near Pendleton, and he hoped they would be OK, then prayed for Jesus to take him to Heaven with his last breath.

When the USMC Hummers finally showed up 5 minutes later, they got a revenge of sorts. The TOW Missile gunners each had a TOW loaded, and blew up the closest two APC's with their first shot. They quickly reloaded and shot the other two APC's then pulled up and attempted to save the wounded, only to discover they had already bled out from their horrific wounds. Lt. Gonzales called back to base, and a clerk took his sitrep, and a request for either an air evac via the orbiting Chinook, or more troopers. The Message Center clerk told him he'd have to wait for a response, anyone who could authorize anything was up to his eyeballs in alligators. He did tell them to secure their location, which was a totally unnecessary order, since the survivors already had their M-4's locked and loaded, and a fresh TOW missile in the launchers.

An hour later, Col. Kerns was livid when he read about his anti-tank teams getting slaughtered since he didn't have enough manpower to make up effective offensive teams, secure the bases, and provide security for his teams. He called General Adams at Twentynine Palms, and they called the Commandant's office in DC.

“Commandant's Office, this line is secure, Lt. Lewis speaking.”

“Lieutenant, this is General Adams at Twentynine Palms, get the Commandant on the phone right now!”

“Aye Aye Sir!”

Two minutes later, “Commandant Hagee, what can I do for you General?”

“General, we need some help right f*cking Now! We're down to clerks and cooks against battle-hardened Chinese Troops who are doing their darndest to invade the US through California. Thanks to that Scumbag in the White House, we're way short on Combat Experienced Marines, Armor and planes to fight! Col. Kerns told me he lost over 30 Marines trying to kill Chinese tanks with Javelins and TOWs since they're too close to populated areas for us to bomb them, and the tanks can't get close since the freeways are hopelessly clogged with refugees fleeing the cities. What we need is a bunch of light infantry, heavy weapons, and anything else that can be airlifted into combat that won't take out civilian houses with the Chinese.”

“Gentlemen, we might have to accept some collateral damage to stop the invasion, but I see your problem. How about I call up any infantry forces I can locate, and send them on C-5s and

commercial aircraft if I have to - would you be able to handle the volume at Twentynine Palms?”

“General, the airfields at North Island, Camp Pendleton, and Lindbergh are available too, plus shorter municipal runways all over San Diego County that can easily handle a fully loaded C-130 if they don’t mind a short-field landing.”

“Ok, Generals, I’ll make it happen. Keep me posted.”

“Yes Sir!”

General Mike Hagee gathered his aides, outlined his plans, and had them get on the phones and take control of any available Marine forces, and get them moving to California. Next he called the other Joint Chiefs, and pushed their meeting up. Half an hour later, they met at a secure location.

“Generals, the Marine Corps is almost overwhelmed in California trying to stop the Chinese invasion. We need to decide what to do - I for one don’t want to declare Martial Law if we can help it.”

Admiral Kincaid, the CNO stood and said “We’ve sunk their supply ships, so they won’t be getting any more men or materials - now all we have to do is defeat all their troops on the ground.”

General Tofflemier, who was in charge of the Air Force spoke next. “Why not just bomb the crap out of the Chinks, we’ve got enough bombs?”

“General, right now the Chinks are still in heavily populated areas of Southern California. We’d destroy millions of dollars of property in collateral damage with each bombing run. Let’s wait until they reach unpopulated areas before we bomb them. General Adams at Twentynine Palms has the aircraft and the weapons to drop a bunch a JSOWS on them once they get clear of the populated areas. What we really need is more bombs, aircraft, heavy armor, and infantry to stop the invasion in the desert before it gets to populated areas again.”

“How did the Chinks ever think they could get away with this?”

“Col. Kerns tried to get hold of Madame Governor Fineswine, but she’s been incommunicado since this started on a “fact finding” mission somewhere. The strange thing is Admiral Lee told me that his subs had all been leased to Greenpeace less than a month ago, and were supposed to be unarmed by Presidential Order, and all of our Carrier Battle Groups were out of position. The Nimitz and Reagan had to steam at flank to catch the Chinese right before they entered US territorial waters off Alaska only to find out it was a diversion, and the real attack was a Trojan Horse. The Chinese landed troops and armor off container ships in Long Beach and San Francisco Harbor, then they sent mini-subbs to attack the Naval Base at San Diego, and almost succeeded in attaching a limpet mine to an attack sub, then they tried to attack the Stennis which was docked at North Island. If it weren’t for the Seals, they’d all be on the bottom of the harbor.”

“Now that you mention it Mike, the President’s been unreachable, and he hasn’t returned our calls.”

“My gut feeling is he won’t, anyone who could file 3 fraudulent claims for Purple Hearts, claim to have tossed them over the White House fence as an Anti-War protestor, and still wind up President is a Scumbag in my books, and I wouldn’t put it past him to be in cahoots with the Chinks.”

“Yeah, but what’s his motive?”

“Probably the same as Chuckie and Hillary’s - to bring the US into the One World Government, with them in charge!”

“Ok, so where does that leave us?”

“We’ve got 35 states that all have National Guard troops, plus active and inactive Reserve troops, plus all the hardware at their bases. Let’s get hold of Governor Craddick at the Republic of Texas, and see if the Secessionist States would be willing to help?”

“I’m sure they would, but at what cost?”

“General, could you quit being a Kerry Brown-noser for a minute and wake up to reality?”

General LePlanc didn't take kindly to Commandant Hagee's comment, but one look convinced him that General Hagee could beat him into a pulp in a New York Minute, and might actually enjoy it. "Ok, Mike what do you suggest?"

"Let's back the Secessionists since 35 states feel that things have gone so far that they needed to take a step that's just short of open rebellion to fix the problem."

The Army General looked like he was about to stroke out, the Admiral was grinning, and the Air Force General looked confused. Admiral Kincaid and General Hagee started in on him, knowing that General LePlanc would fold like he always did.

"General Tofflemier, it's the only way out of a bad situation. Unless we get the manpower, not only will the Chinese not win, but they'll take years to lose, destroying what's left of the country in the process. If we clobber the Chinks and send them packing with their tails between their legs, we'll be heroes, and be able to get anything we wanted through Congress like those new planes you wanted."

General Tofflemier heard "new planes" and suddenly saw the light - they'd be heroes, and Congress would be powerless to stop them from rebuilding their individual fiefdoms. The three of them started working on General LePlanc. Less than half an hour later, he knuckled under, and they called Governor Craddick and explained the problem. He said he'd take care of the problem, and half an hour later, Army and Air National Guard troops and their equipment were headed to Southern CA.

When Col. Kerns got the word that help was on the way, and what they were sending, he looked at the map, and decided not to risk civilian casualties and property damage while the Chinese were in heavily populated areas. He'd make his stand in the California desert. He called General Adams to discuss his plans, and they agreed. USMC General Adams assumed overall command of the defense of California, since he was senior, and had the most combat experience. US ARMY General Lewis from Fort Irwin would be in command of the ground forces, and USMC Col. Kerns would provide support and back them both up. Col. Kerns called the depot at Barstow, and warned them "The Chinese are coming!" The clerk that took the message thought it was a joke until his CO reamed him out for not paying attention - there was a no-shit invasion going on right now, and the Chinese advance would go right through Barstow on I-15N. That got the clerk's attention, and once the message was delivered, he started reviewing the security procedures for the Communications Room. Brigadier General Williams alerted his Base Security detachment, then notified the Transportation Sergeant and Supply Sergeant that they were going to load trainloads of weapons, munitions and supplies and shipping it to Twentynine Palms and Camp Pendleton for as long as possible.

One of the first groups located was the 172nd Fighter Squadron that was training at Davis-Monthan AFB in Arizona with all 17 A-10 Warthogs. They had ample stocks of bullets, bombs, and parts since DM was a training base, so they loaded everything aboard a C-5A and using a KC-130 as a flying gas station, flew non-stop to Twentynine Palms, and set up shop. While they were a bunch of “Air Force Pukes” according to the Marines, they were still glad to see their brothers in arms, and the FA-18 pilots respected the Warthog, and their pilots since they had the same duty - close support and tank killing. Their missions were complimentary, as were their aircraft. The FA-18 could carry stand-off weapons, but couldn't loiter. The GAU-8 30mm cannon fired DU rounds, and could destroy most tanks with 1 round.

It would take more time than they had to relocate tanks cross-country, but General Hagee promised General Adams all the support he could send, even if it took more time than he thought they had to get it to them. The air power would get there first, and hopefully between Twentynine Palms and Fort Irwin, they'd have enough planes and tanks to stop the Chinese invasion. He realized they might not, and took a look at the map - it seemed the Chinese logical line of advance into the American Heartland was Interstate 80. He grinned a death's-head grin when he realized Interstate 80 went through over 100 miles worth of salt flats, and this time of year, the flats wouldn't support a tank, so they'd be stuck on 1 road until they got close to Salt Lake City. He diverted several columns of tanks that were headed west on railcars and sent them just east of Wendover, Nevada with orders to blockade any access roads to I-80 no matter how small, and keep the Chinks on I-80. He wondered what Chinese idiot dreamed up this invasion, not knowing that this invasion had been planned for the middle of summer during the Clinton Administration, but they weren't able to take advantage of the situation when their new tank turned out to be less than hoped. Between the tanks, Apaches, Warthogs, and FA-18s dropping J-SOWs on the tanks, the Chinese wouldn't stand a chance. He called the Governor of Nevada, and discussed his plan with him. Governor Guinn agreed to allow the Chinese to head north along I-80 unmolested while they were in populated areas, and they'd deploy their National Guard troops to keep the Chinese on I-80 to protect the civilians. It was foolish to waste soldiers' and civilians lives in a premature attempt at stopping the Chinese. Val got the e-mail later that day, then understood that Lander County was considered unpopulated so he had a free reign to harass the Chinese who were trying to link up with their compatriots traveling down I-80 from San Francisco.

General Adams had a nagging feeling, and called his Supply Sergeant, swore like a Chief, and called Barstow. They were out of JSOWs as well, and he finally located the memo stating that Kerry and Congress had decided to relocate most of their inventory of smart bombs to their East Coast Depot at MCLB Albany, Georgia. His supply sergeant told him they had less than a dozen smart bombs in inventory, and those were ones they squirreled away for a “rainy day”. Suddenly General Adams plan to stop the Chinese cold in the desert outside Barstow was a non-starter, since they didn't have a bunch of warshots for the tanks as well. He called General

Hagee in DC, who hit the ceiling, realizing just how deep the corruption in DC ran - MCLB Barstow was supposed to be the main depot for the West Coast USMC missions, and the only reason someone would take all their smart bombs would either be sheer stupidity, or the conspiracy to disarm and destroy the US ran much deeper than just the President and the Governor of California. He sent a secure e-mail to the rest of the Joint Chiefs outlining his recent discoveries. He located the order transferring the smart bombs, and it was dated less than 30 days after the Inauguration in 2008, and the hardware was gone within 30 days - no one moves that fast in the US Government or Military unless they planned it months or years in advance. Relocating the smart bombs to Georgia effectively made it impossible for the Marines at Twentynine Palms to stop the Chinese Invasion even with help from the Army at Fort Irwin, since they were short warshots for their Abrams tanks as well.

General Hagee called Governor Franks in Georgia, and got his enthusiastic support for his plan to get as many bombs and munitions to Salt Lake International Airport as fast as possible. SLC International had a single 12,000 foot runway and the C-5a Galaxy only needed 5,000 feet to land fully loaded. Since everything was destined for the Bonneville Salt Flats west of Salt Lake City, they'd take off unloaded, which would be well within their minimums for take-off. They had 32 C-5A Galaxies stationed at Dover AFB in Maryland, but they weren't among the states that seceded due to their proximity to DC. General Hagee chuckled aloud when he found out that Kelly AFB in San Antonio, Texas had 14 of them. While 32 was better than 14, at least he wouldn't have to steal the 14 C-5's stationed in Texas. They could land in Georgia, and while they were loading up, they could refuel then fly to Salt Lake City which was only 1500nm away, and well within the unrefueled range of a fully-loaded C-5a. With that problem solved, General Hagee started work on a plan to take control of the United States from the hands of the corrupt politicians in DC.

Chapter 12

General Adams conference called the rest of the USMC CO's, who reluctantly agreed they couldn't stop the Chinese Invasion in California, or even the Nevada desert without munitions and equipment that wouldn't get to where they needed it in time to stop the Chinese. No matter how it irked them to "retreat" they needed to give ground to the Chinese, and wait until they had the proper correlation of forces, then they'd stop them cold. General Hagee agreed, and suggested they let the Chinese come through California and NV on Interstate 80 without harassing them, but to continue whatever harassment they could safely maintain against the Chinese that invaded via Long Beach since they would quickly be out of heavily populated areas, and into the California/Nevada desert. They agreed, and General Hagee told them he'd set his plan in motion. No sooner had they hung up, then General Hagee called the CO of the California National Guard in his Sacramento office, and laid out his plan for annihilating the Chinese once they reached the Bonneville Salt Flats between Wendover Nevada and Salt Lake City Utah, where the Chinese were road-bound since the salt flats were still not dried, and were the consistency of gumbo mud, which would immediately capture any vehicle that ventured out onto it, including tanks. He reluctantly agreed, and made his arrangements to allow the Chinese to travel from San Francisco to the state border. General Baker called on Guard, and finally got hold of the Chinese General in charge of the San Francisco invasion force.

"General Fang, this is General Baker of the California National Guard. I've been ordered by my superiors to offer your force safe conduct through California under the following terms, which are not negotiable. One, you will remain on the Interstate 80 corridor within 100 yards of the hard surface roadway. Two, you will not attack, harass, molest, or fire upon any civilians or irregular forces even if they're sniping at your command. Three, you will pass through California as quickly as possible. Four, any deviation from these terms will result in the immediate revocation of your safe conduct privileges."

"General Baker, I understand the need to prevent civilian casualties. How about the column headed from Long Beach?"

"They're outside my district, I have no control over them."

"Very well, I accept, but any concerted attack by either regular or irregular forces against my command will be repulsed by any means necessary."

"Ok General - I'll get word to my commanders."

Word of General Hagee's plan quickly spread, and Governor Guinn agreed it was better to let the Chinese pass through the populated areas of Nevada and decimate them in the Utah desert rather than risk civilian casualties. People in Reno were slow to evacuate, and Governor Guinn took the extraordinary measure of declaring a state of emergency, and ordering I-80 cleared by force if necessary in advance of the Chinese. He went on TV statewide to ask for calm, and to keep the freeways clear.

“Citizens of Nevada. Thanks to certain traitors in DC, we don't have sufficient forces to repel an invasion by the Chinese, and in order to spare civilian casualties, I've ordered the Nevada State Guard to allow the Chinese to pass through populated areas of I-80 including Reno, Winnemucca, Battle Mountain, Carlin, Elko, Wells and Wendover. What happens once they reach the Utah border will be up to the governor of Utah. Do not hinder or attack the Chinese columns as long as they stay on Interstate 80. Thank you and good night!”

Governor Guinn felt like a traitor for even saying the words, even though he knew in his heart that they were necessary to set up the ambush and death trap the military was planning for the Chinese at the Bonneville Salt Flats, and to save civilian lives. He refused all media requests, and the Nevada State Guard troops were easily able to convince 99% of the people to return to their homes, at least the ones who lived far away from the freeway. They opened shelters for anyone living within a mile of the freeway at schools that were over 5 miles from the freeway for safety. Governor Guinn called Sheriff Val Johannsen and told him what he couldn't say over the air. He got in touch with his second in command, and removed everyone they wouldn't need for crowd control from the Battle Mountain area, and sent them south to the area west of Austin they had already prepared when the Governor told him that the Marines at Twentynine Palms were going to try and stop the Chinese, but they were short of munitions and manpower. He got the Bofors guns settled into their revetments and got ready to face the Chinese attack, which was only a day or so away.

After the announcements, things got easier for the Northern Chinese divisions, but progressively more difficult for the Southern divisions. The USMC and the Air Force National Guard Warthogs kept the pressure on, but didn't go for the knockout punch since they were low on munitions, and they had to wait for shipments to arrive from Georgia before they'd have enough to mount a serious defense. All over the US, independent truckers and trucking companies volunteered their services to the military, and the military quickly made arrangements for depots and fuel vouchers for essential deliveries. Truckers either took supplies from depots to railheads or the closest military airport, or picked them up at their terminal railhead or airport and drove them to where they were needed. The truckers with lowboys were hauling armor as fast as they could. The military waived normal peacetime restrictions, and driving teams started driving 24 hours a day. One driver would crawl in the sleeper and get some shuteye while the other drove. They only stopped for fuel and restroom

breaks. Volunteers manned the fuel depots, filled the trucks, took the vouchers, helped the drivers get clean clothes, a shower, and food, then get them back on the road as quickly as possible. One reporter quipped that they resembled a NASCAR pit crew in their speed and organization. State troopers kept the fast lane open on the interstates for truckers, and told them they could drive as fast as they thought it was safe for their load and conditions. Meanwhile MP's kept the routes from the depots to the nearest airfield open, and kept the trucks rolling 24 hours per day. All over the US, men and women who had recently been separated from the Military under honorable conditions, and a bunch of old retired vets deluged their local recruiting offices. The recruiting officers were busy 18 hours per day sorting through the DD-214's looking for people with critical MOS codes and telling 60-year old Veterans as nicely as they could that their services weren't needed. Outside, the State Militia recruiters were doing a land-sale business with people who wanted to serve, but weren't in critical MOS's or were told they were too old. The result of this was huge stockpiles of men and equipment showing up at Salt Lake International Airport and surrounding municipal airports. The equipment was quickly off-loaded and sent to a nearby vacant warehouse where the supply people were inventorying and distributing stuff as fast as it came in, and the troopers were quickly mated to their equipment and munitions. Helicopters and jets from all over the US, or at least the half that seceded, were flying to Utah and Nevada to take part in the upcoming battle, and were gone over with a fine-tooth comb while their pilots and the CO's of their wings met and planned the strategy for the upcoming battle.

Bombs and munitions were coming into Barstow and Twentynine Palms, but not enough, or fast enough. General Adams realized he couldn't annihilate the Chinese invaders, but at least he could concentrate his limited firepower on the Chinese' best equipment. Chinese doctrine dictated that their best equipment was always forward, on the point of attack, with their follow-on forces equipped with lesser, older weapons, open trucks instead of APC's, and sometimes not even issued rifles. Their second wave never made it to the US thanks to the submarines putting their cargo ships on the bottom of the Pacific Ocean, but Marshall Yi conscripted any cargo plane that could fly that far to carry troops and equipment to California. Their fighter escort required constant refueling, so he set up a system of H-6 tankers flying racetracks and others flying fuel out to them and back to the mainland. He didn't have enough tankers to fly them back and forth to the US with each flight, and he didn't want any more than 3 cargo planes to be escorted by 2 fighters, which further complicated things. California had been declared a Military Exclusion Zone for all commercial aircraft, and most of the Chinese cargo planes were shot out of the sky.

Aboard the Reagan, Lieutenant Commander Gene "Fishbait" Nichols was having a field day splashing Chinese cargo planes and fighters. The Chinese fighter pilots were exhausted from the long overwater flight by the time they got close to the California coast, and were in no condition to engage in air to air combat. Hammerhead flight was configured for Air to Air, and

were carrying 2 330-gallon fuel tanks, 2 AIM-9M Sidewinders, and 2 AIM-120 AMRAAM Slammers. They were flying CAP so they had tanker support, which allowed them to stay aloft for hours with refueling, and only needed to land to reload and rearm. The first wave of Chinese cargo craft almost caught them by surprise until a sharp-eyed operator aboard the Hawkeye spotted the smaller fighters in tight formation and alerted Hammerhead flight that these “commercial aircraft” were being escorted by fighters, which made them a probable bandit, regardless of who they belonged to.

“Hammerhead Flight, this is Cyclops, We have multiple Bandits, come to heading 2-7-0 for intercept.”

LCDR Gene “Fishbait” Nichols turned to the new heading, checked the rest of his flight, and increased throttle to max cruise as they headed for the intercept.

Seconds later the airborne controller aboard the E-2C contacted the bogies on Guard.

“Attention aircraft approaching US coast at 30 thousand feet on heading Zero-Niner-Five, you are entering a military exclusion zone, you are ordered to come to heading One Seven Five and declare intentions.”

When the aircraft didn’t respond 1 minute later, the controller called the Hammerheads.

“Hammerhead flight, Intercept target at bearing Three Zero Zero, Angels Three Five, Range to target is Five Zero nautical.”

“Cyclops bearing 3-0-0 Angels 3-5, 5-0 Nautical, Copy.”

“Hammerhead One, Roger.”

“Two”

“Three”

“Four”

Hammerhead Flight went to 100% military as they clawed their way to 37 thousand feet and went supersonic as they got within range of the bandits.

The controller aboard the Hawkeye tried a second time “Attention Unidentified Aircraft, This is US Navy. You are approaching a Military Exclusion zone, come to heading 1-7-5 and altitude 10 thousand immediately or you will be considered hostile and be fired upon.”

The flight of 4 split into two pairs and increased their separation when they heard the second radio call.

Less than a minute later, Cyclops called “Hammerhead flight, engage target at heading 0-0-0, Angels 3-5, Range 28 nautical. You are Weapons Free.”

“Hammerhead lead, Mako you’re with me. Tiger take top cover.”

“Two”

“Three”

“Four”

Fishbait pointed his FA-18 at the J-9 wingman and seconds later, he heard a tone in his helmet. “Hammerhead Lead, I’ve got tone, Fox 2.” Gene fired his first Sidewinder, then as soon as he had tone again, he called “Fox 2”. No sooner had the missiles left the rails, then he could see the Chinese fighters breaking left and right. Missile #1 locked onto the left engine of the rear-most TU-16, and blew it out of the sky. Missile #2 veered right following the second J-9, broke lock, and reacquired the second cargo plane, impacting into the right-most engine.

Meanwhile Mako fired off two more Sidewinders after the J-9's broke formation. His first missile targeted the lead J-9, who was popping flares and chaff almost continuously. Mako’s second missile targeted his relatively inexperienced and very tired wingman, who forgot to activate his chaff and flares. That mistake cost him his life as the robot brain in the missile guided it right to the hot exhaust of the MIG copy and blew the back half of his airplane off, creating a fireball of jet fuel, and immolating the pilot. The lead J-9 got lucky when Mako’s first Sidewinder locked onto a flare and blew up.

His luck didn’t last long, as Fishbait saw that he’d escaped, and before he could fire a missile at their FA-18's, he locked up the J-9 with his radar seeker, and called “Fox one on the lead J-9”. He was well within Slammer range of the Chinese aircraft, and the missile leapt off the rails. Seconds later, there was an expanding cloud of debris where they lead Chinese J-9 used to be. LCDR Nichols turned his radio to guard and said “Chinese Aircraft bearing 093, headed toward California Coast. Your escort is destroyed, this is your last warning, turn to bearing 275 and descend to 10 thousand feet or you’ll be shot out of the sky.” Fishbait didn’t have a

problem killing enemy fighters, but shooting at unarmed cargo planes bothered him, so he gave it one last chance to divert. He called “Mako, did you copy my last?”

“Roger lead, loud and clear - either they’re deaf as a post or not listening. I’ve got two Slammers left if you want me to engage.”

“Go Ahead Mako, I’ll cover.”

For the first time in his life, Ensign Bob “Mako” Williams would take the lead in combat. He gently accelerated until his aircraft was ahead of his lead’s, and selected a AIM-120 AMRAAM Slammer, and as soon as he had radar lock, he called “Fox one”. The Slammer left the rails cleanly, and flew straight into the doomed Chinese cargo plane, who didn’t have a clue they were targeted. The explosion was spectacular even from 20 miles away.

Seconds later, LCDR Nichols heard on his headset “Hammerhead flight, Cyclops. The sky is clear, Bravo Zulu.”

“Cyclops, give me a vector to the Reagan, we’re Winchester.”

“Hammerhead flight, the Reagan’s at bearing 1-3-0 range 7-5 nautical.”

“That’s bearing 1-3-0 at 7-5, copy.”

“Pop a cold one for me will you Hammerhead?”

“Hammerhead flight, let’s head home, it’s Miller Time.”

“Two”

“Three”

“Four”

LCDR Nichols turned for home, called the Reagan when he was in range, and half an hour later, he was sitting in the pilot’s ready room sipping a cold beer. The rest of Hammerhead flight were there too, and they were enjoying the moment. Gene didn’t enjoy shooting down unarmed aircraft, but he knew that the planes were carrying men and materials to invade the US, so that made them a legitimate target in his book.

+++ Later that afternoon, near Twentynine Palms, CA+++

General Adams was busier than he ever had been before in his military career. If it weren't for his planning staff, he could have never pulled this off. All his fighters and attack planes, plus all the anti-tank helicopters he could muster from other commands were loaded for bear and sitting on every available ramp and in the hangars, waiting for the order to attack. Generals Adams and Lewis had drawn their "line in the sand" just east of Barstow near Manix on Interstate 15. There wasn't much besides open desert out there, and it was good ground for the Abrams tanks to get to the flanks of the Chinese Columns behind revetments that would protect the bulk of the tanks from return fire from anti-tank missiles. Some of the Abrams were allowed to roam freely, but were supposed to stay in their areas to avoid any blue-on-blue incidents. The FA-18's, Warthogs, and helicopters would have free reign along Interstate 15, which had been cleared of any civilian traffic 8 hours prior to the attack. The nearby towns had been evacuated too just in case. General Lewis had created a masterful ambush with what tanks and Bradleys he had, and if they weren't short munitions, they could have easily destroyed every remaining tank in the Southern Attack Group. As it was, he told his tank gunners to concentrate on the newest tanks, and leave the older tanks for the Hog drivers to chew up with their guns and CBU's.

As the Chinese tanks reached the "Line in the Sand" the American tankers had already divvied up the tanks, and the order in which they'd shoot them, so when the column reached the "Line of Death" suddenly there was a loud roar, and 20 Chinese tanks blew their turrets in the air. When the smoke cleared, the gunners targeted the survivors, and quickly dispatched the remaining tanks. The lead Chinese formation was destroyed, and along with it, their best tanks and tank commanders. The next bunch of Chinese tanks got treated just as roughly, then the Chinese artillery tried to counterattack. One of the OA-10's was acting as an Air Forward Controller, and spotted the Chinese artillery, and called in a couple of Warthogs to take care of the problem. They strafed the gun positions, killing the Chinese artillerymen, and causing secondary explosions among the artillery shells that were in ready storage for the guns, which took them out of action for good. The rest of the Chinese formations stopped where they were instead of driving into an obvious ambush, so the OA-10 Air Controller called Twentynine Palms, told General Adams what was happening, and he released the FA-18's to drop their CBU's and JSOWs on the Chinese tanks and troops who were still bunched up on the freeway. They streaked down the freeway in pairs, dropping their CBU's from the optimum altitude to cover both sides of the freeway with bomblets. I-15 soon became a Chinese "Highway of Death from Manix to almost 5 miles Southwest of there. They couldn't drop cluster bombs much closer to downtown Barstow without risking huge housing developments. Next the A-10's strafed the columns and dropped what few bombs they had left. The remainder of the Chinese forces weren't clear of Barstow and they were critically low on munitions, so General Adams decided to call off the attack for now, and allow his troops to rearm and regroup. Over

the next day, the few Chinese troops that survived the massacre made their way up I-15 in hopes to find someplace to hide and regroup. General Yan, who was in charge of the Long Beach formations had somehow managed to survive the attack, tried to organize the survivors and carry out his mission.

Chapter 13

When Val heard about the Battle of Barstow, and the Marines running out of bombs and missiles, he hoped the Marines had whittled the Chinese down to size before they ran out of weapons. He called the command post in Tonopah, and left a message for Kurt that the Chinese had tangled with the Marines, but the USMC didn't have enough weapons available to get them all, but he was pretty sure the Chinese were down to 2nd and 3rd Echelon equipment, meaning older tanks, maybe a few APC's and everyone else in open trucks or walking. Kurt changed his plans based on the new intel, and told his 40mm Bofors gunners to target State Route 376 and use Contact detonators for their first couple of volleys, so they'd hopefully decimate any remaining Chinese tanks, then switch to VT rounds to wipe out the Chinese infantry riding in open trucks. He didn't think it was very sporting, but the Chinese were invading HIS country, and whether the poor infantrymen deserved what they got was moot as long as they were attacking his country, he'd kill them to the last man unless they surrendered. He knew it was over 300 miles from Barstow to Tonopah, and at 30 miles per hour, it would take at least 10 hours for them to reach Tonopah. He'd be surprised if they made it there in 12. He ordered his men to stand down and rest for the next 8 hours, including his OP/LP personnel, who would go on alternating watch until the Chinese showed up.

The next 8 hours dragged on like an eternity, finally 11 hours later, the LP/OP closest to Barstow reported signs of the Chinese column, but it wasn't moving very fast, or well organized. They looked more like refugees than a fighting force. Kurt called back and asked for details, like if the tank's turrets were turned backwards, or they were flying a white flag. Tony called back "Kurt, these dumb Chinks don't know when they're licked. They look like a bunch of Palestinian Refugees, but their tanks have their barrels facing forward, and they're obviously searching for targets, and I don't see any flags except the damn Communist Chinese red flag, well I guess that answers that!"

"Roger Tony, keep me posted, Kurt out!"

Based on Tony's first report, the Chinese column wouldn't be in range for the TOW or the Bofors guns to attack for another 2-3 hours. He drove over to Wade's bunker and had a pow-wow. They decided to save the few TOW missiles they had in case the Chinese had a modern tank hiding in the back of their formation, and decided to open the dance with an all-out barrage of 40mm Bofors gun fire. With 6 guns putting 200 rounds per minute downrange, and the whole barrage centered on the 40-foot wide road, the results should be horrific, and the Chinese were in for a very rude surprise once they got within range of the Bofors guns. 3 hours later, each of the Bofors gunners had 8 contact fused rounds already loaded in the magazines, had the range and bearing dialed in, and were awaiting the order to fire. Finally the lead Chinese tank

crossed the “line in the sand” indicating the entire Chinese column was within range of the Bofors guns. Kurt gave the command “All Guns, Fire for effect.”

The next sound he heard was the sound of 6 40mm Bofors Anti-aircraft guns firing a quick barrage of 8 rounds each. He couldn't distinguish the sound of individual rounds being fired, but the noise was deafening, even from where he was in the Command Bunker with a great view of the battlefield through his range-finding binoculars. 48 rounds of High Explosive shells rained down on the unsuspecting Chinese tankers, who had the hatches to their tanks open, and were riding in the open to spot targets. He saw 1 round strike a Chinese tank right on the turret, and the Tank Commander disappear in a pink cloud, then the tank erupted in a ball of fire as the HE round penetrated the thin skin of the round turret of the Chinese Type 59 tank, immolating the rest of the crew. Everywhere he looked, there was a Chinese tank either blowing up, or in flames. Kurt thought to himself “that's just the first wave, next come the VT rounds for the infantry in back.” Seconds later, the VT rounds started exploding over the roadway like black flowers of death. Every airburst meant anything not under thick armor or in a deep bunker underneath it was now either seriously wounded, or dead. Kurt was stunned by the one-sided nature of the battle, which was starting to resemble some massacres he'd read about in History books. He almost called “Cease Fire” then realized that every Chinese infantryman he killed right now was one less that could threaten their families in Austin, so he let the mayhem continue until his gunners were out of targets, almost 2 minutes later. Wade called him, and told him to drive north and tell Val that they stopped the Chinese attack along 376, so he could re-deploy his troops along US-50. As Kurt climbed into his SuperBird, he could see Wade organizing a mop-up team to deal with the Chinese wounded. They didn't want to leave anyone behind that might shoot them once their guard was down.

Kurt fired up his car, and shifted into gear once he was ready. He kept his speed around 100 mph since this wasn't an emergency, besides he needed time to think things out before he reported to Val. Some of the things he saw sickened him, yet he realized they were necessary. All of a sudden, he was broken out of his reverie by the noise of a low-flying helicopter. It swooped down and tried to use it's skid to force him off the road, so he accelerated to avoid it. The chopper came up for a second try, and this time he could see the red star painted on it's side, and realized it was a Chinese helicopter, and probably the Chinese General's personal ride since it was unarmed. He was going about as fast as he could, then remembered he had his JATO rocket system he'd never been able to use. He grinned, and snugged his seatbelt tight.

He was coming up on a long straight section, so as soon as he was clear, he flipped the orange safety cover off the switch, then mentally crossing his fingers, flipped the toggle, which threw him back in the seat. He pressed the clutch, threw the transmission in neutral, and watched his speedo zoom past 150mph as the pair of JATO rockets came up to full thrust. Six seconds later, his speedometer was buried past 180, and he knew the JATOs were designed for a 20-second burn. As he hit the switch, he watched the helicopter fade into his rear view mirror.

When the rockets burned out, he left the transmission in neutral until he slowed below 150, then engaged 4th gear, and started forming a plan to take care of the helicopter. There was a curve in the road ahead and the outside of the curve was a 200-foot drop-off while the inside was a rock face. If he parked his car past the apex, and opened fire on the helicopter, he might disable it, or at least dissuade it from following him any more. There was just 1 problem with his plan - he didn't have any weapons that were really effective against a helicopter except for 1 LAWS rocket, and if he missed with that, he was Dead Meat. He smiled when he remembered he had his P-90 subgun with armor-penetrating rounds that might punch through the windshield of the helicopter and hit the pilot. At least that was worth a try, and he had 2 loaded 30-round mags.

As he reached the turn, he slowed and skidded to a stop just past the apex of the turn crossing the T broadside on where the helicopter couldn't see him, but he could hear the helicopter. He popped the trunk, quickly took out the P-90 with 2 mags, and just in case, the LAWS rocket, and got his Dodge SuperBird between him and where the helicopter should show up. A minute later, he heard the sound of rotors, then saw the helicopter flying less than 20 feet above the ground. He already was laying prone across the hood of the car, and sighted in on the pilot, who looked astonished to see the car. Right when they saw each other, Kurt squeezed and held the trigger, and the rounds started impacting the lexan windscreen of the helicopter right in front of the pilot. In a panic, the pilot leaned left, which rolled the chopper left, and struck the leftmost skid, then the main rotor on the pavement. Kurt kept firing, and several rounds penetrated the windscreen, striking the pilot in the chest and face, who reflexively released the cyclic and collective, dooming the helicopter to roll all the way down the hill.

Seconds later, the smoking wreck lay at the bottom of the hill. Kurt was going to leave it alone when he saw someone with a lot of gold on his tunic struggling to get out. Realizing that this General was probably responsible at least in part for this whole invasion, he lifted the LAWS rocket off the hood of his car, pulled the pin off the front, which allowed the sling to fall free, and the front cover to come off. He grabbed the rear sight cover with his right hand, and the barrel of the launcher with his left, and pulled the tubes apart just like Val had showed him. Once he'd pulled the sections as far apart as they'd go, he tried to collapse it to make sure it was locked open. Satisfied it was, he lifted the rocket and placed it on his right shoulder. He pulled the trigger arming handle to ARM, where it stayed like it was supposed to. He sighted the helicopter through the rear rubber sight boot, and lined up the 50-meter range mark on the front sight with the side door of the still smoking helicopter, and pressed the rubber boot on the trigger bar, which fired the rocket. Less than a second later, the helicopter went up in a ball of fire as the HEAT round ignited the remaining jet fuel in the helicopter's tanks, which barbecued the Chinese General and singed Kurt's eyebrows as he dove toward the pavement to avoid the fireball racing skyward. Once he was sure the General was dead, he got back in the SuperBird and drove into Austin.

When General Yan, who was in charge of the Southern Group, missed 2 consecutive scheduled communications, General Fang assumed the worst, and detached a Heavy Armor Company from his Northern Group to travel down US-50 Alternate from Fernley Nevada to Austin, Nevada and protect their flank by continuing the attack along US-50 through Central Nevada and Central Utah, to pick up Interstate 70 into Grand Junction Colorado, then their paths would cross in Denver, where they could hopefully resupply and rearm before setting out again to capture the breadbasket states.

Kurt arrived at Val's Command Center within minutes of his reception of a message from the Nevada National Guard troops monitoring the Chinese formations, that told him a Tank Company of 12-16 Chinese Type 80 tanks and APC's were headed from Fernley, and should be there in less than 5 hours. Kurt gave his report as quickly as possible. Since the attack from Tonopah had been destroyed, and there were no follow-on forces according to Wade, Val ordered the entire lot of them north as fast as they could to help defend Austin. They had 4 hours to pack up, drive up State Route 376 as fast as they dared, and get set up in the extra revetments he had the engineers build. He especially wanted that TOW armed Hummer, since the big anti-tank rocket could take out any Chinese tank in the inventory with 1 shot. He wished they had some anti-tank helicopters, but none were available. Once he got the word, Wade got on the radio immediately, and told everyone "Bug Out, we're headed to Austin to help repel a bunch of Chinese tanks headed there from Fallon. We've got 4 hours to get there and get set up, so let's get the lead out!"

His gun crews were already ready to go, since they had their gun trailers hooked to their pickups and the ammo stored. All they had to do was gather their personal "snivel" gear, and get on the road. The trucks were slightly faster than the Hummer, who was nominated to play rear guard just in case the Chinese had any more surprises left for them. The mad dash to Austin was uneventful except for a couple of drivers almost causing a wreck when they were rubbernecking the wrecked and still smoking Chinese helicopter. One guy wanted to get out and take a leak on it, but the driver told him if he got out, he could walk to Austin. It was 117 miles from Tonopah to Austin, and just 138 from Fernley to Austin, but Wade's troops were driving twice as fast as the Chinese, so it took them half as long to get to Austin. They had an hour to set up once they got there, and made the most of it. When the TOW armed Hummer arrived, Val directed it to a very well built revetment where they could safely fire 4-5 rounds before they had to worry about the Chinese tank rounds defeating their revetment. Some smart Marine had been in Desert Storm before, and remembered an old trick of packing 6 feet of sand bags in front of and behind 1" sheets of Armor plate steel then dumping sand and rock over the whole thing, which should defeat the 105mm rounds the Chinese Type 80 tank fired.

Right before the Chinese armored company showed up, a Military convoy of 2 Hummers showed up pulling a trailer. Their leader found Val and introduced himself. “Sheriff Johannsen, Colonel Reynolds, Utah State Guard.”

“What can I do for you Colonel?”

“I think we can do something for you. Governor Lopez sent us here to help you. We got 6 Javelin anti-tank missiles, and you’re facing 12-16 Chinese Type 80 tanks. We can cut them down to size for you, then your TOW missiles and those amazing Bofors cannons we heard about can take care of the rest of them. Just show me where to set up, and we’ll go to work.”

“Colonel, you and your men are an answer to prayers. Kurt here will help you get located, and once the Chinese tanks are within range, if you could take the 6 lead tanks, you’ll probably get the most experienced tankers and their best tanks if they’re following doctrine.”

They shook hands, and Kurt drove them to several prepared sites, and they set up. Less than an hour later, the Chinese column rolled into view. Once the entire tank company was within range, the first Javelin missile streaked out, and connected with the lead Chinese tank, blowing it’s turret off. Seconds later, the other five missiles struck, and the Chinese Company was now a very disorganized heavy platoon. The TOW gunner chose that instant to fire, and took out the first tank to show any initiative, assuming it was commanded by a senior sergeant. The TOW gunner got off 3 more shots before the last tank in line started shooting at it’s revetment. Their second round blew through the revetment, and destroyed the Hummer, and killed both occupants. With their missile teams out of action, it was up to the Bofors gunners to take out the rest of the tanks. Thanks to the one-sided victory at Tonopah, they had tons of contact fused rounds left, and methodically shelled the entire road until all the Chinese tanks were destroyed. When the last Chinese tank fireballed, they fired 2 volleys of VT shell onto the road to kill any dismounted infantry. This time they had 12 Bofors guns instead of 6, so 2 volleys of 8 rounds of VT meant the entire road as far back as they could reach was saturated with over 190 high-explosive rounds throwing huge cones of lethal shrapnel. The effects were horrific, and no Chinese survived. Finally Kurt fired a white star shell, indicating “cease fire” and the firing quickly tapered off then stopped. When they came out of their revetments to check on the damage they had done, several gunners were heaving their guts out. What was left of the Chinese Tank Company didn’t resemble anything human, mostly bits and pieces of bodies. The tanks were still burning, so they left them where they were. Kurt drove the Javelin teams back to Val’s command bunker, where Val thanked them profusely, offered them a hot meal and a cot, but their commander said they had to get back to Utah, and get ahead of the Chinese. When he turned to leave, Val asked him what his name was.

“Funny you should ask, it’s Russ.”

He turned to leave, and the team climbed back in their Hummers and disappeared.

Chapter 14

After his CO of the tank company missed two consecutive reports, General Fang assumed the worst, but he didn't have anything to send to his south, and with the Nevada National Guard keeping them on the I-80 corridor they really couldn't send anyone else south that wouldn't have to fight their way south. He decided to press on and attempt to complete his mission. As they passed Reno/Sparks, a contingent of NV NG armored troops formed up to their rear and followed them east to make sure they wouldn't turn around. As they passed Fernley and other NV towns, the group of NV guardsmen slowly got bigger and bigger. By the time they passed Elko, they had several companies of NV armor following a couple of miles behind them. The CO of the Chinese rear guard was afraid to tell the General that he had several companies of American tankers following him, because he knew that the General would order him to attack, and he didn't feel like committing suicide. The Chinese Column kept heading East, now herded by the NV National Guard on their rear and flanks. Once they cleared Elko, the only road they could divert north or South on was State Route 93. When the lead Chinese elements reached SR 93, they could see a hand-lettered sign written in Chinese hung on the exit sign that reminded them their Safe Conduct agreement was void if they turned North or South on SR 93. The lead tanker stopped, took the sign down, and passed the word that if anyone headed toward the off-ramps to SR-93, his tank would personally open fire on them. The rest of the Chinese column passed through Wells uneventfully, except for some sniper fire, but they were buttoned up, and expecting sniper fire, so they weren't hurt.

From Wells, it was only another 60 miles to Wendover on I-80, and the Utah State border. By now the US troops waiting at Bonneville to destroy the Chinese column were well-hidden, and the aircraft were in revetments just beyond visual range of the Chinese. General Hagee had finally gotten the complete support of the Joint Chiefs, and they had more than enough aircraft, bombs, and missiles to take out the Chinese. General Hagee decided to start the dance with his Apaches, who would target their Anti-aircraft vehicles first, then stop their lead tank, creating a bottleneck to the front, then they'd target the rear tank company, locking the Chinese in a 30-mile long kill box. If they strayed off into the salt flats, they'd be hopelessly bogged in the mud, and unable to move. As soon as the Apaches stopped the column, the FA-18's would fly down the road and drop enough JSOWS to ensure the Chinese attack would be decimated, then the Warthogs would finish anything that was left attacking. The Army tankers were bummed because they weren't directly involved in destroying the invaders. General Hagee told them if any Chinese tanks tried to escape down the few hard surface roads, they were open season. That mollified the tankers, who liked to shoot their big guns, and felt left out.

Finally, the Chinese lead tank crossed the "line in the sand" 50 miles east of Wendover and the OA-10 pilot acting as Forward Air Controller released the Apaches.

“Cherokee Flight, Execute Plan Alpha.”

In Cherokee 1, Captain Lee from Alabama switched frequencies to his flight frequency. “Cherokee Flight, Weapons Hot - Bring me some scalps!” His gunner, Luther overheard him on the intercom, and armed his Hellfires and his cannon. They nosed forward and charged toward the Chinese formation at top speed. As they got closer, the gunners selected targets for their Hellfires, the Anti-Air Missile vehicles first, then the lead Chinese tanks. Luther was the first to lock up a anti-air APC. It was a twin 25mm, but still dangerous enough to warrant a Hellfire. He called out “hellfire” to warn his pilot, then triggered the missile, which leapt off the rail, and seconds later, obliterated the APC and damaged the one next to it. Captain Lee’s wingman spotted a Type 90 35mm anti-air APC, with similar results. While Cherokee Flight was targeting the lead elements of the convoy, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Comanche Flights were wrecking similar havoc among the Chinese vehicles. Once the Chinese Air Defense had been taken out, they called back and let the FAC know that it was OK to send in the FA-18's. “Bird dog, this is Cherokee Lead. Cheyenne, Arapaho and Comanche Flights all report all anti-air targets neutralized, clear to execute Bravo as soon as we clear area.”

“Roger Cherokee, call when you’re clear.”

“Ok Apaches, you heard the gentleman, let’s go home, and don’t spare the horses.” Practically as one, the Apaches nosed over, and flew just as fast out of the combat area as they flew into it. Once they were 10 miles from the freeway, Captain Lee made the final radio call of their part of the battle. “Bird Dog, Apaches Clear, send in the Pigs!”

Seconds later, Colonel Smith switched frequencies to Navy Common “OK Pigs, it’s your turn. Execute Bravo.”

The lead aircraft of the composite Navy/Marine FA-18 force called his flight leaders.

“Ok Gentlemen, we’ve been given the go - you’ve already got your designated coordinates. Let’s do this by the numbers, and get it right the first time.”

No sooner had they headed toward the ambush site, the squadron leaders got on their radios to their flights, and they broke up into combat pairs so the lead would drop on the south side of the road, and the wingman on the north. There was a long train of FA-18's that slowly climbed to their optimum drop height, and once their computers said they were at their IP for the JSOW drop, the cluster bomb carriers fell off the aircraft with no further input from the pilots, who

circled back and headed back for Salt Lake City to refuel and rearm if necessary. It wasn't. 16 aircraft each dropping two JSOW cluster bomb carriers were enough to cover the 30-mile long kill box with enough smart bomblets to target each tank or APC with 2 or 3 bomblets. The carriers flew to their pre-programmed GPS coordinates, then burst open, scattering hundreds of smart bomblets that fell toward the unsuspecting Chinese. As they got closer, their sensors detected the heat of a tank or APC, and they maneuvered so they were directly above a target when they detonated less than 50 feet above their targets. Their high-explosive fillers detonated, melting their metal casings in a process called self-forging, and drove the resulting molten mass into the turrets of the tank or APC, destroying them. The ones that had 2 or 3 Smart Pigs targeted weren't just immolated, in some cases the explosives in the Chinese shells were suddenly heated to their detonation point, and the tanks exploded. When the FA-18 flight called in clear, the OA-10 pilot was disappointed to learn there weren't many targets left for his fellow Hog drivers, but he sent them in anyway, since they were armed with CBU's that could kill any surviving Chinese infantrymen who managed to get clear of the tanks, APC's and trucks before they blew sky high. The Warthog drivers had a field day diving on anything that moved on the ground, and either strafing the cr@p out of it, or if it warranted a CBU, dropping a bomb on it. Finally the lead Warthog called the FAC, and told Colonel Smith they were out of targets.

“Roger Hog lead, Return to base. I'll loiter a while and see if anyone's playing possum.”

After an hour of not seeing anything Chinese worth shooting, he called in the Army ground troops to mop up. He smiled at his choice of words, after those JSOWS, they might need a mop and sponge to clean up what was left of the Chinese invaders.

+++ Later that afternoon near Westport MD +++

Mike and Kelly had been married for a while, and she was already expecting the first of what they hoped would be 4 kids. Lisa never got over Larry's death, and Gunny had an idea what she was contemplating. “Lisa, there's an old Chinese Proverb - If Revenge is your Goal, first dig two graves.”

“Gunny, I'm thinking more in the neighborhood of 200. I want to take out the DC office of the ATF and everyone in it.”

“What about the clerks and secretaries, they're not responsible for what happened to you?”

“They’re supporting and condoning the illegal behavior by not resigning in protest. If they die, they’re collateral damage. I want to nail the director and the upper level management.”

“Ok, against my better judgement, I’ll help you, I know some people who have wanted to strike back for a long time, and they’ve got the equipment to pull it off. As mad as you are, I’d hate to get in your way.”

Lisa became a teenager again for a second and hugged Gunny like she used to hug her dad. When she remembered who killed her dad and why and how, the teenager was replaced with an Avenging Angel. Gunny was scared to his core when he saw the transformation in Lisa’s eyes. He knew she’d enjoy killing as many ATF agents as she could. He took her aside, gave her a duffle bag full of the ATF agent’s laundered clothing and personal effects. She found that the smallest agents clothes fit, but were a little big on her. She knew she couldn’t pass for a black man, but she hoped that the militia Gunny was going to put her in touch with had access to a forger who could modify the card to match her physical description. Gunny told her to pack, he had to make a phone call. An hour later, a tan Jeep pulled up, and before Kelly could stop her, Lisa bolted out the door, ran for the Jeep and jumped in. The driver was surprised, but had been alerted by Gunny’s cryptic phone call, and drove off before Kelly could react. As they drove away, Lisa was crying and whispering to herself “Bye Sis!” 5 miles later, the driver stopped, told her she had to wear a blindfold from here on out, and not to take it off for any reason, or he’d shoot her. She gulped and took the proffered black bandana, pulled the seatbelt tight, then slid the bandana over her eyes. The driver turned onto a dirt road, and took it easy in deference to Lisa so she wouldn’t get sick. Finally they stopped, and she heard a lady’s voice saying “Welcome Lisa. Don’t touch the bandanna yet, I’ll lead you inside and get you seated, then you can remove the blindfold - it’s for your own safety that you don’t know where this place is.” She helped Lisa out of the Jeep, and her feet crunched on the driveway as she led Kelly inside. Once she was seated, she was allowed to remove the bandana. She was grateful that the light was dim, or her eyes might have hurt. A man was standing behind the only light in the room so she couldn’t see him, and he started talking.

“Lisa Jones?”

“That’s what my birth certificate says.”

“Larry and Sandy Jones related to you?”

“They were my parents - what’s this all about?”

“Just a few more questions Lisa. Did they rape you?”

“You can go @##\$ Yourself!”

“I’ll take that for a no.”

“IF I HAD A GUN RIGHT NOW!!!”

“Easy there Lisa, we don’t know you from Adam, you might be a spy.”

“Right, my Mom was gang-raped in front of my eyes by a bunch of ATF scumbags, then they shot my Mom and Dad, and almost raped me and my sister, and all just so I could infiltrate your piddly little Militia - get a life! Better yet, turn me loose, and I’ll go kill those SOB’s by myself - I don’t need your help, or your abuse.”

“Easy there Lisa, we just needed to be sure.”

Suddenly the light between them was extinguished, and the room lights came up. She was alone with an older bearded man wearing Tiger Stripe Cammo who looked old enough to be a Vietnam Veteran. He was smiling. “Sorry Lisa, you passed, but we had to be sure. Welcome to our little group.”

Suddenly the door opened, and she was lead into a hall where hundreds of cammo-clad people stood at attention as soon as the bearded gentlemen entered the room. “As you were” he said as soon as he was inside. “Ladies and Gentlemen, this is Lisa Jones. We’ve got just a couple of weeks to get her up to speed, then we’re going to take the ATF down.”

From the back of the room rose a guttural sound that shook the walls “HOOORAH!” It made Lisa’s skin crawl, but she never felt more alive in her life. Next the same woman who led her from the Jeep took her by the elbow, saying she needed to go to Supply and get outfitted, then to medical for a quick exam and any shots she might need, then finally to the Armorer to get her weapons loadout.

“I already brought my weapons and a disguise to get me inside the ATF building. I need to see that old man alone for a second, and see if he can help.”

“His name is Gene, and we call him General.”

“Thanks.”

Sandy took Lisa over to Gene, and then faded into the background.

“Sandy said you wished to speak to me.”

“Yes Sir, should I address you as Gene or General?”

“Gene’s fine except in front of the troops, General is honorary, I never got past Captain. Now what can I do for you?”

“Those ATF SOB’s that tried to rape and kill us were wearing ATF gear and had ATF ID’s on them. One of the agent’s gear fits me close enough. The card has a magnetic strip that should get me inside the building, but I need a forger to make the card match my physical description.”

“We might be able to help - have a seat and tell me all about it...”

+++Later that day, near Britt IA +++

“Dad, someone just said on the radio that the Chinks had landed at the airport.”

“How’d they know they were Chinks?”

“Probably because they were short, slanty eyed, and carrying machine guns.”

“So what are we going to do about it?”

“I don’t know - wait a minute - you’re going to love this one, it means stealing a bus and going for a little drive.”

“Where to, and who’s driving?”

“Cherokee Iowa, and someone besides me.”

“Why not?”

“You really want to know?”

“Do I have to?”

“I’m planning on breaking out the nut cases living in the State Mental Hospital in Cherokee, IA.”

“Ok, so what are you going to do with your merry men, Robin Hood?”

“I was going to drive them over to the airport and let them attack the Chinks.”

“Dare I ask why?”

One, living in a nuthouse for the rest of your life is no way to live, Two, they can either distract or actually kill the chinks for us, so we don’t have to do the dying or bleeding, and Three - it will be funny as hell watching the looks on those Chink’s faces as a bunch of nutcases armed with gardening implements charge them. Besides, this will give me a chance to use Chaos and Mayhem.”

“And they are?”

“My custom “illegal as all heck” 12-gauge shotgun pistols. I had a friend make some leg holsters for them so I could carry them while I was riding my chopper, and one shot would kill just about anyone.”

“Hey Ronald McDonald, you want to drive a bus back and forth to Cherokee, Iowa?”

“Why what’s in Cherokee?”

“The State Mental Hospital.”

“We picking up or delivering?”

“Real funny Ron, now will you do it?”

“Yeah, it’s been a while, but it’s just like riding a bicycle - I hope.”

Two hours later, Damon showed up with a Greyhound bus. “Anyone want to go for a ride?” While Damon was busy stealing a bus, Tom, Ron and Clarence were busy hatching a plot to make it easier for Damon to take a bunch of nutcases out of the hospital without any bloodshed. They stole several lab coats, name plates, and stethoscope from a nearby clinic, and dressed themselves up as Doctors. Damon laughed and asked what their names were. Ron said “Larry Moe, and Curly - what else?”

“I guess that means my name is Shemp? Did you bring a coat for me?”

“Wouldn’t work without one, now here’s the plan, we’re going to be from Iowa State University Medical School, and these gentlemen will be test subjects for a new Psychiatric drug. We need them to come to the University since we need to control their environment to make sure the data aren’t contaminated by uncontrolled variables.”

“Ok, but I’m still bringing Chaos and Mayhem!”

“Just wear them under your lab coat.”

Damon tried the lab coat on, and it covered his bad boys as well as his duster did when he rode his chopper. 2 hours later, they drove through the gate at Cheyenne State Mental Hospital, and parked right in the loading zone. They got everyone out, including Gary and his scooter with some work. They just strolled past security without a word, then they waltzed into the Director’s office.

“Doctor Reynolds, Dr’s Albert, Bingo and Charlie, we’re here for the test subjects for the new drug experiment.”

“What Drug experiment?”

“We’re from the University of Iowa Medical School, surely you got the e-mail?”

“What e-mail?”

“The one from the Governor’s office authorizing the transfer of 20 patients to our care for the duration of the study.”

“I most certainly didn’t. What the…… <snore>”

“Damon, what did you do?”

“Thorazine, it’s not just for breakfast anymore, he’ll be out like a light for several hours. I’ll lock his door, and put a do not disturb note on his door, wait, I’ll get his signature on this form.” Damon picked up a pen in the director’s right hand, and scribbled the director’s name on the document, then picked it up. He put a yellow Post-it on the door on the way out, and locked the door. They walked down the hall with Damon in the lead since he knew his way around Mental hospitals. He located an aide and asked him where the Criminal Insane ward was.

“Secure floor top floor.”

“Great could you help us round up 20 patients for a drug experiment. Director Reynolds approved it, then kicked us out of his office saying he needed a nap.”

“He does that more and more lately, must be nice to be a State Employee!” They walked to a nearby bank of elevators, and were soon on the secure floor. The Aide used his card to get the door open, talked to a nurse, and soon they had their 20 patients, in restraints for the Doctor’s safety. They were loaded on board the bus for the ride to the airport in Des Moines. While Ron drove, Damon went to work on the inmates. By the time they got off the bus, they were so worked up they resembled a bunch of Viking Berserkers. They parked as close to the Chinese position on the runway as they dared, then they opened the doors.

“OK guys, remember all those guys who killed Elvis and hate Dale Earnhardt and NASCAR? Well, they’re right over there.”

“My Mom’s with them too?”

“Yeah, they’re holding her hostage.”

“Mom, I’m coming!”

Damon handed them an assortment of picks, shovels, hoes and rakes, then followed along at a safe distance. They started walking, but soon they were jogging and running toward the Chinese screaming incoherently. One chink took a pitchfork through the chest before they figured out that they weren’t a bunch of farmers, and opened fire. Damon dove behind cover, and using the outgoing fire for cover, shot the remaining 3 Chinese troops. The last nutcase turned toward Damon with his bloody shovel raised to kill him, and Damon swore because he’d fired both shotguns. Right before he got his brains bashed in, Damon got 1 shotgun loaded, flipped the barrel closed, and pulled the trigger at point blank range, blowing the inmate’s head apart. Damon turned to vomit, and was sick for several minutes. Finally Ron made his way to Damon, and said “We’ve got to get out of here, the sirens are getting closer.”

Chapter 15

+++ Two weeks later, at an undisclosed location in Maryland+++

Lisa was starting to wish she had stayed at home, they drilled her mercilessly, ran her until she dropped, and taught her everything they could in two weeks. The only thing that kept her going was the image in her head of her dead parents and boyfriend that could have been. She wanted to pile so many ATF bodies over their graves that she couldn't see them anymore. The General was pleased with her ability to shoot, and their most brutal Martial Arts instructor spent as much time as he could getting her up to speed on CQB with knives and other weapons. He was really glad they were wearing protective gear and using rubber knives after she figured out what she was doing. He was especially grateful he wore a steel cup when she kicked him in the crotch a couple of times! Whoever had gotten her so mad would be in for a world of hurt when they turned her loose. Sandy became her mentor and training partner. Over time Sandy opened up and explained why she was willing to die to see the ATF permanently out of business.

“Just like your family, we were hit by a late night raid. We didn't have any guns, and I was 9 months pregnant. They killed my husband in front of me, then raped me so violently that I lost the baby, and in the process of miscarrying, started hemorrhaging. They thought I was going to bleed to death, and left. When they were gone, I called a neighbor on my cell phone and barely made it to the hospital 2 miles away before I passed out from blood loss. The ATF wanted to arrest me, but a friend of Gene's smuggled me out of the hospital by the back door. I don't care if I die as long as they die first.”

“You know exactly how I feel then, you've heard my story, well right after we escaped, my sister and her boyfriend were married by a local minister. His nephew was staying with him, and we were seriously attracted to each other. I told him to be careful, so he brought his AR-15 home with him. Two weeks later, I heard that there was a home invasion robbery, which we know is the media's buzzword for a ATF attack gone bad, except this time there was .223 brass all over the place. The ATF is in love with the H&K MP5, which is a 9mm subgun, so any .223 brass would have been from Larry's AR-15, so I know he died defending himself. He was studying to be a minister for crying out loud - what harm was he to the government?”

“None of us were any threat to the government, it's just that the Government has turned into a Police State, with power-mad men running their own personal fiefdoms while the President hides in the White House.”

“Well, I'm going to take care of 1 branch of the Government. You do realize this is a 1-way trip?”

“I’ve already said my prayers, and Nicky is building my explosive vest. I understand you requested 1 too?”

“I asked Nicky to cover the outer layer with nails and shrapnel so I kill as many of them as possible.”

“Nice knowing you kid!” Sandy punched her in the shoulder, and Lisa returned the punch - “Right back at you Old Lady!”

For the remaining two weeks before the attack, they trained together, and knew each other so well they could almost finish each other’s sentences, and automatically covered each other’s back. They were loaded identically, so if they needed something from each other, they knew which pocket it was in. They both carried H&K MP-5SD’s with 20 30-round magazines full of 147gr subsonic 9mm JHP ammo, and 600 rounds of extra ammo on custom stripper clips that mated to the magazine without an adapter, and held 30 rounds to reload their mags with 1 push. Instead of rifles, they carried dozens of grenades, and 4 M72 LAWS rockets each. They only weighed 5 pounds each, and were 24 inches long when closed, so 4 of them would fit inside the Blackhawk Industries backpack they normally carried. For this operation, they didn’t waste space on food or water, just ammo, rockets, and grenades. They each carried a battle dressing in their right thigh pocket so if they weren’t mortally wounded, they could keep fighting. In case they were mortally wounded and unconscious, they each had a hidden fail-safe 30-second time fuze on a pull ingiter. All their partner had to do was pull the string and boogie out of the blast zone, unless they were dying too, then they’d both go out with a bang! If they were caught and surrounded, they could press a button, and the vest would detonate. Sandy had a remote control so if she pushed her button, both vests would blow, but they didn’t tell Lisa.

One day Gunny and Kelly showed up, and when she saw Lisa, Kelly didn’t recognize her own sister. She had chopped off her long blond hair into a very butch cut which was supposed to be the rage for Female ATF agents, and she had lost 30 pounds, but was strong as an ox. After saying their goodbyes to Lisa, they left the Black Suburban behind, which had ATF markings all over it, and would give Lisa and Sandy a chance to get inside the DC office parking structure without a hassle. The security from the parking garage wasn’t as secure as the security measures they used to protect their street access since the rent-a-cop was supposed to check all incoming vehicles. They did a recon mission, and discovered the rent-a-cop barely glanced at black Suburbans with the ATF logo emblazoned on the doors, even though it was his job to thoroughly check everyone coming into or out of the building. Gene guessed that Security people were the same worldwide. Paid minimum wage, and gave minimum effort. The next morning, they drove into the building with all the other agents to start the day. They kept their Bolle Vigilante mirrored sunglasses on for as long as they could. Their fake ID’s got

them past security, and onto the elevator to the Executive floor. No one else was in the elevator, so they got as ready as they could without tipping off the security cameras, which could stop the elevator between floors, trapping them like rats. As soon as the doors opened to the top floor, they got out, took off their backpacks, and grabbed a LAWS rocket each. Lisa fired 1 way down the corridor, and Sandy fired the other, blowing the doors to the Director and Deputy Director's offices and hopefully killing anyone inside, then they quickly donned their LBV's and took out their MP-5s and started shooting. Lisa took a couple of hits to her vest, and except for hurting like hell, it didn't slow her down much. She retaliated by shooting the agent in the face, killing him instantly. Once everyone on the executive floor was dead, they located the fire stairs, and opened the doors, then started tossing grenades down the stairs, killing everyone that was evacuating using the stairs. When the echo died down, they started down themselves, located the main panel for the power and security, and stuck a charge on it, and pulled the time fuse. 30 seconds later, the power went out, and the security system went dead. That was the cue the assault team was waiting for, and charged into the building, killing everyone they saw. Another team shot the gate guard, drove a large truck to the lowest level of the parking garage, located the critical columns of the building from the plans they bought over the internet years ago just in case. They quickly attached shaped charges to the columns, set their timers, packed sand bags around the charges to tamp the blast, tied them in place, then left with minutes to spare. Meanwhile Lisa and Sandy were doing a land sale business cleaning up the ATF cesspool. They worked their way down the building, herding the worker bees into a trap. Once everyone met on the ground floor, the leader pressed his detonator, which fired the shaped charges and detonated their suicide vests.

5 minutes later, an unidentified vehicle pulled into the FOX news lot, handed a tape to the first cameraman they saw, and told him to give it to Bill O'Reilly, then left. The cameraman found Bill, and they watched the tape. 2 hours later, it was the lead story. Bill O'Reilly showed the tape to the senior news producer, who told him to run it as is, with Bill commentating over it. 2 minutes later, he was on the air.

"Ladies and Gentlemen. As you know, 2 hours ago, the ATF building in DC was blown up. We just received a tape from the people who claim to have blown it up and killed everyone inside. We've agreed to show the tape in its entirety. At the end of the tape you'll understand why. So without any further delay."

"This is General Lee. My real name isn't important, but my mission is. The ATF have been killing innocent women and children due to the depraved indifference of ATF brass, and the sloppy book keeping of the clerks who were supposed to compile a database of gun owners for the eventual confiscation of all firearms. Between the two of them, we have records that show that 5,000 innocent Americans have died, and there was no end in sight. We were forced to take this radical action because Congress has failed to do its job of oversight of Federal Police

Agencies, which has allowed the ATF and FBI, among other agencies, to assume virtual Police State status. The ATF was the most egregious of the violators of our civil rights, starting with the Waco, Texas Massacre and other incidents that have gone unreported. We destroyed the building with everyone in it in hopes that would stop the ATF from killing innocent civilians. If they do not, we will be forced to take more drastic measures. While we regret the loss of life, everyone in that building was guilty of aiding and abetting the unconstitutional search and seizure, plus murder and rape that were going on in the name of law enforcement. Don't even get us started about their violations of the rest of the Constitution. We put the Federal Government ON NOTICE that if they don't immediately cease and desist confiscating firearms, illegal searches, and killing innocent civilians, we have the means and the capability to destroy the Federal Government. This is your last warning. By the way, Mr. O'Reilly didn't know anything about this tape prior to it's delivery this morning. We insisted on him playing the entire tape by threatening to blow up the FOX broadcasting building if he didn't. Thank you and God Bless America."

As the tape ran out, Bill sat their stunned for a minute. Finally he started talking.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, what you've just heard was the truth as I know it. As the general said, I knew nothing about the tape, but FOX and other news services did know the ATF and other Federal agencies had gone off the reservation, so to speak, but we were gagged by seriously restrictive FCC rules and regulations. Just by telling you this, I'll probably be looking for a job tomorrow. This is Bill O'Reilly, signing off, probably for the last time."

General Hagee was watching FOX in his quarters, hoping for news about the bombing of the ATF building when he saw the General's tape, and Bill's confession. He started swearing so loudly that his Marine attached to his security detail came charging in with his gun drawn.

"Put that damn thing away, I was just yelling at the TV - Bill's finally gone and done it - he blew the lid off the commode, and now it's going to stink. We don't have a lot of time left to save this country, so we need to move fast."

The General made a couple of calls, and strapped on his LBV, grabbed his M1 Garand, and hopped into a Hummer.

+++ Two Days Later, Washington DC +++

President Kerry thought he was safe in DC, and was going stir-crazy being cooped up in the White House. The reason the Secret Service wanted to keep him in the White House was they were hearing rumblings that several ex-military snipers were after his hide. Finally he couldn't resist an invitation to speak at a Democratic fundraiser in DC. It was too close to use Marine 1,

so the Secret Service was forced to use a limousine convoy. General Hagee got word of the trip in time to put a plan of his into motion. Less than 2 miles from the White House, right as they turned a corner, the lead vehicle of the convoy was face to face with an Abrams Main Battle tank, with the 120mm muzzle pointed right at them. Seconds later, a dozen Bradleys charged the flanks of the convoy with their Bushmasters pointed right at the vehicles. No sooner had the Abrams showed up when all the Secret Service earpieces and all their radios emitted a high-pitched squeal jamming their communications, and a pair of Apache Longbow helicopters hovered over the convoy armed to the teeth with Hellfire missiles. The Secret Service agent in charge of the protection detail in the lead vehicle got out of his limo, and the Tank Commander popped his hatch when he saw him come out, and flipped his microphone to PA.

“Attention Secret Service, President Kerry is under arrest by order of the Joint Chiefs for Treason. Either stand down or we will be forced to open fire.”

Agent Lewis could count and knew he was hopelessly surrounded, and with 1 order, the tank commander could destroy every vehicle in the convoy at zero risk to themselves, so he took the easy way out. He walked down to President Kerry’s limo, opened the driver’s door, had a word with the driver, and President Kerry was unceremoniously tossed out onto the ground. Before he could say a word, a shot rang out, striking Kerry in the face, and exploding out the back of his head. Agent Lewis stood there stunned, waiting for the next volley that would kill all the agents, which never came. A Bradley drove up, and 4 Recon Marines climbed out and bagged up Kerry’s body, then they drove off. As soon as the tanks and Bradleys cleared the Capitol area, a pair of F-117's flew over DC, and dropped a full load of smart bombs onto the Capitol building, destroying the House and Senate buildings while they were in session. Minutes later, the Joint Chiefs appeared on National TV.

“Ladies and Gentlemen. The Chinese invasion has been defeated, and the traitors that aided and abetted the invaders are dead. Since the conditions that started the secession have been eradicated, we’re asking the States to re-join the Union. In 60 days, we’ll hold a new Constitutional Convention, and new elections, since everyone in the House and Senate are now dead. We discovered that not only had President Kerry and Governor Fineswine conspired with the Chinese Leadership to aid and abet the invasion of this country, but most of the Congresscritters had accepted millions of dollars in illegal contributions from the Chinese Government’s agents in the US to make it much easier for the Chinese to invade by voting for favorable legislation, giving them basing rights and other benefits a foreign power shouldn’t have received in the ordinary course of business. The evidence was overwhelming and damning of corruption that reached all levels of the Federal Government. We will maintain martial law for the duration of the emergency, to last no longer than the next 30 days while we ensure that the Chinese invaders have been destroyed, and law and order has been restored.

We're asking the governors of the 50 states to send a representative to a new Constitutional Convention in Topeka Kansas in 60 days, with elections for a new President and Federal Representatives within 90 days."

+++ Britt Iowa, 2 weeks later +++

"Dad, Guess who's doing a live feed from Des Moines?"

"Would his initials be GR?"

"Yup, that's him!"

"Anybody seen my Barrett's Light 50?"

"Dad, you're too old to make that shot, at least let me go with you!"

"Ok Damon, but I don't want you to get in trouble."

"Trouble's my Middle Name."

Ron decided that Don Quixote and Pancho could go to Des Moines by themselves, he was staying in Britt in his nice comfy recliner and his AC.

"Dad, at least make sure you leave the bedpan at home this time."

"What you don't like the Golden Helmet of Mambrino?"

"Nope, and that conduit lance was pretty lame too."

"Hey, I didn't write that one, remember?"

"Now that you mention it, I seem to remember your Nemesis writing that as a Farewell Story. Fooled him, you wrote at least 10 stories after he posted it!"

“I told him to, I wanted to enjoy it too. Beat the pants off that Sci Fi story he wrote where I was a 500-year old 18 year-old that couldn’t die.”

“That was pretty bad, but not as bad as the one he wrote just to nail Stimpy!”

“So we going to ride your bike, or do you actually own a car?”

“Since the Ex who shall remain nameless died in a car wreck, I’ve taken the insurance money and paid off the house and bought a nice car.”

“So when are we going?”

“The live feed’s tomorrow at noon, we better get to Des Moines, get you a hotel room, stake it out, and find a shooting spot you can get to with your scooter.”

Damon quickly loaded his car, kissed and hugged his kids, and said they’d be back tomorrow. Damon and his dad talked all the way to Des Moines. Even though the trip took almost 3 hours with bathroom breaks, the time passed quickly. They checked into a cheap motel, and scouted the area around Geraldo’s live feed from Des Moines International Airport, just 5 miles southwest of town. Geraldo was doing a follow-up about the mental patients that escaped the hospital to defend their country, or at least that was the way the media was spinning it, since the hospital and the state didn’t want to admit that 3 old geezers could talk their way onto a secure floor of a mental hospital, get the staff’s cooperation in running off with 20 patients in a stolen bus, drive all the way to Des Moines, single-handedly kill a platoon of Chinese Special Forces troops, then disappear into the fog.

The airport was wide open once they were outside the security fences, which were only a quarter-mile from where the newsies would set up. They already located a small abandoned commercial building with a big flat roof and plenty of AC and heating hardware to hide behind. Since the elevator didn’t work, Damon rigged a Bosuns Chair to a handy pulley atop a short flagpole, that looked like it could support his dad’s weight easily. He wasn’t too happy when Damon told him how he planned on getting his Dad up and down the building.

“Damn it Damon, if I go splat, I’ll never forgive you?”

“How will I know, you’ll be dead?”

“Good point - in that case, I’ll get special permission to haunt you!”

“Thanks Dad, I love you too!”

With that settled, Damon hauled his dad aloft, and once he cleared the roof, Damon tied the rope off, and helped his Dad get both feet on the roof. “Easy Dad, I’ve got you.”

“Good thing you’re doing the shooting, my hearts beating so fast that I don’t think I could hit a 747 from here.”

“I was thinking, we could tell Ronald MacDonald that you took the shot - it would make him GREEN with envy!”

“I like the way you think Damon!”

They got set up, and waited for GR to do his live feed at 12 noon. At 11:45, Damon got behind the huge Swarovski scope, and Gary got behind the Leupold spotting scope he borrowed from Ron. He could see the reporters and dignitaries milling around, then he ID’d GR. “Damon, Target - 60 feet left of podium facing right.”

“Got it. Should we take him now, or wait until the cameras are rolling?”

“If you want to, I’d rather wait. Nothing like seeing a scumbag’s head explode on live TV.”

“I don’t think I can make a headshot from here Dad.”

“Ok, then how about 2 quick rounds, 1 for the head, and 1 in the body to be sure.”

“Works for me, except you got the stinking little 5-shot mags.”

“I could hit him with 5 shots Damon.”

Right at Noon, the dog and pony show got started. Finally GR took the podium. They already had their earplugs in, and Damon called out “Target, podium. Shooting.” Less than a second

later, two closely spaced shots boomed over the tarmac. The first shot blew GR's head all over the cameras who were recording the speech. The second shot hit him in the center of the chest, but it wasn't needed. Damon low-crawled behind a much bigger AC box on the roof, quickly took the rifle down, stowed it in a duffle bag, lowered everything to the ground, then lowered his dad in the bosun's chair as quickly as he dared. Once his dad was on the ground, he told him to stay in the chair, and fast-roped down the building.

"I always wanted to do that!"

"Son, anyone ever tell you you're NUTS!"

"Yeah practically on a daily basis, but it's no fun being crazy unless you can inflict it on others!"

"You realize I started going back up as you were coming down?"

"I had the rope all the way down, if you'd gone too high, I would have lowered you down. Let's get in the car and act like a couple of shepherds and get the flock out of here!"

Damon drove more sedately than he felt back to Britt Iowa. When they got back, Ronald greeted them. "Well you succeeded, they never suspected a sniper, and he's deader than a doornail, and just in time for lunch! Nice shooting Damon!"

"Dad made the shot, not me!"

"You're Sh#tting me?"

"Nope, it was only 600 yards, that huge Swarovski scope made his head look like a beach ball."

"Well Gary, you finally got your wish, now what do you want to do?"

"I'm retired, let's make some iced tea and watch Jerry Springer!"

Chapter 16 - Epilog

A very pregnant Kelly and her husband Mike drove to the new memorial site where the ATF building once stood. She placed a single white rose on the marker, then whispered “Bye Lisa.” then held her husband while she cried. On the way back to their Jeep she asked him “Honey, if the baby’s a girl, can we name it Lisa?”

Mike leaned over kissed her tenderly, and when the baby moved, Kelly placed his hand on her belly so he could feel the baby move. “Sure Kelly - That would be great for me.” They climbed back into their Jeep and drove home.

+++Austin, NV +++

Val, Kurt and Wade were sitting in Val’s rec room sipping a beer when Val turned on the TV. Governor Guinn was on the TV, and was reading from a prepared speech.

“Dear Citizens of Nevada, with the death of the traitors to the Constitution, and the assent of the governors of the secessionist states, and the Nevada Legislature, we join the State of Texas in declaring that our Secession is over, and we look forward to rejoining the Union as soon as the Constitutional Convention is held in Topeka Kansas. We’re hearing what we hoped to hear from the other State Delegates, that the old Republic is Deader than the Dodo, and we need a new government like the Founding Fathers envisioned with the State Governments having significantly more power than the Federal Government, whose sole function is to negotiate treaties, and provide for the common defense, period. We’ll wait and see what comes out of the Convention before we reach a final decision, but things are looking up. Good night, and God Save the State of Nevada.”

“Things are looking up, Val?”

“They’re looking better. Governor Guinn agreed to let the County Militias keep their military hardware, but all that means is we’re armed equivalent to the Mexican Army.”

“What was that I heard about the Chinese?”

Marshall Yeng committed suicide in his office once he got news of the humiliating defeat of his forces, and the Joint Chiefs sent a strong note via the Chinese Ambassador giving them 24

hours to surrender and destroy their equipment in place. Their surrender was conditional on China writing off our entire National Debt as War Reparations and demilitarizing to a level consistent with self-defense only, and the destruction of all nuclear weapons and launchers. The Joint Chiefs shut down the UN, and ordered the diplomats deported Personna Non Grata, which means they can't return. My guess is the US Checkbook is closed, at least for the near future. The funny part is the EU isn't fighting us on this, and moved the UN to Brussels."

"Sounds like the Globalists took a beating. Maybe they'll learn?"

When they finished their beers, Kurt said, "Almost forgot, we got the road to Tonopah cleaned up, next Tuesday at Midnight."

Val and Wade smiled and said "See Ya Then!"

The End