**Epilogue – Echo Below**

Somewhere in the South Pacific – 17:42 hours

Sara was nearly done patching the mainsail when the console chirped.

Just once. A staccato burst. Shortwave. Low band. The kind of signal no one used anymore—except people like her. Or the ones she used to work for.

She wiped her hands on a rag and crossed to the nav station. The LED readout blinked once, then again.

DROP 4: WAKE.

Her breath caught in her throat. No one should know those codes still existed. Let alone where they pointed.

The Wake site was one of four—underwater caches she’d seeded across a dozen countries during her black years. This one sat on a sloped reef outside the atoll’s safe zone. Sixty feet down, anchored in coral, invisible to sonar, forgotten even by her.

Until now.

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Three days later

The water was warm. Blue as breath. Quiet enough to feel sacred.

Sara descended with slow, practiced control. Every movement precise, fluid, deliberate.

The reef curved like a crescent below her, its coral ridges sheltering schools of neon fish and skeletal fanweed. Nestled in a cavity half-shielded by rock and growth, the cache case waited—black carbon shell, barnacle-streaked, just where she’d left it six years ago.

She unlatched the anchor clamps, detached the buoyant tether, and began the slow rise back to the surface.

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Onboard Nymeria, she opened it.

Inside: a vacuum-sealed journal, ink-smudged but intact. A flash drive. And a single laminated card bearing nothing but old military coordinates, faded kanji, and one line in English:

“JINTAO REEF – SUB PEN – 1944 – UNCHARTED”

She stared at it for a long time.

Then, without a word, she stood and walked to the helm.

The tide was shifting.