



Direct Action! By Tom Fitzgerald

A Modern American Western

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Prologue: The Present

The three men and one woman walked into the chief justice's chamber on the eighth floor of the Department of Justice Building, better known as the J. Edgar Hoover building. They; along with the chief justice were all federal district court judges until they were selected; and then accepted their present assignment. Only five government officials knew their assigned purpose, one being the President of the United States, who was the only one they answered to. The court they presided over is known as "The Ultra Court." All documents and decisions by this court are classified "Ultra-Secret - President's Eyes Only."

The Chief Justice greeted each of the members of his court by their first names and once everybody had been seated the chief justice laughed and said, "I have read your briefs and recommendations, and we seem to have a hung jury, two for and two against. I was hoping for a consensus before I made a recommendation to the President." The four jurists looked at him with blank stares. The chief justice continued, "The Wanderer Case is the first case under the guidelines of the Patriot Security Act. I was glad to see that the focus of your briefs were on the actions of this Special Operation Project Group of the National Security Agency. Also all agreed that the other federal agencies in this case acted in accordance with their charters. I was hoping that we could have a discussion on the key points of your summaries. Does any one object?" Justice Lang said, "This is highly irregular, but the guidelines for our decisions are only in the best interest of the security of our nation, I am willing to forgo protocol." Justice Robinette said, "This is setting a dangerous precedence to our decision making, but I concede in the interest of

national security.” Justice Calder nodded in agreement. Justice Lawson said, “I for one was hoping when I took this assignment that we could do without pretense, egos, and guidelines.” The chief justice smiled they had their first consensus.

The chief justice took out his list of points that needed to be clarified. Starting with Justice Lang's' argument that the leader of this special operation group should be held for trial on the charges of murder, false imprisonment, interfering in a federal investigation, illegal surveillance, and inappropriate use of government personnel and resources. Then came Justice Robinette's recommendation to disband this group because of its rogue operating procedures, and their liability to the government. Justice Calder found no fault with the results of the case but questioned the means by which it was obtained; stricter guidelines in their operations was her recommendation. Justice Lawson presented the most interesting argument in their defense, claiming the “Chaos Theory” was the element in their success and by working outside the bounds of normal governmental bureaucratic procedures they achieved results. The chief justice said, “Shall we start with the highjacking of the explosives shipment at Oatman's Crossing.

Two and a half years before:

Devin was sitting in the Dateland Café on Interstate 8; he stopped to have a piece of their famous date cream pie. Being a traveling man, there was nothing better to soothe the soul than a piece of pie and a cup of Joe. His favorite pie was pecan; but that is what he was weaned on in New Iberia Louisiana. He had spent the whole week competing in the All Marine 45-caliber-pistol competition at Twenty-Nine Palms Marine Corp Base. He

was tasting the fruits of his victory in the form of a piece of pie. Aside from the waitress and the cook he was the only one in the café in the early evening hour. But he was expecting company when he had heard the air brakes of a semi-truck in front of the café. Then he heard the café door open and turned his head to see two men walk in the door. He quickly faced forward not liking what he saw and thought of his .45 in the back seat of the car. One man was wearing white coveralls and a baseball cap; the other was wearing jeans and a black leather jacket. The thing that he didn't like was the bulge under their clothes in the upper left corner of their chest. Devin rose from his stool placing ten dollars on the counter, saying "Thanks Helen" as the waitress walked towards the men at the other end of the counter. He scanned the men as he walked out the front door. They both had bored tired looks on their faces, a good sign. In the parking lot was the semi with the engine running and a man sitting in the driver's side seat, but what caught his attention was the new black Chevy Impala in back of the truck also with a driver and it's engine running. The Impala had black wall tires, the sign of a government car. He breathed a sigh of relief thinking it's only a government shipment with escort. Now for Amy, he thought. He walked over to the pay phone at the corner of the building. He knew better than to try his cell phone in this neck of the desert. "Hello?" "Hello Mr. Jensen, this is Devin. Is Amy around?" "Devin! I've been waiting to hear from you more than she has, will you please take this female far away from here!" Devin laughed; he had never seen a father-daughter combination like them. "I should be in Gila Bend within the hour Mr. Jensen." John Jensen laughed, "Good, there is only so much a man can take I'm glad you are taking her away forever. Here she is." Amy growled into the phone, "You know insanity runs in the family, you sure you still want to marry me?" Devin said, "I'm sure"

Half-heartedly, something had distracted him. Amy said in a serious voice, “Is there something wrong dear?” Devin was watching an old yellow van creep out of the interstate underpass with its lights out heading towards the café, the lights came on as it continued pass the parking lot down the road. “DEVIN!” “Yes Sweetie?” “What’s going on there?” Devin was brought back to reality when the two men came out of the café and headed to the truck and car with bags of food. “It’s probably just a local drunk in the yellow van, never mind.” Amy said, “I know you miss little old me, but I’ll kill you if you pick up any drunken floozies.” Devin laughed as he watched the truck and car pull out of the parking lot “You know sweetie you are the only one for me.” Amy said, “Good, then I’ll see you in an hour, right?” Devin said; “Sure.” As he watched the truck and escort car go up the entrance ramp to the interstate he caught sight out of the corner of his eye the yellow van coming back down the road again this time towards the interstate. “Sweetie, I may be a little late, got to go.” Amy was about to yell when the phone went dead.

“It’s been an hour and a half, where is he?” Amy said to her father. JJ didn’t like it either, Devin was a marine’s marine, if he said he was going to be some place at a certain time he would be fifteen minutes early. JJ put down his beer and picked up the phone and started dialing. Amy looked at him and said, “Who are you calling?” JJ gave her a reassuring look, “Duke should be on duty over at the cop shop, they can check the interstate. Maybe he had a flat tire.” Amy smirked, “He has new tires on that corvette of his.” After JJ put down the phone, Amy saw the concerned look on his face. “Duke said that there are no break downs on the highway, but that hot spring fish farmer at the Aztec

exit called asking if the military was conducting any exercises in the area. There seems to be some strange activity going on near the river. They are sending a patrol to check.” Amy just stood there not saying a word but JJ could see that her mind was calculating possibilities. He got up put his arms around her and sat her down on the sofa. Twenty minutes later the call came.

As the Pave Hawk touched down on the dirt road outside of Oatman’s crossing. The Major looked at the four remaining members of his team; he could see the grim looks on their faces in the flashing lights of the emergency vehicles. He said, “I want you all to stay in the chopper until I find out what is going on. It looks like our cousins are in control here and you know how they can be. Let’s not make this worse than it already is. We are here to help Amy and Devin, please be strong for them.” The Major looked at the Chief first, who nodded his head and then looked up at the ceiling of the chopper. Whiz just stared down at the floor. Blue had that blank look on his face, which the Major knew as trouble, “You hear me Blue?” Blue stared at him and said sarcastically, “Yes Sir Major!” Before The Major could make eye contact with Brat she said, “I don’t give a shit what you say, I’m finding Amy!” and jumped out of the chopper with the rest following her. The Major put his head in his hands. He didn’t have to get out of the chopper to find out what was going on, five minutes later the chief agent of the FBI Phoenix field office was screaming in his ear. “I have five murdered federal agents here, a stolen shipment of high explosives, and the only lead I have is being compromised by your people trying to take her away!” The Major took his head out of his hands and looked over at the chief agent and said in a controlled voice, “One of those murdered agents was one of mine, and

that lead you have is also from one of my agents. If you want me to pull out, I am going to take all my agents with me. Then we'll see how far your investigation goes with a National Security Agency blackout." The chief agent looked at him in disbelief; "You can't do that." The Major smiled at him and said, "Are you willing to bet your career on that?" The chief agent thought for all of one minute and said, "We are done with Miss Jensen, you may take her home." The Major got out of the chopper and went to find his team.

Part 1-“Everyday Problems”

Two years later:

Day One-Monday

Amy sat on the dry riverbank of the Gila River; at one time it was one of the mightiest rivers in the Southwest, now it didn't even flow above ground to the Colorado River. She looked at the cottonwood trees along its bank at a desolate spot called Oatman's crossing. The funny thing was that Mr. Oatman never got across the river. In 1851 his wagon train broke down here on their way to California. They were soon attacked by a band of Apache Indians. They killed him, his wife and fifteen other members of the party. Only a young son was able to escape. His two daughters were not so lucky; they were taken and sold into slavery to the Mojave Indians. The youngest daughter died in captivity, but the army freed the oldest daughter five years later. A very interest story in Arizona frontier history which Amy's dad, JJ like to tell tourist at the Gila Bend Museum, where he is curator. Amy was determined to free herself from the captivity of this place that has held her heart for two years. One hundred and fifty years after the Oatman Massacre, there was another massacre here. This time it involved Amy's fiancé Devin, who was also murdered by a group of savages, but they were not Indians, just cold-blooded thieves. All that God given talent she was given and she couldn't do a damn thing to help in the investigation. She started to cry, “NO. She must let go.” She clasped her hands in her lap and closed her eyes “God, it has been a long time since we talked, and even then I haven't asked for much, help me to go on with my life.”

Interstate 10 from Litchfield Park, Arizona to the California border is “a hell of a lot of desert” as Deke Weaver put it. As driver/security for this eighteen wheel mobile lab, he was a stand out from those geek guys wearing their plaid shirts and chino pants that were traveling in the Chevy Suburban behind him. If basic black was good enough for Johnny Cash it was fine with him too, plus it made his 6’3” 275 pound frame look thin and enhanced his salt and pepper beard. At least that’s what Connie said, Connie, his “old lady” for twenty-five years who he met while working as a roadie for a “Bad Company” tour, was his conscience; she kept him on the right track. She told him to be easy on the geeks. So he took pity on them whenever they asked “Darn Stupid Questions.” Like now, “Mobile One to Mobile Two, shouldn’t we make a pit stop before we get too far into the desert?” Deke thought, hell we’ve been in the desert for the past fifty miles, at least a concrete desert. “Mobile Two to Mobile One, there’s a nice truck stop fifteen miles up the road. We can stock up on supplies there.” “Roger Mobile Two” was the response.

At the truck stop, after Deke called Connie, he checked the rig; tires, gas, oil, transmission, pressure lines, and refrigeration unit. Everything was fine. A thought kept nagging at him as he looked at the logo on the side of the trailer. Did Borden’s Dairy still use “Elsie the Cow” as their company mascot? Did Borden’s Dairy still exist? He was reminiscing on how, while growing up he enjoyed looking at the cow’s face as he ate his cereal. Jack Hughes, the project manager walked up and said they were ready to go.

“Another sixty miles and we’ll be there!” As Deke climbed into the cab, he thought, “Vicksburg Junction was not there. It was nowhere!”

Sixty miles later through the most inhospitable desert landscape and they turned off the interstate. To the north was a dirt road leading off to some low mountain ranges. As they went under the interstate they could see another dirt road leading south off to a blazing sun. But to the right of the road was maybe a truck stop at one time. There were a few single shack structures nestled around a signpost that had no sign. Deke pulled off and waited for the suburban to pull alongside. Jack jumped out the driver’s side; Ho came out of the passenger side and Jim, the rear door. They all stretched and looked around. Deke rolled his window down and yelled over the truck engine “What’s the story?” Jack yelled back “We’re here.” Deke turned off the truck and leaned back in his seat looking at the horizon and said to himself “Connie please give me strength.”

One hundred and ten miles back down the interstate, Charley Ames was sitting in the reception area of the Park Service Headquarters for Papago Park. Jennie, the receptionist tried to look busy as they waited for the call from John Miles, the superintendent for the park. Charley thought assaulting another park employee was not good, but he hoped that at least he would be able to tell his side of the story. Isn’t that what boards of review were all about? When Jennie motioned for him to head back to the conference room, the superintendent was sitting at the head of the table flanked on both sides by the other department heads; the chief ranger, the resource manager, the law enforcement ranger, the director of interpretation services, and the chief of scientific

services. (SS) Charley was instructed to sit in the lone metal chair facing the conference table. The chief ranger stated that they had read his report on the incident at Red Bluff and would like for him to tell them in his own words what happened. Charley took a breath and said to himself “Here goes nothing!” He then in a profession tone told his side of the story.

“On April 25, I was assigned to the archeology site at Red Bluff. This was the spring excavation site that was looking for artifacts of the prehistoric Papago Indian tribe that migrated through this area. The site leader was Dr. Richardson of the park’s scientific service. I was there to provide logistic support for the site. There was a group of twenty college archeology students from Desert Community College.” The chief ranger broke in and asked, “Who was their professor or instructor?” “Dr. Richardson was also their professor at the college.” Charley stated. The chief ranger said, “Continue.” “We all arrived at the site at 8:00 AM in two park vans with Dr. Richardson and I as drivers. I had brought two twenty-gallon containers of water and an assortment of snacks; Bananas, candy bars, peanut butter and crackers in my van. Dr. Richardson had brought the tools in his van. Dr. Richardson broke the students up in four groups of five, handed out the tools and led them down to the site at the bottom of the wash. I stayed with the vans to check the first aid supplies and set up a rest area for the students around a group of trees. After an hour and a half waiting at the vans, it was starting to get hot; I decided to go check on the party. “The chief of scientific services asked, “How hot was it?” And why did you wait so long to go down to the site?” “It was probably in the mid-80’s “ the chief of SS responded with, “Not very hot for a spring day?” Charley said “No” then the chief

of SS asked, “Was there any friction between you and Dr. Richardson previous to this occasion?” Charley sat up straighter in his chair and said; “Maybe resentment would be a better word.” The chief ranger growled “explain.” Charley continued with “Dr. Richardson tended to be an egotistic maniac with a slave driver persona. Nobody was as good or fast enough for him.” The director of interpretation services cut in and asked, “is that why you stayed up at the vans?” “No! I could hear him yelling at the students to work faster, and I didn’t want to interfere.” The law enforcement ranger stated “But you did interfere.” Charley could only respond with a shallow “Yes.” The resources manager said, “Tell us how that happened.” Charley ran his hand through his hair and looked up at the ceiling thinking, “This is not going well.”

“When I got down to the wash, the students were all on their hands and knees working at four excavation points in the wash. Their clothes were soaked with perspiration and they were covered in dust. Dr. Richardson was bent over one of the previous excavation points down the wash. I called out to him that I had set up a rest area at the vans and that now would be a good time to take a break. He yelled back “Not now, we’ve made some good finds. We’ll take a break in a while.” I looked at the students and they looked exhausted. One of the girls was working in slow motion and looked very pale. I asked her to stand and she needed my help getting up. That is when I yelled over to Dr. Richardson “I am taking the students up to the vans for a break.” I grabbed the girl around the waist and started leading the students up the path. Dr. Richardson was in my face in a flash, yelling, “What the hell do you think you are doing? I’m in charge of this class!” I asked him to get out of our way. He grabbed the girl I was holding up and she

collapsed to the ground. In my opinion there was no time to argue with him, so I cold-cocked him.” The chief ranger muffed a cough. The law enforcement ranger just shook his head. The resources manager bowed his head and ran his hands through his hair. The chief of scientific services asked, “What is cold-cocked?” and the chief of interpretation services, a small wiry woman smiled and said, “Decked him.”

The Superintendent spoke for the first time, with a lofty wave of his hand he said, “Please finish the story.” Charley explained that after getting the students up to the shaded area near the vans and handed out water and snacks, he instructed them to rest. He then went back down to the wash with water and the first aid kit for Dr. Richardson, who was coming around when he arrived and started yelling, “You assaulted me!” I asked the doctor to calm down while I put a bandage on the cut over his left eye, and that I would help him up to the vans and they would drive back to the visitor’s center; which they did without further incident. After the students left, I then instructed the doctor to come into the visitor’s center and make out a report, which he did saying “With pleasure!” I made out my report and called the chief ranger, who told me to go home for the day. “End of story.” Charley said with relief. The Superintendent asked the board if there was any further questions, and no one replied. He then said, “Thank you Ranger Ames. You may leave and when the board reaches it’s decision you will be informed. Charley stood up, put on his Ranger hat on and walked out of the Park Headquarters.

About two hundred and ninety northwest of the Park Headquarters in Las Vegas's Chinatown Pagoda Shopping Mall, another review board was about to hold court. Cindy Lo was standing in front of the floor to ceiling tinted glass windows, in her second floor office overlooking the interior of the mall. She was tall for an oriental woman, 5'9" with a slender but well-defined figure that gave fullness to the black silk business suit she had on. The only thing different from her young executive appearance was that her long black hair was tied in a bun behind her head for the meeting with her Grandfather, usually she wore it in a long ponytail. She paced back and forth listening on her cell phone for the man in Hong Kong to get back to her with the account information she wanted. The intercom on her large black lacquer desk buzzed. She walked over to it and pressed the button saying, "Yes Bridget." The voice on the other end said, "Miss Lo, your grandfather is here." "Could you please ask him to have a seat, I'm still on the line to Hong Kong." Was her reply. Just then the cell phone came to life with a man saying, "Cindy are you still there?" "Go ahead Roger." "Sorry Cindy but there is no activity with that account, are you sure it's still active?" "Can't say Roger, but thanks for checking. Could you keep an eye on it for me?" "My pleasure Cindy" was his reply. Then she hung up.

Now for grandpapa! She walked back to her desk and pressed the intercom. "Bridget, could you please ask my grandfather to come in." Johnny Lo was one of those men that could charm the socks off a dead man; at 80 he looked 60, always wearing a beautiful Hong Kong silk suit and tie. He came through the door with a big smile on his

face. “Oh Precious, you look beautiful!” was the first words out of his mouth as he came over to the desk to kiss Cindy on the cheek. Cindy motioned to one of the chairs in front of her desk. After he was seated, she sat down behind her desk, “Grandfather, the reason I asked you to come concerns this note from the Rio Casino.” In a very business like voice she added, “It seems you owe them \$10.000.00.” “Oh baby, you know how hard it has been since your grandmother died.” Giving her a sorrowful look. Cindy paused a minute before pounding on her desk and in a loud voice saying, “I should believe that this weakness for gambling must be an oriental male heredity thing. Our family is not some old Chinese coolie joke! We are Americans! I will not stand for this behavior or the loss of the family assets because you’re sad.” Before her grandfather could protest, she let loose with the final barrage. “Father said he needs some help at the warehouse. I have booked you on the 6:00 PM flight to San Francisco.” Her grandfather got to his feet and clasped his hands together in front of him, looking down at the carpet he said “Baby I’m sorry, but couldn’t I just work it off doing something around here?” “NO! This is not the place for a compulsive gambler. You can pick up your ticket at Bridget’s desk. Goodbye Grandfather.” With that, her grandfather turned around and slowly walked out.

Sandra Conner was an early riser and today was no exception. It was a beautiful spring day in the Kofa. Kofa stood for the King of Arizona Mine, a gold mine that didn’t produce any gold, but started the second great gold rush in America in the 1930’s. It was a con by a man who thought that by digging a mine in one of the most god-forsaken areas of the Arizona desert between Yuma and Quartzsite, he could sit back and milk investors of their money. It worked for a time, but one day he was surprised when a would-be

investor showed up with a geologist. The funny thing was that the geologist said that the mine was a dud, but the area had prospects for gold. The investor started his own mine and it was one of the biggest producers of the decade. The ocotillos were in full bloom and Sandra couldn't wait to get some great photos of them. But today was "milk run" day, the day every two weeks when Andy went into Yuma to drop off the weather data to the Fish and Wildlife office; who administering most of the Kofa and had weather-reporting instruments at the Star Bright Mine. It was also the day Andy picked up his salary for watching over the mine, which was still a private active holding in the wilderness. He then did the shopping and picked up or posted the mail for them.

Sandra rarely left the Kofa, two years ago was the last time, for Andy's foot infection. A year before that is when she came to the Kofa after her husband died. She said she hated to leave her friends, the plants and animals. The truth of the matter was that she had lost interest in the outside world. With no electricity or running water, life gets a lot less complicated. "Andy, I forgot to put shaving soap on the list." Andy was getting into the old pickup on the side of the hill when she came out of her cabin. "Shaving soap!" He looked puzzled "What do we need shaving soap for?" As she looked down the wide expanse of the King Valley she said, "You never know when guests will come." Andy said, "OK, shaving soap." Guests? He wondered if it had something to do with that letter he posted for her last month to New York. Andy slowly let the clutch out and the truck rolled down the dirt road. Sandra waved as the truck engine kicked in, and Andy headed down the valley. She thought, he's a good old coot, but he never says good-bye. Old Coot, Ha! She should talk at sixty-one. She thought Andy had to be around

eighty. Better get up to the mine and get some film for the camera and clean out the cold storage for when Andy gets back tonight with the supplies.

At the bottom of the ridge, Andy looked on as the golden rays of the sun stretched out over the King Valley. It would be a forty-five minute ride in the old Chevy before he got to the pavement at interstate 95 and another thirty minutes to Yuma. Most people thought of the desert as a desolate place and that was fine by him. But as he nursed the truck through the turns and washes he thought of the peace and quiet this big sandpit brought him. Kind of like Sandra. Always something going on with her, but with no fanfare or noise. If she was not out taking pictures, she would be writing in her cabin. When she did talk, it was about something interesting, like finding “Pete” the big diamondback rattlesnake at the entrance to the mine.

Forty-five minutes later Andy had reached the junction with I-95 and made a left heading to Yuma. He didn’t notice the three men sitting in the truck across the road on the side of the stone cabin. As he went by them, the truck started its engine and slowly crossed the interstate onto the King Valley Road.

The klaxon was sounding the “General Quarters Alarm.” Other horns and bells were blaring and lights were flickering as Captain Morrison turned to the Executive Officer and gave him the cut sign with his hand across his throat. When the klaxon died he calmly spoke into the mike, “Damage Control Report.” The intercom speaker came to life, “This is Chief Kenny, in the engine room we have a minor explosion in the battery

banks. Hull has not been breached, repeat, hull has not been breached, but compartment is filling with sulfuric dioxide and we are sealing off air supply and going to breathing apparatus, copy.” Captain Morrison kind of figured that the hull was intact, otherwise they wouldn’t be having this conversation. At eight hundred feet below the surface the USS Squid would have imploded and they would be on their way to Davey Jones’s Locker. “This is Chief Black, research room reporting minor electrical fires. Will have them under control in two minutes, also switching to OBA units.” The Captain waited a minute for any more reports before calling sonar and asking the status topside. “Captain we have the OR/V McGraw two miles off starboard, the frigate USS Thatch is playing tag with the Russian trawler ten miles to port, that is all within a twenty-five mile radius, sir.” “Com, This is the Captain put out a May-Day and give our position.” “Yes Sir.” was the reply. The Captain turned to the Executive Officer on the bridge and said, “Bring her up slow Phil and prepare to evacuate when we are topside. I’ll be in the COM Center.” Phil looked the Captain in the eye and said “Yes Sir.” Turned and picked up the mike “All Hands, Prepare to surface.”

An hour later, Doug Remington was waken by his pager beeping on the nightstand. He grabbed the pager and turned on the bedroom light. As he read the number, one word came into his mind, SPAWAR. As he jumped out of bed he thought it was too good to be true, this dry spell in problems. He put on his robe and slippers and strolled down the hallway to the conference room and flicked on the lights. He picked up the SCR phone and dialed the number that was on his pager. “C.O.C. U. S. Navy, Point Loma Station.” Was the answer he received from a gruff voice. Doug said, “Hello this is

Douglas Remington returning your call.” “Could you please hold for Lieutenant Huff?” was the question from the voice. “Of course I’ll hold.” Was Doug’s reply as the phone went dead. He thought they were tracing the call and checking to see if it was on a secure landline. A cheerful young voice came on two minutes later. “Hello Professor Remington, this is Lieutenant Barbara Huff, thanks for calling right back. Admiral Yates was wondering if you could come over tomorrow?” Doug said, “Why of course, but I better check flights before I confirm.” The cheerful voice laughed, “That won’t be necessary. Would 0800 be too early for you to show up at Terminal A at McCarren Airport?” “No, that would be fine Lt. Huff.” Was all that Doug could mutter as he thought of that laugh. It reminded him of Jane, His deceased wife. “We will be looking forward to seeing you tomorrow, Professor Remington.” Then the line went dead.

Jennifer Applegate was just finishing a glass of port wine as she looked out of her picture window at the moon as it crested over the Red Rock Mountains. She enjoyed the view from her Summerlin home, but felt very alone when she got ready to turn in for the night. The phone rang and she slowly walked over to read the number on the caller ID. The office was calling? That’s right, Doug is in town. As the answering machine went through the motions, she picked up the phone and said, “Hi Doug, what do you need?” “Jennifer, Point Loma just called wanting me to get over there tomorrow morning.” Jennifer put down her glass of wine and said, “I’ll be right down.” Doug wanted to say “thanks.” But she had hung up. Fifteen minutes later she was in her Jaguar XJ and on the Summerlin Parkway to the Hughes Center. In the Diplomatic Service you have to know when and how to “Get into Gear.” The cashmere sweater, jeans, sneakers and

windbreaker with scarf are part of the gear. Her mind was racing, it had to be the USS Squid and they were conducting trails this week on the EAM-ELF System. This is probably just a “Navy Thing,” she thought, but she’ll have to contact Pauline at the Pentagon. Troy was her contact at U.S. Pacific Fleet Command and Sidney would be at Point Loma if things were getting bad. Unfortunately, her main contact, Raja, would be on the boat.

The USS Squid’s homeport is the Naval Research and Development facility in San Diego. It is a unit of the U.S. Naval Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, under Commander, Submarine Development Squadron Five. On this particular assignment it was operating a mission for Space and Naval Warfare System Command (SPAWAR). Who were testing a classified mission (EAM-ELF) for the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA). These are the scientists who come up with the most advanced theories and applications of modern warfare for the Department of Defense, under the guidance of the National Security Agency, Who was really in charge is anybody’s guess.

Day 2 –Tuesday

Deke liked getting an early start in the morning. At 6:00 AM he crawled out of the sleeper cab of his truck and looked out, nothing! Luckily last week the technical support people had rigged up the power and phone connection to the side of the old gas station, and they had full power and communication with the outside world. It also meant that the overhang on the station would block the sun on the truck for most of the day. He thought that he better go check on the crew. He walked around to the door on the side of the trailer and went up the metal stairs. As he unlocked the door he could hear the microwave buzzing from the break room to the right but decided to go to the bunkroom at the back of the trailer. As he walked past the john he could hear someone in there showering. No one was in the bunk room, so it was probably Jim in the shower after doing the graveyard shift and Jack and Ho were in the control room (known as The Black Room for it's top secret designation.) He wanted to get everybody's order before he went off to explore the wonders of Quartzsite. Deke went towards the front of the trailer to the locked door blocking access to the remaining third of the trailer. There was a phone next to the door, which he picked up and waited for one of them to answer. Jack picked up and said, "Deke we need coffee and Pepsi and why don't we try donuts or pastry and plenty of cold cuts for sandwiches." Deke thought he didn't have to waste his cooking skills on these connoisseurs but asked, "Want do you want for dinner?" there was a "Hold on" at the other end, and after a few moments of discussion with Ho, Jack came back with "Chicken or steak." Deke said, "They don't work too well in the microwave, but TV dinners should work." He heard Jack say, "That will work for us. Thanks Deke." Just then Jim came out of the bathroom and said, "Can you pick up some Snickers bars and

Mountain Dew?” As he jumped in the Suburban, Deke thought, “Less that a week to go; Thank God!”

Doug pulled his classic racing green 1972 Volvo 1800 estate wagon into the parking garage at terminal A. It had been a long time since he used this terminal to take the daily Janet flights up to “Dreamland” better known as Area 51. Of course the place didn’t exist, but the flights still kept going. When he got to the security check-in he had to show his ID card and was directed to Gate 4. He was in seventh heaven when he saw what the Navy sent for him, an old DC3, silver with the black “United States Navy” above the windows. The two pilots were standing at the nose of the plane and headed over to him when he stepped out of the terminal door. “Professor Remington, I’m Captain Hanson and this is Lieutenant Powell, we are to take you to North Island Naval Air Station, San Diego.” Doug said “I’m looking forward to flying with you in this beautiful old “Dakota.” Would it be possible for me to sit up in the cockpit during the flight?” They smiled at each other and Captain Hanson said, “Sure; let’s get aboard.” By the time they were making their approach, Doug was strapped in the flight engineer’s seat. He had learned that the navy had kept this old World War Two plane because so many admirals had flown in it; Halsey, Niemetz, Rickover, Zimwalt to name a few. When they touched down, Doug thanked the pilots for the trip down memory lane and hoped he could go up with them again, they preferred to fly their E-2C Hawkeye. When he stepped out of the plane, there was a lieutenant with the gold adjutant braid on her shoulder waiting for him. She came up and introduced herself as Lt. Barbara Huff, Admiral Yates’s adjutant. She asked him to follow her over to the “Little Bird”, a small McDonnell-Douglas helicopter

fifty feet away. She said that it would take them over to Point Loma and it sure beat using the Coronado Bridge and the water taxi.

After they were strapped in and the chopper started up, Doug thanked the Lieutenant for sending the DC3 for him. She said that according to his bio, he liked old classical machines. The hard part was getting this “Little Bird” away from Seal Team 3. The flight over the channel was short and they landed in front of the Submarine Command Pacific Fleet Building, which Doug was all too familiar with, As Lt. Huff led him into Admiral Sidney Yates’ office anteroom, Chief Ronda Finestein rose from her desk to greet him. Doug went over to her and grabbed her hand in both of his and said “Ronda, how are you? It has been too long.” Ronda smiled and said she was fine. And “how is Mel and the boys?” referring to her husband and children. “Everybody is doing good, Mel is out to sea again and the boys will be home from college for the summer.” Doug said “If Sidney or the Navy ever cut you loose, come see me.” Ronda was blushing when she said that she was a “Lifer.” And that he better get in there or she would be looking for a new job.” Doug followed Lt. Huff into the Admiral’s office.

Admiral Sidney Yates looked like the Captain on “The Love Boat,” a small trim man with two patches of gray on the side of his bald dome, but there the resemblance ended. He was known as a no nonsense leader, who had the loyalty of the seaman up to the Joint Chiefs. He said it had to do with respect on his part for his people. As Lt. Huff and Doug entered the room he was leaning over his desk reading some papers. “Doug, good of you to come on such short notice.” As he came around his desk with his hand

extended, Doug extended his hand and said, "With the kind of service Lt. Huff provided I'll come more often." Lt. Huff said "Thank you Professor Remington."

The Admiral asked Doug to have a seat in front of his desk as Lt. Huff followed the Admiral back to his seat and positioned herself beside his desk. "Doug do you know why you were asked to come?" "I take it that it has to do with the incident last night aboard The Squid." The Admiral smiled and said, "That was the original reason, but that proved to be just an accident. One of the battery banks blew and it fried your boy's equipment. They were able to surface and evacuate almost everybody with only minor casualties, You know that old diesel boat; I've been fighting to keep it out of mothballs, and now this." Doug didn't like the part about "Almost everybody." Doug chose his words carefully. "Admiral, The Squid has a flawless and decorated track record and the experimental work it has done in the service of our country is incalculable. I hope that Captain Morrison can have it back in service as soon as possible." The Admiral looked over at Lt. Huff, who opened a file on the Admiral's desk and passed it to the Admiral. All Doug could think was, "Here it comes." The Admiral looked at Doug and said, "Yes that is what we were hoping for too. The boat has extensive damage and we will look at it tomorrow to see if we can repair it. You and Captain Morrison go way back to the Glomar Explorer Days, is that correct?" (The Glomar Explorer classified as Project Jennifer was to raise a Soviet nuclear submarine that sank 750 miles off of Hawaii in 1968.) Doug said, "We were both on that project and became good friends." The Admiral started to say something and stopped. He looked over at Lt. Huff and said "Lieutenant,

will you please read the press release regarding the accident to Professor Remington.” Lt. Huff started reading the report that was on the desk.

“At 2210 Pacific Standard Time, The U.S.S. Squid reported a fire aboard ship while underway to Hawaii. The crew was able to surface fifty miles off the Santa Barbara coast. The Mayday, sent before surfacing was received by the Oceanographic Research Vessel OR/V McGraw and Frigate U.S.S. Thatch, who responded to the coordinates given and were within a mile of it when it surfaced. Evacuation was started and all members of the crew were safely taken aboard the OR/V McGraw except Captain Morrison who elected to stay with his ship after it was secured and moored to the U.S.S. Thatch. OR/V McGraw was ordered back to port. The Submarine Tender U.S.S. Kellie Chouest got underway from Point Loma at 0300 PST and was at the scene at 0400 PST. Towing operations commenced at first light and Captain Morrison and the U.S.S. Squid arrived back at port at 0815 PST. The Crew of the U.S.S. Squid were at Pier 160 to welcome the Captain and boat back to homeport.”

The Admiral said, “Thank you Lt. Huff. Could you arrange transportation for Professor Remington while he is with us, that will be all.” Lt. Huff looked straight and center and said “Yes Sir.” She then left the office. Doug sat there and tried to figure out what just exploded! He had worked with the Navy for many years and they, of all the services were steeped in traditions and protocol. To say something here was fishy was an understatement; but not being a navy man he was afraid to guess. He didn’t have to guess for long.

The Admiral stood and walked over to one of the windows overlooking the channel leading into San Diego Bay. “Well Doug what do you think?” Doug said, “It sounds like a well executed rescue and recovery mission by very dedicated personnel. You should be very proud Admiral.” The Admiral turned and said, “That is what I thought until 0800. That is when I got a call from base security requesting reinforcements for the sub pens. They said that things were getting volatile there and added security may be needed. I asked if an Admiral would do? So I jumped in my car and went down there. There was an attack and a boomer sub in port along with a supply ship. The crew of The Squid were all lined up in dress uniforms on pier 160. I asked myself, “What the hell do these people think they are doing?” The crews of the other ships were harassing them in a good nature way. You know Doug the crew of the Squid are unusual sailors, many “Old Salts”, and the other submariners are mostly “Whiz Kids”. For the most part they were just razzing them about losing their boat. But I noticed that the Squid crew was very uptight about this razzing. And for some unknown reason things got very quite when I showed up. So I walked down to the pier and waited for the Squid to be towed in. They all just stood there, so that’s what I did. And who was in the conning tower and had been there all night when they towed the boat in?” Doug just said “Dudley.” “You got it. Now do you see the problem?” The Admiral said shaking his head. It clicked in Doug’s brain, it wasn’t the accident that was the problem, it was the Captain and crew!

Amy was walking along side the South Pacific tracks that ran from Gila Bend to Maricopa. She was looking for one of the old-line camps that the railroad workers used

when they were building the line in the 1890's. She had an impressive collection of old glassware from that period. There was a freight train sitting a half a mile up, probably waiting for an express to whiz by. 10:00 AM and already it was pushing ninety degrees. A green glitter caught her eye. As she reached down to check it out, the engine on the freight train gave her a blast from its horn. She thought "These men! Whenever a woman bends over their hormones kick in." Just then the express train came through and almost knocked her off her feet it was traveling so fast. She held on to her engineer hat as the train blazed by. At 5'2" and only ninety-five pounds she was lucky it didn't suck her up in the wake. She dusted herself off and waved to the train on the siding. "He was just trying to warn me about the express." She was surprised when the freight train started crawling towards her. When the engine cab was even with her the train stopped, she saw part of an arm hanging out of the cab and heard someone yell out "What are you looking for half-pint?" She yelled over the engine "Antique bottles and coins." "Well, good luck and watch out for those express trains." She yelled "Thanks." As the train picked up speed she was left counting the freight cars as they went by. He was right, she better start paying more attention to her surroundings. This stretch of track averaged 30 trains in 24 hours. She wondered if the FBI asked the engineers if they saw anything two years ago.

The white van with ladders fastened to the top pulled up in front of the silver colored trailer in the mobile home park. Benny checked the address and this was the right place. He got out of the van dressed in his white work coveralls stood looking at the trailer. He thought this thing had to be at least fifty years old. It sort of looked like one of those Airstream trailers but this thing was long, very long, sort like Jerry, long and thin.

Growing up in El Paso he knew what “Trailer Trash” was. As he pushed the bell outside the door all he could think was “Poor Jerry.” He heard the bell ring twice but there was no TV, no music, no nothing, Poor Jerry, Damn Jerry! Just then the door flew open and there was Jerry in his skivvies scratching his head. “Why the hell are you waking me up so early?” Benny fired back, “Early, It’s ten o clock in the morning!” Jerry looked up at the sky and said, “Everything is relevant. Well just don’t stand there, come in.” Benny smiled and said “Is this thing safe?” As Jerry opened the screen door Benny stepped up and into the trailer. The interior of the trailer was paneled in dark birch wood, except for the kitchen and bathroom, which were modernized sometime in its 48-year history. “Have a seat, I’m making coffee,” Benny heard from the back of the trailer. Benny sat in one of the modern Scandinavian chairs in front of the TV and said, “This wouldn’t take long. The boss wants us to case a place this Friday, You have Friday off right?” “Yea, Right!” was the reply, Jerry reappeared in the kitchen area at the back of the living/dining area in jeans and a T-shirt. “What’s the story on our friend?” Benny inquired. “He’s a model citizen, sticking to his routine. I think we have the wrong guy.” Benny said “If something don’t happen soon, I’m with you.” “How do you like your coffee and what is the job on Friday?” Jerry asked. “Cream and plenty of Sugar, and you are going to love this place. Here is the scam we’ll be using.” Benny smiled because he had it all figured out, all he needed was a front man.

Charley sat in his studio apartment in Scottsdale and stared off into space. The only thing that seemed to calm him was the gurgling of the water fountain coming

through the open patio door. All his training and schooling gone to waste. But the saddest part was that he really enjoyed his work. Annie, his girlfriend called and asked what they were going to do this weekend. He said that he had to go out of town and he would catch her next week. Then the phone rang and he picked it up without saying a word. “Charley are you there?” was the question from the Chief Ranger. “Yes, go ahead” was all that Charley could say. “Charley the board has come down with a verdict, and I’m sorry to tell you that we have to terminate you because the park has a zero tolerance policy towards any form of violence, no matter how justified. I hope you understand Charley. I tried my best just to get you suspended, but they wouldn’t listen. You may drop off your equipment any time, and we will mail you your check. Do you understand?” Charley said as calmly as possible “Yes, I understand. Thank you for trying. Goodbye.” And then he hung up. He laid down on his studio couch and went to sleep for the first time in twenty-four hours.

Sandra sat in her cabin with the sun shining on her table; she put on her glasses to open the letter from New York and began to read each and every word. The outside world was trying to force her to return. What do they mean they were verifying the validity of her claim? Learning mining from Andy, she knew that to verify a mining claim you brought the minerals to the assessor’s office and they didn’t care who you were. “It would be most helpful if you could come to New York,” the letter stated. What if I had no desire to go to New York? “Is there someone who could act as an intermediary, such as a lawyer or another trusted person?” the letter continued. I should send Andy with his shotgun and that would straighten them out in a hurry! It really

wasn't that important. She was happy with her life and the memory of her husband didn't really belong to anyone but her, and maybe it should stay that way.

Andy was concerned ever since returning from Yuma. Someone had stopped at the well at the bottom of the hill yesterday while he was gone. Sandra said no one came by, but she had gone over to the next valley to the old miner's cemetery to take picture of the ocotillos against the background of the headstones. He just felt that someone was watching them. He had gotten up in the middle of the night and went outside to listen and look for any sign of people, but there was none. Most of the people that get this far into the Refuse respected the "No Trespassing" signs around the mine. He could feel it in his bones that something was not right. Now Sandra had been ranting and raving in her cabin all morning. It was a good thing that he kept the loaded shotgun by his front door. He may need it.

Cindy came storming into the mall's office. Bridget with her fire red hair was explaining to Mr. Foo the square foot price for his gift shop as Cindy breezed by them into her office. "Ah was that Miss Lo, the mall owner?" was Mr. Foo's remark. "Yes indeed that was Miss Lo." Was all that Bridget could say before the intercom buzzed. Bridget excused herself and picked up the phone. "Yes Miss Lo." "Bridget could you get me some green tea from the restaurant? I'm going to need it this morning, and hold all my calls and appointments until after lunch." "Yes Miss Lo. I will have the restaurant send up the tea right now." As Bridget speed dialed the oriental restaurant on the first floor of the mall, Mr. Foo came over to her desk and asked, "Would it be possible to see

Miss Lo today?” “I’m sorry but Miss Lo is not available today, but she would be glad to meet with you at a future time, if that would be convenience with you?” “Yes I look forward to meeting her.” With the concerned look on Bridget’s bright face, Mr. Foo excused himself and left.

Bridget was at that point again when she wondered what an Irish girl was doing working for the unofficial mayor of Las Vegas’s Chinatown. As bosses went, Miss Lo was firm but fair, but she had a mysterious aura about her. She seemed to do things on impulse, like hire her. Just then one of the boys came in with a full porcelain tea service on a wicker tray. Bridget asked him to set it down on her desk and after he left she picked up the tray and headed for Miss Lo’s office. If there is anybody who knows how to serve tea, it is a Colleen from the Emerald Isle and recently departed waitress from Fitzgerald’s Casino. Now would be a good time to invite Miss Lo to see her cousin Jimmy dance in the “Lord of the Dance” Production at New York-New York. He wasn’t one of the main characters, but he always gave his heart when he danced. As she entered the office, Miss Lo was sitting behind her desk talking on the phone. She motioned her to the coffee table in front of the beautiful silk couch. Bridget poured a cup of tea and brought it over to Miss Lo’s desk and got a “Thank you Bridget” while Cindy laughed on the phone.

Dexter Ambrewter was a third generation navy man and when he retired five years ago as a Master Chief from the Navy he was lost. He spent his days drinking and fishing until one day he came home and announced that they were going to move to the desert. His twin daughters in their last year of high school were horrified, but it was

enough incentive to get them to apply for college. Susie his wife of twenty years thought he was going through his mid-life crisis and she gave his plan six months. Then the calls started coming in from a mystery man named 'Doug.' Dex stopped drinking, well he slowed down a bit. And he would mysteriously disappear from time to time returning with a new vigor, which Susie enjoyed. Tonight the girls were jabbered about how wonderful things were in California and their parents would see it when they came back in June for their college graduation. As a dutiful father he asked them about their job outlook after they graduated. Jessica wanted to take the summer off and think about going to graduate school in the fall. That is what an English Major does according to her. Jenny on the other hand was going down to San Diego to work at Sea World this summer and might apply to the Scripps Institute in the fall as an oceanographic intern, and that is what marine biologists do. As a proud father he thought it was great and wished them well. The problem started when he said he was going up to the legion hall to watch the ball game. Jessica said that they didn't want to watch TV and he could watch the ball game here. Dex didn't want to watch the game with a bunch of jabbering women, that's what legion halls are for. And when Jenny said, "Why don't we all go for a drive?" Dex started to get suspicious, and said in a commanding voice "OK, What's this all about?" Of course Miss English Major was first, "Dad, Mom has been worrying about all the time you have been spending at the legion hall every weeknight till 10:00 PM." Dex responded with "Susie, do I come home drunk?" "No Dex, but why do you have to spend so much time up there?" Susie said with a cheated look on her face. "Listen girls do I ever refuse you anything? How much was the bill for the shopping trip today? The truth of the matter is that I am making some extra money bartending, so that you can have

those extras.” Of course the response from the three women was “We don’t need anything extra.” “Girls you have been living on extras for a long time, do you really think that we have been getting by on a retired chief’s salary?” With that he said, “I’ll see you at 10:30 if you are still up.” He grabbed his jacket and went out the door. As he got into the truck he thought, from the frying pan into the fire

Dudley felt his wife shaking him, “Come on sleepy head, you need to eat.” “What time is it?” Was all he was able to mumble, “It’s 7:00 PM, the boys have been fed and are gone, but Doug should be here any minute.” “Doug who?” “Doug Remington called and asked if he could come over for dinner.” Dudley said, “OK, I’ll be dressed in a minute.” When the doorbell rang, Dudley was just getting a beer out of the fridge, he heard Carol say, “Long time no see stranger.” Well we better get this over with before dinner he said to himself as he walked out to the living room. “Dudley, I see you still have the prettiest wife on Coronado Island” Doug said smiling. “Doug good to see you again. Want a beer?” “Sure, that will be great.” Was Doug’s response. Dudley gave his wife the look all married couples gave when they wanted them to do something. Carol said, “Dinner will be ready in a half hour, why don’t you boys go out in the backyard.” After getting Doug a beer, Dudley joined him out in the yard; “Well what did the old man say to get you out here?” “He’s a little concerned about the actions of you and your crew. What is the problem Dudley?” Dudley laughed. “We just wanted to go out in a blaze of glory, that’s all.” Doug lost the smile on his face and said, “The Admiral said that the Squid may be repaired, but he may have to replace the crew with what you pulled today.” “They are not going to repair the Squid when they have the “Cutthroat” all remote controlled with no

crew to worry about.” Dudley was referring to the first autonomous submarine. Doug looked Dudley in the eye and said, “What gave you that idea? Hell, I’m more worried about them turning that into a launch platform than anything else, and no one is supposed to know about “The Cutthroat Project” anyway.” Dudley looked up at the stars saying, “The Air Force does it, the Navy can’t be far behind. Humans are too valuable to be placed in danger, only in the unemployment line.” Doug looked at him and thought, he may be right!

Charley didn’t have a wife to wake him, but he woke up at about the same time as Dudley and he was starved. “Well I might as well go out and celebrate my good fortune,” he thought. He showered and got dressed and jumped in the old “Eagle”, a 1982 AMC Eagle station wagon. He headed to Old Town Scottsdale to have a steak at the Pink Pony Restaurant, a place his father told him about when he had come out here for spring training in the “good old days.” Good old dad, everybody had a good word to say about his dad; unfortunately he wasn’t very good at being a father. Too bad they didn’t have training manuals like he had in the Army, “This is what you do when you have children.” He wasn’t a bad father; it was just that he crawled into a bottle when Charlie’s mother died when Charley was ten years old. If that is what love did to people Charley didn’t want any part of it. The steak was good and he decided to head down to The Willow House in Phoenix to drown his sorrows with strong coffee and cheesecake. Peggy was behind the counter and she was arguing with this guy about palm trees. Charley was heading for a seat in the living room with his coffee and cheesecake, when Peggy called over to him “Charley, will you tell this guy that palm trees are not native to Arizona.”

Charley set his coffee and cheesecake down on the coffee table and said, “The native parrots is a more interesting story, but to answer your question, not these palm trees and not around here.” Peggy gave Charley a dirty look and yelled, “What are you talking about?”

As Peggy came into the living room with the guy, Charley said, “There is a native palm tree in Arizona. Supposedly, it only grows ten feet high with a long plume skirt around its base, and it only grows in this one canyon in Arizona,” Peggy said “Where might that be and have you seen it?” “On the western edge of the state, there is a place called Palm Canyon. You have to travel eight miles from the main road to get to the canyon and then you climb up this narrow boulder strewn canyon for about 800 feet and there they are on the side of the canyon walls, and that is the only place they grow, and no I, haven’t seen” Charley stopped in mid-sentence, “them, but I plan to tomorrow.” Peggy looked at him like he was crazy. The guy asked, “What was that about native parrots?”

Day 3-Wednesday

As Cindy entered the mall's office, Bridget was pondering the monthly computer readouts on the Lo Family Mall Enterprise. Yesterday she wanted to talk to Bridget because she seemed to have something on her mind; but Dad called and wanted to know what to do with Grandfather, and that took all morning to figure out. She liked this girl with the pale complexion and bright round face. Another thing she liked was that she wore her heart on her sleeve, as the saying goes. The other two girls she hired were Chinese-Americans, they were spoiled rotten and about the only thing Chinese they retained was that you couldn't read them. "Bridget why don't you come in when you are free." Cindy said as she went into her office. "Yes Miss Lo" was all Bridget could get in before Cindy disappeared behind the door. "Hmm, I wonder what is going on now?" Bridget thought as she picked up her pen and paper. As she entered the office Cindy was standing at the window looking at the mall. "I'm sorry we didn't have a chance to talk yesterday. Is there something on your mind Bridget?" Bridget was startled but was able to say, "It's just that, I have been wondering what I am doing here." Cindy turned around to face her "You do a good job, what do you mean?" "I'm the only non-oriental in this mall, and I have never done office work before." Cindy laughed, "Bridget that makes you perfect for the job. You try your best and you're always friendly and pleasant, and for not being oriental that is a plus, especially when it comes to our clients." Bridget had that questionable look on her face, "Could you please explain that?" Cindy walked over to where Bridget was sitting and put her hand on her shoulder and said, "The oriental culture is very biased and not use to change. When you throw in an unknown variable, like yourself, it either accepts it or rejects it, and they have accepted you as an outsider. If

you were oriental and made a mistake they would be screaming bloody murder, but everybody I talked to says, “That Irish girl is smart and so sweet.” Bridget smiled and said “My cousin Jimmy is in the Lord of the Dance at New York-New York. Would you care to join me for the performance on Thursday night?” Cindy smiled and said “Girls night out, I would love to. Thank you Bridget.”

Jennifer was seating at her desk in back of the conference table at the office, going through the daily dispatches and reports, Doug wanted information on the “Cutthroat Project” up in Idaho, and the “SSGN Project” up in Bangor, Washington. He was going to be with the Admiral today checking out the damage to the Squid. The other members of Project 6 were still working on “Wanderer,” and “Desert One” but there was no future progress with those. The most importation thing on the agenda today was lunch with Martin at the Flamingo. Jennifer thought it was cute that when she had lunch with Martin, it was always breakfast for him. Bandleaders tended to burn the midnight oil, and Las Vegas being a 24-hour city had its advantage in that you could always get breakfast somewhere. Today it would be the Flamingo, Jennifer liked it for it’s aviary, and the penguins reminded her of Martin when he was in his tux leading the band.

Doctor Raja Diptal was standing at the overhead door leading into Building 606 on the west side of Point Loma, the crew had just left after unloading all the components or what was left of them, from the Squid. He was afraid to look, what didn’t get fried was probably ruined by the fire suppressant. The gray navy sedan was no surprise as it pulled up and Doug got out. “Good morning Raja” he had the nerve to say. Dr. Diptal was one

of the leading theorists in electric-magnetic communication. "I'm glad you're so chipper; the navy didn't try to blow you up or drown you." "Come on Raja it was an accident." Doug said with a smile. Raja started waving his arms "That is the last time I'm going down in that old crate, why they still use that thing is beyond me." Doug looked compassionately at Raja and gave him the verdict, "After the Admiral and I inspected the Squid this morning, we have come to the conclusion that it would not be worth it to repair her." Raja broke out in a big smile and said "Thank God!" Doug was not smiling and even looked a little sad. Raja asked the big question "What about my research?" Doug looked at him and said, "That is going to be a problem. The Navy has every kind of ship imaginable, except another research submarine."

Dex woke to the smell of bacon and eggs, he got out of bed and walked out to the bathroom and luckily remembered to knock on the closed door, "I'll be out in a minute," came the reply from Jenny. Remembering the good old days with three women around, Dex was resigned to the fact that he better get his robe on and find that mayo jar in the shed. As he entered the kitchen Jessica was sitting at the kitchen table talking to Susie who was cooking breakfast. "Good morning Daddy," which prompted "Good morning Sweetie." He went over to Susie and gave her a peek on the check and asked "Is that for me?" "You know darn well that no one else eats this stuff." He smiled and said "Good, I'll be right back; I left something in the shed." Jenny came out of the bathroom and asked, "Where did Dad go?" Susie and Jessica said in unison "Out to the shed." And they all laughed. When the laughter died down Jenny said, "Why don't we all go to a movie today and see something Dad would enjoy." Susie and Jessica both nodded with Susie

adding “That would be nice.” Dex returned and said “Out of my way, don’t you know never stand in the way of a man and his food!” He proceeded to chow down with the women cringing.

Amy was looking at eggs too, but these belonged to her father’s desert tortoise Mildred. She had crawled under the house after Mildred came out to feed in the yard. Amy checked to see if they had hatched. Not yet, there were six of them, and that was a good clutch. When she came out from under the house, her dad, JJ was sitting at the patio set drinking coffee and looking at the thing she had found along the tracks. He was holding up a calico encrusted square glass container about six inches tall with a stopper, “This looks like it might be an opium bottle from one of the Chinese workers.” Amy sat down as her father opened the stopper and smelled the top; “Not opium but may be laudanum.” “What was that used for?” Amy inquired. “That was the narcotic of choice back in the 1800’s many times it was given by doctors to control pain, and the patient then became addicted to it. Luckily for the patient it was readily available at any pharmacy.” “Why do you say luckily?” Amy asked. “The Wild West would have been a lot more wild if it wasn’t readily available. I don’t know what I would do if I didn’t have my two cups of coffee first thing in the morning.” Amy smirked and said; “You would survive.” JJ turned the container in his hand “I’m going into Phoenix tomorrow we’ll see what Jean at the Arizona Historical Society has to say about this.”

As Jerry entered the convenience store on the corner Carol gave him a sad look and said “Someone has already beat you to the pecan rolls” “Damn!” he smiled at Carol

behind the counter, "I'll settle for donuts," as he picked two chocolate donuts out of the case. "How can you stay so trim eating those?" Carol asked. "It's not what you eat, but how you eat them," "Pray tell," Carol asked. "I eat them off a plate with a fork." Carol laughed and said "One dollar please." Jerry handed over a dollar and said, "You are coming to the computer club meeting tomorrow, aren't you?" "If I can find a baby sitter for the girls." Jerry smiled and thought, 'I'm glad I'm a confirmed bachelor.' As he walked out the door he noticed the old yellow van pulling in. He continued to walk to the street and then bend over pretending to tie his shoes. The muscular man in his early fifties got out and started pumping gas into the van. Jerry waited until the man put the nozzle back, then Jerry rose and headed down the street. Another full tank he figured, second time this week. Jerry laughed and thought it is a good thing that we are all creatures of habit.

Benny was sitting at his workbench in the garage monitoring the phone tapes. He was working on an analog phone block for the job on Friday; this would get them in the door. Janice, was going to get the weekend off from the hospital and he had better start planning a wonderful weekend for the three of them; maybe a trip to the coast to see her family. He had met Janice while he was in the Army at Fort Huachuca. While checking out a communication tower, one of his men came in contact with a live line and was knocked unconscious and he went up to get him, something lieutenants are not suppose to do, he fell and broke his back. They rushed him to Fort Bliss Medical Center where Janice was a first class nurse to him. With a lot of physical therapy the back healed; Janice was all the incentive Benny needed. They married a year later and nine months

later Rudy was born. After he was discharged no one wanted to hire a medically discharged vet. Until the mysterious man showed up on his doorstep and offered him a job that utilized his talents. As they say the rest is history.

Day 4-Thursday

Sandra sat in her cabin and decided that it just was not worth the trouble to go on with this. She was enjoying her life and this thing would change all of that. Andy knocked on the door and said, "Sandra I was right. Their truck is parked down by the well and they are walking up the road. You have your pistol right?" "Yes, right here. Do you want me to go down and meet them?" Sandra inquired. "No you stay here. They're carrying rifles. I'll sneak down and surprise them and see what they want. If there is any gun play head up to the mine and use the air vent if you don't hear from me, got it?" Andy said all excited. "OK." Was all that Sandra could say. It was all something harmless and Andy is getting excited over nothing, she thought. She watched as he snuck down along the mountain to the left of the road. She could see the two men walking up the road, in their plain shirts and jeans, they had rifles slung over their shoulders. Andy had gotten to the drainage ditch and was cutting through it to the road. When he got to the road he stopped and laid against the far wall of the ditch; they hadn't seen him. After they passed by the ditch Andy climbed up on the road and pointed his shotgun at them. Sandra couldn't hear what was been said but the men stopped and dropped their rifles to the ground and put their hands in the air. Then there was a shot, one loud shot. At first she thought that Andy had shot one of them, but Andy had dropped his shotgun and was trying to pick it up when the two men jumped on him. They were young men in their 20's and it wasn't much of a contest. Sandra didn't wait to see the outcome; she bolted out the cabin door and ran up to the mill site and into the mine entrance, where she waited. She peeked around the corner and watched as the men pulled Andy up to the cabin; thank God he was still alive. They sat him down on her porch and she saw that they had tied

him up with his hands behind his back. While one stayed with Andy the other kicked down her door and went inside. He came out and yelled in a loud voice “OK Mrs. Conners, we know you are here. Come out and we can talk.” Sandra was terrified, but she did what Andy told her; she ran into the mine, down corridors and tunnels until she reached the air vent, which had an old rusted metal ladder that went all the way up to the mountain ridge. She didn’t know what she would do when she got there but she just started climbing.

Doug had caught a commercial flight from Lindberg Field in San Diego and after disembarking he had a long walk over to terminal A’s parking garage. It was good to be home no matter where home was. The Volvo cranked right up and he headed over to the office. Jennifer was at the console in the conference room when he came in. “Hi Doug, How was San Diego?” Jennifer said not looking up. “Not a lot of happy faces now that we are going to deep six the Squid.” Doug said as he took his bag back to his room. Jennifer picked up the reports on her console and swiveled in her seat to wait his return. “What’s new here?” Doug asked when he came back. She handed him the reports and he sat down at the conference table. After a half-hour skimming the reports he asked, “What do you think Jennifer?” “Well the boys up in Idaho would have heart attacks if they had to put their toys in the real ocean. The Tridents look very promising, and I know just the admiral to make it possible.” Doug leaned back in his chair and said “OK, I’ll leave it in your capable hands. What else do we need to look at?” “You didn’t forget the meeting at the Desert Research Station?” Doug smiled and said “No, but you better brief me.”

Jim was sitting in the passenger seat of the Suburban as it headed back to the trailer from Quartzsite. “Deke you mean that all those people are just there temporarily!” Deke smiled and said, “By the end of May they’ll all be gone.” Jim asked, “Where do they go?” Deke laughed “Most go back to their permanent homes in the cold climate regions of the country, others are gypsies, who travel around the country full time; those are mostly the retired folks.” Jim looked out at the desert flowing by and said, “That must be a strange life-style.” Deke looked over at him and said, “That indeed is what it is, from someone who has experienced it.” Quartzsite, Arizona goes from over 500,000 people in winter to 3,000 people in summer.

An hour before, Charley had turned off I-95 onto the dirt road leading to Palm Canyon. As he traveled the road he was amazed at the rugged mountain range that towered into the sky. The road ended at a ridge looking down at a canyon mouth. He stepped out into the cool morning air and was glad that he had headed out early; he was the only one there. He stretched as it was a long drive from Phoenix. He reached into the back of the station wagon and pulled out his pack and climbing boots. He put on his boots and went over his mental checklist; water, lunch, small first aid kit, gloves, hat, camera and climbing rope. He was set. The short trail led to the boulder field and there is where he started climbing. When he got 100 feet up he turned and looked out on the desert plain shinning in all its glory. He took a couple of pictures and continued to climb. At about 200 feet he needed to stop to catch his breath and have a snack bar with some water. The view was unbelievable. As he sat in the narrow canyon, it was dark compared to the bright shinning plain far below and the contrast was haunting. When he turned to climb

again is when he first noticed them. On the canyon walls were palm trees that looked like they were wedged into the rock. They didn't have skirts around them; they were tall but their bases were very thin, and there seemed to be ferns also nestled in the rock. As he climbed higher he realized that these ferns were the immature palms with the long skirting around them. As he dropped his pack and took a gulp from his water bottle he wondered how this oasis was created here.

JJ had taken off for Phoenix by the time Amy had gotten up. She wanted to ask him if maybe it would be a good idea to take the clutch out from under the house and incubate them until they hatched with an UV light. She wondered if maybe there was something going on with Dad and that lady at the Historical Society, of course he was the most handsome widower in Gila Bend, and a very interesting character on top of that, but she admitted that she was biased toward him. Well until he returned she was just going to occupy her time with her new toys, if she could remember where she hid them from her father.

Benny breathed a sigh of relief when the package came by air express. He brought it back to the garage and opened it to expose the two magnetic "Pacific Bell" signs for the side of the van. He had received the two employee ID's the day before. The blueprints were ready to go and the van was loaded with his equipment. His big worry now was Jerry. Not that Jerry didn't get the job done, but he tended to improvise. Sure, when he proposed the alternate route to the job, it would cut their drive time by an hour. Then he said that gave him an extra hour of sleep and he had to convince him that they were

already running on a tight schedule. It was a good thing that he would pick him up tomorrow just in case he came up with any more bright ideas. Now to concentrate on tonight's mission.

Bridget was just going over The Golden Dragon Restaurant accounts; Miss Lo had left at noon and said that she would be back at 3:00 PM. It was a quarter to three now. She had picked up the tickets for the show from Jimmy; she just hoped that there were no problems tonight. Just then Cindy came through the office door, right on time. Cindy said, "Just give me a few minutes, Bridget." "Yes Miss Lo." Bridget said continuing with her work. A few minutes later Cindy came out of the office and asked Bridget if there was anything important they needed to go over. Bridget said: "There was nothing important." Cindy smiled and said, "Then go home and change and I'll meet you at the steak house in New York-New York at 7:00 PM." Bridget said "Thank You Miss Lo." Bridget got up from her desk and was about to leave, when Cindy turned around before heading back into her office and said, "There is one other thing. Tonight I'm just Cindy." "Of course, Miss, I mean Cindy." And Bridget left smiling.

Bridget had decided to wear her bright green dress with a white sweater, even though it was spring in the Vegas Valley, the temperature got chilly at night. She was able to meet Cindy at 7:00 PM mainly because that is the time Jimmy came in to warm up for the nightly show at 9:00 PM. She had agreed to meet Jimmy after the show at the New Yorker Bar for a nightcap before he drove her home to her little apartment. Cindy was

wearing a beautiful red silk dress with a black velvet short coat. When Bridget was given the menu her chin dropped when she saw the prices. She was glad when Cindy said, "It's my treat, order what ever you like." In a steak house, Bridget thought you ordered a steak, and the porterhouse sounded wonderful the way the waiter described it. Cindy had the same and said that they needed two beefsteak tomato salads to go with it. Cindy ordered a scotch and water and Bridget ordered a Guinness Beer to remind her of the old country. There was a pregnant pause after they ordered. Bridget didn't know what to talk with Cindy about, but Cindy said that she wanted to know about her cousin Jimmy. She and Jimmy had grown up in the East Coast town of Cork where most of the O'Brien clan lived. They had both gone to the Shaw School of Irish Dance, but from the start Jimmy had the gift. They were all taught that one must follow the gift that God gave them.

Dex was polishing the highball glasses and watching the Cubs-Astros game in the Legion Hall in Boulder City. There were a few old timers quietly sitting at the bar watching the game with him. Tonight was a slow night at the Post. The younger members were either playing softball, bowling next store, or enjoying one of the many specials the casinos had for locals on Thursday night. Boulder City was a throwback to the fifties; with a population of fifteen thousand, the average age for the town's people was forty-five years old. It is the only town in Nevada where gambling is illegal, and up until the sixties, alcohol was banned. The town retains its roots of the hard working people who built Hoover Dam and lived on the federal reservation, which the city was until the early sixties. Two commodities the town didn't have in short supply is kids and dogs. The joke there is that the dogcatcher has more action than the police. The Town is divided into

four communities; the Old Timers, who live in the hill area surrounding the old downtown district. The Descendents; who live in the southern sloping area of fifties and sixties tract homes, The Newcomers, who live in the northern sloping Hemenway Valley in new condominiums, and then there are the Eccentrics, who live in all the different areas including the mobile home parks. The Town's economy is based on tourism for Lake Mead and Hoover Dam. The Town's motto is "Stop awhile in clean, green, friendly Boulder City." Most of the town's people would stress the "stop awhile" and for you to move on after you left your money. The town owns a land area that is larger than the City of Chicago but has a growth ordinance that limits the population. With the excess over in the Vegas Valley and the Hoover Dam Bypass construction, the town has a siege mentality worrying over the loss of their values. If you were to call them "Provincial," they would say "and Damn Proud of it."

As Jerry rode the elevator up to the first floor of the Community College, he checked his watch, 4:45 PM; he had fifteen minutes to get ready. Old Bob was sitting in his usual spot, one of the reading tables in front of the college reception area. Jerry gave his normal greeting of "Good Morning" to Bob and Joann, the office manager sitting at the open window of the office. They smiled and said nothing because in fifteen minutes they would be saying "Good Night" to him. He ran up to the security office and put on his white guard shirt and black clip-on tie. Five minutes later he was back downstairs getting briefed by Bob on information for the classes tonight. Bob said that everything was fine for tonight and picked up his bag and headed down to the garage. Dr. Almont, the college administrator, came out of her office in back of the reception office and came up

to him. "Jerry, remember to ask Bruce to have his class fill out the evaluations." "Will do Dr. Almont." Jerry replied. She then wished him a good night and left. Next came Joann with her pile of books; she was in her final semester at UNLV. Jerry said "let me get the elevator for you." She would never let him carry her books, but holding the elevator doors open for her was all right. He had an hour to get ready for the night classes at the college, making sure all the lights were on and the classrooms were setup. Tonight was the computer club meeting on scanners. He had to get the screen in place and setup the projector in the auditorium, then it was usually a breeze until closing. He then turned on the alarm, locked up and went home. With no classes on Friday, it also was the start of his three-day weekend. This was Boulder City you had to remember.

Benny had a nice dinner with Janice and Rudy at home and asked what they wanted to do this weekend. It was no surprise that Rudy wanted to see the sharks at Mandalay Bay again, but Benny was surprised when Janice said that all she wanted to do was rest and that the boys could do what ever they liked. As he rode up to Boulder City, he was asking himself if he was chipping in enough with the family chores. He hated housework but he thought that he could spend more time taking care of Rudy. He pulled in back of the Boulder Theater and went into the back door of the apartment building next door. He opened the small maintenance room at the back of the building, and went to the fake fire alarm panel he had added. He pulled out his large ring of keys and opened the box, then he opened the bag he had carried in and pulled out a small headset that he plugged into the digital recorder inside the box and listened. After a few minutes he took the headset off and picked up his cell phone and dialed the number he was given. After

the fifth ring Jerry answered. "Is he there?" Benny asked. Jerry said "He just walked in the door, I'll call you when he leaves." Benny hung up and picked up his bag.

Jerry hung up and closed the maintenance room door and went to the auditorium, Andrew Stowe was at the computer projector and was hooking up his computer and scanner for the presentation. Jerry scanned the crowd; it was a good turn out, about thirty-five people. Most of the people were from the computer classes that were offered at the college. There were a few new faces, a couple of high school girls which Jerry made a mental note to see that they left undisturbed from the two new guys in their twenties wearing Dockers. Then Jerry spotted real trouble, Nancy had decided to come, and Carol had found a baby sitter, and to make matters worst there was Betty! He tried to remember that training he had in compartmental separation. Then realized the smart thing would be to run and hide. When there was a tap on his shoulder he was afraid to turn around for fear of seeing another girlfriend, but it was Bruce asking about the evaluations.

Cindy and Bridget found a table in the corner of the New Yorker Lounge. Bridget was all flustered, Jimmy was like the only dancer in the production, she couldn't keep her eyes off of him as he glided over the stage. They were seated twenty rows back in the center; it was like being awashed in a sea of her being. The only thing that brought her back to her senses now was Cindy smiling at her not saying a word. Bridget blustered out "Well Cindy, did you enjoy the performance?" Cindy broke out laughing, "Yes my dear, it was simply amazing." "Did you notice Jimmy's dancing?" Cindy took on a very thoughtful look and said "Bridget I'm afraid to say I was enchanted with his dancing,

among other things, I hope you don't mind?" Bridget tried to steady herself as jealousy entered her mind. Cindy picked up her purse and started to get up saying, "Maybe it would be a good idea if I left." "I hope I haven't kept you ladies waiting?" Jimmy said walking up to the table. Cindy looked at Jimmy deeply but with a totally blank expression on her face, then looked down at Bridget "Thank you both for such a wonderful time, but I have a early morning appointment tomorrow." She shook Jimmy's hand without him knowing it and walked off. Jimmy turned and watched her leave with a look Bridget had never seen on his face. All she could feel was ashamed.

Part 2-“What the hell is going on here?”

Day 5-Friday

After spending a restful night in his tent at the entrance to Palm Canyon, Charley started making coffee on his butane stove. He got the pancake mix and syrup ready and then all he had to do was wait for the coffee to boil. He went into the back seat of the wagon and pulled out his laptop computer. Now would be a good time to put his impressions of Palm Canyon in his journal. This is the best medicine for recharging the batteries that he knew of. Within the hour he was back on the road. When he got to the interstate he didn't have a plan on where to go next. He remembered seeing a sign on the way down about a place called Crystal Hill and decided to check it out, so he made a right and headed back towards Quartzsite. About six miles outside Quartzsite the sign for Crystal Hill came into view. He pulled over and checked the map; great, the road led from Crystal Hill to a place called Vicksburg Junction where he could catch I-10 back to Phoenix. After spending an hour looking around Crystal Hill and picking up a few quartz crystals he got back on the dirt road and headed towards Vicksburg Junction but after a few miles he came to another junction with a turnoff for Sheep Tank Wells. He checked the map and yes there was a road that went into the Kofa and then swung around back to Vicksburg Junction. Hell! It was only 10:00 AM and he had all the time in the world.

Sandra did not wake up refreshed, every bone in her body ached. Yesterday she made it up the ridge and ran down the hill into Yaquis Wash. As she looked back over the hill she could see black smoke rising. She knew she could not go back that way. The only

way out was up the wash and over the Kofa Mountains through the pass and then head towards the New Water Road where there was bound to be traffic. She had made it over the pass by nightfall but as she slowly came down the mountain she could see someone on top of the ridge following her. By the time she reached Hoodoo Wash she was too tired to go on, so she rested against an old cottonwood tree along side the bank and fell into a fit filled sleep. She rose slowly into the bright sunshine; the birds were chirping a sweet melody. She was thirsty, hungry, and filthy. She made her way to the back road, this was the road that went through the back of the Kofa and was only used by hunters during hunting season. The only hunter she expected to see was the one stalking her. She knew where she was now. It was only a half a mile to the reserve tank and pen where she could at least get water. She thought that she would not take the road but go through the scrublands, as she had no doubts that they were still following her. She sat down besides the clearing and waited. An hour passed and there was no activity anywhere. She stared at the water tank that the refuse people had set up for the bighorn sheep. She could see drops of water falling into the trough. She couldn't wait any longer so she slowly went around the clearing to the trough and that is when she heard it, a vehicle coming down the road. She remained motionless as the station wagon pulled up to the clearing, the engine was turned off and a young man in his late twenties got out, was this one of the guys that had been at the mine? He walked over to the corral where the rangers would pack it in by horse. He wasn't looking for something; he was just looking at things. She decided to make a run for it anyway before he discovered her just standing there.

As Charley pulled up to the clearing he was amazed, twenty miles from nowhere and here was a corral and water tank. He got out of the car and decided to check it out, the corral was modern metal fencing, not the broken down wood logs you see throughout the west and the water tank, "What was that!" Out of the corner of his eye he saw something flash near the water tank, not making a sound. He slowly scanned the area, nothing. Two days out in the bush and he was seeing things. Now he got it, it was probably one of the bighorn sheep, which is what this place is for. He got back into the wagon and slowly continued on. He came to a wide sandy wash and decided to put the Eagle into four-wheel drive. As he slowly crossed the wash, he looked down it and noticed a woman standing by a cottonwood tree twenty feet away, "Isn't that nice!" When he slammed on the brakes, the car made a squishing sound in the soft sand. He looked again and yes, there was a woman wearing a bonnet and green jeans, and a white, "What did the nuns wear?" Cape? Almost high noon and he was losing it twenty miles out in the middle of nowhere! He slowly got out of the car and walked around to the back and checked again. she was still there. "Can I help you?" he asked half anticipating that she would disappear in a cloud of smoke. Very quietly Sandra asked, "Do you have some water?" Charley laughed "Water, pop, orange juice, and beer, what would you like?" Sandra said, "Orange juice would be nice." As she slowly walked towards the car she placed her hands in back of her, so that the revolver in the small of her back rested between both of her hands. Charley opened the door to the back seat and reached into the ice chest and pulled out an ice-cold container of orange juice and turned around, Sandra was standing right there as he handed it to her. He noticed that her face and hands were covered in dirt and dust along with the rest of her, so he reached into the back of his

jeans, causing Sandra to back away. He pulled out his handkerchief and put it into the cool water of the ice chest, wrung it out and handed it to her. She smiled at him and said, "I must look a fright." Charley smiled back at her and said "I've seen worst, why don't you go sit in the passenger seat there's a mirror in the overhead visor." She thanked him and went around the car. "It's lunch time would you like a sandwich? I can make peanut butter and jelly or bologna and cheese, what would you like?" "Peanut butter and jelly would be good, by the way my name is Sandra." "I'm Charley." As he started making the sandwiches in the back, he wondered what Sandra was doing out here, just as she was wondering the same about him. As he handed her the sandwich he asked first, and was surprised when she said that she lived here and even more surprising when she said that she lived at a mine on the other side of the mountain. She then said it was his turn, and he just said that he was seeing the sights on his days off.

As he sat in the driver's seat eating his sandwich, Charley had a feeling that he knew her, not personally, but like he knew about her, somewhere in the back of his mind. He came back to reality when she asked if he could call someone when he got to the nearest phone. He said that he would be glad to, but where was she going? "There is a cabin up at the turn off that you take back, and I needed to wait there." She said that they better get going because she wanted her friends to arrive before nightfall, and then asked for a pen and paper to write the details that she wanted him to pass on. He drove up the road deeper into the Kofa. At the junction Sandra gave him the note and said, "You're a life saver Charley, thank you." She then got out of the car and started walking down the other road.

Charley opened the note and read "Please call the Fish and Wildlife Service at Yuma, 520-236-4535 and tell them, there is trouble at the Bright Star Mine. Andy may be hurt, will wait for help at the Cooper's cabin. Sandra Conners."

The man knelt down at the water trough and took out his handkerchief. After dipping it in the water he put it to his face. Again he said to himself, "I'm getting too old for this stuff." He saw the fresh tracks in the dirt, and then he heard the car start up down the road. "Damn! Where the hell are those guys?" Just then the radio came to life "Waters are you there?" "Good of you to call, where are you?" He asked. "We are at Crystal Hills, where are you?" Lance said. "I'm at a holding pen along a dirt road near a wide sandy wash." "OK Waters, you are at Hoodoo Wash, we're about a hour away from you, are you still tracking her?" "I just missed her, she got into a car heading south." Lance yelled, "That's not good because that road curves around and comes out this way again. We could catch them on it coming back, is that what you want us to do?" Waters thought for a few moments, the car had to be a chance encounter, why didn't they turn around here and head back? Unless she was trying to throw me off, and then double back on me. "No, come for me on the nearest road, you got me?" "OK, we'll be there in an hour." Waters started walking down the road to the south.

Carol sat at the reception desk in the main foyer of the Desert Research Station. She pretended to act busy as she played Mahjong solitaire on her computer. She had put on one of her pretty print dresses because Brad had a tour to give to a Professor Remington this morning. Brad, the facility manager and her husband, didn't usually give

tours that was her job, but the request for the tour had come from the board of regents of the California State College who administered the research station. Brad also thought that something was not right about this request, but didn't know why. The outside door opened and a man in his early thirties came in wearing jeans, work boots, blue cotton work shirt and a white hardhat. He walked up to her desk and said, "Hi I'm John and I'm with Pacific Bell. Here is my ID." Carol took the ID and it said John Reed, Lineman Pacific Bell, Western region. Carol asked, "How can I help you John?" John smiled and said, "As you already know by the construction work on I-15 that we are putting new fiber optic lines in, unfortunately it's messing up all the other lines. We are checking to see if your lines are OK." Carol lifted her phone and it was dead. "John it appears that our lines are dead. It's a good thing you are here." John said "Sorry about that." Then picked up his radio and said, "Pete the lines are dead up here also." John smiled at Carol and asked "Carol, would you have someone with keys to open the electrical cabinet for us?" "The facility manager has an appointment shortly, but Tom our maintenance man will be able to show you around. Let me get him on the radio." John smiled again saying "Thank you Carol."

Doug pulled into the driveway of the Desert Research Station and parked next to the white Pacific Bell van. He got out, straightens his tie and reached into the back seat and pulled out his navy wool blazer. He could see a man leading two men in white hardhats over to the warehouse building. He looked at his watch and said to himself, "Right on time."

Entering the foyer of the station, his photographic memory was going over the facility's history; a Doctor White started it as a health spa for the wealthy in the twenties. He got carried away by its success and in the thirties started a patent medicine business and Evangelical radio ministerial. It went foul of the licensing board and by the forties was bankrupt and boarded up. Entered General George Patton, who used it for a desert warfare center during the Second World War. It was boarded up again after the war until the sixties when it was transferred to the Bureau of Land Management for back taxes, then in the eighties it was leased by the California State Colleges as a Desert Research Station providing environmental studies seminars on weekends. Doug walked up to Carol at the reception desk and introduced himself, which was greeted by a warm smile and "Professor Remington, welcome to the Desert Research Station. I'm Carol and I'll get Brad who is expecting you." Doug smiled back and said, "Thank you Carol." Carol got up and went through a door in back of the reception area. A few minutes later she returned following a rugged outdoors type man in his early forties who extended his hand and said, "Hello, I'm Brad Johnson, the facility manager here." "Glad to meet you Brad and your charming wife Carol" Doug said smiling. "Well let me show you around, and then we can have some lunch and talk." Doug said, "I'd like that. Thank you Brad."

Cindy woke up at her usual time of 7:00AM. When she got back to her home in the Seven Hills Estates in Green Valley the night before, she left a message on the office answering machine saying that she wouldn't be in today and that she was going out to the coast to see her family over the weekend. She floated down the stairs thinking of Jimmy. He was so cute and the way he danced was so sexy...Uh La La! As she started the coffee,

popped a bagel in the toaster, and found the cream cheese in the refrigerator she thought, why does sex always make me hungry? To control her emotions she turned her thoughts to, what was she going to do about Bridget? Jealousy rears its ugly head again, but this time she thought Jimmy may be worth fighting for.

At the village at Lake Mead, Dex was loading up the truck to take the twins to the airport. Jessica came out the door and asked “Everything all loaded Daddy?” He smirked and replied, “You two girls have enough junk for an around the world cruise!” He was at least glad that Susie wasn’t coming too. Jenny came out with Susie and then climbed into the truck. As he pulled out the driveway Susie was standing on the porch smiling and waving and the girls were yelling, “Love you Mom. We’ll call when we get to the apartment.” Dex thought a week was all he could stand of these women’s chatter.

Jennifer was sitting at the console in the conference room. As she punched the number she took off her glasses and waited. A lady answered and said “Office of Chief of Naval Operations, how may I help you?” In a precise voice Jennifer said, “Mrs. Harry Applegate to speak with Admiral Windlow.” “One moment please.” Was the reply, then “Jennifer good to hear from you, what can I do for you?” Jennifer held her breath and thought here goes nothing! “Adam, how do I go about getting one of your Trident Submarines?”

Amy had breakfast over at the Space Age Inn with her father, who told her to leave Mildred and her babies alone; they were all fine under the house. He then took off

for a camping trip with his cronies up to the Bradshaw Mountains. Amy was hunched over her father's workbench in the shed admiring her new toys. Her new toys had worked perfectly. She had a Lothar Walther barrel and a Tasco Super Sniper ten power military specs scope installed on her Ruger's Mini-14 Ranch Model rifle. The new walnut stock was pure vanity, but wait till the gals see this honey! When she went out to the range yesterday she had grouping she didn't think possible at one hundred yards. Last night Annie called and wanted to set up a weekend so that they could have their "Wild Women's Rendezvous." She and a few of her high school girlfriends (no men allowed) would get together out in the desert, get drunk as skunks, howl at the moon, tell lies, swear and shoot their guns, the only thing not allowed from the women was crying. She was surprised when she realized that this had been going on for ten years. She hoped it would go on forever.

Deke was coming back on the Eagle Eye Road from the old Harquahala Peak Observatory that the Smithsonian had built in the twenty's to record and measure solar activity. The observatory had only lasted five years. He thought that this area probably gets too much solar activity. He could just imagine how hot it gets in the summer here, and with no air conditioning back then, it must have been tough being a solar observer. Well it was Friday, and the last experiment was taking place right about now. Then it's pull the plug and head home, he would have no trouble leaving this, what did Jim call this area? "A Dead Zone," at least that's one of the reasons why they picked it.

Jack Hughes and Ho Magi were sitting at the control console in the trailer just finishing their checklist. "Streamer Control to AFE-17 come in." "AFE-17 go ahead." "SPYGLASS 05 will be coming into range in 02 minutes copy?" "Copy Streamer Control, dish is deployed and ready to accept transmission." Jack turned to Ho in the seat next to him and inquired, "Is the laser powered up and is our dish tracking SPYGLASS?" Ho turned to Jack and smiled "Of course Jack, everything is fine." Jack turned back to the microphone on the console and pressed the button "Los Alamos do you copy?" "Los Alamos reading you loud and clear." Jack pressed the button again "Sandia how do you read?" "Sandia reading you five by five." On the speaker they heard "AFE-17 to Streamer Control receiving transmission, transferring data to Streamer Control." Jack turned to Ho and said, "Yes!" Ho just smiled. Jack flipped two switches on the console and said, "Los Alamos and Sandia downloading and transferring data now." "Los Alamos to Streamer Control not receiving data." "Sandia to Streamer Control connection not active also." "Shit!" Jack turned to Ho "Get Jim up and have him check the connections." Ho jumped up and unlocked the door and ran down the hall. As soon as the intercom rang Jack pushed the button to open the door. Ho and Jim came in and Jim went to the bank of monitors in front of the console, he then looked at the meters, "It is transferring only at 33.000 KBPS." Jim said proud of himself, "It must be the outside connection, I'll go check it." Jim unlocked the door and Jack and Ho looked back at the monitors.

Jim was about to step out of the trailer door and then realized that he had nothing on his feet. He walked back to the bunkroom and slipped into his boots, He remembered what Deke had told him, always wear high tops for the snakes. When he stepped out he

was blinded for a minute from the glare of the afternoon sun. He started looking under the trailer for the output cable. It took him a minute to find it and the connection looked like it was firmly connected to the cable. Jim turned to check the connection from the cable to the old phone box on the side of the old gas station and shook his head to make sure he wasn't dreaming or seeing a mirage. Sitting in front of the phone box was a man with his back to him hunched over with red and green wires running from his lap to the old phone box. Without thinking Jim blurted, "What the hell do you think you are doing?" The head of the man turned to expose a tan but unshaven young face "I need to get some information, I hope you don't mind?" Jim noticed the station wagon for the first time, he then ran to the trailer door and realized that he didn't have his keys so he started banging on the door. The man got up and Jim watched as he closed a black laptop computer and then he reached over to the building and started winding up the red and green wires, which were connected to alligator clips. He looked over towards Jim and said in a snickering voice, "OK, you can get back to your porn sites." Jim stopped pounding on the door and watched the man slowly walk over to the station wagon, get in and drive off down the dirt road heading into the Kofa wilderness. Jim ran over to the cab of the truck and tried to open it but it was also locked. A moment later the trailer door opened and Ho stuck his head out smiling and said, "Good work, you fixed it, we have a connection now." Jim looked up to the sky and in a screaming voice yelled "Give me a break!" With a worried look on his face Ho said, "Jim you better come in out of the sun."

Deke had pulled up to the stop sign at the ramp to the interstate from the dirt road. Like a good driver he looked both ways and laughed. The mobile radio came to life on

the seat “Mobile 1 to Mobile 2 come in.” Deke shook his head he was Mobile 1 not Mobile 2 but responded anyway, “Go ahead Mobile 1.” The shaky voice of Jack came over “We need you here now, we have been compromised.” Deke said “ETA 2 minutes.” He then reached down to his boot and pulled out the .38-caliber snub-nosed revolver, it looked very small in his huge hand. As he pulled up to the trailer nothing looked out of place. He parked the truck on the north side of the old gas station close to the wall. When he got out with the gun in hand he was protected on three sides and he had looked down the West Side of the trailer as he pulled in and it was clear. He inched his way to the corner of the building and looked around the corner. The trailer looked secured. He then pulled the radio out of his back pocket. “Mobile 2 to Mobile 1 at location, have one of your people open the trailer exterior door.” “Copy Mobile 2.” Was Jack’s reply. A moment later Ho opened the door and looked out; when he spotted Deke at the corner of the building he smiled and waved. Deke ran to the door knocking Ho inside and slammed the door shut in the process. “Any intruders inside?” he whispered to Ho. Ho came back to his senses after being knocked against the hallway wall, “No, he already left.” Deke put his weapon in his waistband, “OK, let’s go inside the control room.” Ho wasn’t going to tell this giant in front of him that he didn’t have clearance, so he pushed the button.

As Deke followed Ho into the control room he saw Jack and Jim sitting at the control console, neither one of them looked too happy. Deke listened to Jim’s story and then Jack said “Shouldn’t we call the police?” Deke looked at him in amazement, and then said, “You mean the Las Pas County Sheriff? No, I’ll handle this. We’ll take a chance on the landline again. Which phone do I use?” Jack said “that one on the console,

but it's still being used for the project right now." Deke got a look on his face that would have scared the devil and said in a forced controlled voice, "The project is over, shut everything down, and then all of you get out of the room!" Jack was about to protest and thought better of it saying, "OK boys, you heard the man." It took them about five minutes to shut everything down and leave Deke in the control room by himself. Deke pulled out his wallet and with his pocketknife ripped the lining inside the money compartment, where he extracted a card. He sat staring at the number on the card, then picked up the phone and dialed an eleven-digit number. A voice came on the line saying only "State your message at the tone. "Deke Weaver ID number DW34216, project number AFSP2378, code A1CP, location VBAZSW." The voice said "Thank you, we will be in contact with you shortly, keep this line free." Then the line went dead.

Jennifer was watering the plants in the office and was mulling over whether she should drive over to Huntington Beach for the weekend to see Martin do a gig there. She didn't have to decide because the green wall phone at the console rang with the little red light on its receiver flashing. She set the water sprayer down and picked up the phone. She listened for a few minutes then reached down on the console's black desk phone and pressed three numbers on that phone. After a few "Yes sir, and "I understand," she ended the conversation with, "We'll get back to you with that information as soon as possible." She looked at the black phone and it didn't look good. Only three of the seven lines were flashing, she thought that least she could get the ball rolling, and pressed the first flashing button.

Doug was sitting in Brad's office and they were getting down to the nitty-gritty. "Professor Remington, exactly what agency do you work for?" "That is a good question, Brad. Mostly it is the DARPA, are you familiar with it?" Doug said smoothly. Brad said, "No, what does DARPA stand for?" Doug said "Defense Advanced Research Project Agency." Brad moved his hands from the armrests of his chair and folded them on the desk and asked, "What does a defense agency want with the Desert Research Station?" Doug smiled and said, "occasionally we would like to use your facility for some of our research projects." Brad looked Doug sternly in the eye and asked, "Your defense projects would not conflict with our environment agenda here, professor?"

Doug reached down to his waist and pulled out his pager and looked at the display, it was the special number for the office. The member of the project were instructed to immediately call the office on the nearest landline for instructions. The last time this happened was on a cold night two years ago. "Brad I need to use your phone please." Doug said. Brad thought he was trying to change the subject, but said, "Be my guest." Pointing to the phone on his desk. Doug picked up the phone and then set it down saying, "It appears to be out of order; I'll try the phone in the foyer." He got up and walked out to Carol's desk, Carol looked up smiling, Doug repeated his request to Carol who said "Sorry Professor but they are working on the phones, wait a minute here comes that lineman." Pointing to the man rushing into the foyer. Brad came out of his office just as the man came up to Carol's desk. The lineman had that goofy smile on his face that Doug was so accustomed to. "Blue where's Whiz?" The lineman shyly said, "He went to fix the phone line." Just then the lineman's radio said, "OK try it now." The lineman

picked up the phone on Carol's desk, listened and handed it to Doug. Doug reached down and punched in a phone number just as Brad said, "What the hell is going on here?" Doug turned around and put his finger up to his lips, requesting silence. "Go ahead AG." Then they heard Doug say; "Good we'll be waiting. What does the Chief think about that? OK on my authority, how long can he hold the dogs off? We better get lucky and fast." Doug then hung up the phone and said to the lineman, "They'll pick us up in ten minutes. Tell Whiz to get ready." The lineman said "Roger that." And ran out to the courtyard. Brad said, "This is outrageous Professor." Doug turned to him, smiled and said, "Yes I agree. Let's go back into your office and I will explain some things to you."

Doug followed Brad into the office and closed the door behind them. Doug started by saying, "I'm sorry for the inconvenience, this is a very rare occurrence and I can understand why you are upset." Doug waited for the response; "You cut the phone lines so we could not call for help. I suppose you're going to hold us hostage in some criminal activity?" Brad said as he stood looking out the window of his office. Doug walked over to him and said, "We cut the phone line so we could have access to check out your facility. I did not lie when I said I work for the government and do research projects." Brad turned to Doug and said, "I'm afraid Professor that I'm going to have to reject your proposal for using this facility." Doug looked down and said, "You will not be able to do that, you see Brad, this is government property, on loan to your college, and your college willingly accepts government grants and loans." Brad smiled saying "I will make such a stink in the media that you will not want to come fifty miles near this facility." Doug turned and slowly walked towards the door, then stopped and said, "I was hoping it

wouldn't come to this, you are free to say anything you like, except when it comes to national security. I'm sure you learned your lesson from the last time you spent in jail."

Brad turned back to the window and said nothing. He was oblivious of the two green Air Force Pave Hawk helicopters (A highly modified version of the Army Black Hawk helicopters) landing on the maintenance road and the three soldiers in camouflage uniforms with blue berets carrying three flight bags toward the station entrance. Brad thought, time to look elsewhere. Doug said "I have to go, give my compliments to your wife on the wonderful lunch." Brad didn't hear him.

Jennifer put down the phone and said to herself, It's not every day you talk to the Director, and then he tells you that they have a 'Code Alpha' the highest alert in the country! But she kicked into 'Gear.' She called Nellis Air Base and got a rapid response team and two helicopters warmed up. Cindy, Dex, and Amy called in, and got them moving. Better start using their code names, Brat, Chief, and Scout. She was getting worried when she didn't hear from Doug, Benny, and Jerry. Lets see their code names are Major, Whiz, and Blue. She almost lost it when the Major called her AG just now, her code name. Scout asked for a 'Priority One Authorization' and would setup the perimeter since it was in her neck of the woods and she would be first on the scene. The Major didn't flinch when she told him about that, no one has seen Scout in two years and to give someone the resources of any government agency. We all better cross our fingers. The Director said they had two hours to stabilize the situation with 'Direct Action' authorized, shoot first and ask question later, scary! In two hours the director said that he would close

down the borders, no one in or out period. At that time the National Guard would be mobilized. She better find out where exactly this Vicksburg Junction was.

Amy sat in her 1995 Ford Ranger truck on the side of the road in front of the entrance gatehouse to the Gila Bend Auxiliary Air Field; she was going over the state map trying to remember all dirt and 4x4 roads in that area. “What was this guy up to?” She said to herself as she looked down the road leading into the base and saw the white squad car heading up the road with its light bar flashing. “Finally” was her only thought. She started the truck up as the squad car went by her and turned around to lead her into the base and over to Range Operations where they both stopped. As she got out of her truck she noticed four army Chinook helicopters sitting on the flight line near the hanger. Once in the building, she was met by Bob Sherwood, the range operation manager, who escorted her into his office. “After I verify your identify,” Amy handed him her military ID card. “I have been told to give you anything you want as you have a “Code One Priority.” Amy said “Those Chinooks, who do they belong to?” Bob went over to one of the clipboards hanging on the wall, put on his glasses and started reading “160th Special Operation Aviation Regiment, assigned to the 75th Ranger Regiment. “A” Company commanded by Captain Roger Miller. They are here doing desert warfare testing of special operation vehicles.” Bob turned to Amy and said, “motorcycles and vehicles that look like “Sand rails.” They will be on range four all week conducting night operations.” Amy smiled saying “Excellent, I need to see Captain Miller ASAP!”

Captain Miller was still groggy. It was a long flight from Fort Bragg and when they touched down here, it felt like they were rattling around in a tin can for eight hours. He got his men fed and told them to get some sleep before the exercises tonight. He did the same. The squad car dropped him off at range operations and he was ushered into the manager's office where a small lady in jeans and a T-shirt was hunched over the desk looking at a map. "Captain Miller, I am known as Scout, we have a Code Alpha and I have been given Priority One status with Direct Action authorized. Do you understand?" If Captain Miller was half a sleep, he wasn't now. He said, "Yes I understand, but I will have to verify before I can comply." Scout pointed at the phone on the desk and said "Lt. General Smith is on the line from Fort Bragg, please verify with him." Amy waited until after he put the phone down, "We need to setup a forty mile perimeter at this location. What is your troop strength?" Capt. Miller said "175 Rangers with ATV's" Amy said, "That should do nicely. Next, you will insert me in once we make contact with the objective. Then you will be under the command of Major Remington once he is on scene. I want you to make up a special demolition team in case the need arises to cut power and communications at these locations." Amy pointed at four locations on the map. "Do you understand Captain?" Captain Miller looked at her in disbelief. She wanted to shut down one tenth of the state of Arizona, which included a medium size city. People would die! All he could say was "Yes I understand."

"Hey Whiz, be sure to thank AG for our new flight suits." Blue said to Whiz who had taken over the communication console from the flight engineer on the Pave Hawk as they cruised at 5000 feet. The Major looked at the Chief and said, "The guy just tapped

into the nation's top secret encryption and communication system, saying that he needed some information, then wandered back into the desert?" The Chief said, "They are situated a half mile from the interstate and the suspect comes in from the desert and heads back to the desert!" The Major shook his head saying, "Something is not right here." Whiz cuts into the intercom, "Major I have a Captain Miller on the net requesting to talk to you." The Major gives Whiz the thumbs up and Whiz says into the headset, "Go ahead Captain." "Major Remington this is Captain Miller of company "A" 75th Ranger Regiment. We have set up a forty mile cordon of the area and have inserted Scout at grid coordinates 1, 15, 37 after making contact with the objective at 2, 17, 37. Awaiting further orders." Major turned to the Chief and said "What are the coordinates for "Streamer?" Chief checked the map and said "3, 14, 37." The Major clicked on the mike again and said "Captain Miller can you meet us at grid coordinates 3, 14, 37?" The Captain came back with "Already there Sir." Brat snickered over the noise from the rotor blades; "You let Scout go into an unknown situation by herself after spending two years recovering from a tragic incident? You guys take the cake!" The Major said, "if you don't think Scout is up to it, I'll pull her." The Chief started waving his hands "Listen Brat, Scout is acting on her own initiative, and I trust her." Blue leaned over to Whiz and said in his ear. "The Dragon Lady is showing her fangs." Whiz said, "Cut it out." Brat looked at Blue and said, "You have something to say Blue of Mayberry?" Blue said "Nobody has seen her for two years and I'm willing to give her the benefit of the doubt." Then he put one finger from each hand up to make a cross at her. Brat laughed saying; "Do we have to put up with this juvenile delinquent?" Chief said "Both of you cut it out, we have a mission, right Major?" The Major said, "listen everybody, Scout has decided to rejoin

us and we have to trust her decisions and focus on the mission by working together.” The flight engineer poked his head out of the cockpit and said, “ETA two minutes.” Then Whiz got into the act by throwing a switch on the communication console and they all heard “Scout to SOP6, come in. Scout to SOP6, come in?”

The Major turned to the Chief and said, “I want you to handle it, Chief” Chief looked at Whiz and gave him the high sign. “SOP6 to Scout, we read you, go ahead.” “Scout to SOP6, I have suspect under observation along with four, possibly five other players. Suspect and one female holding up at the cabin at Camel Crossing. Two males holding a third male hostage in standoff at same location. There is another male floater in the area. The situation is stable and isolated. No threat of loss to “Streamer” with no power and communication in area. Need more time to assess the situation and work out closure. Possible direct action by you at first light, copy?” The Chief and the rest of the team looked at the Major who just nodded his head. “SOP6 to Scout, we copy, advise of any changes in situation. Will prepare for Direct Action at first light, over and out.” “We have a problem already.” Chief said to the Major “There is no Camel Crossing on the map!” As the helicopter made a slow descent, everybody was lost in their own thoughts as they looked at the beautiful sunset over the Chocolate Mountains. Major turned to the Chief asking, “Who is the caretaker agent with the project?” Chief said over the roar of the landing “A guy named Deke Weaver, the truck driver.” The Major said, “We have to phone Washington fast, before every three letter agency is let loose here.”

An hour and a half before, Charley was heading back as fast as he could to where he let Sandra off. On his way to Vicksburg Junction he remembered where he had seen Sandra's name, it was an all points bulletin at the ranger station. The FBI was looking for her in connection with a car bombing that killed a woman. When he got to the Junction he saw the phone on the side of the gas station. He didn't think anything of the milk truck parked in front of it; truckers park their rigs everywhere out here in the west. He lifted the phone and got the squawking noise of a computer connection. He saw where the trucker had patched into the line and figured two can play that game. He got out his laptop computer and was able to hot-wire the connection. He found an Email address for the Wildlife Service and sent them Sandra's note, and then he did a search on Sandra. He was right about the wanted poster. He saw a biographical web page on her and her husband and was downloading it when that trucker went crazy. The funny thing was he didn't look like a trucker.

Charley got back to the turn off, but stopped. There was something going on down the road. A quarter of a mile down the road was a man standing with a rifle on the side of a truck. He could hear yelling coming from the clearing where a cabin stood. Another young man was holding an old man and yelling at the cabin from the clearing. Charley guessed that Sandra was in the cabin. He unlocked the glove compartment and took out his dad's Colt 38-caliber service revolver and holster and put them on his belt. Then he gunned the Eagle down the road and swerved into the clearing between the men in the clearing and the cabin. As he got out of the Eagle he watched the guy over at the pickup, if any one was going to be brave it would be him. But he just stood there and

watched. “What seems to be the problem here?” Charley asked nicely. “Nothing that concerns you, unless you are looking for a problem here?” the young man said as he grabbed a tighter hold on the shirt of the old man in front of him. “Charley, they are holding my friend Andy hostage. Did you sent the message?” Sandra called out from the cabin. Just then a shot was fired and the Eagle’s windshield exploded. Charley didn’t need a hint; he jumped over the hood and crawled into the cabin. The young man dragged the old man back to the pickup while the other man covered them with his rifle pointing at the cabin. Charley saw Sandra kneeling below the window as he crawled through the cabin’s doorway. He yelled to her, “What is going on here?” Sandra yelled back in an uncontrolled voice “I wish to hell I knew!” As Charley pulled himself up to the window they heard a strange noise coming towards them. Sandra said, “What is that?” Charley was scanning his memory and yelled, “A Chinook they must have gotten your message!” Everybody at Camel Crossing watched as the helicopter came over from the east, it came right over them but was very high up and continued off to the west. Charley thought that it was just heading back to Yuma Proving Grounds, which borders the area on the south and west of the Kofa.

“Poor old Ray,” pounding the pavement all day, Ray laughed. He didn’t think there was any pavement on his beat, but it was a long boring day and now this, “What the hell was old Andy up to?” That will teach him to check his Emails before going off duty. He pulled his Ranger’s Chevy Blazer onto the King Valley Road and noticed something going on up ahead. There was a guy in a camouflage outfit standing in the road wearing a tan beret. “These survivalists what will they think up next?” He pulled up to the soldier

and more soldiers came out of the brush carrying M-16s. “Maybe Andy was in trouble after all.”

As the Major started climbing out of the chopper he said to Whiz, “I need you to check the landline and patch me through to the “Anagram Inn,” fast!” (The Anagram Inn is the nickname for the headquarters for a No Such Agency.) The tech’s name is Jim, the one who saw the compromise. Get with him and find out what really happened, got it Whiz?” Whiz turned and said, “Got it Major.” The Major stood for a moment looking at the surrounding desert and taking in the chaotic scene that was taking place around him. The Chief was talking with a ranger captain and an air force lieutenant. It was a good thing they were wearing different colored berets or he wouldn’t know the difference. (The Army Rangers now wear tan berets and the Air Force Security Force wears blue berets.) There were rangers manning a checkpoint at the road to the interstate with motorcycles and strange off road vehicles. Security Force members were getting their gear out of the Pave Hawks. There was a command post set up in front of a semi-trailer. Whiz was talking with four civilians at the back of the trailer, two Chinook helicopters were parked on what was left of a paved road, and a squad of rangers were setting up a large field tent in back of an old gas station. He turned around to the helicopter and there was Blue and Brat sitting on the edge of the chopper looking like lost puppies. “OK Blue you go with the Chief to the command post and Brat you come with me to the trailer. Move,” They reached into the chopper for their flight bags as the Major headed for the trailer.

At the back of the trailer were Jack, Ho, and Deke; Jim had gone into the trailer with Whiz. "This is a hell of a show you are putting on Major." The Major smiled and said, "I try my best Jack" as he extended his hand. "Major, I want you to meet Ho Magi and Deke Weaver. Major turned to Brat and said, "This is Brat and you have met Whiz." They all shook hands. Jack said to Ho and Deke, "The Major is the one who cleaned up the computer caper mess back at Los Alamo after a certain agency made matter worst." Just then Whiz opened the door of the trailer and said, "We're all set for you Major." The Major smiled and said, "Excuse me, duty calls." And walked into the trailer with Brat. Deke turned to Jack and said, "Are all these people cleared?" Jack said, "They all have 'Top Secret Special Intelligence Clearance,' I know the Major has 'Q' Clearance." Deke said, "That will do."

Captain Miller was standing at a portable table with Chief, Blue, and Lieutenant Donner at the command post. "We just got a report from post 21 (pointing to the King Valley Road on the map.) They have stopped a wildlife ranger who had received an email this afternoon from a Sandra Connors stating that her friend Andy may be in trouble at the Bright Star Mine (pointing again to the map) and that she would wait at the Cooper cabin for help." Chief said, "Where is Cooper cabin?" Captain Miller said "There is no listing on the map for it." Chief expelled a breath and said, "Let's assume that the Cooper cabin is at Camel Crossing where Scout is. Blue, I want you and lieutenant Donner and his squad to take one of the Pave Hawks over there and find out what is happening and bring that ranger back here, got it?" "Got it Chief." Blue said as he headed to the chopper with Lieutenant Donner.

As Whiz and the Major went into the control room, Brat started going through the other rooms. Canteen: serving counter with four chairs around a kitchen table, maybe. Bathroom: she was shocked, it was clean! Four guys spent a week using it, no way! Bunkroom: service counter, two sets of bunk beds, three of the beds were not made, and one looked untouched, and a table with four chairs. She decided on the bunkroom. She threw her flight bag on the made top bunk and started to get her things out. The Major walked into the control room where Jim was standing with his arms folded looking at the console. “You must be Jim, I’m the Major.” Jim turned around and shook his hand. “Jim, I need to make a phone call, do you mind excusing me?” Jim looked at Whiz who said “Come on Jim, I’ll introduce you to Brat.” Jim followed Whiz out to the corridor where he yelled, “Brat where are you?” Brat answered, “I’m set up in the bunk room.” They walked down the corridor to the bunkroom where Brat was sitting at one end of the table with her tape recorder, voice analyzer and laptop computer. “Hi, you must be Jim, they call me Brat.” She smiled at Jim. Whiz closed the door and felt sorry for Jim. If he was stressed out already, wait until Brat gets through with him.

The Major saw the light flashing on the console phone and pressed the button as he picked up the phone. He was greeted with “Go ahead please.” “Major Douglas Remington USAFR ID number RID 1034500.” A mechanical sounding voice said “Identity verified.” Then “Doug, I hope you have good news for me.” The Major started “Admiral we have it contained. We are still sorting it out and should have more information in the morning.” “Doug do you know about the downloaded file that went to

Los Alamo and Sandia during the compromise?” “No, we just arrived on scene.” “Both labs received a biographical file on an environmental radical and his wife. The man is dead, we think, but the FBI is looking for the wife in connection with a car bombing in California two years ago. This could get messy Doug, I’m sending in SOP3. They will get there tomorrow by mid-day, I hope your group will have it cleaned up by the time they get there.” Doug thought, if SOP3 gets here and it isn’t cleaned up, it would turn from messy into a bloodbath! Doug returned back to reality when he heard, “OK Doug, do you need any more resources?” “We will be going to Desert One to sort this out and will need it stocked with provisions.” “Tell Jennifer she is authorized for anything you need.” Doug could only say, “Thank you Admiral, I will keep you informed.” Doug hung up the phone and walked over and opened the door; Whiz was crouched in the corridor. “Whiz get in here, I have some questions for you.” Whiz looked up with a worried expression on his face and said, “Major, can I call my wife? She will start to get worried about me.” The Major smiled “Sure Whiz, but you know the rules.”

NAF1 to AR21 come in.” “AR21 to NAF1 go ahead.” “Can you light it up where you want us?” “Copy that NAF1.” As the Pave Hawk came into the King Valley a strobe light flashed in the darkness. Blue turned to the flight engineer and said, “It’s starting to get cold.” “I’ll turn on the heater, if there no chance of a heat-seeker missile.” He laughed and threw a switch on one of the panels. Blue said, “I hope not.” As he opened his flight bag to get ready, he looked over his shoulder at the ten Security Force members sitting in the back of the chopper. They were all sitting quietly, holding their M-16s. Blue

remembered when he was a baby-faced robot like them. Next to him the Lieutenant was telling the master sergeant the details of the mission.

The Pave Hawk switched on its floodlight as it came in and a minute later they were on the ground. Blue put on his SAS field hat saying to the flight engineer, "I'll just be a minute." And then jumped out. He walked over to the sergeant who was holding his beret from the rotor wash and asked, "Where is the park ranger?" The sergeant headed over to the Blazer and Blue followed him around to the passenger side of the vehicle. "Mr. Coliter this" the sergeant paused, looking at Blue in his gray jumpsuit, Strange black hat, and 9mm strapped to his waist, but no insignia of any kind, he then continued, "this officer will take you to the mine." Ray looked at both of them and said, "I'll leave the blazer here, but I'm not going anywhere without my .357." The sergeant looked to Blue who said, "Give it back to him." Ray climbed out of the truck and was handed his pistol. After making sure it was loaded he said, "Let's roll." They both climbed into the chopper and took off.

After a few minutes the flight engineer came out of the cockpit and went over to Blue, and said, "You sure there are no heat-seekers around here? We have a hot LZ." Blue said, "You have been locked onto at the landing zone?" "No, but the land zone is hot from something burning." Blue said, "OK, let's go over it with the floodlight and then find an alternate LZ." The flight engineer said, "Roger That." Blue turned to the lieutenant, sergeant, and Ray and said, "Sarge, when we land, take your squad and secure the area then the lieutenant, Ray, and I will come in." The sergeant asked, "Rules of

engagement?" Blue smiled, "Whatever it takes." The sergeant thought here goes my pension! But said, "Yes sir." The Pave Hawk made three passes over the mine site. The two cabins were still smoldering, what was left of them, and at the mine entrance black smoke was billowing out. The only thing intact was the metal mill structure. There was a clearing one hundred feet down the road and that is where the pilot set it down. The squad jumped out and secured the LZ. Then Blue, Ray, and the lieutenant jumped out as the chopper took off. The Pave Hawk circled, lighting up the cabin area as the sergeant led his squad up the road. When they got to the cabins they fanned out and half of them ran through the ruins, as the other half covered them. They heard someone from the other side yell, "Clear." Then the sergeant and three squad members started slowly going over the cabin area, leaving the other three to give them cover. Three squad members on the other side started going up to the mine entrance. Blue, Ray and the lieutenant started up the road.

"OK Ray, we are going to need your help here, What was this place like the last time you were here?" Blue asked as he turned around looking in all directions. "Well, you know I didn't catch your name and what you are doing here?" Ray asked. The lieutenant spoke for the first time, "Sir, this is a special government agent, who is working on a case that is tied in with this, and your cooperation would be appreciated." "Blue, they call me Blue." Ray thought for a minute, then started, "Old Andy has been here for the past ten years, about three years ago this Sandra woman showed up to take pictures, and she stayed. That charred ruin was her cabin and that large hunk of junk was Andy's house. They liked to call the mine up there their 'Summer Retreat.' Pointing at

where smoke continued to come out the side of the mountain and where the Sarge was bending over looking at something. "Lieutenant you better come up here and look at this." The Sarge yelled down. Ray said, "If one of you give me a light, I'll show you the short cut up there."

Blue and the lieutenant followed Ray over to the base of the mill site where he stopped and warned them not to touch anything because of the Black Widow spiders. They then continued up an old, but solid wooden staircase that went up two stories. Blue was glad that they had a quarter moon to act as a backdrop through the metal skeleton of the mill site; it was eerie but it provided light. When they had gotten to the second landing Ray started heading to the back of the structure where there was a section missing from the tin sided wall. Blue looked around and saw where the moonlight was coming from another missing section at the front corner. As he looked out on the peaceful King Valley, he noticed something strange silhouetted in front of the opening and decided to check it out on the way back. They reached the mine entrance where the sergeant was pointing at a burnt and melted can next to the head of a rattlesnake, "Airman Mason could not find the body of the snake, they must have taken it with them." Blue took a pen from his breast pocket and bent down and lifted the can over on the unexposed side. They all thought it was an unusual top for the can, with a hole in the center and a group of holes on the outer edge of the top. Blue straighten up and said, "Any ideas on what happened here?" Sarge said, "It's a warning, I saw a lot of that stuff over in Nam." Ray said, "The head isn't burnt. The 'good old boys' took the rest of the snake to eat; don't know about the can." The lieutenant said, "The can is some sort of

incendiary devise that was dropped when the snake surprised them.” Even Airman Mason shook his head in agreement with the rest of them. Blue reached behind and pulled a large zip-lock bag out of his back pocket, putting it over the can, flipped it over into the bag and zipped it shut. Blue said, “There is something I want to look at in the mill site.” The lieutenant turned to the Sarge and Airman and said, “Good work men, this will be in the report.” He then followed Blue and Ray into the mill site.

“Over here with the light, is that what I think it is?” Blue directed Ray. “A rocking chair?” Ray said. The three men stood around an old fashion style-rocking chair next to an old wooden fruit box, with a large manila envelope sitting on top of it. They all thought the same thing looking out on the valley; this would be a nice spot to read a book. Blue reached down to pick up the envelope when Ray said, “This is my jurisdiction, and that is my evidence.” Blue in an exasperated voice said, “Sir, look at your evidence, but please let me see it.” Ray said, “Go ahead, look at it, but like the can, it goes with me.” Blue picked up the envelope and pulled out about three hundred pages of white typewritten paper bound with brass stays, Blue set the pages on the fruit crate and they all leaned over with the flashlights to read, “*Direct Action*” by Sean Conners with Photographs by Sandra Conners. “Alright boys, it’s time to go.” Blue said as he stuffed the pages into the envelope and handed it to Ray.

“Jim what would be your idea of a great vacation?” A big smile came over Jim’s face, “Rafting down the Grand Canyon with Amanda, which we are going to do this summer.” “Jim who is Amanda?” “She is the girl I met on the internet, she is studying at

Ohio State University, we haven't met yet, but we have been chatting for months and have a lot in common." Brat looked up from her computer and said, "Jim I'm going to need all the information you have on her, just say it into the microphone."

The two men in plaid shirts were leaning against the old pickup. "Bo, you stay here and keep an eye on the cabin. Waters wants to go over the plans for tomorrow morning. I'll be back in a hour." Lance said and then headed away from the pickup. Bo went over to the cottonwood tree on the edge of the clearing. He wondered about the old man in the truck, weather he would be alive tomorrow? Scout was hoping for this. She crawled up to the passenger side of the truck and shook Andy awake with her hand over his mouth. "Mister, you have to listen real close to what I am going to say, are you with me?" Andy shook his head. "Hold up your hands so I can cut the rope." Andy did as she said. "How serious is your wound?" "It's just a flesh wound, I'll live." Andy whispered to her. "I have to get into the cab to do some work before we can sneak away, but I can't use the door, do you understand?" Andy thought for a moment and realized that the light would go on if the door was opened. "Got you Miss." Scout started climbing through the open window of the truck with Andy helping her. Once inside she took out her Leatherman tool and started working on the cab light, then she reached under the dashboard and cut some wires, and just to make sure she pulled out a Popsicle stick she found and rammed it into the ignition keyhole and snapped off the protruding end, "Now we can start opening your door very quietly."

“Deke what are your plans for retirement?” “Retire from WHAT? I plan to work at my lazy life until the day I die, and Connie said that is the best plan she has heard.” “Get out of here before I put you in chains for wasting my time.” Brat said still laughing.

“Incoming!” the radio operator at the command post said to the Captain and Chief. Just then a ranger sergeant came up to the Captain and said, “The field tent, bunks, and mess hall are set up.” “OK Sarge, you and your men take a break.” The Sarge saluted and walked back to the tent. Chief looked at the Captain and asked, “That guy had a EOD patch, what is he doing putting up tents?” “Your Scout asked us to get a demolition team together in case they were needed, you don’t want these guys standing around getting bored.” They watched as the Pave Hawk landed and Blue, Ray, and the lieutenant came over to the command post. Blue said, “I’ll let the lieutenant fill you in. I have to talk to the Major.” The lieutenant saluted the Captain and said, “This is Wildlife Ranger Ray Coliter from the Yuma Ranger Station.” “Well boys, I hear you need to know where Camel Crossing and the Cooper Cabin are.” Ray said trying to be obliging. “You must have gotten ‘Camel Crossing’ from a local. When the Army tried to use camels out here in the 1890s they brought these Arabs from one of those desert counties in the Middle East. I don’t know why the camels didn’t work, but why bother when you have horses, am I right? There was one, had an Arabic name, so everybody just called him ‘Hi Jolly’ because he was always smiling. He settled in Quartzsite with an American wife and used the camels for freighting. When he died in the twenties his wife sold the camels to petting zoos and local ranchers, who found out that these camels were worst than goats and they ended up letting them loose in the desert. Camel Crossing was named after the last

sighting of one of those camels in the late forties. 'Hi Golly' has a memorial in Quartzsite if you are interested."

"Are you crazy? I spent half my life getting here, first to Hong Kong, then to Canada. Oh No! You are going to have to drag me kicking and screaming to China for a vacation. I plan to stay right here in the 'Land of Good and Plenty.'" Ho pulled out his handkerchief to wipe the sweat off his face. Brat wrote down, "The land of Good and Plenty." What a perfect description of the United States of America.

The Chief said "NO, we are not interested, we just want to know where it is on the map along with Cooper's cabin. You got me Ray?" Ray said, "Let me see now" as he looked at the map. All the time Ray told his story the lieutenant was briefing the Captain on the Bright Star Mine. "There they are!" The Chief took a grease pencil and marked them on the map. "Ray, there is food and a bunk over at that tent over there, make yourself comfortable." "Hold on a minute! I was under the impression that after I showed you where the places were, you were going to cut me loose." "I'm sorry Mister Coliter, but we can't do that." Ray red faced turned around to a trim gray-haired man who had walked up with Blue. "If you look around here Mr. Coliter, you will see that we are using all the resources necessary to resolve this situation, but as a sworn law enforcement officer, it is your duty to bring those responsible to justice." "I don't know who is responsible and I will continue my investigation tomorrow after a good night sleep." Ray chuckled. "You will have your good night sleep right over there and we will bring you to the five armed and dangerous people responsible, tomorrow morning." The Major said

with a blank look on his face. Ray laughed and said, “Wake me up after the Army gets through with them.” The Major smiled and said, “As you pointed out to Blue here, this is your jurisdiction and it is against the law for the military to do your job.” (Posse Comitatus Act of 1878 was signed into law fifteen years after the Civil War because of federal troop’s occupation of the South. It is currently illegal to use active military personnel in direct law enforcement action against United States Citizens.) “It looks like you are going to have to take them on yourself.” Ray looked down at his cowboy boots then looked the Major in the eye and said, “I take it you have a plan?” The Major said, “Blue will you escort Mr. Coliter over to the trailer to sign some papers?” “My pleasure Major.” Blue smiled.

Brat smiled at Jack, “I see Mr. Hughes that you are a admirer of Frank Lloyd Wright, he was a great architect, way before his time, it is a shame we don’t have more of his building.” “I plan to change that in a small way by building one of his houses on a plot of land I have in Scottsdale, Arizona.” Jack smiled thinking about it. Brat asked, “His homes are lavish mansions, how could you afford to build one?” “Mr. Wright was also the champion of the masses, he had designed Unitarian homes called “Unsonian,” a simple block concrete home that celebrates the openness of Organic Architecture.”

“Scout to SOP6, Scout to SOP6?” “Go ahead Scout.” “This will be my last communication, was able to get hostage away from captors, name is Andy Bean. He said female in cabin is a Sandra Connors who lives with him at the Bright Star Mine. Said two young men came yesterday looking for Sandra, burned the place down and took him

hostage. Sandra escaped over the mountain but they were able to track her down to the Cooper's Cabin. He said he didn't know the man in the cabin with her. I overheard a conversation with the young men about an action tomorrow morning with a person called "Waters."

"SOP6 to Scout." "Go ahead SOP6." "We will be coming in at first light, how do you want us to proceed?" "Come in with a blaze of glory from the north, that should scare the two young men and maybe they will run. I will try to neutralize the other one who I think will be playing God. Watch out for the western mountain and smoke would be good between the mountain and the cabin. I think he wants to take out the women. Be careful of the cabin, they are both armed inside." Chief asked, "Any ID on the young man inside and the reason for him being there?" Scout thought for a few moments then said, "I think he is there to help the women." "Do you need anything before morning, or do you want us to bring anything in with us?" Scout thought of her nice warm bed then said, "No, wait a minute, I hope you brought my flight bag with you?" Chief smiled and thought "She's back!" then said, "Of course we brought it." Scout wanted to continue to talk with her old friend but there was too much to do. "I'm going to try to get some sleep now and I will see you at first light. Over and out." "SOP6 to Scout, looking forward to seeing you again, Over and out."

The Chief turned to the Major, luckily the Captain broke the silence by asking, "Do you want me to send my EOD men to the mine?" The Major turned to him and said, "That is a good idea Captain and I want to thank you and you're men for the excellent

assistance you have provided us; your support saved the day.” The Captain could only say, “Thank you Sir.” The Major turned to the Chief “Chief, I want you to get the group together in the trailer.” The Chief nodded as the Major walked off into the darkness.

“Thank you Officer Coliter, we have the evidence inventory, chain of custody log, and the six deputies authorizations from you. Silly me, I almost forgot about the National Security Act declaration you signed. You can now go to the field tent and get some food and rest; we will wake you in the morning.” Blue smiled as the Security Force Airman escorted Ray out of the trailer. “He will admit to seeing UFO’s before he admits to seeing us.” Brat said as she put the forms in her flight bag and then said to Blue, “I’m sorry I snapped at you, I had a rough week.” Blue gave her a wink and said, “And the fun never stops coming.” “OK you two, the Major wants a meeting and it looks like it is going to be in the control room.” The Chief said while making sure that they weren’t at each other’s throats. Whiz opened the door for them to enter and asked Jim to go tell his people that they were done with the bunkroom and they could get some sleep.

Whiz and the Chief were sitting at the console and Blue and Brat were sitting against the wall on the floor when the Major was buzzed in. He motioned them to stay where they were. “We have a lot going on here and I don’t know why. The one thing I do know is that we have to round up all those people at Camel Crossing. That should be our focus at this time. As you know, it will be Ray and us who will be going in to get them, seven to five is not very good odds in a operation like this. SOP3 will be arriving some time tomorrow morning from Denver to assist us if needed. Unfortunately, we can’t wait

for them because one faction is going to move against the other faction at first light. We also have Scout in the middle of this; if she can't take out the sniper, we will be hurting."

Day 6-Saturday

The Major looked at the Chief, “Chief what is the plan?” Chief looked very serious at the other members in the room as he talked, “We will be going in as two teams, team one will be the Major, Ray, and Whiz. Your objective will be the two people in the cabin, Ray knows the woman. Whiz needs to find that laptop from the thief and the Major needs to be command and control, especially when it comes to Ray. Team two will be Brat, Blue, and myself, we will be the first off the chopper to neutralize the two young men, then to back up Scout and provide cover for the other team members. We will be coming in from the north. Brat, do you have any physiologically warfare tapes? Scout said to come in loud and scary.” Brat turned to Blue and asked, “Do you have that new U2 tape?” “Right next to my heart.” Blue said as he unzipped the pocket over his left chest and pulled out a cassette tape. The Chief continued “Once we get to Camel Crossing, we will circle to the west dropping smoke between the northwest corner of the cabin and the mountain to the west. This will cover our landing to the East of the cabin area. Scout thinks the sniper will be in the western mountain area and is after the woman and not the thief. Team one will follow us and take up positions at the location and advise the people in the cabin to stay where they are until the sniper is neutralized. Team two will then provide support for Scout or engage the sniper. Mission’s goals; One-keep casualties to a minimum, Two-take possession of the laptop computer, Three-take into custody the thief, Four-take into custody the woman who is wanted by the FBI, Five-take into custody or neutralize the remaining perpetrators. Questions and comment time boys and girl.” “Whiz?” “Once we get the laptop then what?” “We call in the chopper and you head back here with it.” Whiz got angry; “And leave you with the bad guys, I think not!” The Major

said, "That is an order lieutenant." Whiz swirled in his chair and said nothing. "Brat?" "Do we give these guys an options to surrender?" "If the option presents itself, Yes." "Blue?" "Can I shoot Ray if the option presents itself?" Everybody laughed and the Chief said "Only in the foot, if he really pisses you off." "Major?" "What if these people just take off into the desert?" "We can't allow that to happen, does everybody understand that?" From the nods, Chief got his answer, "we have about four hours until take off and I advise everybody to get some sleep, now get out of here."

Captain Miller stood over the grid map and watched the civilians come out of the trailer. He wondered if they would pull it off. He hoped it wasn't a "Dead men tell no tales operation." Lieutenant Finch strolled over from the mess tent saying, "I don't know if the MRE's are getting better or worst?" "Ever see one of these?" the Captain said placing the scorched container on the table. "Hmmm, looks like a homemade 'Shake and Bake' probably used something like Astrolite, it is inert until mixed with the primer, you shake it and plunge the primer in and throw it in a room, guaranteed to produce a three-alarm fire." The captain nodded and said, "A Chinook is on the way with portable lighting I want your team to go over the mine site and see what you can find." "Mona me' El Captain." Lieutenant Finch said as he saluted. "AR10 to AR1 over." "Read you AR10." "Sgt. Powell just came in with a civilian, Andy Bean. Medic is checking him out but looks fine except for a flesh wound to his left wrist area and dehydration, please advise." Captain Miller picked up the microphone and said "Make him as comfortable as possible, Break, Mark: three hours and twenty-eight minutes until SOP6 operations begin, Hunker down folks and stay alert, Captain Miller out."

“How can he sleep? In a few hours we may be going into a firefight. Did you see the food he ate?” Brat said as she laid on the cot next to Whiz. “All I know is that I wish I had his guts.” Whiz said as Blue let out a snore and rolled over. Brat laughed “Guts? You have to have brains to have guts.” Whiz said, “I think it has something to do with growing up in New York.” Chief paced the room in the trailer and said, “So you are saying that you don’t think he knows he stole our top secret ‘Streamer program?’” He shook his head and said, “this is how I figure it, he is involved with this Eco-terrorist group for national attention and cold hard cash. Something went wrong at the exchange and now they are trying to kill each other.” The Major said, “How do you explain the incident at the mine?” The chief thought for a moment before commenting, “I think these guys are bad dudes, the exchange was to be at the mine but these guys couldn’t wait and decided to cut out the middle woman.” The Major swiveled in the chair, “Well we will soon find out, and I hope I am right for our sake.” He then folded his arms on the console and rested his head on them. The Chief left and headed over to the command post just as the Chinook took off for the mine. Captain Miller was next to the radioman when the Chief walked up. “As the Major said, you and your men did a hell of a job today.” “It was yesterday, aren’t you going to get some sleep?” The Captain said looking concerned. “Too many things to get done, I work best on auto-pilot anyway, what about you?” “Like you too many things to get done. I have a platoon of young kids, they are good but I don’t want any mistakes. It must be nice working with a pro team like yours?” “What did you think about Scout?” The Chief asked. “That’s what I’m talking about, a real pro, she

knew what had to be done and was determined to do it, I wouldn't want to go up against her." The Chief smiled saying "That's my Scout."

Waters was lying prone on a nice flat rock ledge, it had passed the darkest minutes of the new day, slowly, but surely it would get lighter and then it would be time to finish the job and go home. One hundred yards would be a piece of cake for his Weatherby 30-30 Special Edition. He had a clear field of fire from the back of the cabin on, if those clowns mess up the plan this time he was just going to walk away. He put the clip into the receiver and cocked the bolt with the first round; he looked through the sight and knew he had to wait, not enough light. Better check the radio, he hoped that the radios were not being jammed like last night. Still being jammed, those guys over in Yuma must be doing an exercise. (Yuma is home to a Marine Air Station and an Army Proving Grounds) He started thinking about his spread in Texas; he could do a lot of improvements with the twenty thousand he was getting for the job. This Job! This was going to be the last job he took. He had traveled all around the world killing generals, politician, druglords, and agents. He comes back to the states and all he is doing is killing women for a man that doesn't even have the guts to show himself. Only in America.

"Colonel we are getting a blip in section 37, on 90mhz." "Can you lock in on it?" "That is affirmative Sir." "Big Bird to AR1 come in." The AWAC was making a slight bank to stay within its station points. At thirty thousand feet the jet was shining brightly in the early morning sun.

Whiz focused on Blue putting together the assault rifle as he laid on his cot. He was putting the rifle barrel on his Stoner 63 and then lining up the sight on the scope. "Just remember to stay away from any open areas until the all clear, you got me Whiz?" Whiz nodded. "Now to wake 'Sleeping Beauty.'" Blue gently started rocking the cot he was sitting on, which just happened to be the cot Brat was sleeping on. "What?" Brat moaned in a whisper. Blue smiled, then Whiz smiled as he watched Brat slowly bend her leg. Blue bent over to put the rifle back in its case and that was all Brat needed to push him on the floor. "That is where you belong on your hands and knees." Brat said as she jumped out of the cot. "Why, do you want to play horse?" Blue said laughing. Brat looked at Whiz with a big smile on his face, "Time to get some Java." And walked around Blue making horse sounds. "Time to go Major, here is your gun belt and hat." Chief said as he gently shook the Major's shoulder that laid on the console. The Major stepped out of the trailer and greeted the crisp dawn, soldiers were running in all directions; the choppers were warming up, but the Captain was still at the command post along with the rest of SOP6. The Major and the Chief walked over to them "Well Captain do we have a 'Go?'" The Major asked. "All is ready for the insertion we think we have a fix on the shooter here." the Captain said pointing to the map. "About five hundred feet on the ridge." All those around the table studied the location. "We have five mobile units ready to provide support" pointing to five dirt roads leading to Camel Crossing, "And your Medivac unit will be circling the area to evacuate the injured," he pointed to the second Pave Hawk helicopter. Just then the lieutenant and his squad of security force members came out of the field tent carrying stretches and medical flight bags with red crosses on them. The Chief called the lieutenant over, "What do you think you are

doing?” The lieutenant saluted and said, “We are allowed to provide humanitarian aid in civilian emergencies, are we not?” The Chief smiled and asked, “Why are your men wearing their 9mm Berettas?” “Chief, all the clips are out of the weapons.” The Chief looked over to the Major who just nodded. “Everybody ready?” Everybody nodded, “Let’s do it.” The Chief said as they headed to the choppers.

Sandra and Charley were sitting at the back door of the cabin. The sun was just starting to come up and he wanted her to take off at first light. He would hold them off as long as possible and if he got away he would go for help again. “Charley, I’m sorry I got you in this mess; maybe if I give myself up they would let you and Andy go?” Charley smiled and said, “It’s too late now for that, the only hope is for you to get away. Sandra as they say, until we meet again, now get going.” They both listened to something rolling in the front of the cabin. Charley crawled over to the doorway as the canister rolled on its side erupting with a spray of flames in the room. It spun around shooting the flames at anything it came in contact with. Charley turned back to Sandra and said, “Get going.” Then disappeared in a cloud of smoke. Sandra looked out at the desert she loved and took off in a run.

Scout heard the first shot as she rounded the large out-cropping on the ridge; it had taken her most of the night circling around the ridge and climbing up the jagged boulders to the ridge in silence, was she too late? As she crawled round the boulder she could see the man lying prone on the flat rock, he was just cocking the bolt for the next round. She looked down at the cabin and could see something being thrown through the

window of the cabin and a man crawling out of the clearing. The man on the ledge was shaking himself and positioning his head to the telescopic sight, this was going to be the one for the money. Scout slowly swung her rifle from her back and cocked her bolt as she thought, should she risk it? Music and the sound of rotor blades filled the air. The man took his head off the sight and looked to his left as the noise got louder. Out of the corner of his eye he could see a figure at his back raising something towards him “Take your finger off the trigger and roll onto your back, DO IT NOW!” Scout screamed at him. The music was very loud as one of the Pave Hawks dropped smoke bombs between the cabin and the mountain and circled around the clearing as the cabin erupted in flames, the second chopper was just taking off from Camel Crossing and the sound of automatic gunfire could be heard.

The two men leaped over the hood of the truck with their rifles pointing at the cabin but they were watching in amazement as the helicopter dropped the smoke bombs. The next thing they knew was being showered with glass. Brat had put fifteen rounds from her Uzi into the windshield of the truck. They cowered at the wheel well of the truck as Brat stood spread eagle twenty feet in back of them. “I have another fifteen rounds for the first one who doesn’t do exactly as I say.” Blue ran around from the back of the truck pulling their rifles off the hood of the truck, and gave Brat the high sign. Blue had to hit the ground when a bullet whizzed by him from the cabin, which was completely engulfed in flames. The music had stopped and the Pave Hawks were blaring, “We are Federal Agents, put down your weapons and wait for further instructions.” Chief covered Brat as she handcuffed the men. The Major with Whiz and Ray had made it to

the cottonwood tree on the edge of the clearing. A man was crouched holding a pistol behind the station wagon. The Major realized there was no time for another stand off. He turned to Whiz and Ray saying, "Cover me, I'm going in." He stood up and walked into the clearing. The man behind the car said with a cough, "That's far enough mister." The Major with his arms outstretched said, "I'm a Federal Officer here to solve this problem, please give up." Charley couldn't stand the heat and smoke from the burning cabin much longer, Sandra had enough time to get away he figured. Charley threw his pistol over towards the Major and stood up with his hands in the air. "Where is the woman?" the Major asked, "She took off from the back once the party started." The Major walked over to Charley, picking up the pistol on the way and led him over to the cottonwood tree where Ray cuffed him. "SOP6 to all units, female on the run from the back of the cabin." Whiz said into the microphone.

Whiz came up to Charley saying, "Smart move, where is your laptop?" Charley didn't give it a second thought, "The back seat of the car, on the driver side." Whiz turned to look at the car, why did it look funny? Then he realized that it was on an angle, the two passenger side tires had blown from the intense heat of the cabin. He then noticed the flames licking at the back of the vehicles gas tank. Both the Major and Ray were startled when Whiz yelled "NO!" and ran to the car, opening the rear driver's side door and rummaged through the back seat. The Major saw the situation, jumped up and ran for Whiz. Three-fourths of the way there Whiz pulled out the laptop and stumbled backwards right into the Major, knocking both of them to the ground. It was a good thing because the gas tank on the vehicle blew up then. They both started to crawl away just as the

flames came showering down on them. The back of Whiz flack vest caught fire and the Major rolled Whiz on his back putting it out. As the smoke cleared, the Major looked at Whiz, sweat and grime were smeared all over his face as he laid there with his eyes closed, both his hands were clucking the laptop tightly to his chest. "Whiz you just entered the ranks of the misfits, assaulting a superior officer." The Major broke out laughing. Ray looked at both of them rolling in the clearing laughing, and said, "These people are crazy!" Charley looked over at Ray saying, "I can relate to that, I have been living crazy for the past week, at least I don't have to worry about a car anymore."

The Chief came around the truck with revolver drawn. He looked at Ray scratching his head, and then watched as his teammates stagger to the truck. The Major said, "Get Whiz on the chopper out of here." "Yes Sir." The Chief said helping Whiz towards the landing zone. The Major yelled to Ray to get the prisoner over to Brat.

After Blue had the two men propped up against the truck, he left them in Brat's and the Chief's capable hands. He heads towards the mountain looking for any sign from Scout. At the base of the mountain, He heard someone say, "Are you looking for little old me?" Blue swung around with his Stoner at the ready to see an older man kneeling next to a Palo Verde tree with his hands on his head. Blue yelled "SCOUT!" and she came around from behind the tree with her rifle pointed at the man. "I hope you have a pair of cuffs?" she said not taking her eyes off the man. "One pair of cuffs coming up." Blue listen to his hands free radio. "The women got out the back of the cabin." Scout said, "I know, our friend here tried to take her out." Blue cuffed the man and helped him to stand

up. "Did you frisk him?" Blue asked. "No I didn't want to chance it." Scout said as she watched Blue frisk him. "What do we have here in your boot, one .25 caliber automatic and this is a nice sharp knife." Blue backed up to Scout saying, "You take him in and I'll go for the woman." Scout said, "No, give me the radio and I'll go after the woman." Blue didn't like the look of Scout, "Are you up to it?" "The radio please, and don't take your eyes off of this guy. Good seeing you again Blue." Blue watched Scout put the radio earplug in her ear and then walk off. "OK mister, let's get moving. Do you know what I mean when I say I left my conscience at home?" "You will kill me if I make one false move." Blue smiled, "I'm glad we understand each other, now move."

"Scout to SOP6 come in." "Go ahead Scout." "Blue is bringing in the shooter without a radio, I'm going for the woman, any recon on her?" "Let me check." The Major threw a switch on the radio pack, "SOP6 to AFN1." "Go ahead SOP6." "Do you have a location on the woman?" "That is a roger, she is heading south for the pass where the Army unit is stationed. Do you want us to advise them of her location for pickup?" "Hold on AFN1." The Major relayed the location to Scout, "Tell the chopper to let the Army unit know when she gets to the wash area, have them lay down a barrage of weapon fire toward the east. Also ask them to send Sgt. Powers and Mr. Bean to me in their scout vehicle on the road to Cooper's cabin. We will meet up with her where that wash and the road meet, copy?" The Major said, "Copy, Scout don't take any chances, she is armed and we have the material we were looking for." Scout thought for a moment, "I'm looking forward to finally meeting her and finding out why so many men are fighting over her, Scout out."

The Chief brought Charley around to where the other guys were sitting against the truck. Brat was starting to get their names, addresses, and social security numbers, Bo Murry, 1205 fourth St. Yuma, Arizona. SSN 425-21-5093. "OK, your name?" "I want a lawyer to protect my rights before I answer any questions." The man said to Brat. Brat's reply was swift; "You gave up your rights the minute you entered this fiasco. We have the right to keep you indefinitely without consul and I can accidentally erase all records of you if you don't cooperate." "Lance Stickly 1203 fourth St. Yuma, Arizona. SSN 761-56-8822." Brat smiled, "Now that wasn't too hard, was it?" Brat looked at the third man; smoke was still emitting from his soot-covered clothes. "Your turn." "Charley Ames 900 Shade Tree Lane, Scottsdale, Arizona. SSN 324-59-9812." Just then Blue strolled in with his prisoner, "Here's another one for you Brat." Brat turned to Blue and asked where Scout was, "She went after the woman." "Is she alright, you know what I mean?" Brat asked. "She's a little worn out but none the worst for wear." Blue said gently. The Chief came over and said that the security force was coming in and to hood the suspects for transport. Brat asked where the interrogation was going to be. The Chief was dreading this moment, "Desert One." Blue yelled out "Not that Hell Hole." Brat said in a rage, "Where is he? I told him that I would never go back to that place!" The Chief said, "Come on, it wasn't that bad, you know we have to isolate this." Brat turned back to the shooter, and said in a hiss, "OK buddy, your name address, and social security number."

Scout was sitting on the side of the road conserving her strength. Would the barrage force her to take the wash to the west? She didn't want her to come in contact

with the Army unit and if she went southeast it would take her further out into the desert. She looked down the road and could see a dust trail rising. By the time she got to her feet, the scout car with Sgt. Powers and Andy had arrived. She looked at the vehicle, it was mostly metal welded together with four oversized tires. She jumped into the back seat with the two men in the front of the vehicle. "How are you doing Andy?" Andy smiled saying; "Once I got some grub and rest I was fine Miss." "Sgt. Powers, we will try to intercept Mrs. Conners at Squaw Wash and this road. Your boys will signal us with a barrage of fire when she gets to the wash. Hopefully she will head west towards us." Sgt. Powers thought for a moment and then said, "It just might work and I willing to give it a try." Scout said, "Good, lets head for the wash." Scout was amazed with the vehicle, it was very quite and very fast, and watching Sgt. Powers it looked like it handled well also. Bob from Range Ops was right; it was similar to the "Sand Rails."

"Hello, is this the Third Marine Division Supply Center? Good, I have a request for one of your portable swimming pools, yes here is the order number, RO#-PSW 324-0089. I need it delivered to Gila Bend AFB, that is in Arizona yes. Tomorrow, that will be fine, thank you, goodbye." "Hello is this Lt. General Smith's Office, this is the office of Special Operation Project 6, we just wanted to call to thank the general for his assistance to this unit. Without the assistance of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment and Captain Miller of Co. "A" of the 75th Ranger Regiment our mission could not have been completed. I'm sorry but that is classified. Sorry that is on a need to know basis. Thank you again for your assistance, goodbye." "Big Daddy's Records? I would like to order some CD's. The top forty should do. All of them. You deliver right? Nellis

Air Force Base, they have to be on a plane tonight at 6:00 PM.” Jennifer was halfway through her list.

Sandra was tired, sweaty, and scared. After she left the cabin it sounded like all hell broke loose. She hoped that Andy and Charley were able to get free. On the run for two days with very little sleep was taking its toll. She tried to make sense of the helicopters and the “We are federal agents put down your weapons, and wait for further instructions.” She pulled out from her back pocket the Charter Arms “Bulldog” snub-nose .38 caliber revolver. If she was going to die, she thought that she might as well take them with her. She stuck the gun in her front pant pocket; she needed both hands to cross the wash. She grabbed a mesquite branch and lowered herself down into the wash. She wiped her cut and scraped hands on her blouse and fell to her knees on the sandy wash. When the firing started, she just sat there crying NO! NO! After fifteen minutes she got up and decided to go to the road and wait there for whatever may come; she just couldn’t go on any longer.

Scout had found a good observation point fifty feet east of the road. There was a big old cottonwood tree on the north bank and she sat at its base waiting. Andy and Sgt. Powers were sitting in the vehicle on the far bank of the wash at the road. If Sandra got pass her maybe she would listen to Andy and give up. After a half-hour Scout was starting to get worried; she should be here by now. She was about to call in and see if they had a fix on Sandra when she heard signing and then saw the figure swaying in the wash singing old folk songs. Sandra looked like she was delirious and Scout realized that

she didn't have the strength to fight off a crazy and don't even try reasoning with one, fear was her only hope. "Stop where you are or I'll shoot!" Scout yelled, leaning against the tree aiming her rifle right at her. "Shoot? Shoot? You want to shoot me?" Scout tried to see her eyes, as to whether she was comprehending her command, but didn't catch the hand in the pocket until it was too late.

Sandra shot all seven rounds at the pretty tree and then dropped the pistol. A minute later Scout went crashing into Sandra at the waist, knocking both of them to the ground, Sandra was yelling for Sean, when Scout gave her a right-cross to the left temple of her head, knocking her unconscious. Scout sat up and grabbed her left shoulder, she just wasn't fast enough getting behind the tree. Sgt. Powers and Andy came running down the wash, Andy bent down to hold Sandra and Sgt. Powers knelt next to Scout putting direct pressure with his handkerchief on her wound. Scout lifted the chrome-plated pistol from the sand and put it in the waistband of her jeans, "Sarge tie her up and you and Andy carry her to the vehicle, then come back for me with your first aid kit." "Don't you want me to call in the chopper?" The Sarge said. "It will be faster just to drive to the cabin, now do it!" it was a nasty flesh wound but nothing more. Once they cleaned it, bandaged it and shaped a sling out of Sarge's tee shirt Scout was ready to go. When they got to the vehicle Sandra was stretched out in the back seat moaning. The two men sat in the front and Scout wedged in the backseat between all three of them; the ride to the cabin was swift and silent.

The Major had called the team together. They looked tired and worn out. The security force members were a godsend. They had provided medical aid, put out the fire at the cabin, helped the prisoners into the Chinook, and cleaned up and collected equipment. They like the rest of the team were waiting for the outcome at Squaw Wash. “You all did a great job today and if there was any doubts about Scout they were laid to rest today, but we should still keep her out of the loop concerning ‘Wanderer’ agreed?”

As the scout vehicle pulled up to the old pickup, everybody started cheering. Sgt. Powers directed the airmen with the stretchers to Sandra and Scout; who carried them to the helicopter. Andy escorted the one carrying Sandra and was given a seat near her. When the rest of the team arrived at the chopper Captain Miller who informed them that SOP3 had arrived and were taking over back at the command post greeted them. He said that when he got back there he would arrange for Whiz to disappear, just like they were going to disappear. Everybody shook hands and wished the best, except for Ray who just wanted to go home and forget this mess. The Major warned him that if anything was said, he would make him the groups new project, but agreed to have the Army drop him off at his vehicle and wished him well. First the two Pave Hawks took off with some of the security force squad then the Chinook lifted off and headed south, with Captain Miller, Ray, and Sgt. Powers getting into the scout vehicle for the ride back to Vicksburg Junction.

“Girl, who do you think you are Wonder Woman?” Brat smiled down at Scout. “Somebody has to take up the slack when some people are too busy doing their nails.”

“I see you haven’t lost your tongue, at least not yet.” Brat stroked Scout’s forehead and said, “Can I get you anything?” “A double cheeseburger, fries, and a chocolate shake.” Brat thought, boy that sounds good, “Lots of luck sweetie how about a Salisbury steak MRE, a chocolate brownie and a Mountain Dew?” Scout smiled saying, “The next best thing.” “Is this Femme Fatale bothering you?” Blue said coming up and putting his hand on Brat’s shoulder. Brat grabbed his hand and shoved it off, then walked to the back of the chopper. “Why do you always irritate her?” Scout asked. “Because she needs it, she still has this thing about exclusion and you can’t say I don’t include her in my nonsense.” Scout smiled and said nothing. Blue looked at the drip bag and IV, “Gin or Vodka?” “Neither, saline. They say that I’m dehydrated. Why don’t you help Brat get me something to eat.” Blue bowed, “Your wish is my command fair maiden.” Blue headed back to where Brat was rummaging through boxes. “I’m sure glad you are back Scout.” Chief said putting a blanket over her. In her best pixie voice Scout said, “Did you miss me?” “You know we need two referees with those two.” Chief said pointing at Brat and Blue. Scout looked over at them fighting over a metal tray, “I think maybe they are in love with each other.” “Bite your tongue!” Chief said and mumbled something as he headed toward them. “Fine job Lieutenant, I would recommend you for a commendation if I had someplace to send it.” The Major said as he put his hand on her free hand. “That’s alright Major, I’m just happy to be back.” The Major smiled at her, “Glad to have you back Scout. Whiz told me to tell you he can’t wait to see you again.” A man in a helmet and green flight suit came up. “Major we have a call from someone called ‘AG’ for you.” The Major looking concerned saying; “Get some rest Scout.” Scout felt his hand move from hers, “That I will have no trouble doing, Major.”

“What’s up AG?” “The Admiral is breathing down my neck; what do I tell him?”

The Major smiled and said, “Tell him mission accomplished, will report when I get to a secure line.” AG sighed and then said, “Was able to get everything on the Chief’s list, one question tho, the bathing suits for the girls, what style and color?” Jennifer would have loved to see him squirming. He did have a lost look on his face but said, “Military cut, one piece, solid color, either black or blue.” AG said, “You’re no fun. Also Captain Miller said that he will get Whiz out in an hour with the mine report.”

Part 3-“How far south is this going?”

Day 6 Saturday

“Hey Pat are these the right coordinates?” “That’s what that Chief guy said.” Both sets of pilots in the Pave Hawks looked at the abandon runway with a tower and small building behind the tower. “OK, let’s set it down.” They set the choppers down in front and taxied them to the right side of the tower where there was a grotto of large trees to give the cockpit some shade; “We’re here!” The security force members climbed out and the lieutenant started walking up two flights of stairs to the control room at the top of the tower. At the last step he reached down, searched under the brace and found the magnetic container with the key. “Right where the Chief said it would be!” He opened the control room, went to the cabinet on the far wall and extracted three sets of keys before turning on the air conditioning, and placed the tower key where he found it. The Sarge came over when he got back down and said, “Where do you want them?” “One up in the tower, two to come with me, and the other two to help when the Chinook gets here.” The lieutenant handed him a set of keys then went over to the ground building and started trying keys in the door’s lock. The fourth one opened the door; the musky smell was over-powering, but he able to turn on the air conditioning. As he approached the double doors at the back of the building, two airmen came into the building. They watched as the lieutenant studied the doors, then took what looked like a skeleton key and placed it in the lock. He slowly turned the key and heard a click. He pushed the doors apart into the sidewalls to expose a freight elevator. The airmen looked at each other, and one said, “This is spooky!” The lieutenant turned and said, “Do we have any volunteers?”

The flight engineer went down the center aisle of the Chinook telling everybody to brace themselves. The Major, Chief, and Blue were dozing in their seats in the front. The medic was standing over Scout with Brat, Andy was seated in front of the bunk Sandra was in, with two airmen at each end, and four hooded and handcuffed prisoners sat across from them with two more airmen on each end. It looked like a dust storm when they landed, but it was a soft landing. The Chinook taxied up to the tower and cut it's engines. At the back, the flight engineer was holding onto a grip as he flipped the switch for the rear door; slowly the hydraulics lowered the door to make a ramp. The Sarge entered the back of the copter and went to the Chief, "Sir, the lieutenant is having a problem starting the electrical system down below and asks for your assistance." The Chief got up and headed for the rear of the chopper saying "Everybody stay where you are until we get this solved." Brat turned to the Chief as he walked by and said "Patton's Revenge!" The Chief kept going but said "Brat don't start with that again." Two airmen came aboard and asked the other airmen if they needed a break. One asked if there was a 'John' out there. "Buddy you have the whole desert out there and nothing else!" The airman decided to chance it, as he gave his M-16 to the new arrival. A few minutes later Chief came back with the Sarge and said, "Head them up and roll them out. We will take the wounded first, then the prisoners, and the rest to follow." As the Major went to thank the Chinook crew, they asked him if they were going to be all right out here? The Major smiled and said that everything would be fine for a couple of days.

Whiz and the Los Alamos team were going over the files on the laptop. The ‘Streamer’ files were all together in one downloaded directory. They accessed the directory and were stopped in their tracks by the encryption program. They had to get the algorithm sequence controller program and match it up and only then were they able to say for certain that these were the same files transferred from yesterday. They weren’t able to decipher the files but that is what the program was for, and it worked. They had a seamless network solution with state of the art encryption for information transfer between satellites, mobile receivers, aerial command posts, and controllers right on the battlefield, with real-time feedback. On top of that, it was scaleable to different levels of access. One of the main problems with joint force command was that different units and different countries had different access levels which didn’t work with each other; this would allow that to happen. Whiz leaned back on the chair and realized what would happen if this had fallen into the wrong hands! The buzzing brought Whiz back to consciousness as Jack picked up the phone, “Go ahead Deke, OK, we will get ready.” Jack turned to Ho, Jim, and Whiz saying “Two Black Hawk helicopters with twelve men wearing black outfits armed to the teeth have just landed, expect them any minute.” Whiz yelled, “We have to hide the laptop in something!” The Buzzer buzzed and Jack pushed the door button. The door opened and three men in black entered, the lead man looked at the four men trying to look nonchalant. “Well if it isn’t Whiz, Where is the Major and the rest of the team?” “They are still out in the field, Commander.” Whiz cringed when he said it. “Good, now don’t tell them we are coming, I want it to be a surprise.” Whiz stood at the trailer door looking at Deke standing at the corner of the old gas station. When he heard the rotor blades of the Chinook coming in for a landing, Deke gave the sign and

Whiz bolted out of the trailer. As he walked to the chopper, he looked over at the command post where Captain Miller was directing the attention of the two men in black outfits to the map. As he passed a group of Rangers coming off the chopper, a Sargent stopped him, "I was told to give this to you." Whiz looked at the clipboard with a few pages on it held down with a rubberband at the bottom. "What is it?" "Our report from the mine, very interesting." Whiz saw the EOD badge and said, "Thank you." He then dropped the clipboard in the Macy shopping bag that held the laptop. As soon as he was on board the Chinook took off heading south.

Blue was the last off the chopper. Once off, he stopped and stared at the desert expanse. "Another beautiful day in Paradise." He said to no one in particular. The Medic was directing the stretchers into the sick bay; at least that is what it said above the door. He didn't like the sign above the door across from sick bay; it read 'Interrogation Room.' The Chief was directing the prisoners and their guards into the back hallway marked 'Stockade.' Brat was in the 'Canteen' going through all the metal cabinets, "Nothing!" she yelled. The Major was standing in front of the door across from the elevator marked 'Control Room' with a clipboard giving out room assignments. The bunkrooms were divided into two corridors marked 'Blue and Red' each had four rooms with four bunks each and it wasn't going to be enough. The Major thought, wait a minute, there would be two airmen in the spare cells in the stockade. He hoped that this would be the last time here. Brat came stomping around the corner; "Do you realize that we have no food and water to drink?" The Major was tired, "Calm down Brat it's on the way. While we're waiting, go find Blue."

An hour later The Major asked the Chief to round everybody up into the Canteen. “I hate to inform you, but we are all sequestered for the duration of the mission, and once we are done you will not be able to speak to anyone about it. Do I make myself clear?” Everybody in the canteen nodded. “We should be here only three days. Food and water is on the way, along with some things to keep our minds off being here. These are close quarters and we have to live and work together in harmony. I ask each and every one of you to show consideration towards the detainees. We are here to find out who is guilty and who is innocent. Any questions?” One of the airmen raised his hand and the Major pointed at him, “Where are we? What was this place built for?” the Major turned to the Chief and said, “The Chief here knows more about the history of ‘Desert One’ than me. But to answer your first question and warn you about what you are going to see and hear around here; first we are still in the U.S.” everybody applauded. “We are on a military reservation that likes to fire missiles, shoot shells, and drop bombs. The sortie put on quite a fireworks display, but this area is closed to that while we are here. Chief will you tell how ‘Desert One’ came about?” The Chief stood and started telling the story, “During the Second World War, a certain general wanted to make sure that his officers acted properly during capture and interrogation. Since he was performing maneuvers in the area with his tank corps, he asked that an interrogation bunker be constructed to train his officers, it’s said that on occasion he would personally conduct the sessions. Switch to the Korean War. When rumors came back after the war that our captured troops were subjects in brainwashing, studies were conducted here to measure the merits of those procedures, again on volunteer officers. In between the Korean War and the Vietnam War a new branch of the military called physiological warfare was created and used this

place as one of its test centers. I like to look on this place as a debriefing area.” The Major stood and asked for any more questions, “Can we call our friends and family to tell them we are all right?” The Major smiled, “Yes, under certain conditions, one call each and it will be monitored for content. That is all.”

“Where the hell is everybody?” the Commander said to the two men he left behind at Vicksburg Junction. After finding no one at Camel Crossing, he had returned with his team and everything except for a clean up detail were gone. The two men didn’t want to tell him that they were chowing down in the tent when the 18-wheeler, suburban, Chinook, and command post disappeared. Their prayers were answered when someone in the chopper yelled to the Commander, “Commander, the mission is cancelled; we have orders to return to base.” The Commander returned to looking at his two men, “You may wish you went with those ‘Misfits,’ get onboard.” As the helicopters lifted off, one of the soldiers taking down the tent was heard to say, “C’est la vie!”

Whiz jumped out of the side door of the Chinook and waved as they took off. He went right to the control room where the rest of the team, the lieutenant and Sarge were organizing the daily schedules. When he saw Scout sitting with a sling on he went over to her and asked if she was all right? “Yes, I’m fine, just a flesh wound.” Scout said as she wrote in her notebook. “You see, I warned them something would happen if I left during the operation.” “Whiz we were waiting for you to brief us on the computer, well!” The Chief had a habit of getting right to the point. “Streamer was on the computer, due to

hacking the download, but the program has not been compromised or distributed. He is definitely the one who committed the crime, jeopardizing national security.”

“AFH130 to Desert One come in.” “Copy you AFH130.” “Coming in with a supply shipment, are we cleared to land?” “Desert One to AFH130 landing strip 021 is clear, Wind out of the southwest at 10 knots. Copy?” “On final approach.” Blue watched from the tower as the C-130D made a perfect landing on the runway. “Attention all personnel. The supply shipment has arrived and needs to be unloaded, all able bodied personnel report to the landing strip.” Blue put down the microphone and tried to familiarize himself with the tower controls. It had been a long time since he was in a tower and it was a lot different from being a ‘Coyote’ (the nickname Forward Air Controllers are given in the Air Force. There are not many special operation units in the military that don’t rely on them to bring in the precision strike from the sky.) Blue looked out the window and liked the setup, him up here and the ants down there, hard at work.

Day 7-Sunday

Charley sat with one hand handcuffed to the metal chair bolted to the floor. “Sandra was in trouble and I sent word to the authorities for help.” “First we want to know how you connected into the telephone system?” Brat asked sitting across the table from him. “I used two alligator clips connecting to the phone jacks on my modem, then I attached the clips to the phone cable.” “That sounds very simple, but not for someone without expertise, where did you learn this little trick?” “It was learned in the Army.” “Charley, I have all day, if you want to drag this out, be my guest, but I was hoping you wanted some food.” Brat said with disappointment. “Ranger school at Fort Bragg.” “That’s better, now after you sent the email to the wildlife service, what did you do?” “I tried to download some information about Sandra, but it didn’t work. Everything looked like Chinese, so I packed it up and headed back.” “How did you know that there was information about Sandra on the Internet?” Brat kept a close eye on the voice analyzer for this one. “I recognized her from something I saw at work and wanted to find that information.” Brat looked at him, “What was that information that jogged your memory?” Charley laid his free hand on the table and said, “It was a FBI wanted flyer, saying that she was wanted for questioning in connection with a murder in California.” Brat smiled at him, “So you knew she was a wanted person and you went back to help her?” “Listen lady, she needed my help. I informed the authorities, she is still innocent until proven guilty under the Bill of Rights; something you people seem to disregard!” Now it was time for Brat to fold her hands on the table, “Charley, we have not forgotten our laws, but in certain cases like treason, espionage, and sabotage those rights are suspended for the good of all the people.” “She isn’t a terrorist!” Charley said satirically.

Brat stared at him, "You're right, but the question is why did you steal top secret government property?" Charley laughed, "I don't know what you are talking about." Brat smiled "That is what we are here to find out, let's take a break and continue later, shall we?" The two guards came into the room, handcuffed Charley hands in back of him and took him out of the room. Brat walked into the control room where the other SOP6 members were sitting, "I think he is telling the truth. Do we have his history yet?" The Chief said, "No, but it seems that we have another ex-military free-lancer.

"Mr. Waters, you are facing some serious charges here. It would be unfortunate if you spent many years in prison considering you're past service to an agency that no longer recognize you." Brat said walking around the room as he sat at the table. "Well that was to be expected, I'll save you time, was it Brat?" "That is correct." "Brat the only way I'm going to see daylight is telling you what you want to know, let's get on with it." "Who hired you?" Brat stopped in front of him. "I wish I knew, it was all done over the Internet. I put my persona on a 'soldier of fortune' bulletin board. A month later I get an offer of twenty thousand dollars to hit this lady. It looked like an easy shot; isolated, remote, easy prey. Looks are deceiving." Brat got the first answer they were looking for; who was the target. "Why did you bother to torch the mine area?" "The Farquart Twins thought it was a good idea to cover their tracks." Brat thought, good, but not good enough for me. "What did they use to torch the place?" she knows Waters thought. "It was dynamite I think." Brat smiled down at him she could lie too. "Have you ever used military grade explosives, like Astrolite?" Waters took too long. "Do you want to tell me where you got it?" It worked, Waters was looking for a way out, "One of my old war

buddies from Nam gave me some for services rendered.” Brat said swiftly, “Did you say you wanted to see the light of day again?” “Colonel Alan Spitz.” Brat thought it best to let that drop and continue. “When did you get the explosives from Colonel Spitz?” Waters thought this was working, “It’s been maybe two years, up at his retreat in the White Mountains of Arizona.” “What were the services rendered?” “He had started this militia and he had big plans for turning this country around, he wanted me to train a squad for my type of work. I really wasn’t interested in running around the woods playing soldier, but I set up a training program for him.” How did you actually get the explosives?” Waters looked confused, “The Colonel handed it to me on my last day there, he kept it in a bunker in the side of the mountain.” “What else was in that bunker?” Waters liked this line of questioning, it was leading away from him, “The bunker was a min-arsenal; weapons, ammunition, rockets, and explosives. Everything a paranoid would want to save him from those other people.” “And who are those other people?” Waters laughed, “Your guess is as good as mine.” Brat smiled at him, “Well Mr. Waters we made progress, let’s continue this later.” The guards came in and escorted him out.

Brat was buzzed into the control room; Blue was sitting drinking a soda and said, “Those other people may be your type?” Brat turned to him and said, “You mean the ones with brains!” Blue laughed, “Those are the dangerous ones.” Brat turned to the Major, “I didn’t know if we should continue without checking this Spitz out.” The Major was looking at Scout who was at the control room console with Whiz; she was entering data with one hand into the computer, “What do you think Scout?” Scout continued entering data, “It’s a clever way to divert attention away from him. Once we get the

information on this colonel we should be able to tell if this is a fairy tale or not. Thanks to Brat we now know who the target was.” The Major next asked Chief, “I think he is looking for a way out. This may be his trump card.” “Whiz what do you think?” Whiz turned in his chair, “We still haven’t found out why someone wanted this woman dead maybe she was involved in this militia, I need more information on how he was hired. This thing about the Internet sounds fishy.” The Major turned to Blue; “This guy knows his stuff on explosives. How was that woman in California killed? Maybe that is our connection?” They all looked at the Major “And is there a connection with ‘Streamer?’ Careful people, let’s not get too focused on one aspect or another, always keep in mind the whole picture.” Blue said, “Chief isn’t it time for the barbecue?” The Chief smiled and said with great gusto, “Right you are matey!”

Everybody but the girls climbed aboard the freight elevator. Brat and Scout headed to their room, when they entered they noticed a CD boom box on the built-in desk with a few CDs. On each of their bunks sat two Bloomingdale’s shopping bags. “Be careful it could be one of Blue’s stunts.” Brat said. Scout smiled “Can’t you tell they are for real?” she walked over and peered in one of the bags. Brat held onto the door handle waiting to bolt, “If it is Blue, he knows just what I need.” Scout reached into the bag and pulled out a three-pack of Hanes panties, next came a new bra, Scout checked the sizes and they were hers. Brat and Scout started pulling things out. The bags were full of everything they needed for a weekend, even swimsuits. Brat tried on the bright blue swimsuit. Not her style, but it fit in a modest way. “Come on girl, we have to get to the Barbecue.” Brat turned to see Scout laid out on the bed, “I’m feeling tired. I’ll take a little

nap and join you later.” “Do you want me to bring down some food for you?” Brat inquired, “Thanks, but I just need to sleep.” “If you are not up there in a few hours, I’ll be back.” Brat put on her flightsuit over the swimsuit, grabbed a towel and took off. Scout laid there thinking, Thank you God, you answered my prayers. She then fell into a deep sleep.

When Brat got to the top there was a guard stationed behind a table filled with magazines, he was armed with a sidearm and an M-16 leaned against a floor to ceiling metal cabinet with a big padlock on it. Brat figured this was the temporary armory. “I hope you will be able to join the barbecue Airman?” “Yes Ma’am I’ll get a break in a hour.” As Brat exited the building she didn’t need anyone to point her. She could hear music, laughter, and splashing coming from the grotto over where the helicopters were parked. As soon as she passed the first chopper she saw a big black plastic container in the back area with Blue and a few airmen leaning on the side of it. That is where the splashing was coming from. In the center of the grotto were metal picnic tables with a couple of pilots and airmen chowing down and metal lawn chairs where the Major and Lieutenant held up cans of pop towards her. On the left side of the grotto was a stereo system blaring out music, to the right of it was the Chief wearing a chef’s hat and apron standing in front of a large 55-gallon drum on legs dishing out steaks to Whiz and Sarge. On the other side of the barbecue were tables with food, utensils and coolers. In front of her were a couple of airmen making a large fire ring. Brat smiled and headed over to the Chief. She was going to get the biggest steak, then take a nice dip in the pool. That will fix a hard week!

AG was sitting at the console in the conference room eating a salad. The Admiral was pleased that they were able to clean up the mess before the reinforcements got involved. The taskers were in to the Pentagon and The Defense Security Service in Phoenix, Dallas, and Los Angeles. Each had called back and would send investigators out the first thing in the morning. Doug had called to say the usual “Jennifer what would we do without you? Everything you did was prefect. They were continuing the investigation, and hoped to wrap it up by Tuesday.” Jennifer started setting up files on the computer so that once the information started coming in she could catalog it and download it to Desert One. Then it was on to the National Crime Information Computer System.

“The Stoner 63 was designed by Eugene Stoner, who also designed the M-16. He wanted to create a more versatile weapon with interchangeable stock, barrels, and ammunition loads. Unfortunately the M-16 was catching on with all the services and the need for a more versatile assault weapon was not needed. A dozen were ordered mostly by the Navy for their seal teams.” Blue loved talking about his baby, “Tomorrow we could go to the range and you guys can shoot it.” One of the airmen asked, “There is a range out here?” “You see that brick wall on the other side of the runway?” Blue said pointing across the runway, “That is the execution wall, and this grotto was the cemetery.” The three airmen looked at him in wonder, “You mean to tell us they executed people at that wall and then buried them here?” “It was mock executions and burials, the physiological warfare people wanted to see what effects the executions and burials of comrades had on the volunteers they were studying.” Each of the airmen

commented, "Sick Bastards!" "Who thinks up this shit?" "I wonder what the results were?" Then a sweet voice said, "Are you boys talking about me?" They turned to see Brat standing on the small deck above the pool. The three airmen in unison said, "No Ma'am." Blue started to say "Just telling them about this..." Brat unzipped her flightsuit and let it fall to the deck. She smiled at the results; the airmen couldn't take their eyes off of her. Blue turned around and looked over the grotto. Brat turned and slowly lowered herself into the water. "This is just what I needed." She cooed and swam over to the guys. Blue turned to her and asked about Scout. "She just wanted to take a nap before coming up." Brat said leaning on the side of the pool next to Blue, "Is there something wrong Blue?" "You look beautiful Brat, and we are in this hellhole, what could be wrong?" Brat was more shocked by the compliment than the cynicism. "What's the problem, missing old Boulder City?" Blue laughed, "I'm missing something."

"Mrs. Connors I hope you are fully recovered?" "Yes, Thank you." Sandra said with her hands folded in her lap. "We are investigating the incident that happened on Thursday, Friday and Saturday and need to question you on it." Brat said sitting across from her at the table. "Yes, I understand." "We are federal investigators; you may be questioned later by local officials." Brat said bluntly. "There is not much I can tell you concerning the reason why." "Why don't you tell us your involvement starting on Thursday?" After an hour and a half detailed account of what happened, it ended with Sandra crying, "I didn't know what I was doing! I'm terrible sorry I shot that woman. I thought I was shooting at a talking tree!" "That's alright Mrs. Connors. She is fine and will recover fully and you have no idea why these men were after you?" "No, at first I

thought they were escaped criminals, then I realized they were after me, why I don't know." "OK, Mrs. Connors let's play a word game. I will say a word and you tell me what it means to you." Sandra wiped her tears with a Kleenex, and said, "OK." "Streamer?" "Kid's bike." "Charley?" "Fine young man." "Andy?" "Good old friend." "Judy Nelson?" "Old friend from Tucson." "Direct Action?" "Sean's last Book." "Militia?" "National Guard." "Planet First?" "Friends of the Planet." "Are you involved with this group?" "At first, but Sean thought of better ways to change the world, his last book tells it all." "Riverside, California?" "Place in California?" "Yuma?" "Place where Andy picks up supplies for us." "Do you shop there much?" "The last time I was there was two years ago. That is the only time I've left the Kofa in three years." Brat looked up, "You have only left the Star Bright Mine once in three years?" Sandra shrugged, "There was no need." Brat had a puzzled look on her face and said, "Thank you Mrs. Connors that will be all." Brat walked into the control room saying, "Can you believe that?"

"Andy I hope you have recovered from your ordeal?" Blue asked. "I'm doing fine mister." "Good. We were talking to Sandra and she said that she hasn't left the Kofa in over two years, is that right?" "When did she leave two years ago?" Andy asked puzzled. "We thought maybe you would know." Andy scratched his head then said; "Now I remember, you see I had to go into the hospital for an operation on my foot. Got a sliver chopping wood and it got infected. She had to drive me to the hospital and drove me back." Blue thought, that will be easy to check with the hospital. Then asked, "Did she have any problems while she was in Yuma?" Andy scratched his head again, "She said

she didn't like the food at Big Bob's, that was the only thing." "Andy did you know Bo Murrey or Lance Stickey from Yuma?" Andy didn't scratch his head this time. "Are those the two strange guys that run the Postal Express?" Blue thought this is going to be a long interview, "No Andy, those are the two guys that came up on Thursday." "Oh, no I never saw those guys before." "Did you or Sandra have any trouble with people coming to the mine?" Andy said "Just that group of Boy Scouts that came last summer; what an unruly mob they were." "Ok Andy back to Yuma, did you have any trouble with anyone in Yuma?" "No, I didn't like those guys at the Postal Express, but they didn't cause me any problems when I picked up the mail." Then it clicked in Blue's brain, "Who did you get mail from?" "Sometimes my brother from Tennessee would write, or I would send in a coupon for something free." Blue was praying this would be the question, "What about Sandra?" Andy was about to say something then stopped, "I was going to say she didn't get any mail, but last month she sent off a letter to New York and then got a reply last week." Blue thought, this is it, "Andy do you know what that letter was about?" "Something to do with that book she is always reading." Blue turned his head around and smiled into the one-way glass, "Andy do you know what the book was called or where it is?" Andy scratched his head again; "I think it something like Direct Express or Express Action, or something like that. I think it's somewhere back at the mine or got burned up." Blue asked "Direct Action?" Andy smiled and said, "That's it, that is the book she was always reading!" Blue could hardly contain himself, "Andy one last question, do you know what Streamer is?" Andy started nodding his head, "Yes sir that is that fireworks that shoot up in the sky like a big Roman candle." Blue almost fell out of his chair

laughing. The two guards came in, looked at Blue laughing and took Andy back to his cell, “That must be a new form of Physiological Warfare.” One guard said to the other.

“Mrs. Conners there are a few more questions we need to ask you, if you don’t mind?” Blue asked, now composed. “No. I don’t mind, if it will help.” “You sent a letter to New York, for what reason?” Sandra wondered what this had to do with what happened, “I had sent a letter to Sean’s old publisher Brad Hanson at EarthGuard Magazine which published all of his books, and I asked him if he was interested in publishing Sean’s last book. He wrote back that he would have to verify that this was Sean’s book before he could make any offer. To verify the book I would have to bring it to New York. Thursday before the men showed up I had decided that it wasn’t worth the trouble, changing my lifestyle and all.” Blue looked at her in astonishment. He had read most of Sean Conners books in college. They were the books that had brought poetry to the Environmental Movement and changed the thinking of a whole generation. Blue thought that this book would be a bestseller once it hit the bookstores. “Mrs. Conners what would you do if you could not go back to the mine?” Sandra looked worried, “I don’t know where Andy and I would go, we both love the desert.”

Blue stepped into the control room once Sandra was escorted out, “This thing is getting strange even by my standards.” Brat had to add her two cents worth, “Which isn’t saying much.” Blue screwed up his face at her. The Major turned and looked at Scout, “Well Scout, you’ve been reading the book, what’s in it to cause these incidents?” Scout rocked back in her chair with the manuscript on the table in front of her. “It’s a departure

from his other books of madcap mayhem. This is a serious work asking for coordination between all groups and agencies for the common good, without which he questions the survival of the human race.” The Chief asked, “Wasn’t this guy a member of that anarchy group “‘Planet First’ that advocated violent action against government and business? And wouldn’t that tie in with the militia groups?” Brat shook her head; “The two groups are at different ends of the spectrum. The only thing they have in common is the way to achieve their goals, through violence, and this Connors thought that he could achieve social change through his writing, but he was associated with that ‘Planet First’ group.” The Major said, “OK, Whiz what is your slant?” “First, it looks like the Streamer incident involved only this Ames fellow, and he wasn’t trying to steal any national secrets, just trying to help that lady. I think that this hit man was to kill her to stop the book from being published, and he may have killed that woman in California. Why, I don’t know, but it all seems to relate to that ‘Planet First’ group.” The Major looked at everyone in the room before he spoke, “Good work people, if what you say is true, we should be able to wrap this up tomorrow and turn these people over to the FBI and be on our merry way. Blue lets finish up the interrogation of the other two men and call it a day.”

“Bo tell us how you got involved in this incident.” Blue said not really interested. “Me and Lance were having a few beers in Lutes Casino and playing some pool, when this Waters guy came in and started shooting pool at the next table by himself. Naturally we asked him if he wanted to have a game and he agreed. We got to talking and he said that he was looking for a couple of sharp guys to help him with a job. Me and Lance thought since the roofing jobs were kind of slow we may be able to help him if the price

was right.” Blue cut in, “This Lutes Casino is where? And have you ever seen this Waters guy before?” “It’s a bar and grill in downtown Yuma. No, we never saw him before; he said he was up from Texas.” Blue said to go on. “He said that he would pay us one thousand dollars each to flush out some low-life squatters from a mine he had in the Kofa, said he wanted to torch the place for the insurance money.” Blue asked “Didn’t you realized that you were committing a crime?” “Hell, it’s no crime taking money from an insurance company. They are the biggest crooks in this country!” Blue said, “Did he tell you who these squatters were?” “Said that it was a man and woman alone up there.” Blue asked, “Did he say what he wanted you to do?” “I was just getting to that if you wouldn’t stop interrupting me.” Blue said, “Sorry.” “We were to go up and he would provide cover from a ridge, he told us that the hillbilly was dangerous and tried to kill him the last time he went up, so don’t take any chances. He wanted us to throw these canisters in the buildings and mine, and to tie the couple up and leave them there and he would come back later to deal with them.” “Excuse me Bo, but what did you think he meant by dealing with them?” Bo smiled, “That was none of my concern. Of course, we had to renegotiate when the woman got away, and he needed our help finding her.” Blue could take no more, and signaled the guards to take this... whatever, away.

“Lance we would like to hear your side of the story.” Blue asked. “This guy conned us into getting rid of this old couple up at this mine in the Kofa, said they were squatters on his mine. We get up there and this old coot pulls a gun on us. Luckily I was able to disarm him but he gets away and goes crazy, starting fires in the cabins. We were finally able to tie him up. Then the bitch runs into the mine and starts a fire to prevent us

from getting her. She climbs out an airshaft and takes off over the mountain. We figured that we better go after her and see that she doesn't hurt herself. So we follow her to the cabin. Then this guy comes out of nowhere saying we are messing with his bitch and starts shooting at us. We figure that we better stick around and see that he doesn't hurt her. In the morning we hear them fighting in there and he's really smacking her real good. The next thing we know the cabin is on fire and the guy is shooting at us. We figured that he killed her and is trying to escape, so we return fire and that is when that crazy Chinese bitch blows out my truck window and starts swearing at us. Someone needs to really smack that bitch good and show her whose boss." "And you are just the man to do it, right?" Blue said smiling. "Man, put me in a room alone with her and in an hour she would be begging for mercy and more at the same time." Blue stood up from the table and looked down at his smiling face, "Brat do you want to take over for me?" The voice of the Major could be heard on the speaker, "That's enough Blue!" The two guards came in grabbing Lance and took him out.

Blue walked into the control room and all pandemonium had broken loose. Brat was on the floor with Whiz holding on for dear life to her legs while the Chief had her shoulders pinned to the ground and Scout was kneeling down next to her asking her to calm down. Brat was screaming "MERCY! I'll give him mercy and he wouldn't be asking for more!" The Major was in Blue's face, "Lieutenant what the hell do you think you are doing? Do I constantly have to remind you of your oath, to be an officer and a gentleman?" Blue bowed his head and said "No sir." The Major turned and yelled, "Get off of her." They slowly let go of her and helped her up. He then turned back to Blue, "I

think you owe Lieutenant Lo and everybody else an apology.” “Yes sir.” Blue looked up as they were dusting themselves off and wiping the sweat off their faces. Brat was huffing, and her cheeks were red and he noticed a beautiful glow to her face, Damn! “Major Remington, Captain Ambrewter, Lieutenant Lo, Lieutenant Jensen, Lieutenant Rivera I want to apologize for my actions. My conduct was uncalled for and disrespectful towards you all, and I want to personally say I’m sorry to you Cindy, this would not have happened with a professional interrogator like yourself. Brat looked at Blue and said, “Apology accepted.”

She then ran out of the control room with Scout following her. Blue sat down at the table and put his head in his hands; Whiz and the Chief came over and patted him on the shoulder and then left. The Major sat down at the table with a pile of transcripts in front of him, “Blue do you want to tell me about it?” Blue looked up with an exhausted look on his face, “What’s there to tell?” The Major had a kindly look on his face, “Do you want to tell me how you feel about Cindy?” Blue stood and said “It don’t matter, because nothing can come of it.” He then walked out of the room.

“Why does this always happen to me?” Brat said crying on her bunk. “Cindy you are a woman of strong emotions, which create strong emotions in others, you have a gift which you must control.” Scout said looking down at her, “And Blue is like you, but different.”

Day 8-Monday

“Mrs. Richard Waters?” “Yes, how can I help you?” “We are agents with the Defense Security Service, and we have a federal search warrant for your property.” “Gladys was flabbergasted. “I’m sorry, but you will have to come back when my husband is here.” “Sorry Ma’am but your husband is in federal custody, and he will not be able to be contacted at this time; please stand aside.” With that the three men in suits entered the house. Gladys screamed, “I’m calling our lawyer!” “Ma’am you will have that right when you are taken by Agent Phillips here to the Federal Building for questioning; please get your purse.”

“Superintendent Miles, I have two men from the Defense Security Service here to talk with you.” John Miles straightened his tie, “Send them in Jeanie.” The two men entered his office and he showed them to the two seats in front of his desk, “Superintendent, we are here to gather all information you have on Charley Ames. We have a federal subpoena for all your records, and wish to interview anyone he worked with.” “Does this have anything to do with the reason he was let go?” The Superintendent got an uneasy feeling in his stomach. “I’m sorry sir, but we are not allowed to comment on the investigation.”

“Grant, Homicide.” “Detective Grant this is Chief Landry. I have two federal agents here who want to go over with you your investigation on the Judy Nelson case.”

“Send them down Chief, we could use all the help we can get.”

“Mr. Hanson, We have two agents from the Defense Security Service here to see you.” “Nicole, call Peter Brico and have him get over here. Find that advisory he gave us on dealing with government inquiries, OK? Show them in.” The two agents came in to the spacious office of the publisher of EarthGuard Magazine. “Please have a seat gentlemen.” Brad pointed to the two leather wing chairs in front of his massive desk. “To what do I owe the pleasure of this visit, Gentlemen?” “Mr. Hanson we are making inquiries into a letter that was sent to you last month from a Mrs. Sean Conners.” “Yes, would you like to see it?” “That would be most helpful.” Brad pressed the intercom button on the phone, “Nicole, could you please bring in the file with the correspondence dealing with Mrs. Conners?” “Yes Mr. Hanson.” Brad turned back to the Agents, “I hope she is all right?” “Yes Mr. Hanson, she is well and safe.” Each of the agents looked at each other like they were deciding something. “Mr. Hanson can you get your legal counsel here?” “He is on the way as we speak.” Just then the door opened and the very attractive Nicole came in with the two files. Brad took the files and said, “Nicole as soon as Peter Brico arrives send him in, thank you.” Brad tried to hand the files to the agents, “I think we will wait until your counsel gets here.” The lead agent said. Brad was trying to remember all the pieces in this mystery. One of the world’s greatest and most controversial author dies while writing a book, whose wife disappeared with the book after his Cochise funeral. (The great apache leader Cochise; when he died his body was taken out into the

wilderness and buried. His braves tramped his gravesite and swore never to say where it was. To this day his remains have never been found.) She had been missing for three years, even the FBI could not find her after her friend was murdered in a car bombing two years ago. Suddenly out of the blue, the wife writes that she has his long missing last book and now federal agents arrive acting very strange. Brad couldn't ask for better publicity!

Peter Brico opened the door to Brad's office saying, "This better be good Brad, I'm still hung over from the weekend." Peter didn't noticed the men seated in the chairs when Brad stood up, "Peter you are not going to believe this! First, let me introduce you to agent Zanders and Baldwin. They are with the Defense Security Service." Peter said, "Let's all sit on the couches, I'm not good at standing today." They all moved to the herringbone fabric sofas in front of the fireplace in the corner of the office. Peter started, "As legal representative for Brad Hanson, EarthGuard Magazine, and Environmental Press Inc. can you state the reason for this visit?" Agent Baldwin replied, "We are conducting a National Security Investigation which involves Mrs. Sean Connors. She is not a direct party in this investigation, and as far as we know has not committed any crime, what concerns us is the letter she sent last month to this office." Peter thought that he had figured it out, "Does this have anything to do with the Judy Nelson Bombing?" Both agents looked at him with blank stares, "No, we can say that it doesn't as far as we are concerned." Peter leaned over to Brad and asked, "Where is the letter?" "On my desk." Peter stood and walked over to the desk and opened the letter. There wasn't anything strange about the letter, she just asked if they were interested in publishing the

book. But she gave her return address, at least a P.O. Box number. This is what they were after, Peter thought. "I'm sorry gentlemen, but I can't show you the letter because it has her return address on it, and that is privileged information." Agent Zanders reached into his suit pocket and pulled out a notebook, "Sandra Conners, P.O. Box 234123, Yuma, Arizona, is that the return address?" Peter shouted, "Well, what do you want?" Agent Baldwin smiled, "We are on the same team here. Mrs. Conners is in protective custody after someone tried to murder her, like Judy Nelson. We think the person who wanted her murdered got her address from this office. We want to know who was given that information." Brad was in shock with his head in his hands. Peter walked over to Brad, "Tell them who you gave that information to and why."

"OK, Everybody's here. Gather around the table. Whiz has been downloading a ton of reports, interviews, records and case files, and Scout has been sorting them into individual packets since they started coming in this morning. It is review time. Pick up your packet and spend the afternoon reviewing all the information. You will be updated if anything new develops. By dinner I want everybody to have questions and recommendations. Chief has graciously agreed to barbecue chicken and ribs for our last night, then it's back to work for Blue and Brat with final interviews. Tomorrow I will make the final dispositions and then we are out of here. Get to work." The Major picked up his packet and sat down at one of the seats at the table. He was trying to judge the mood of his people. The chief hated this paperwork, but like Whiz, was running on automatic pilot. They missed their wives and Whiz his little boy. The Major caught Brat sneaking a look at Blue and he was glancing at her. It seemed things were back to normal

with Miss Proper and the Rebel. When it came to Scout, she was more subdued, stuck more to herself; he had seen the most changes in Scout, the girl rejected by her peers, but fighting on, the shy girl with men, the happy woman in love, the devastated woman in mourning, and now the confident loner. And what about him? The absent-minded professor who was just going through the motions after the loss of his beloved Jane? It was a good thing he could count on Jennifer to keep the ball rolling.

Jennifer wished she had two heads and five arms, she had spent the night sleeping on the couch so that she could catch any calls that came in on Monday morning, and they started coming in at 6:00AM from New York investigators. Funny in the fact that they were the last ones contacted on Sunday. Government investigators are squeamish when they have to interview members of the press; it's like talking to the enemy. But these guys were sharp in their questions and request for guidelines on what to ask and what they were permitted to divulge to EarthGuard Inc. Then the investigators in Dallas had to call in the bomb squad in their search of the Waters residents. It seems they found some high-grade material in the deep freeze locker in the garage. Then the boys in Phoenix were finding no dirt on Charley, just praise on what a good guy he is. The real shocker came from the Pentagon. It seems our thief was a war hero! And the Los Angeles office said that the bomb in the Judy Nelson case was made from Semtex, an explosive used only by the military and the same material stolen in the Oatman massacre, but Astrolite was used at the mine? Now the tricky part was coming, when you start asking a lot of questions, you start drawing a lot of attention. Doug is going to have a hard time containing this. The way it was going; the faster he could pull the plug the better.

The Chief had snuck up to check the coals for the slow cooking of the ribs and chicken, and was greeted with a beautiful spring afternoon in the desert. There were lovely colored flowers blooming around the trees at the grotto. The airmen were putting to good use the pool and stereo system and he had detected other deserters. Blue and Scout were over at the wall with a group of airmen doing some target practice. Spending most of his life around water, the desert was a shocking change, but the more he saw of it the more he enjoyed it. Chief had the ribs and chicken seasoned and lightly basted, the coals had a steady, even heat. Time to wrap them up and put them on the rack. After checking his watch, he would give it an hour, and come back and check them. As he headed back down to the Dungeon, he wondered if he should call Blue and Scout back. Scout had probably read everything, but Blue tended to things on the fly, resting on his judgement and instincts. If anything the Chief admired about Blue it was this quality. The military tended to pound that out of people, and requires you to do things by the book. It was probably best to let him play. Blue was on edge, this thing with Brat was getting on his nerves. Why they didn't just get it on, and over with was beyond him. Chief had the thinking that too much brainpower was just as bad as too little brainpower, and both of them had too much! After tomorrow it wouldn't matter, even tho they would be less than twenty-five miles apart, they wouldn't see each other until the next incident.

Brat greeted Chief as he entered the control room and handed a service record, "Here's more on our little thief." U.S. Army Sgt. Charley Ames; Medical Specialist. Enlistment: 1990. Discharged: 1995 Assigned: 75th Ranger Regiment. Company 'D'

Sgt. Ames was decorated with the Silver Star and the Purple Heart for his actions on October 3, 1993 in the country of Somali during the peacekeeping action in the city of Mogadishu. The nature of this action “Restore Hope” is still classified. In 1995 after recovering from wounds suffered in this action, Sgt. Ames was offered reenlistment with a placement in Officer Candidate School, which he declined and was released from the U.S. Army in July of that year.

The two agents were sitting in the cafeteria of the Lawrence-Livermore National Laboratory drinking coffee and eating sandwiches. They had driven up after getting a sample of the residue of the Semtex from the Riverside Evidence Room. A man in a white lab coat came over to them and said, “Agent McGreagor and Agent Brown we have a perfect match, the scrapping from the incendiary device matches the residue of the sample from Riverside.” Agent Brown said, “How can that be? He used Astrolite in the incendiary device and Semtex in the bomb?” The man in the lab coat said, “We didn’t find any Semtex on the incendiary device but we found Astrolite on the sample from Riverside. He may have used the Astrolite as a primer, or primary charge in Riverside.” Both Agents got up and said “Thank you,” and took their sample with them when they left. The man in the lab coat wondered if they knew about the other sample.

Scout and Brat were leaning against the side of the pool soaking up the rays of the setting sun, “Isn’t that amazing about Charley? When he came back at me in the first interview I thought he was one of those bleeding heart liberals, not a war hero!” Scout simply replied, “Who would have thought?” This guy from the start puzzled Scout,

idealist and fatalist is a bad combination. “Brat will you ask him a question for me?” Brat smiled, “That depends on whether you have the hots for him.” Scout smiled, “I haven’t thought of a man in that way for a long time.” Brat was startled, “And I take it you haven’t noticed the men looking at you?” Scout laughed, “I have always wondered if they would look at me at all, if I didn’t have these breasts?” It was Brat’s turn to laugh, “And the biggest breasts I’ve seen on such a small lady! Women like me pay plastic surgeons thousands of dollars to get those.” Scout looked horrified; “Brat is that all you think about? Image is so superficial, and that is the question I want you to ask this guy.” “Oh! What was the question?” Brat asked, “Why did he throw away a hero status for one of obscurity?” Brat laughed, “There is an old saying that one who does not promote one self, is obnoxious to begin with.” Scout thought for a few moments before saying, “You may be right.”

Chief had just given Whiz a thigh of chicken with a side order of ribs, “Whiz could you please go tell those women that I’m not going to hand out food all night, and if they want some to get over here.” Whiz said, “Sure Chief.” The Major was eating with the lieutenant and the pilots, a few of the airmen were getting the fire pit ready for the campfire, as the sun slowly slid down behind the Mohawk Mountains. The two women ran over to the barbecue laughing. Brat said, “Reporting as ordered sir.” Chief smiled, they both reminded him of his daughters, “What do you want a breast or thigh?” Scout squealed, “She defiantly wants breasts!” Brat reached back and softly hit Scout on the head with her metal tray. “Quiet you!” The Chief wasn’t going to touch that with a ten-foot pole, “Next.” The Major was trying to arrange flights out the next morning with the

lieutenant and the pilots when the lieutenant's radio came to life, "Lieutenant, we have company." The lieutenant stood up, "How many and where?" The Sarge peered through the binoculars in the tower, "Maybe ten, two clicks to the south, heading right for us." The lieutenant looked at the pilots, "Get the choppers ready." He then walked over to the stereo and turned it off, "Security Force, intruder alert, ten minutes at the choppers," airmen scrambled from the grotto to the building. The lieutenant said into the radio, "Sarge we're going out to get them." He then turned to the Major; "Can your people secure the facility while we intercept them?" The Major replied "Of course."

The group assembled at the picnic tables where the Major was sitting. "Scout and Blue up in the tower, Chief and Brat in the building. Whiz at the entrance to the bunker with the elevator down with you. And I'll be in the tower. Go!" The doors of the metal cabinet were swung open and two airmen in shorts and Hawaiian shirts were handing out weapons and equipment. The Security Force looked more like a drug lord's posse than military personnel. Gaudy and camouflage is not a good combination. In about fifteen minutes the building was deserted and the choppers had taken off. The Major stood in the control tower with Scout and Blue laying prone on the outside walk around, their weapons trying to pickup targets to the south. Chief was sitting in the open doorway of the building with his MP-5 across his apron on his lap. Brat was sitting cross-legged in front of the closed elevator doors with her Uzi. Whiz had positioned himself at the end of the red corridor with his M-16. There still was one guard in the back with the prisoners. Slowly it got darker; all the lights above ground were off; SOP6 waited in silence on a clear moonless night.

“SF-1 to SOP6.” “Go ahead SF-1.” “We have six adults and four children in custody; illegals who sneaked across the border. Returning to base, copy?” The Major replied, “Copy that SF-1.” As he looked to the south, the dreams of some were just ending. “Major to all units, stand down, reply with code names, copy?” They all responded and assembled at the tower, when the Major came down, “Gila Bend will take them and hold them for Border Patrol.” Brat asked, “What are these people doing out here in the middle of the desert?” Whiz answered her, “El Camino de Diablo.” “Sorry but my Spanish is rusty.” Brat said. Whiz translated, “The Devil’s Highway is twenty miles to the south. For fifty miles from east to west from that point is the most desolated desert in the good old USA. They can only guess that there are hundred of undiscovered corpses out there.” Brat asked, “Why do they chance it?” The Major answered, “Contrary to NAFTA, it’s the only chance they have for the good life of jobs.”

They watched as the choppers landed and the six adults were escorted out and four children were carried off the choppers. The lieutenant came up, “They are pretty torn up, and the Doc wants to patch them up before we take them in.” They were escorted into the grotto where Doc used a picnic table as a dressing table. Everybody just stood around looking at our poor neighbors from Mexico. Blue went up to the Major, “Can’t we take the cuffs off and at least feed them?” Major gave Blue a deep look; “I’m glad someone is thinking around here.” The Chief put on his apron and the rest of the group started putting food on trays and bringing them to the visitors. Situations like this affect people differently. Scout and Whiz, after bringing trays to two people then took off for the

bunker. Blue kept going back and getting them more food and soda. Brat was the big surprise; she had a little girl on her lap and was playing a game with her while feeding her. After an hour Sarge called down from the tower, "The Border Patrol is waiting at Gila Bend." They were loaded back onto the choppers and sent off to an unknown destiny.

Charley was escorted into the interrogation room; he had that look of disorientation that this place was good at producing. "Charley, you are a real surprise." Brat said softly. "I was hoping I wouldn't disappoint you." Charley said while trying to follow Brat as she walked around the room. "Why didn't you tell us you are a decorated war hero?" Charley laughed, "Then for sure you would have thought I was a traitor." Everybody in the control room perked up to this, and crowded around the one-way glass. "Why does one go from hero to obscurity?" Charley stopped following her around the room and just stared straight ahead at the glass window, "The only heroes I know are dead, maybe that is what obscurity is for some?" The Major asked into the Microphone, "Has he lost it?" Brat stopped in front of the glass and shook her head, no, she turned around and just looked down at him, "Are we done feeling sorry for our self?" Charley smiled up at her, "To feel sorry for ones self, they must live in the past. I left that all behind." "I'm glad to hear that Charley, and what will the future be for you?" He just kept that silly smile painted on his face, "For now, it seems that is in your hands." "If we were to cut you loose, what would you do, you have no job?" Brat thought, that was the wrong question to ask. "Life is a mystery, I'm sure I will survive that is something I have a lot of experience at." Brat was questioning who was in control here; "Charley is there

anything you would change if you had the chance?" Charley laughed, "There is that dirty word." Brat asked, "And what word is that?" Charley stared straight at Brat, "If, and what is even worse is, What if." Brat broke the eye-to-eye contact, "OK, Charley you win, hope you have a nice life." The guards came in and took him away.

Brat walked into the control room exhausted; "I now know what a dentist feels like pulling teeth!" Whiz asked, "What game was he playing?" Chief was next, "Some ancient Chinese meditation trick." Brat yelled, "Leave my ancestors out of this!" That was the break and everybody started laughing. Scout put her two cents in, "I think he was using our game against us, or maybe a new game we don't know?" Blue said very quietly, "This guy is very cool, too cool for my liking." The Major said, "The next and as far as I'm concerned the last interview, will be Blue with Waters. How are we going to handle this one?" Whiz started, "We have this guy pinned to one murder, and maybe accessory to five others, one attempted murder, and accessory to three arson charges. This guy is going to jail for life. I talked to the techs in Dallas and he is telling the truth on how he was hired; they are still trying to find that source. They came up with the source for Colonel Spitz. When he isn't playing soldier in the White Mountains, which by the way is owned by a dummy corporation, he lives with his wife in a gated community in Paradise Valley, Arizona. The last contact we can trace to him and Waters was two years ago, but after the time of the highjacking. Conveniently Waters was in New York at that time. The question is, are we going to use him before we send him to prison for life?" The Chief was next, "It is too chancy letting him go, he would catch the next flight out of the country. I would rather take him out to the wall and bury him with those other poor

souls out there.” Blue said, “I’m with you Chief. Unfortunately too many people know we have him. We can use him and then waste him in an accident when he figures it out and runs.” The Major looked over at Scout, “We don’t know what his involvement in the Oatman massacre was, let’s probe that area. Scout is that all right with you?” Everybody saw the fire in her eyes, “I think it best if I sit out this session.” She got up and left the control room, but she didn’t cry, she had no more tears. Brat said, “Let me use those ancient Chinese meditation tricks and you wouldn’t need to kill him, or sent him to prison, he’ll just need a garden to vegetate in!” They all laughed.

“Mr. Waters, we found the Semtex in your garage’s freezer and have identified it as the material stolen in a highjacking two years ago where five federal agents were murdered; we are talking the death penalty here.” Waters may have been disorientated, but that perked his concentration. “I told you I got the explosive from Colonel Spitz.” Blue smiled, “No, you said you got the Astrolite from him, nothing about where you got the Semtex.” Waters was almost yelling, “That is where I also got the Semtex from, believe me I’m telling you the truth.” “Maybe you would like to tell us the truth about the murder of Judy Nelson?” Waters leaned forward and put his head on the table, he knew he was doomed and the only hope was to tell the truth. He lifted his head and in a monotone voice said, “OK, OK, I did it, I planted the explosives in her car, but I had nothing to do with the highjacking that was a Colonel Spitz operation. He said he bribed the driver to turn off at the Aztec turnoff and the chase car just followed. The truck driver had killed the agent in the truck after the last stop. The guy in the corvette wasn’t even supposed to be there. The ambush units were waiting at the river dry bed. It was all over

in a couple of minutes. They killed the truck driver after unloading the explosives.” Everybody just paused like in a time warp, imaging it. Blue yelled, “We figured it out! Now we want the killers!” Water was startled and sat upright in his chair with a scared look on his face. “It wasn’t me, you can check, I wasn’t even in Arizona, check, you will see.” Blue’s face was bright red, “That don’t tell me who the killer were!” “The only thing I can tell you, is that I overheard the Colonel talking to someone called ‘Hilly’ on the phone about the bridge plan. He told this person that it was ready, and that he wanted him to lay low until they had photo-recon on the bridge, and that he should be ready to go in late September, that was in November of 2000.” Blue asked, “Are you sure he said a bridge?” Waters said, “Yes, I think they wanted to blow it up.” Blue said, “One last question, how and when were you contacted to kill Judy Nelson?” “That was in April of 1999, the same way as this time, through the bulletin board, and I did the job that year, in August.”

“I think he was telling the truth this time, how did it look to you?” Blue said walking up to Brat in front of her equipment. “His pitch was high, he was scared, but if he was lying he deserves an academy award.” The Major looked over to Whiz. “Get this information to our people in Washington, Dallas, Los Angeles, and Phoenix. Now for the fun part, contact Phoenix FBI, give them everything, except the information about Conners book.” The Chief howled, “But we don’t have a silver platter, what are you up to?” The Major laughed, “Let’s make them work for us for a change.” The Chief was about to say something, but the Major asked him to get Scout, saying, “We are going to do the recommendations and dispositions tonight, let’s get this over with.”

All the group members were sitting around the table in the control room with piles of folders and files stacked in front of them. The Major stood and said, "Let's start with the easy ones first, Bo Murrey?" "He is dumb, but he told us the truth, and he didn't set any of the fires." Whiz said. Scout added, "He has no criminal record, can we go with accessory to arson?" The Chief said, "Let's turn him over to our friend Officer Ray Coliter." Everybody agreed by nodding their heads. The Major said, "Next, Lance Stickey." Brat was waiting for this, "We have one count of arson on federal property and two other counts of arson on private property." Scout said, "he has two felony convictions for domestic abuse." Blue smiled, "Why is that not a surprise? If he is convicted of a arson charge, that would make it three strikes for him, goodbye for life!" Everybody agreed.

"Next, Andy Bean." Almost everybody said, "Let him go!" except Scout, "Where is he and Sandra to go? And we can't let Sandra go until we find the person responsible for wanting her dead?" The Major came to the rescue, "They are coming with us until we find the killer, I don't know where yet." Whiz came to the rescue of the Major. "Why don't we take them to the Desert Research Station? They should blend in real good there." The Major said, "Great idea Whiz!" Scout asked, "What about the FBI warrant for her?" The Major smiled, "If I figured right, they will be too busy to worry about her because they will have Richard Waters." Everybody laughed and said, "Here's to the FBI." "Next, Charley Ames?" The Chief said, "Him we can definitely let loose." The Major looked around the table and nobody else said anything. The Major Laughed and everybody stared at him, "It's funny, but this guy is in the same position you were in

when you entered the group, how soon we forget!” Brat with a shocked look on her face said, “You’re not going to invite him to join us?” “Brat do you remember those officer’s wives at the sub base?” Brat threw up her arms, “OK, it don’t make any difference because he will laugh in your face!” The Major smiled, “Shall we find out?”

The guards brought Charley into the room looking groggy and helped him sit down. The Major was sitting across the table from him, “Do you remember me Charley?” It took him a minute, “You’re the guy that probably saved my life.” The Major smiled, “Probably is sort of like ‘What if.’ Charley smiled, “Touché” “Charley all charges have been dropped, you are free to go in the morning.” “If I remember correctly my car was blown up in your firefight.” The Major said, “If I remember correctly it was our firefight, but you will be taken anywhere you want to go, within reason.” Charley looked around the room, “Where is that pretty oriental woman?” “She is looking at you behind the glass.” Charley looked at the glass, “I wanted to say I’m sorry, I was a little rough on her.” The Major smiled, “I’m sure she will understand.” “Oh! Where is Sandra?” Charley started looking around the room. “She is alright, she will be taken to a safe place.” Charley settled down, “Good, Good. I don’t suppose you could tell me where?” “Charley I’ll make you a deal, if you come with us, you will be able to see Sandra whenever it is possible.” “What’s this come with you about?” The Major reminded himself to be careful, “It’s a job, working for the government, trying to find answers to problems, there is no commitment except you would have to sign a national security agreement.” Charley laughed, “I can walk away any time I want and all I have to do is keep my mouth shut?” The Major thought this is the part where he laughs in my face, “Basically, yes.” Charley

looked up at the ceiling, “Where do I have to go to sign up?” “Las Vegas.” “Hmmm, I’ve never been to Vegas, sure why not?” The Major looked at him staring up at the ceiling, “Charley, don’t you want to know what kind of work you will be doing?” Charley lowered his head and looked the Major in the eye, “Finding answers for problems, and I figure I will have a lot of work to do.” The Major couldn’t take his eyes off Charlie’s eyes except to say, “That’s right, you will have a lot of work to do.” The Major thought he could hear Brat behind the wall screaming, I DON’T BELIEVE IT!”

Part 4-“The best laid plans of...”

Day 9-Tuesday

The Major felt like he was on a school bus. First they dropped off Scout at Gila Bend, then it was on to Luke Air Force Base where they turned over Waters to the FBI and refueled, and now it was on to the Desert Research Station to drop off Mrs. Conners and Mr. Bean with Whiz. The Major would then drive into Vegas with Charley. It seems the other chopper was making better time, dropping off Lance and Bo at Yuma with Ray, then they would go straight to Nellis to drop off the Chief, Brat, and Blue. The Chief was glad to drop Blue off at Boulder City. As the helicopter touched down on the maintenance road at the station something didn't seem right. The Major was tempted to hold the chopper, but those Security Force members wanted to get home. He carried his flight bag over to the entrance with the rest following and found the doors locked. “So much for a fine welcome. Whiz can you check on the maintenance man, see if he could open up for us?” Whiz took off for the maintenance building, and everybody settled into chairs on the veranda. Whiz came back with old Tom, who was cursing up a storm, “Brad and Carol cancelled the star gazing seminar on Friday and were gone by noon on Saturday, so I just locked the place up, then you come back with that damn helicopter, what's a person to think?” “Tom could you open the main building for our friends here, Sandra and Andy. They will be staying here for a while.” The Major motioned to Sandra and Andy. Tom rubbed his chin, “You know I don't cater to people, they will be on their own, I have enough to do around here.” Sandra spoke first, “Tom we are here to help you. Andy here can fix most anything, and I'm good at most domestic chores.” Tom pulled out a set of keys and unlocked the front doors. “Tom this is Charley, he will be

coming up here from time to time, and you know Benny already. Tom looked at the two men. "Yes, he is the phone guy." The Major turned to Benny, "Amy should be up here in a few days. I told her to call the office first, get them squared away and you can take off. Just swing by every day and pick up supplies. We are still working this out, If you have a better plan, be my guest." Benny nodded. "OK Charley are you ready to see Vegas?"

Doug changed clothes before leaving. Whiz had driven Tom to the gate and he opened them. By the time they reached Interstate 15 it was two in the afternoon. Doug got off at Las Vegas Blvd. show Charley McCarran Airport and then they cruised down the strip. The visual sensation of the casinos and the visitors walking the strip is overwhelming on the eyes, especially for two guys that just came out of the desert. At Flamingo, Doug turned off and pulled into the Hughes Center. Charley was impressed with the office complex, "This part of Sin City?" Doug laughed, "This is where Sin City is financially controlled, one way or another." Doug found his parking space in the garage and within minutes they were riding the elevator up to the suite. Charley felt uncomfortable because he was wearing the same jeans and work shirt from Thursday and all the people in this area were wearing suits and dresses. When they got off the elevator, Charley noticed that there was an office at either end of the elevators, one sign said Lode Stock Inc. and the door they went towards said GRP Enterprises. They entered into an anteroom with another door at the end. As they stood there, Charley saw the camera above the door, then a buzzer buzzed and he heard the lock on the door open.

The Door opened into a luxurious office with floor to ceiling windows, which looked east toward the Sunrise Mountain. A beautiful older woman in a light blue dress came around the large desk to greet them, “Jennifer I would like to introduce you to Charley Ames.” Jennifer held out her hand, which Charley accepted. “Jennifer is the brains of the operation.” Doug said, which produced a mild blush on her cheeks, “His comments are the reason I work here. Enough about me, Charley how are you holding up?” “Going from dungeon to pleasure capitol of the world is a shock.” “I bet it is, Charley I hate to do this but we have a ton of forms you need to fill out before we can proceed with your processing; they are on the desk. But if you would like to clean up first the bathroom is through those doors. You will find some clothes in there, I hope they fit.” Charley could only say, “Thank you.” He then went to the bathroom. Jennifer looked at Doug, “And you look like you are about to drop.” Doug loosened his tie, “I’ve seen better days, but what do you have for me before I take a nap.” The Trident Project is a go, if we promise not to send Cindy back to the Navy.” They both laughed. “Dr. Armstrong wants your head over the Desert One Project. What did you say to that couple, I think they left the country! And the Admiral called, the Director of the FBI is about to declare war, but aside from that everything is normal.” Doug smiled, “I’m glad there is nothing serious.”

Charley felt like he lost ten pounds, with all the dirt, grime and sweat washed away. The white polo shirt, Dockers, and Brooks running shoes all fit; he wondered how they knew. When he came back to the office they were both gone. He got the hint when he saw the can of pop, sandwich, bag of corn chips, and large brownie sitting on the desk in front of the forms. As he went through the forms, Doug wasn’t kidding, if he did this

or said that he was guaranteed ten years in the big house. He wondered if he was making the right decision. But he liked the act these people put on, a real class act to be sure, and he could always walk away, or be put away! What was that old saying, “Go with the flow.” As long as it didn’t turn into a flood! Now what was his mother’s maiden name?

“Where the hell were you?” Bob asked as Jerry came off the elevator, “I called in, they sent someone to cover for me didn’t they?” Jerry said looking worried. Bob grumbled. “Yes, they sent old Johnny Hudson, but your lonely hearts club was worried about you.” “You mean someone cared I wasn’t here?” Jerry smiled. “Well, there is nothing new to report, good night.” With that Bob picked up his bag and left. “Jerry, I want to talk to you.” Dr. Almont said coming out of her office, “There is no...improper behavior going on ...on campus here is there?” Jerry looked over at Joann who was about to crack up. “Dr. Almont, how could you think such a thing? All improper behavior is conducted off campus.” Jerry said with a straight face. Joann broke out in hysterical laughter. Dr. Almont looked over at Joann and said, “What’s so funny?” Joann recovered enough to say, “Dr. Almont, it is a college campus. Down at UNLV you should see what goes on!” Dr. Almont smirked, “This isn’t UNLV! And that behavior will not be tolerated in Boulder City, do I make myself clear?” Both of them said in unison, “Yes Dr. Almont.” Jerry smiled; it was good to be back home.

As Cindy jumped on the freeway, all she wanted to do was take a nice hot bath. Then the car phone went off and she pressed the answer button on the steering wheel, “Hello?” “Cindy, your secretary called yesterday asking if everything was all right.

Where have you been?” Cindy forgot to call work on Monday. “Everything is OK Mom, I just had to get away from it all and I didn’t want Bridget to know about it, so I said I was coming to visit you. How is Dad?” “He and Grandpa are going fishing down on the pier every morning and then they work at the warehouse until five. That was a good idea sending grandpa back here.” Cindy didn’t receive praise from her mother often and this made her feel good. “Have you heard from Troy?” “That brother of yours! He came over for dinner on Sunday with one of his blond bombshells. With you two, I don’t think I will ever have grandchildren.” “Mom do you want me to have a child for you? It won’t be hard getting pregnant.” Cindy could hear the anger in her mother’s voice, “You better be married if you do, or your father will have to wait in line to kill you!” “Mother are you watching those soap operas again, stop with the dramatics!” Her mother laughed, “So when are you bringing a nice boy over for Sunday dinner?” As Cindy turned off Eastern Ave. onto St. Rose Boulevard, she thought that maybe she should just stop off at St. Rose Hospital and pick up a baby before heading home, “Mom, I’m working on it. Say hello to Dad for me, got to go, love you.” As she pulled the 2002 blue Thunderbird into the garage she was suddenly sad remembering that little girl sitting on her lap yesterday.

There were fifteen calls on her answering machine. She pushed the button and half of them were either from Bridget or her mother worrying about her. She dialed the office and Bridget answered on the second ring, “I’m safe and sound Bridget. When I hit the 101, that’s the Coast Highway, my new car just took me on a wild ride up the coast. Sorry I didn’t call.” Bridget sounded sad, “Miss Lo I don’t blame you for not calling after the way I acted on Thursday. You have every right to be angry with me. There is no

excuse for my jealousy. I was surprised at it myself, enough of that. Jimmy was asking about you every day, and I would like for you two to get together.” Cindy was undecided, “We will talk when I come in tomorrow. I’m exhausted and all I want to do is take a bath and have a long sleep. Bridget stop worrying about things you have no control over.” Bridget’s voice got lighter, “Right, have a nice bath and a good sleep Miss Lo.” Cindy hung up and headed up the stairs for her bedroom.

Susie had just gone up to town to buy groceries and was about to turn into the driveway when she saw Dex’s truck. “Damn Him!” He will have to carry the groceries in and she parked the car across the road. When she got in the front door she called out his name, no reply. She put her purse and keys down on the breakfast nook and headed to the bedroom. There he was sacked out across the bed in his shorts. She went over and sat on the side of the bed and debated whether she should wake him, “Dex where are your truck keys? I have to move it to bring in the groceries.” He stirred saying “Huh? What?” “Dex I have to move your truck for the groceries.” “No you don’t, you need to crawl into bed.” He grabbed her as she tried to get up, “No Dex, the groceries!” “Screw the groceries, they can wait.” As he pulled down her shorts, “Dex, things will melt.” “You’re the only thing that needs to melt.” “Dex not now, not there, yes there, Oh Dex!”

Benny was taking Jerry’s short cut; it was a nice drive through the Joshua forest on Route 164, but would it get him home faster? With all the trucks being diverted to Route 95 instead of route 93 over the Dam, Route 95 was getting to be called the ‘Head on Highway,’ for the number of fatalities caused by cars trying to pass the trucks and not

making it. Eureka! That was why they didn't blow up what ever they were going to blow up. Their plan was for after 911, and because of the increased security at all the principle bridges they weren't able to do it. But what bridge? They certainly weren't waiting for the new bridge down from the Dam to be built that was ten years away. Why was 'Wanderer' waiting up at Boulder City? If they were going for the Page Bridge, it would be easier picking someplace closer like Flagstaff or Page itself. Hell! We don't even know if this is the right guy. Benny got to the Searchlight junction with Route 95. As he turned left heading for Henderson he wondered if it was the bridge over the river at Laughlin. No, The Corp of Engineers can have a replacement up within a week. What Bridge was it?

As Benny pulled his van into the driveway, Rudy was in the yard playing with his dump truck. Mrs. Olsen from down the street was sitting on the porch. "Hello Slugger!" Rudy sat up with dirt all over his hands and clothes, "Daddy! Daddy!" Benny reached over the fence and picked him up, "Did you miss me?" Rudy put his dirty hands on Benny's face and kissed him. Benny broke out in a big smile, "That's my boy!" Benny carried Rudy up to the porch, "I hope he wasn't too much trouble Mrs. Olsen?" She smiled, "If they could all be like him, there wouldn't be any problems in the world." "Thank you Mrs. Olsen, do I need to pay you?" "Janice took care of that. She should be home from work any minute." Benny looked at Rudy, "Come on Sport, we better get dinner ready."

After she was dropped off Amy drove over to billeting to say thank you to the Rangers, but they were all sleeping from a night exercise, so she left a nice note for them and then drove home. Dad was sitting on the patio with a plastic washbasin sitting on the table, “Where were you when I needed you?” Amy laughed, “When did you ever need me?” JJ put his coffee down, “Monday morning.” And pointed in the washbasin. Amy looked inside and there were six babies tortoises scurrying round inside. “See Mildred didn’t need any help from us.” JJ said with a righteous look on his face. Amy smiled and asked “And how was your trip to the Bradshaw Mountains?” JJ smiled, “The usual drinking and telling lies, and how was your trip to wherever?” Staring down at the babies Amy said, “It was the best thing to happen to me in a long time. In fact I will be leaving in a few days for a job up near Las Vegas.” JJ said looking sad, “Well! Your cottage will always be waiting for you Amy if you should need it.” Amy smiled, “Good, because I plan to stop by often to check up on you.” JJ smiled, “Let’s go over to Ben’s and celebrate with some ‘red beer.’ (red beer is a concoction of beer and tomato juice, farm hands in rural desert communities like it, because it fortifies them during harvest time.)” Amy said, “then we could go over to Miss Rebecca’s for some chicken.” JJ stood saying, “Sounds like we have a busy day!”

Sandra looked out on the expanse of the Soda Dry Lake. What a strange and wild country. Last night before they turned in she and Andy sat at the oasis pool and looked at the stars. So much has happened in the past week that it felt good just sitting and relaxing. Andy was getting along with Tom; in fact they had gone into Baker today to pick up supplies. Tom was a good old boy; he raved about the breakfast she had cooked

for them this morning. He was a widower like herself from Wyoming, said he just couldn't stand those horrible winters after his wife died. It is funny how the southwest is a new frontier for many people wanting to leave their troubles behind; the problem comes when they bring their troubles with them. Enough dilly-dallying around, time to survey the office. She hadn't used her degree in business administration since leaving college, how many years ago was that?" Can't remember, but she remembered that is where she had met Sean, he was always being called to the Dean's office because of his social activities. Oh the passion and fire he had in those days. She giggled remembering him saying, that he only got in trouble just so he could see her, and that she better go out with him before he got into too much trouble and they threw him out of school. Well she took some of the passion out of him, but not much! She was surprised when she found out that they wouldn't throw out their local genius, even for the social anarchy he caused. Those were the days!

Admiral Willard was ushered into the National Security Advisor's office. Gertrude Mitchell was a tall thin black woman who had grown up on the south side of Chicago, in Hyde Park, the home of the University of Chicago. It is noted as one of the intellectual enclaves of the country, surrounded by the worst ghetto of the country. Both of her parents were professors there, and one of the distinguishing features on her otherwise pretty face was a scar on her chin, caused by a pimp who tried to recruit her, she was found in an alley by the police. The pimp disappeared, some say into Lake Michigan. She had a sign on her desk saying "Leave your pretences at the door." "I wish I could say I was glad to see you John." Admiral Willard had been called to the meeting

because the FBI Director was not informed of the 'Streamer' recovery operation until it was over, and then handed Waters on a silver platter. The Judy Nelson case was an on going FBI case, and the director had asked that Sandra Conners be turned over for questioning, which was refused by the Admiral on national security grounds. "So tell me John, why this Sandra Conners can not be turned over to the FBI?" "We will gladly turn over Mrs. Conners when we are through with our investigation. She is been held in protective custody at one of our safe houses. As you know she was involved in the thief of the 'Streamer' program which is a National Security Agency initiative. Gertrude rubbed her chin, "For some reason John I feel I'm not getting the whole picture here." The Admiral smiled, "Gertrude, it's like this, we handed over the Judy Nelson murderer, who was trying to kill Mrs. Conners, but we haven't found out who is behind it. This case involves other areas of national security with a homegrown terrorist group, stolen military explosives, the murder of federal agents, and what else we don't know. I feel that our investigation has broken the case after two years of no progress and to transfer this to another agency at this time would be detrimental. We will gladly cooperate with the FBI. In fact we want to assist them in they're follow-up operation against this terrorist group." Gertrude asked, "And what of the thief?" "He has cooperated fully and is being utilized as we speak." Admiral Willard reminded himself that the truth is arbitrary.

"How are we doing Charley?" Jennifer said coming out of the conference room. "Well I may be wrong on some of these telephone numbers from ten years ago, but I think I answered everything as truthfully as possible." Jennifer smiled, "Is there anything that gave you trouble or you had questions about?" "That Physiological Profile

Questionnaire was bizarre, but no, everything was pretty straight forward.” Jennifer came over and picked up the forms, “Doug said that you have never been to Vegas I want you to think about anything that you are interested in seeing or doing. I will be back in a couple of minutes.” She then quickly disappeared behind the door. Charley thought about what Las Vegas represented in America, gambling, no, that was becoming a national epidemic, sex, prostitution is illegal in Las Vegas, at least on the surface, glamour and glitz, this was the capital! And you can’t leave out gluttony, there is more food served around the clock here than people eat in third world countries! Charley had to go with glamour and glitz, then maybe gluttony. When Jennifer returned she asked, “What would you like to see or do?” “I would like to see one of those extraordinary Las Vegas production shows!” Jennifer smiled, “Good choice, which one?” Charley looked confused, “How many are there?” “Maybe a dozen. Let me get the show book.” She reached into the side desk drawer and pulled out a magazine sized book, “Here make your choice, while I go freshen up.” She proceeded to the bathroom. Charley scanned through the book; there were so many shows. He was about to narrow it down when he looked at the prices, Holy Cow! Anywhere from sixty to one hundred and sixty dollars per ticket! Jennifer came out and said, “Which one?” Charley said, “It would be cheaper to buy a TV.” Jennifer laughed, “I have friends and they can comp me any show.” Charley said, “What’s a comp?” “It means ‘complimentary’ the tickets are free.” Charley had a surprised look on his face, “But what’s the catch?” Jennifer looked surprised at the question, “The hotels and casinos give things away to important, special or show people to bring in more business. They don’t lose a penny. One thing you have to remember about Vegas is that the house never loses. Now what will it be?” Charley said

hesitatingly, "EFX." Jennifer then picked up the phone on the desk, "Angie, can you get me two tickets for EFX tonight, and no front row tickets I'm tired of getting things all over me. Tenth row, that will be fine, thanks a lot sweetie." Charley looked at her in amazement. Jennifer said, "let's go."

"OK Charley, here are the rules," Jennifer said as she turned the Jaguar onto Hughes Parkway, "You will stay in one of the bedrooms in the back of the suite until you find a place. Here is a key card to let you in the suite. No one is allowed in except you." "If you meet a girl take her to a hotel; you do like girls?" Charley said, "Yes." Jennifer smiled. "Here is a credit card for incidentals. What you charge will come out of your salary. We are making arrangements for a vehicle for you, you look like the SUV type?" Charley again said, "Yes." "Your training will be on the job. It will be like a rover until you get the hang of it, or it could mean a special assignment. Doug said that you might be going to Arizona. Any problem with that?" Charley said "No." "If you run into any problems you call me. I am the Control Officer. Here is the office and my home phone number, do you understand?" Charley was getting to like this setup, "Yes." "We have decide your code name will be 'Ranger' any objections?" "No." "If you are caught or captured no one will care because you work for no such agency," Jennifer laughed, "I love putting that in." "You almost had me going." Charley said with a grin. "When Doug decides you will be sworn in as a second lieutenant in the U. S. Army. Any questions?" Charley laughed, "Yes."

Doug was sitting in front of the console in the conference room; he was going over the loose ends. Once the FBI find out about Colonel Spitz's little camp they will mount a raid. That is what Doug was counting on, but he wanted Spitz captured. It wouldn't do, if he was sitting comfortably in his home in Paradise Valley. That is why he had to send Charley to the White Mountains to make sure all goes according to plan. He didn't like this idea of putting Charley in danger, but the stakes were too high. This thing with Mrs. Connors was against his better judgement. He should have turned her over to the FBI, but Scout's interest in her was a good diversion. He still wanted to keep Scout out of the loop when it came to 'Wanderer.' Was he right about this guy? And what is the target? A bridge? They were all set up for a hit on Hoover Dam and now this! They had one long shot to put them in the picture, and they had to rely on someone whose reliability was in question. Doug thought about the good old days of just being a college professor, with a great wife and two wonderful children. Now he felt like the little Dutch Boy with his finger in the dike.

"OK Charley, what do you want to know?" Jennifer asked as they pulled up to the main entrance of the MGM Grand Hotel-Casino. "Your people seem to be a very mixed bag, for what purpose, I would like to know." Jennifer handed over the keys to the valet attendant; "We are one of six operational groups that deal with national security concerns involving military and scientific research." Charley smirked, "Which tells me nothing." Jennifer smiled as they walked through the clanging slot machine rows and entered a corridor leading to the theatre. "You really are a hard case, Charley. After we entered the nuclear age, traitors plagued us. We didn't have a protection apparatus to deal with these

breaches of national security, yes there was the FBI, but like most law enforcement agencies, they were good at finding the criminals, not preventing the crime.” Jennifer went up to the box office counter and showed her drivers license to the clerk, “Mrs. Applegate good to see you again, here are your tickets, and I hope you enjoy the show.” Jennifer smiled, “Thank you Gilbert, we will try.” Jennifer handed the tickets to Charley, “So the government in all it’s wisdom decided to create an agency that could oversee all scientific and technological advances, that is the agency we work for.” Charley thought that over as he handed the tickets to the ticket taker, “I still don’t see how our group fits in the picture.” Jennifer said, “Sort of like troubleshooter, Charley, why don’t you use that credit card to buy me a glass of champagne.” Charley said, “It will be my pleasure” Charley wondered if he was pushing too hard on the first day as he gave the champagne to Jennifer, “No more questions, let’s just enjoy the show.” Jennifer smiled saying, “Thank you Charley.”

Phil walked up to the bar; “Dex we missed you yesterday. Hope everything is alright?” Dex had it down, “The old lady was having one of her spells, and I thought I better stay home.” Phil sat down on the stool, “Women!” Dex smiled, “Can’t understand them either, but what have you been up to lately Phil?” Phil said with a wink, “Living the good life of a retired military slob.” Dex laughed, “I know what you mean.” Dex knew that the loose clothes concealed a finely tuned body even for a man in his fifties. This was no slob, but was he the man? That was the key to the puzzle. “Hey Phil how is that computer class at the college going?” Phil laughed, “The future is here. You better jump aboard Dex.”

Day 9-Tuesday

Jennifer pulled the Jaguar into the circular drive of the office building, “Rick Springfield is much better than Tommy Tune, I never get tired of that show.” Charley was in a daze, “Jennifer; all I know is that I haven’t seen a performance like that before and I want to thank you for your wonderful company.” Jennifer smiled, “Charley, getting back to business, there is one thing I want you to remember, never forget what you said, ‘I can always walk away.’” Charley said, “That sounds ominous.” Jennifer looked at the palm trees swaying in the breeze. “I just have a feeling that you will be earning your money right off the bat. Now get going, and I will see you later today.” Charley got out of the car and said, “Thanks again for your help.”

Jennifer looked at her watch as she made the turn on to Las Vegas Blvd. Two in the morning, Martin and the crew would be eating dinner over at the Windmill Restaurant, better stop and give him the bad news. The crew’s favorite hangout after their gigs was the Windmill Restaurant, an old Vegas institute, a twenty-four hour greasy spoon with glamour and class. Jennifer hated parking here, the place was wedged between a strip mall and a boarded up casino, but it was on the strip. Once you entered through the glass doors you were transformed into another world, some say the Vegas of the past. Of course there was the row of slot machines right inside the door, you must not forget where you were, but when you get to the cashier’s station the bright dining area opened into a grotto of cherry blossom trees with spacious clean booths arranged around them. Jennifer walked past the front counter and waved to Audrey coming out of the kitchen area. The crew had their booth in the back corner; Jennifer put her hands on her

hips and looked at the motley crew in various stages of undress from tuxedos, eating, reading the paper, or playing with silverware while drinking coffee. "You guys are a sorry sight!" They all looked up and said, "Jennifer!" She walked up to the table, "Kid scoot over." The saxophone player that looked like James Dean gave her some room at the end of the booth, "Well, how was the gig at Huntington Beach?" Leroy the drummer said, "If we weren't playing, you could have heard a pin drop, that's how much they dug us!" It took them a moment to figure it out before they all broke out laughing. Jennifer asked, "You were that good?" Pete the horn player said, "I'll take small clubs any day, the acoustics were so intimate there." Jennifer smiled over at Martin as he chewed on a piece of steak, "Can I borrow your illustrious leader for a few minutes?" Johnny the guitar player said, "Take him away, but you come back." They all chuckled as Martin wiped his face and got up. Jennifer slid her arm around his and walked him through the restaurant to the lounge in the back. The lounge was empty but had the same cherry blossom trees but with small intimate tables in a dark setting. Off the entrance to the lounge is the pit, which is a gas fire pit surrounded by a pool of water in a sunken circular couch area. Jennifer took Martin down there and once seated she gave him a long sweet kiss, "Steak and kisses; I should order that more often!" Martin replied. Jennifer gave him her serious look, "Martin, this weekend was rough and the coming weeks look even rougher. Can you live without me for a while?" "Sweetie, it works out for me. Bernie wants us to put together a road show, so I'll be running on empty too." Jennifer thought that needed another sweet kiss, and another.

Benny pulled into a space in front of the station. He could see Tom riding the mower around the pond; fresh cut grass always smelled good. The door to the office was open, that was a good sign, but he was surprised to see Sandra sitting at the reception desk playing with the computer. "Hello, Mrs. Conners. Is there a problem?" Sandra looked up, "Oh hi Benny, no problem except my computer skills, they are very outdated." Benny came up to the desk, "What are you trying to do?" Sandra puffed, "I'm trying to access the course lesson plan for the classes the college offers out here, but there is something more importation I need to talk with you about." Benny said, "Shoot." "Have you seen where Tom lives?" "No, I figured he had a trailer around here some place." Sandra got up and said, "He has one room in the back of the warehouse, with a table, chair, bed, hotplate, radio, and one overhead light bulb." Benny put his hand to his chin, "That wouldn't do, we are going to need the whole warehouse building." Sandra looked at him, "Benny it wouldn't do for Tom either." Benny didn't know what to say, except "What do you have in mind?" "Well, since we have no staff, and we have plenty of room over at the staff cottage where we are." Benny said, "That's great, because we will be ripping apart the warehouse soon. Have him move over with you." Sandra sat down, "Benny whose in charge here?" "I guess Doug is, but he is real busy now. In fact I will be going out of state as soon as Amy gets here." Sandra asked, "Who is Amy?" Benny laughed, "She is the lady you shot." Now it was Sandra's turn to laugh, "She is just going to love seeing me." Benny said, "No, No. She is real sweet; she understood about the accident, in fact she asked to be put on your case, you will like her, a nice lady."

JJ came staggering out to the patio, “What happened last night?” Amy laughed, “You got drunker than a skunk! Here have some coffee.” JJ said, “Bless you child.” Amy was picking up the baby tortoises one at a time and cleaning them with cotton balls after their feeding. After gulping down a cup of coffee JJ asked, “The last thing I remember was being put in your truck after the sand rail races, by men in green?” Amy laughed, “That was the Rangers, and those were not sand rails. It’s a good thing you don’t remember, otherwise I would have to shoot you.” JJ put his head in his hands, “I wish you would.” “Dad they offered to fly me up to Vegas tomorrow morning when they get done with their exercises, but if you need me to stick around a day or two, now is the time to say so.” JJ looked at Amy, “Sweetheart I don’t know what you did while you were gone, but I haven’t seen that sparkle in your eyes in a long time. Get out of here as soon as possible, don’t worry about me.” Amy reached over and kissed her father on the cheek.

“Doug I don’t like it. We don’t know this kid; he got caught in a meat grinder and did his duty. It’s a different story when it comes to our home grown crazies. There is no Geneva Convention with these guys.” Doug sat at the conference table rocking back and forth, “Dex, he is our only option. We can have all the listening devices, 24-hour satellite coverage, and soldiers in the field, these guys aren’t stupid. They know what we are capable of, and all it takes is one who is willing to risk it all. We need to know what they are capable of and we need someone who’s willing to risk it all for us. I think it’s Charley.” Dex got up and started pacing, “This cover may get him in the front door, but if the shooting starts, the good guys and bad guys will both be pointing their guns at him.”

Cindy walked into the office and said, "Good morning Bridget, what do we have today?" "Mr. Foo still wishes to talk with you, and wouldn't sign his lease until he does. A Roger called yesterday, from Hong Kong, he wouldn't give me his last name, said that you would know. The Chinese-American Cultural Society would like for you to be their guest speaker." Cindy said, "I'll call Roger. Hold any calls. Call Mr. Foo and see if he can come up this morning. Write out a check for five hundred dollars for the Society, but give my regrets as a speaker." Bridget had that look on her face. "Let's go out for Lunch and you pick the place." Bridget smiled saying, "Yes Miss Lo." Cindy then headed into her office. Roger picked up on the second ring, "Hello? Who is this?" "Roger this is Cindy, sorry about not get back to you sooner." "Cindy, we have activity on that account. One hundred thousand dollars from a Cayman Bank to an air transport and shipping company in Los Angeles, twenty-five thousands to a private account with Banknet. It's going to take me some time getting information on that." Cindy sat and pondered this, "Roger give me the name of the transport company and the private account number when you get to a secure line. I will have a couple more accounts for you then." "OK, Cindy. Let me get a few more hours of sleep and I will get back to you." "Sorry for waking you up Roger." She then hung up. Things were still stable in Hong Kong, but there may come a time when Beijing would tighten the screws on its cash cow. Roger wanted an insurance policy for him and his family if that day came; Cindy was that policy.

Jennifer was sitting at the desk in the main office going over Charlie's record. She was pissed. In the five years since she was recruited, there was only one time when she

was cut out of the loop and that happened when there also was a new recruit; Cindy three years ago. But now, what did Charley say, ‘Ominous’ would be a good way to describe it. Doug and Dex have been in there for over an hour. Was she looking at a record of a sheep being readied for the slaughter? “Hi Jennifer.” Jennifer swirled around on her chair to see Charley standing in the corridor to the bedrooms, “Good Morning Jennifer, do you know where I can get a cup of coffee?” Jennifer had to remind herself that she must maintain control, “I hope you had a good night’s sleep Charley. Here let me show you the kitchen where there is a pot of coffee on.” Jennifer went through the swinging door into a fully equipped kitchen and over to the drip coffee maker, “There’s milk in the refrigerator, if that’s your preference.” Charley smiled, “Thanks, that’s the way I like it.” After making himself a cup he sat down at the breakfast bar, “What’s on the slate for today.” Jennifer didn’t know, she didn’t think that he would be going through the normal procedure. She had a feeling that they would call him in and give him his assignment. She knew she wasn’t off the mark when the intercom asked for her, she quickly picked up the kitchen phone, “Yes Doug, he is right here. We will be right in.” Jennifer turned to Charley; “They want us in the conference room, you can bring your coffee.” Charley asked, “Can I bring my shoes?” They both looked down at Charlie’s bare feet.

Charley followed Jennifer into a large room that looked small, with the ten-seat conference table and one wall taken up by a black metal wall unit that had rows of cabinets with combination locks. A communication setup was in the center with three computer monitors and he counted at least five phones. Doug and Dex were sitting at one end of the table. “Jennifer I want this recorded.” Jennifer sat down at the console, put on

a pair of headphones, and gave Doug the sign that the recorder was recording. Doug and Dex stood, “Charley will you please stand and raise your right hand to take your oath.”

“Denise Green, how can I help you? Yes Deputy Director Ford, we are right in the middle of planning for that operation. You want me to fly up to Las Vegas? Yes I will be there.” Denise slammed the phone down, “Boy, this guy really likes interfering!” Chief Boyle of the Phoenix FBI SWAT Team looked at the map, “What’s Las Vegas got to do with this?” “Were you involved with the transfer of that Waters fellow?” Denise asked the chief. “We got there just as the transfer was taking place.” “Who were those people that brought him in?” Boyle thought for a few moments like he was making a mental picture, “There were the two guys dressed in gray jumpsuits, who handed over Waters, a guy that looked like a homeless man, he stayed in the chopper, and an air force lieutenant with a squad of airmen with Blue berets. I think they are the base police force. Denise said, “This is a real circus Chief, and we need to see the governor before I take off for Vegas.” The chief laughed, “Like a three ring circus!”

Benny pulled into the parking space in back of the building. He debated whether he should take off his white coveralls before going in. It beats the jeans and work shirt in the land of suits and skirts. Janice was very understanding when he got home and she said OK when he said that he would have to take off again soon, but he promised her that as soon as this was cleaned up they would take a nice long vacation. He used his card to get into the office and Dex stuck his head out of the conference room door and said, “Benny

hold on, there is coffee and food in the fridge.” Benny went to the fridge and pulled out a bottle of water and went back into the office and sat down on the couch along the wall.

Cindy was driving back to the office after having a great lunch with Bridget at Joe’s Crab Shack. She explained to Bridget that she had to leave town on business and that she had full confidence in her ability to run the office in her absence. Bridget didn’t bring up Jimmy and neither did Cindy. As she entered the Mall parking lot the car phone went off, “Cindy, its show time. The plane lands in a hour.” Cindy said, “I’m on my way.” The phone went dead. Cindy was glad Bridget heard the call, “Bridget I will try to check in often, see you in a week or so.” Bridget stepped out of the car and entered the Mall. Cindy turned the car around and headed for the Executive Airport Terminal at McCarren Airport.

Agent Green stepped off the agency’s Lear jet to be met by a tall oriental woman wearing a beautifully tailored white business suit. “Hello Agent Green, I’m Cindy I will be taking you to our office.” Denise extended her hand, “So this is the famous Las Vegas?” Cindy didn’t know what to make of that. When you are on duty, the surroundings are secondary. But Cindy decided to play along; “We like it and call it home.” Giving her a big smile. Cindy walked around to the passenger side of her car and opened the door for Agent Green who was wearing a blouse, sweater jacket, and plaid skirt combination, all in dark colors. Cindy made the short trip fast. When they entered the suite, Jennifer escorted them into the conference room where Doug, Dex, Benny, and Charley were sitting around the table. They all stood when the ladies entered the room

and Doug asked Agent Green to sit at the head of the table and started introducing everybody. When that was done, “Agent Green, I want to thank you for coming on such short notice. We understand that you are mounting a operation against the compound in the White Mountains and we want it to be as successful as possible.” Denise said, “Yes, that is right, and I take it that you want to contribute to that operation?” Doug smiled, “Agent Green, Charley here would like to go into the compound undercover.” Denise laughed, “what is the need for that?” Doug asked, “Is Colonel Spitz at the compound?” Denise said, “It doesn’t matter. We will pick him up after the raid.” Doug looked concerned, “That is, if he is still in the country. You see Agent Green; Charley can get the colonel to the compound so that your team can have them all. Unfortunately there is nothing on paper that links him to the compound otherwise.” Agent Green thought for a few minutes, “And why are you willing to risk one of your agents so that we could get all the credit?” Doug smiled, “Information on an investigation we are conducting.” Denise asked, “And how long will it take him to get this information?” “Once the colonel gets there, Charley will inform him that you are going to hit him with,” Jennifer handed Doug a paper, “Two SWAT teams; one from your Phoenix office and one from your Albuquerque office, along with one company of the Arizona National Guard and one squadron of Arizona Air National Guard. Charley will just inform him that it will be an insurmountable force. His force numbers only twenty-five irregulars, that shouldn’t be a problem for your people.” Denise looked at him in shock; she then looked at the rest of the people, “Are you people mad?” Doug looked her right in the eyes, “No Agent Green, we are quite serious.” Denise was angry now, “You want to turn this into a bloodbath, for what purpose?” Doug said, “Information on an act of terrorism that may make 911 seem

trivial. We are hoping that they will do the smart thing and give up.” Denise yelled, “And if they don’t!” Doug said, “If we can prevent this act of terrorism, it will be worth whatever the cost.”

Amy was lying on her bed reading ‘*Direct Action*’. She was at the end where Sean Conners unleashed his soul, begging for the people of the world to save themselves from mass destruction. Always at the back of her mind, Amy kept wondering what was in this book that someone needed to kill for? Amy went back to the passages dealing with Sean’s involvement in the Planet First Movement. There was Sean and Sandra, Judy was the editor for the books. Davey Jones was the radical environmentalist, Phillip James was the spokesman and lawyer, Juan Garcia was the social activist, and Peggy Litton was the spiritual holy one. Two dead, five alive, but only three were told of the book; Jones, James, and Juan. Peggy had disappeared a long time ago.

Benny and Charley started unloading the van. Boxes of equipment went into the baggage compartment of the Lear jet. Dex and Denise were talking at the stairs of the jet hatch. Cindy had already taken off and would soon be on a flight to the coast. “We were talking worst case scenario in there. I’m sure it wouldn’t be as bad as we figured. Benny is one of the best control operators there is. You will be able to watch everything in real time, which will give you a lot of control over events.” Dex tried to sound Optimistic. Denise looked out onto Tropicana Road; “You know that in the bureau, Las Vegas is usually a temporary duty assignment. They are afraid that an agent will be corrupted by all this temptation. I’m afraid that all our power is corrupting us more than any Mega-

resort temptation.” Dex looked over at Benny and Charley, who had just finished loading; “Come on guys, Agent Green wants to get out of here.” Denise looked at Dex as Benny and Charley climbed aboard, “Agent Green good luck, and take care of our boys.” Dex extended his hand. Denise took his hand, “Dex, thanks for making the best out of a bad situation.” She then climbed aboard, and the hatch closed. Dex got in the van and headed for the exit; he was glad that he wasn’t in her shoes.

Day 10-Wednesday

“What in tarnation!” JJ said as he climbed out of bed. The doorbell was ringing at 7:00 AM in the morning. He put on his robe and went out the patio door to the compound door. When he opened the door he was facing two soldiers wearing tan berets standing next to a sand rail. “Sorry to disturb you Sir, but we were looking for Amy.” JJ saw that Amy’s truck was gone. “Sorry boys, but your guess is as good as mine. Last I heard she was going with you this morning.” The Captain said, “we must have missed her. Could you please tell her Captain Miller stopped by and she can always reach me at Fort Bragg.” JJ said, “Thank for dropping by Captain, I will give her your message.” The Captain and the Sarge got into the scout car and drove off. JJ was amazed; it had a large powerful engine on the back, but only hummed. He closed the door and went over to the patio table where he found a note, “Dad I won’t be going to Vegas right away. I’m heading down to Tucson to do some bushwhacking, see you on my way back.” JJ rubbed the back of his neck; I wonder what she means by that?

Jennifer carried the bag of groceries into the office and was startled when she ran into Doug in the kitchen. “Boy, you are up bright and early.” Unshaven Doug said, “It’s the other way around” as he took a cup of coffee into the conference room. After filling up the refrigerator and getting a cup for herself, she followed him. Doug was sitting at one end of the table with piles of files and folders stacked in front of him. “Doug, you can’t put this all on your shoulders. We all have to accept that it is a bad situation with lousy options and we all have to make the best of it.” “I’m afraid that I pushed too hard,

maybe if I just kept everything quiet, we could have worked out a better plan.” Doug said dejected. Jennifer laughed, “Yea, and you all would still be sitting out at ‘Desert One.’ Doug you could have dropped this on day one, but you didn’t, and that’s why the Director and all of us are behind you all the way.” Doug smiled, “No, because you are all a bunch of ‘Misfits.’ Jennifer smiled, “And proud of it!”

Sandra was sitting at the reception desk downloading the lesson plan from the college; she had received a call yesterday from a Professor Genova, from the college’s Environmental Studies Program. He wanted to know what was happening out there. There was a weekend seminar planned and he wanted to know if Brad was going to do it. She had told the professor that Brad had left. He said that he hated canceling the ‘Photographing Nature Seminar’ but he was tied up this weekend. Sandra as calmly as possible asked what were the requirements for the instructor? Since this was a non-credit class, almost any experienced photographer who knew the desert would do, but getting one on short notice was impossible. Sandra could hardly contain herself when she said that she fit the qualifications. The professor asked her if she had a degree in Photography? Yes, she had received it while Sean was teaching at the University of Arizona. Had she had any darkroom experience? Yes, she was the darkroom assistant for two years there. Professor Genova then wanted to know where she wanted her check mailed. As Sandra put down the phone her whole body was shaking, she jumped out of her seat and ran to tell the boys.

Amy left at first light. As she took Interstate 10 from Gila Bend to Casa Grande, she looked forward to the next half-hour. The interstate between these two towns had one of the most scenic drives through the desert there is. How this unspoiled area escaped commercialization had always been a mystery, but she was glad. When she got to the outskirts of Casa Grande her country radio station informed her that I-10 was closed from there to Tucson due to a dust storm. That stretch of road is known to the locals as ‘Dust Devil Demolition Derby.’ While going to the University of Arizona, she had tried going through one of these dust storms. She was lucky she had pulled off the road before she got to the ten-car pileup. Well she figured she would have to take the long way through the Papago Indian Reservation on Route 15. She smiled when she thought of her nieces from back east. She had taken the same route when she took them to Kitt Peak Observatory and they asked wasn’t she afraid of an Indian Attack? Amy informed them that the Papago Indians were never hostile; they were farmers and desert gatherers. In fact, they helped the Army against their enemy the Apache, and that is one of the reasons why they retained most of their land. After two hours, she approached Tucson. Now she had to find a good porn shop to get what she needed.

Jerry was back at his old spot drawing, but this time it was for a rendezvous with Dex. Dex looked over his shoulder, “Quite the Artist, have you had lunch?” “You know me, I’m always hungry, how about Carlos’s?” “Sounds good to me.” Jerry put his stuff away in his drawing box and followed Dex over to the restaurant. Dex asked for a table by the front window in the corner away from any activity. After Jerry stowed his stuff away he asked, “What’s going on? I feel like I have been left out to dry.” Dex laughed,

“That is exactly what happened, and we’re sorry, but things are moving fast and you haven’t created any problems so we forgot about you. Jerry you are losing your touch.” The waitress didn’t know what to make of these two guys; the big barrel chested guy was laughing his head off and the tall thin guy had the look of just being kicked in the stomach.

Jennifer had given Doug two aspirins and sent him off to bed when she got an incoming call on the SCR phone. She looked at the readout on the monitor. ‘The Congress Hotel. Speedway and Fourth Ave. Tucson, Arizona. 520-532-4763.’ She thought whoever it was had class. The Congress Hotel in the downtown area is the crown jewel of Tucson. How would Leroy put it? ‘A Funky Place’ “Hello, how may I help you?” “Hi Jennifer, this is Amy. I’m here in Tucson to clear up that matter for Sandra.” Jennifer looked at the monitor, the voice recognition system stated, ‘Lt. Amy Jensen, U.S. Army.’ “Amy, I was hoping to see you soon.” Amy felt like a schoolgirl whenever she talked to the headmistress Jennifer. “Yes, I said that I was coming up, but I thought that this should be taken care of immediately.” Jennifer was worried, little Amy acted like Super Girl during the Vicksburg Junction Incident. “Amy maybe you should talk to Doug first?” Amy thought that Doug would talk, no order her out of it. “Jennifer, I want to try something and if it doesn’t work I’ll head right up there.” Jennifer thought about resources, she could pull Dex and Jerry and have them there tonight. “Amy how about I send Dex and Jerry there to help you?” “Jennifer there is no need for that, I will see you in a couple of days.” Then she hung up. Jennifer spun the combination on the one of the console’s drawers and pulled out a black book.

“Hi I’m Cindy O’Brien, I have an appointment with Director Dial.” The receptionist at the FAA Control Center at Los Angeles International Airport looked at the two National Guard soldiers sitting in chairs on each side of the entrance door. “Funny, you don’t look Irish.” Cindy smiled, “That’s what my mother-in-law keeps telling me.” The receptionist picked up the phone and dialed an extension, “Mr. Dial, Mrs. O’Brien is here to see you.” The receptionist put down the phone; “Mr. Dial’s assistant will be here in a moment.” Cindy said, “Thank you” and started looking at the pictures of jets on the wall.

Dex picked up the phone, “Legion Post 31, what can I do for you?” “Dex, I’m worried about Amy. She just called and said she was down in Tucson, solving Sandra’s problem.” Dex could only say, “Shit! Have you gotten a hold of Doug?” Jennifer said, “No, he was up all night and needs to sleep.” Dex’s mind was racing, “OK, do you have a fix on her?” “Downtown Tucson but she hung up on me when I tried to talk her out of it.” Dex was pissed, “We won’t find her if she doesn’t want to be found. If she calls back, tell her that she has a direct order to return to base immediately.” Jennifer kept saying to herself, ‘Control’ then said, “That’s the only thing we can do, and pray.” Dex calmed down when he heard her shaky voice, “Jennifer, go home and get some sleep, she will be alright.” Jennifer said, “OK Dex, I’ll talk with you tomorrow.” She hung up and laid her head in her arms on the console. She wondered why she was crying.

“Come on Benny, we need to have some fun, and a ball game is just the ticket. I can’t wait to see the Giants kick the Cubs ass.” As they stood outside of Scottsdale

Stadium Benny asked, "I thought you were from Chicago?" Charley smiled, "There is a joke in Chicago, if you bet against the Cubs you will be a rich man." Benny thought, these Anglos are so crazy!

Doug got up at 11:00 PM and went to the kitchen to see if there was any coffee. As he walked past the office he noticed a sliver of light coming from the bottom of the steel conference room door. Jennifer still here? After getting the last drop out of the coffee maker, he headed into the conference room. Jennifer was asleep at the console. He walked back to the bedrooms and turned on the light in the room Jennifer stayed over in. Now it was his turn to send her off to bed. He gently shook her shoulder, "Jennifer, Jennifer, time to go to bed." Jennifer groggily said, "Yes, Harry I'm coming sweetheart." Doug paused; he hadn't heard her deceased husband's name in a long time. Her eye's blinked open, "Doug, is everything alright?" Doug said, "Yes, except you need to go to bed." She sat up in the chair and ran her hands through her short blond-gray hair, "Do you want the news on the latest disaster?" Doug smiled at her, "Can't it wait till morning?" "You decide, Amy went rogue on us." Doug looked up at the ceiling, "Let's have it." Jennifer told him the story. "You did what I would have done. Amy can take care of herself, now off to bed." Doug said while helping her out of the room.

Sandra, Andy, and Tom had found some old wooden Adirondack chairs in the warehouse and had set them in front of the staff cottage. "Isn't it a beautiful night with the moon shining down on the dry lake bed?" Sandra said. Tom lit his pipe, "How a place can be so desolate and attractive at the same time, that's the kicker." Andy asked, "I

wonder where the mines are around here.” Sandra smiled, “I’m sure we will find them on our road trip tomorrow.” Andy almost fell out of his chair. Here is a woman until a week ago, had not left the Kofa in years. Now she is riding around in dune buggies and helicopters, teaching a class, and going on sightseeing trips! I guess you can teach an old dog new tricks.

Carol looked out the kitchen window while washing the dinner plates. Dudley sat on the chaise lounge looking up at the stars. She went over to the back door, “Hey Sailor, you want another beer?” Dudley stood up, “Maybe later I better check on the boys to see if they finished their homework.” Carol waited for him at the door, “Do you want to go for a drive later?” Dudley had a forlorn look in his eyes, “Carol I’m alright. It’s just a boat. We will all get another one, and hopefully most of us can stay together.” Carol watched him go upstairs. She was new to Navy life when she met Dudley and the first couple of years of marriage were terrible, the constant moving and the long separations. She had to draw on an inner strength to cope with the loneliness and isolation especially overseas. But they survived and then the boys came and Dudley started getting promotions, then great duty stations. She loved Hawaii, Bermuda, and finally San Diego. Life became normal, now the uncertainty. Tomorrow Dudley and his crew of sailors; some came and some went, but a majority stayed, would take the Squid out on it’s last voyage down to the salvage yard to be turned into a pile of scrap iron. At parties with other wives she had picked up terms for these boats. The men referred to them as, “she”, “damn her”, “what a bitch,” and “come on sweetie get us home safe.” It is the last bastion of the male domain on the seas. Carol had heard a few years back; a female officer was

assigned to a spook boat, (Either a special warfare or spy submarine) that caused such a ruckus that no one has seen that officer since! Carol knows that it will be a very emotional time tomorrow.

Day 11-Thursday

As the two people entered the office of Lorcin Air, a bell went off. The office consisted of a desk and chair, with a tool calendar on the wall. A man in dirty coveralls appeared from a side door, "What do you want?" "Hello, I'm Mr. Tomajczyk and this is Mrs. O'Brien. We are from the FAA doing a routine inspection for your license." The man pulled a cloth from his back pocket and started wiping his hands, "Can't this wait till later, we are kind of busy." "Sorry but the inspection must take place now or you will forfeit your license." "OK, OK, But we are setting up for a job and the place is a mess." Mr. Tomajczyk said, "Mr. Troy, we are interested in seeing your flight, maintenance, and business records." Mr. Troy said, "Yea, Yea, they are in the back." They were led into the hanger section of the building, where a large helicopter sat in the middle of the space. Surrounding the helicopter were six men in various stages of work; four of the men were building crates and two were working on the interior of the helicopter. Cindy was hoping that the miniature video camera that was mounted on her clipboard was working, the LED light on her pager was on, just like Benny said it would be. Cindy was impressed with the helicopter, the description on her clipboard said Sikorsky H-37 built in 1955. It was almost as big as the Chinook she was on, but this was a single rotor aircraft. Mr. Tomajczyk said, "Cindy, can you give me a hand with these manifests?" Cindy was wearing jeans, polo shirt and a FAA windbreaker just like Bob was wearing. "Sure Bob, I'll be right over." As she headed over to the file cabinet that Bob was rummaging through she tried to scan as much of the hanger as she could with her clipboard. Mr. Troy had returned to working on one of the side-mounted engines. "OK Cindy, why don't you go through these and see if you can find what you are looking for, I'll keep them busy

over at the chopper.” Cindy said. “Thanks Bob.” and got to work going over the manifests and business records.

After the phone call, Amy went across the railroad tracks from the downtown area, into the Bohemian area of Fourth Ave. She checked into the Carlton Hotel and crashed for the night. When she woke she walked down Fourth Ave to a thrift shop and purchased some clothes and items for that night. After a continental breakfast at one of the coffeehouses, she decided to make her first contact. Davey Jones address was listed down the street from her hotel. It was a storefront on the corner, looking like an artist space. After pushing the bell twice a middle aged woman answered the door, “Yes, what do you want?” Amy went into her routine, “Hi, a woman that was staying in the campground I was staying at last night asked me to deliver a message to Davey Jones.” The woman smiled, “OK, give me the message.” Amy stepped back, “I’m sorry but the lady say that I was to personally give it to him.” The woman turned into the space and yelled, “Davey, another of your girlfriends is here.” Amy could hear a man say, “What the hell are you talking about?” and then footsteps coming to the door. The woman disappeared and a middle aged man with wild unkempt hair and a beard appeared bare-chested, “What do you want?” Amy reached into her back pocket and gave him the note, which he read and then laughed “Like I give a shit! I’m not going back to prison for her after her husband sent me there once. Get the hell out of here little girl,” he then ripped up the note and threw it at her.

Amy was trying to figure out if it was an act for his girlfriend or maybe he didn't care. And what was that about prison? Sandra's husband sent him to prison? She had all day to find out before she had to set up for tonight. The main public library was on the other side of downtown and she decided a walk down memory lane was in order. As she walked up Fourth Ave she was surprised to find that not much had changed. The hippie influence was still prevalent here after forty years. When she went to college it was still going strong after twenty-five years. There were no more head shops, but the boutiques and coffeehouses were the same and when she got to Sixth St. the old Dairy Queen was still there. Should she call in? No, they would order her back; it wasn't like she was in danger.

Doug had worked a few hours last night, hoping Amy would call in. Then he decided to get some more sleep so he could take a run out to the Desert Research Station in the morning. As he headed out on interstate 15 he wondered how the guys were doing in Phoenix. Agent Green said that they would send Charley to the compound on Saturday and hopefully get the Colonel there that night, with the raid on Sunday. That is, if there were no more glitches. There wasn't much he could do since it was a FBI operation. When he pulled up to the main building he could see Tom painting some old chairs at the warehouse, so he drove over there. "Tom, how is it going?" "It's going good Mr. Remington. If you are looking for Sandra and Andy they took off for a tour of the Preserve." Doug thought, so much for protective custody, "Tom can you let me in the office?" Tom put down his paintbrush, "Sure Mr. Remington, let me get the keys." Once in the office Tom asked if he needed anything else? Doug said he knew where to find him

if he did and Tom went back to his painting. Doug tried to visualize how this facility could be put to good use; the military was in desperate need of desert training facilities. The war was going to go on for many years in a desert environment and most of the high tech equipment had not been tested for prolonged periods in extreme conditions. They had to find new ways to better prepare the equipment and the soldiers to deal with these extremes.

After his morning briefing at the FBI field office in Phoenix, Charley was ready for lunch but Benny had the rented car and he didn't know where the motor pool yard was. Benny was installing some equipment in the Command Post Truck, in FBI jargon that would be the CPT. Charley was starting to get antsy with all these abbreviations; it was like they were speaking another language. As he got on the elevator he looked for the button for motor pool or an abbreviation for it, "Can I help you?" Charley turned to see a thin blond in a business suit looking at him; she had a FBI I.D. card on her lapel. "I'm trying to find the motor pool yard." She looked at his visitor I.D. and said, "That is a restricted area." Charley said, "OK, then maybe you could go there, and find my friend Benny, and tell him Charley wants to go to lunch." Without a change on her stonewall face, "and why should I do that?" Charley smiled and said, "Because I will also take you out to lunch," looking at her name on her I.D. "Ann." She smiled as the elevator reached the lobby, "Come with me." Charley smiled, he had made progress. Benny was showing the techs the satellite image of the White Mountain compound. When he received a call on one of the phones in the truck, "There is a Charley Ames being held in the lobby

trying to bribe an employee, do you know this guy?" Benny shook his head, "Yes I know him, I'll be right in." Needless to say Ann did not go to lunch with the boys.

Jennifer was having lunch at the console again, salad and crackers was her standard fair. The SCR phone rang and she looked at the monitor, 'Tucson Public Library, Sixth Ave. and Main. Tucson, Arizona 520-523-4763' Jennifer picked up and Amy said, "Jennifer I think I found the reason why!" Jennifer said, "Great Amy, but you have a direct order to return to base." "Let me speak to Doug." Jennifer said, "He's not here. He's out at the research station." Amy thought that was even better, "Jennifer can you patch me through?" Jennifer was worried that if she didn't Amy would hang up again, and even though it had never happened, Doug could put out an 'All Points Bulletin' to every law enforcement agency in the country to have her picked up. "Hold on Amy." Jennifer called the station and Doug picked up on the second ring. Jennifer explained the situation and Doug said to patch her through, "Amy what the hell are you doing?" Amy laughed, "Doug I saw this old John Wayne movie and I came up with this great idea on finding the killer, but I need to talk with Sandra first." Doug said, "Unfortunately she is not here. She and Andy went sightseeing or something." Amy asked, "I thought they were in protective custody?" Doug laughed, "So did I, but you're not here to protect them." Amy felt guilty, "Sorry Doug, It has been so long since I worked with the group, I was only thinking of myself." Doug thought, the prodigal child returns, "OK Amy, what do you have?" Doug listened and thought maybe John Wayne had something, but it also was dangerous and she definitely needed backup. "The direct order for your return is rescinded, but you now have a direct order to wait until I get

backup to you, do you understand?” Amy said, “Yes Sir.” Doug started thinking about something else, “Amy, I’m going to send you back to Jennifer and you give her where you can be reached and you wait there, understood?” Another “Yes Sir.” “When Sandra gets back, I will ask her about that, and I should have backup on the way and you don’t move until it arrives.” When Doug heard the final “Yes Sir.” He transferred the call back to Jennifer.

Jerry was eating breakfast and watching the news, “Reporting from Kabul, U.S. Special Forces were hot on the trail of Usama Bin Laden.” Jerry turned off the TV. He thought if they found him, the American people would never hear about it, it wouldn’t be good for the war effort. The phone rang and Jerry listened to the message. As soon as he heard it was Doug, he picked up, “What’s up Doug?” “Jerry I want you to head out to Nellis for a flight down to Tucson for a ‘Direct Action’ mission with Amy, Jennifer will call in your resignation for work, we will do a remote on the college.” All Jerry said was, “Yes Sir.”

Doug was at the shop with Tom going over the blueprints for the facility when Sandra and Andy arrived back with the station’s van. “How was the trip?” Tom asked. Sandra was worried when she saw Doug, “We had a great time. The Mojave is a lot different from the Sonoran Desert. I miss my Saguaro but the Joshua trees are a good substitute.” Andy laughed, “There is no difference in the mines around here.” Tom smiled, “Mr. Remington came by to see you.” Doug said, “Good to see you both, and you look healthy and well.” Andy was getting some vibrations from Sandra; “Tom here has

been taking real good care of us.” Tom laughed, “Mr. Remington, It’s been the other way around.” Doug smiled, “I’m glad to hear that you are all taking care of each other. I need to borrow Sandra for a while, if you boys don’t mind?” Both men nodded their heads and Sandra and Doug walked off towards the main building.

“Did Tom tell you about the seminar?” Sandra asked Doug, “No, what seminar?” Sandra explained, and apologized for not telling him. Doug laughed, “So much for keeping you undercover, which brings me to Amy.” Doug told her about Amy’s discovery and asked her about the connection with Davey Jones. As they sat down on the patio, Sandra became sad and told Doug that it was one of the most difficult chapters in her and Sean’s life.

“It was the summer of 1972. The University of Arizona was a hotbed of social activities. Both Sean and I were deeply involved with the Planet First Movement. Sean was an associate professor in the creative writing program and I was getting my degree in photography, and Davey Jones was an associate professor in the environmental science department and the voice of the movement. To listen to him speak on the duty of every citizen to resist the corporate greed of the establishment that was poisoning our planet was stirring. We were all young idealistic activists and we would meet weekly at the Desert Rat Inn, to get drunk and stoned, then rant and rave on how we should do something. We called ourselves ‘The Gang of Seven.’ Sandra put her hand to her head, “Let me see if I can remember them all. Me and Sean, Davey, was our radical action leader, Judy Nelson was the student paper editor, Phillip James was the law professor,

Juan Garcia was the Hispanic student president, and Peggy Lipton was a divinity student.” Doug noticed that Sandra looked pale, “Sandra are you alright? Can I get you something to drink?” “Yes maybe some juice. I think I had too much fresh air for the day. Why don’t we go into the kitchen?” Sandra led the way into the kitchen and Doug noted that it was just where the blueprint said it would be. They sat down at the large old kitchen table. When Sandra had a drink of juice she continued, “For fall semester the university allowed Dow Chemical Co. to sponsor an engineering fair in the gymnasium. Oh, we were all outraged. When we met at the Desert Rat Inn, there was a call for action, except for Davey Jones. He sat back smiling and said nothing. It was Friday September 1, 1972. As we were leaving the Inn, Davey came up to Sean and asked to talk to him. I was the one who told him to follow us home and then they could talk. We had a small apartment near Randolph Park and I said I would make coffee while they talked. The next thing I know they were screaming and yelling at each other. Sean was calling Davey crazy and insane, Davey was calling Sean a hypocrite and a coward. Davey stormed out of the apartment and Sean was sitting there mumbling to himself about how he must do something, but what? He asked me to get Phil on the phone, so I dialed Phil. He was three sheets to the wind, but he was still able to talk, must have been that lawyer training. All I remember was Sean saying that Davey was going to set the gym on fire. I thought Oh my god, not the gym. The gymnasium was this old cow palace from the thirties, made of wood and stucco, not the new monstrosity that is there now. Then Sean said, “You think so? Maybe you are right, but should we tell anyone? OK, I’ll forget about it. Good night.” And they say, that the rest is history!” Doug said, “Don’t leave me hanging.”

“We went to bed, and the next day Sean tried to call Davey, in fact he tried to get him the whole weekend. Davey’s family had a cabin in Safford and we figured that he just left town and it was all a bad joke. Then on Monday we got the bad news; Davey had been arrested by the FBI on the charge of attempted arson and attempted sabotage of government property. It seems that the fair was showing the latest products of the military industrial complex. They were waiting for him when he broke into the gym on Sunday. And since he had three students helping him, the charge of conspiracy was also tacked on. When the rumors started that someone informed on him, Sean was devastated. He went and confronted Phil, who said that he didn’t know what he was talking about; he claimed that he forgot all about it like we did. We didn’t know what to think, was it one of the other students that was with him? We went to the trial and they were all charged with the crimes, so it wasn’t one of his fellow conspirators, and when Sean heard that a confidential informant had tipped the FBI off to the ringleader and the crimes we knew who it was. Davey was convicted and sentenced to ten years in federal prison. When Sean went to him at the end of the trial, to say he was sorry, Davey spat on him and called him a ‘Judas.’ Then Phil disappeared and the remaining members of our group wouldn’t believe us or talk with us, except for Judy, she thought it was Phil too. I was in my final year of school, so we stuck around until I graduated, then we left. Sean said it was to concentrate on his writing, but we both knew why.” Sandra got up and said in a teary voice, “Now you have it.” Doug stood and put his hand on her shoulder and gave her his handkerchief. He said, “Let’s go out and find Andy and Tom.”

“Special Delivery!” Amy was combing her long blond hair after taking a shower and all she was wearing was her panties. She yelled, “One moment please.” She grabbed a towel as she headed to the door; she put the chain on the door and opened it. Jerry was standing there with two flight bags smiling. Amy lowered the towel a little to expose more of her breasts. “How did you get here so fast?” Jerry shook his head in a circle; “It’s called an F-15 on afterburners and a pilot on espresso. Well are you going to let me in? The Tucson Police would find these bags very interesting.” Amy was coy, “Let me put some clothes on.” She left the door ajar and walked over to the bed, dropping the towel and slowly putting on her jeans and her University of Arizona sweatshirt. Jerry couldn’t help but to look through the door opening. He had a hard time reminding himself that she was like a little sister. She came back and undid the chain, “Get in here before the other guests see you.” Jerry smirked, “What different does it make?” Amy laughed, “Most of the girls on this floor are your type.” Jerry asked, “And what type is that?” Amy shook her head, “Fast and easy.” Jerry carried the bags into the room smiling, “Hum, someone told me I was losing my touch.”

Benny was looking through the lens of a pair of high-powered binoculars and Charley was checking on the map to see if they had the right location. “Do you see the Camelback Inn?” “Yes.” “OK, down and to the right.” Benny squinted, “OK, I got it, I wish I knew what house.” Charley folded the map and said, “That calls for up close surveillance.” Charley stood up on one of the red colored boulders, and scanned Paradise Valley, “It’s really a great view up here.” Benny stood up when his beeper went off. He

looked at the number, "We better go, it's the office." They slowly hiked down Camelback Mountain.

When Cindy got back to the FAA office, she called in, "Hi Jennifer, did you get the video feed?" Jennifer had just seen something when she was scanning the surveillance material. "Hi Cindy, yes they came in clear, I think you better head back here, if you don't have anything else." Cindy thought that she had gotten all there was at Lorcin Air, except what they were up to, but she came across a couple of good leads that could be analyzed back at the office. The FAA assigned one of their security men to keep an eye on the hanger. "OK, I'll catch the next flight out of here." Jennifer said, "Come right to the office after you touch down, you may be heading out again." Cindy didn't like the sound of that. Jennifer didn't like the look of the email she saw and it was a good thing that Doug was on his way back. The phone rang and Jennifer was glad it was Benny, "Hello Jennifer, you rang?" "Yes Benny, how is it going down there?" Benny laughed, "We are having a great time with the FBI." Jennifer wanted to wait until Doug got back before making the request, but little Amy was waiting on the go signal, "Benny, do you have access to the FBI Data Center?" "If I could get to one of their network terminals, it would be a piece of cake." Benny asked, "What do you need? And when do you need it?" Jennifer pondered this, "The name of the informant in the Davey Jones case in 1973, and I need it as soon as possible." Benny shook his head, "My guess watching the 'G'-men is that would have top security on that. I could ask Agent Green for it, what priority do we have on it?" Jennifer would give it a Priority Three, not critical to national security, but important to an ongoing investigation. Doug came through the conference

room door right on cue. Jennifer informed him of the situation, Doug seemed perturbed, “Tell Benny to forget he heard the request.” Jennifer relayed the message then thanked Benny for calling, and to stand by the phone for the next couple of hours, for more traffic. Charley didn't like it when Benny told him, back to the hotel for the evening.

Jennifer asked if everything was all right. Doug said, “No, and that she had gone beyond her duties.” Jennifer asked what she did wrong? Doug said, “You will see, get me Amy, and put it on the speaker phone.” Doug sat down at one of the chairs at the console. “Hello, Who is calling?” The monitor read Amy Jensen at the Carlton Hotel in Tucson. “Amy this is Doug, did Jerry arrive?” Amy laughed, “He’s here suffering from jet lag.” Doug pondered something, “Amy you are the lead, do I need to tell Jerry that?” Amy smiled, “Don’t you know, I have that boy wrapped around my finger.” Doug said, “Good, because I am going to give you a direct order, are you ready to copy?” Amy said in a serious voice, “Yes, ready to copy.” Doug paused a minute, “Amy, because we have no concrete proof on this killer, it would be hard to prove anything in court. I am authorizing direct action, with extreme prejudice, do you understand?” Amy said, “I was hoping for that and have made plans, which don’t include Jerry.” Doug said, “Good, I was hoping you would understand. Don’t take any chances, and dust your trail as the ‘Duke’ would say.” Amy said, “Thank you Sir.” The phone was then hung up. Jennifer said, “I see what you mean, sorry about that.” Doug asked, “Now, what about that email?” Jennifer felt that the mistake was closed and they needed to move on, “This was sent to ‘Wanderer’ on the college’s network, ‘hope to see you hilly up at the sky suite this weekend. Signed Al’” Doug looked at Jennifer, “What do you think is going on?” Jennifer was a trained

analyzer; if anyone had the whole picture it was her. All the loose ends were coming together and that was what scared her. After two years of investigation, was this the easy end?

“Come on lazy bones, time to go to work. We only have a couple of hours of daylight left and we have a lot to setup.” Jerry was getting comfortable lying on the bed, “Wouldn’t you like to put this on sis?” Jerry held up Amy’s bra. “I have been looking all over for that. I should have figured that you would be laying on it.” Jerry watched Amy take the bra into the bathroom and this time she closed the door all the way, “I take it we got the ‘go’?” Amy smiled fluffing her hair as she came out, “Personally by Doug.” Blue picked up his flight bag and headed for the door, “If we meet one of your neighbors could you introduce me?” Scout shoved him out the door, “Not likely.” Blue started singing softly “I want to have fun,” all the way to the truck. Scout thought that it would be a long drive to Mount Lemmon.

“Hi Susie, this is Doug, can I talk to Dex?” Susie said, “Hold on Doug, I’ll go wake him up.” A minute later Dex was on the line, “What’s up Doug?” Doug laughed, “It seems you are, finally. Pack your bags it seems our friend is going on a road trip.” “Is it where I think it is?” Doug smiled, “That’s our assumption. Head for the office when you get your equipment.” Dex said, “We’ll get them all in one place, it’s too good to be true!” Doug thought, was it too good to be true?

Cindy was bushed by the time she got to the office. Leaving her bags in one of the spare rooms, she immediately headed for the kitchen and the coffee maker. After a cup and a refill she headed for the conference room. Doug was talking with Dex and Jennifer was on the computer. She sat down at the console and asked Jennifer, "What's going on?" Doug had called Washington and asked for another satellite and she was trying to get the uplink, "Benny and Charley are in Phoenix getting ready for the raid on Sunday. Amy and Jerry are on the trail of Sandra's villain. Sandra and Andy are working out great at the station. 'Wanderer' is heading for the White Mountains, and Dex will follow him and I'm losing my mind with all of this." Cindy said, "I won't bother you now; I need to study some things from Lorcin Air. Can I use this monitor?" Jennifer looked over, "Go ahead Cindy." Doug asked Jennifer, "How long till Spyglass 30 will be in position?" Jennifer said, "In about forty-five minutes." Doug turned to Dex, "Dex, I think he will take off sometime tomorrow, so you can get a good night sleep at home. I just feel safer if we have someone following him from a safe distance." Dex said, "That's the prudent thing to do if he tries something funny." Dex said "Good night and keep your fingers crossed."

Doug came over and sat at the conference table nearest to the console, "How did it go at LAX, Cindy?" "Good, except those guys at documentation have to come up with different covers for ethnically looking people. Half the time I was saying, "and my mother-in-law says I don't look Irish either." Doug laughed, "what do you think they are up to at the hanger?" Cindy looked at the monitor with the video running, They are getting ready for something soon, what I don't know, but there is something about those

shipping crates they are making,” more thinking to herself, “What do you store in wooden crates?” Doug looked at the video, “Why do those crates look so strange?” Jennifer looked over and said, “Those are fine art painting shipping crates.”

Blue started setting up the tent at the campground site. He thought that it was a good place for an ambush, isolated from the other campers, not that there were any, and the parking space were between them and the road. He heard the air compressor going and thought she isn't one of those people that sleeps on air mattresses; hey, they weren't sleeping here, what's she up to? He was about to go back to the parking lot when she came into the clearing with a bunch of fire wood already cut and ready to go, “We have a half hour.” She put a couple of pieces in the fire ring and had a nice small fire going as dusk settled on the forest. Blue said, “Everything looks good. Where are you going to be sitting?” Scout was checking the surroundings “I'll set up across the road.” Blue said, “We are setting an empty trap?” Scout smiled, “Linda will be our bait, I was just going to get her.” Blue watched as Scout headed back to the truck, “Linda, who's Linda?” Blue pulled his flight bag to the back of the tent and started putting on his gear; he heard her come back and started talking to Linda, “Now I want you to sit here and stay quiet, just read your book Linda.” Blue was set, the Stoner had a full magazine, the flashlight was on full charge. He put his bag next to a big Douglas fir on the corner of the back of the tent. When he got into position, lying prone against the tree, he could see the trail in, and the woman sitting beside the campfire reading a book. He tried his communicator, “Scout come in?” “Read you loud and clear Blue.” “Scout who is Linda?” “You mean you didn't go up and introduce yourself?” “No, I was getting ready.” Scout laughed, “Blue, Linda is

always ready for fun.” Blue adjusted his sight, and put it on Linda’s face. The cowboy hat covered most of her head, but he could make out red hair surrounding an open mouth. Since darkness had settled in for the night and they hadn’t had a vehicle pass on the road, Blue decided to investigate. “Scout come in.” “Scout go ahead.” “Since we don’t have any traffic, I’m going to meet Linda, now don’t go shooting me.” “Scout copies.” Scout set her sight on the clearing and could see Blue coming from behind the tent and creep towards Linda. Scout had to stick her glove in her mouth to muffle the laughter, when he was right next to her, Scout could hear on the communicator, “Oh no, Scout you are a sick puppy!” Scout was rolling on the ground she was laughing so hard. They both heard the car coming up the Catalina Highway at the same time. Scout swung her rifle to the road, Blue dove for behind the tent. Scout switched on the night vision; it was a BMW, probably on its way to Summerhaven. “So what did you think of Linda?” Blue laughed, “When I saw those eyes in the campfire, I thought you brought a corpse up here. So where did you get the sex toy?” Scout said laughing, “I’ll never tell.”

Cindy was going through all the art sites in the Los Angeles area. Were they just going to walk in and take the art off the wall and put it in the helicopter? The helicopter was enormous and there had to be at least twenty-five crates they were making. You don’t land a helicopter that big anywhere, it needed a lot of area. If they were going to load twenty-five paintings into the crates, we are talking hours; the police would be on top of them in minutes, unless the police were too busy somewhere else? Why wouldn’t the police respond to a major art theft? What were they going to blow up to cause this? A bridge? A dam? The power! If they could cause a major power outage for a long period

of time, the police may have their hands full, especially in the largest metropolitan city in the country.

Jennifer turned to Cindy, Cindy was mesmerized by the monitor. She seemed to be forcing all her concentration onto the screen as her fingers were going at lighting speed on the keyboard. Better not break the concentration; she was on to something. Jennifer turned around in her seat to look at Doug looking through more reports and files. “Doug does this mean that we don’t have to send Charley in?” Doug looked up, “Sorry Jennifer, what do you mean?” Jennifer got up and sat next to Doug, Doug was staring at Cindy, “What’s she doing?” Jennifer smiled, “Whatever it is, she will be at the end of the Internet in ten minutes. Since the Colonel is heading up to meet ‘Wanderer’ we don’t need to use Charley as bait.” Doug was thinking when Cindy looked over at Jennifer’s empty seat, “Jennifer how long would it take for the National Guard to respond to a regional disaster?” Jennifer thought for a minute, “The Governor of the state could probably get the troops on the scene in ten to twelve hours.” Cindy shook her head, “No, I mean if all of California, half of Oregon, and the southern part of Nevada were without power for let’s say, a couple of months during the summer?” Jennifer just looked at Cindy. Doug said, “forget the National Guard, the President would have to marshal the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force to restore order and pickup the dead.” Jennifer looked at both of them sitting there with blank expression on their faces, “Your kidding, right?” But she could tell when their expression turned to gloom, that they were not.

“Hey Blue, What’s wrong with you and Brat?” After an hour of nothing, Blue thought that this was a wash out. “The question is what is right with us?” Scout smiled as she answered into the communicator, “You are two young beautiful people who have an animal magnetism towards each other.” Blue laughed, “So that is what it is?” Scout knew she was playing with fire. “Whenever I see you two together, I see a bright energized couple. It’s like magic. If you two would stop looking at each other and look at the people around you, you would see that magic affecting people.” Blue was silent for a minute. “I think if we got over the lust, there would be nothing to hold us together; we come from different worlds.” Scout said, “If you look at it, you have more in common than you think. Come on Blue, what’s one of the stumbling blocks?” Blue had no problem with this one. “You mean beside the fact that she could buy me three times over.” Scout smiled, she got him. “At ‘Desert One’ she was telling me about her new car, a new Ford Thunderbird. How it was a return to the classical Thunderbird, how it had this and that. I asked her why she bough a Ford and not a Mercedes or Lexus? She said that it was an American Classic, and she didn’t like foreign cars,” Blue cut in, “What’s the point?” Scout was a little put off, “I asked her how much it cost? She didn’t know. I then asked her how much she made at her job? She gave me a figure, but again she really didn’t know. Does that tell you something?” Blue said sarcastically, “She doesn’t have a head for figures?” Scout wanted to go over there and strangle him, “No, it means she’s not about money and if you would only notice that when she not around you she is a sweet loving person!” Blue said, “I know that, but she can have any guy.” Scout wanted to scream, “Unfortunately she’s crazy about you. Let’s call it a night.” When they met at the truck Blue asked, “So after the lust, we get married, have babies and live happily ever

after?" Scout stopped what she was doing and looked off into space, "There is nothing wrong with that, if you can find it." Within a half-hour everything was packed up and they were on their way down the Catalina Highway.

Day 12-Friday

The chief pointed at the map as agents grouped around the table, “We will have three staging areas in St. John, Heber, and Show Low. The command post will be set up in Snowflake.” Agent Green said, “We don’t want to spook them by getting too close too soon.” The chief continued, “Reconnaissance suggests that there are twenty-five people at the camp,” pointing at an area right on the border of Navajo and Apache Counties at a place called Mesa Redondo. “The compound consists of the main house, a bunkhouse, a recreation/training/mess hall building, and at the base of the hill a bunker. At the entrance to the property is a gatehouse trailer behind a fortified gate. There are no other barriers around the twenty-five acre property. There doesn’t have to be, the terrain is soft with many sinkholes and gullies. Weather conditions at this time of the year call for mist, fog, and rain. Before we go any further, Agent in Charge Green will now go over the operational parameters. Agent Green.”

Denise took the pointer from the chief, “We will set up a perimeter a half mile from the compound using the National Guard units being flown in by choppers thirty minutes after the colonel arrives at the main house. Ranger will then ask them to surrender. With our SWAT teams coming in the night before to take the high ground on the hill, then coming down the hill and up behind them. We hope to create a diversion by blowing the main gate and attacking with all other units there, at that time. This will signal the start of the operation. The National Guard will then move forward to pick up any stragglers that escape from the compound. Now the reason why and the objective.”

The chief left the room; this was time for the goody-two shoe talk; we are the good guys and they are the very bad people.

The objective is to bring these people to justice for their crimes against America. They will be told more than the national guard troops, who will be ordered to shoot anyone that is not wearing an FBI jacket. As far as he was concerned that kept it nice and simple. His teams had to capture the bunker first, then the main house and all it's inhabitants including the undercover agent; if he was still alive. Then it was to trap the fools that would not give up in the face of the advancing National Guard troops. Agent Green was finishing up when he returned, "Alright people you have your assignments and staging areas. Everybody is to report to your staging areas by 10:00 PM tonight and check in with your command coordinator." "Agent Green, If it is foggy or raining how are the National Guard going to get in?" Denise turned to face Charley, "That is a good question. The alternative plan is for them to go through the main gate in their trucks and to fan out when they reach the compound. I hope that answers your question?" Charley asked, "The SWAT teams are to hold the main house and bunker until the National Guard arrives?" Denise said, "That's right." Charley turned and whispered to Benny, "I was afraid of that. This is starting to smell a lot like Somali." Benny said, "I'm glad I will be in the command truck." Charley smiled, "You will tell me when to duck, right?"

"Come on boys we have a lot to do today." After another big breakfast, Andy and Tom just wanted to sit at the kitchen table and let everything digest. "We have to get food for the box lunches and barbecue, gas up the van, check in at the ranger station, and

hopefully the supplies I ordered have arrived at the post office.” Andy was wondering if it was better if an old dog didn’t learn new tricks.”

Dex was a sight to see standing at the elevator bank at 8:00AM, he was surrounded by suits. He was wearing his daily grab; an island shirt, khaki pants, and his boat shoes. He wished he had a cigar, maybe he would be mistaken for a retired CEO. The elevator came and took him up. Dex wished he was retired when he entered the conference room. Doug was sleeping on a bunch of files, Jennifer was sleeping at the console, and Cindy next to her was staring at the screen saver on the monitor. Cindy was in the worst shape. “Come on Cindy; time to go to bed.” Still staring at the screen saver, “One more calculation, that is all I need.” “No honey; come with me.” Dex helped her up and guided her to one of the bedrooms. He sat her down on the bed, took off her shoes and eased her under the covers in her clothes. She stared mumbling something about they can’t do it. Dex returned and did the same for Jennifer. Doug wasn’t so lucky, he got a shake on the shoulder and a “What the hell is happening around here?” Doug looked up. “You better make some coffee and I will tell you.” Dex sighed, “that is the best offer I had all morning.”

Benny was eating breakfast in the hotel coffeehouse when Charley scooted into the booth, “What are we going to do on our last half day of freedom?” Benny didn’t like remarks like that. “I don’t know about you, but I’m going shopping for presents for my family.” Charley smiled, “I got it, we’ll go to the zoo and you can pick up a stuffed animal or something for your little boy.” “I take it you don’t have a five year old?”

Charley smiled, "And never will." Benny in a way felt sorry for Charley, he was a good enough guy, but he lived for the here and now and would probably stay that way for the rest of his life. Benny asked, "Are there any malls around here?" Charley laughed, "You really are married. Yes, I will take you to one of the ritziest malls in the country." Benny thought he was right. He remembered all the times Janice would drag him to the mall. She wasn't a spender, she just liked to look and he liked looking at her when she did. She would make funny little jokes or comments about the fashions and displays. He started to like going there with her and Rudy; that was the reason he wanted to go now.

Dudley looked sharp in his dress blue uniform as he walked into Admiral Yates' office. Chief Finestein had a smile on her face from ear to ear as she showed him in. Admiral Yates was studying some papers on his desk when he looked up and returned the salute. "Have a seat Captain." Dudley sat down and wondered where they were going to send him and his crew. The Admiral looked up at Dudley, "You are probably wondering where you are shipping off to?" Dudley cringed and said, "Yes Sir." The Admiral said, "I can't be so lucky, they are bringing the USS Michigan down from Bangor, stripped to be refitted as a research boat, and you and your motley crew will be assigned the task. It seems you have friends in high places." Dudley stood up to full attention, "Yes Sir." The Admiral leaned back in his chair, "Dismissed, and congratulation Captain." Dudley said, "Thank you Sir." He turned and walked out of the office; he wasn't going to push his luck. Dudley didn't have to wonder who was behind this as he walked out into the daylight.

Scout sat on the side of the bed looking at Blue sleeping in the other double bed. Boy! They look so cute when they are sleeping. Enough of that, she had work to do and luckily she didn't have to drag him around. As she was about to jump in her truck she heard the clanging of the trolley on Sixth Ave. She forgot that the trolley ran on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday and went right to the gates of the University. She locked the truck, ran up to the room and dropped off the key for the truck for Jerry. She caught the trolley just before it took off; she had forgotten how much fun Tucson was as the trolley slowly made it's way to the university. She had to stop in the student center to get a map, the place had changed so much since she went to school, and was able to find the Political Science building. Now to find Full Professor Phillip James's office. She checked herself; her University of Arizona sweatshirt and jeans blended in well with the students and her muddy boots would add credence to her story. The note, which she wrote last night at the campsite, had a gritty touch to it. She stopped in her tracks at his office door, there was a picture of smiling Phillip James, it seems he was running for City Councilman. Amy thought how vain it was to put a campaign poster on your office door.

After knocking, a deep voice said, "Come in." Amy entered to see an older man with a white beard correcting papers on his desk. "Hi, are you Professor James?" He stopped writing on the papers and said, "Yes, can I help you?" My boyfriend and I went up to Mount Lemon last night to look at the stars and we ran into this lady camping out up there. She saw my sweatshirt and asked if I went to school here. I said yes and she asked me to deliver a message to you." Phillip James asked, "What did this woman look like?" Amy pretended to think for a couple of moments, "Well, she was old like you,

kind of nervous or scared, I would be, all alone up there, wearing old clothes and a cowboy hat. She sounded kind of desperate that I get this note to you. Do you think she is crazy or something? Maybe I should just rip up the note, I'm sorry if I disturbed you Professor." "No, wait, what does the note say?" he asked. "Beats me, I don't read other people's mail." Amy answered like being accused. The professor said, "Here give me the note." Amy reached into her back pocket and pulled out a folded piece of paper. The professor took it and unfolded it and read it, "It's from a old friend passing through town. We haven't seen each other in years. How did she know I taught here I wonder?" Amy didn't count on that question, but came up with an idea, "She probably saw one of your posters and decided to look you up. That wouldn't be hard, you being famous and all." The professor smiled, "You are right, that's it." Amy asked, "Can I go professor? I have a lot of studying to do over at the library." The professor smiled, "Yes my dear, and thank you for taking the trouble to deliver the note." As Amy walked out of the building, she thought, there's a man who doesn't want his past catching up with him.

"Hi Annie, did you miss me?" Charley said as he entered the Eddie Bauer's store in the Fashion Mall in Scottsdale. Annie put both hands on her hips, "NO! Not one call from you, and then I call the park, and they tell me you no longer work there. You have a lot of explaining mister." "I can't sweetie, except to say I'm living up in Vegas and I hope you will visit me." Annie started folding shirts again, "What are you doing up in Vegas?" Charley smiled, "The last time I was there I saw EFX at the MGM." Annie said, "They say that Rick Springfield is real sexy, for an older guy." Charley said, "You can

see when you come up.” Annie was impressed. “Come on Charley; we have to go.” Benny said.

Dex was gunning it past Rose’s Café on Interstate 93, “Major, where is he now?” Doug was sitting at the console monitoring ‘Wanderer’s progress on Interstate 95 “Chief, he just turned on to 183 heading to Laughlin. Take it easy, you are to follow him, not beat him there.” Dex eased up on the gas pedal and thought, he was from the old school where you maintained visual contact at all times. With satellites that wasn’t needed, the satellite would follow the locked on target where ever it went, giving the speed, and telling you when the vehicle stopped. Doug switched over to Spyglass 15, with a clear view of the compound in the White Mountains; it looked like everybody was coming out of the training building after lunch. The techs back in Washington haven’t picked up anybody going in or out of the bunker and that was a good sign. Jennifer strolled into the conference room, “Where are we?” Doug turned to see that she looked all right, “Chief is hot on the trail of ‘Wanderer,’ Scout just called and she had placed the bait for Phillip James, and the last she knew Blue was asleep at the hotel. Whiz and Ranger are on their way up to Show Low, and Cindy is in a catatonic state in the back bedroom. Jennifer asked, “Can you hold on while I go check on her?” Doug looked sad, “Dex said that she was staring blindly at the monitor when he came in this morning.” Jennifer turned saying, “She will be all right in eight hours. That is all the time we can give her.” Doug switched to the other monitor; this one gave him the data reading on the FBI communication net sent from Fort Meade. The Colonel was still in Paradise Valley, but the Albuquerque SWAT team was on the move and so was the command post unit out of Phoenix.

Doug sat and waited; there was nothing else to do. Over the objections of Jennifer he had decided to stay with the plan to send Charley in on it seems Saturday now. He told Benny to check in again when they arrived in Show Low. If the Colonel arrived up at the compound on his own steam, he would offer Charley the opportunity to bail out then. Amy seemed to be in full control down in Tucson. He had a feeling that tonight would be the night; he wanted to send Cindy down as further backup, maybe it was better to keep her away from Jerry. And Jerry, with him ‘taking off into the wild blue yonder’ on occasion, this was not good. Thank god there was Benny, the rock of stability. He was quiet, too quiet for his own good; everybody tended to boss him around. No wonder he was more comfortable with electronics. Cindy was starting to calm down now that Amy was back and the memory of three years ago was fading. He wondered if she and Jerry could make a go of it?” Amy, what was that old saying, when she got a bee in her bonnet, watch out, she was another case of the tragic memories fading. Charley, what to make of him, throw logic out the window, he would either bring the group closer together or split them further apart. Now for the old timers, Dex, how long could this strategist and workhorse keep going? He was more than his right hand man; he was one of those second stringers that made the world turn. Jennifer was the glue that held everything together. Everybody liked her and respected her, and as he found out, they would do whatever she said. How does one judge oneself? A scientist, researcher, teacher, project manager, military commander or just plain problem solver. He was brought up to follow the rules, make others proud of him, follow orders, please others, for the good of the unit, group,

family, nation, and God. Maybe he needed to start creating a new life for himself; did he need to give up his old life in the process? Once this is over, he could start making plans.

Part V “Their finest hour.”

Day 12-Friday

Cindy woke to Jennifer staring down at her, “Cindy how are you feeling?” was the question Jennifer asked her. Cindy said, “I guess I’m alright, what time is it?” Jennifer said, “It is 2:00PM, and Doug needs to talk with you, are you up for it?” Cindy sat up in the bed, in her blouse and panties, “Where are my slacks?” Jennifer brought them over from the chair where she had placed them. “Your shoes are under the bed, there is a pot of coffee in the kitchen, and we will be in the conference room when you are ready.” Cindy just stared at the floor. Jennifer closed the door as she left.

“Ok Chief, he stopped in Chino Valley. As far as I can see there is just forest until you get there. Looks like he is stopping at the McDonald’s in a shopping mall.” Doug said as he stared at the monitor. Jennifer came in and walked over to the console, “She’s up, but is groggy. I think she will be all right.” As Jennifer sat down at the console Doug got up and stretched, “Phoenix FBI said that the Colonel is on the move towards Interstate 17.” Doug looked down at the map laying on the conference room table, “Where is he going?” An hour before Wanderer pulled off of Interstate 40 that would have taken him to the White Mountain Compound, now he was heading south on route 89 towards Prescott, Cindy came in sipping on a coffee cup, and went over to Doug, “Raring to go, what do we have?” Doug turned to her and asked, “Are you up to rendezvousing with Chief?” “Sure, is Wanderer giving us a problem?” Cindy said setting her coffee cup down. “He is heading south, and the Colonel is heading north, and we have no idea where they are going. Chief can’t be spotted by Wanderer or the game is up.” Doug said looking

at the map, "I want you to get over to Nellis where the chopper will be waiting. We are hoping that they will meet at Prescott. Either way that will be a good drop off point for you meeting up with Chief." Cindy didn't like the setup; but there didn't seem to be any other options, "Yes Sir." She turned and left the room.

"Hope you brought your long johns? I'm starting to freeze already and we are not even halfway there." Charley said as he pulled the rental car into the Kmart shopping mall in Payson. Benny was looking at the expensive vacation homes in the heavily forested area as they entered the city, "Aren't these people afraid of forest fires?" His Uncle Pedro had a vacation cabin in the Guadeloupe Mountains east of El Paso but it was just a cabin for roughing it two to three times a year. These houses were mansions compared to his. Charley said, "I would like to see the fire premium on those houses." Both of them got out and stretched. Then Benny opened the back door of the car, unzipped his computer bag and hooked up his cell phone to the computer modem port. He entered a few access codes and was into the main frame at Fort Meade where he was confronted with a direct access inquiry from a watch commander. It was his old buddy Tess, who asked him a personal question and after getting the right response, asked him what she could do for him. "Where was the Colonel?" "Approaching Cordes Junction." Benny yelled, "He's on his way." Charley came over, "The Colonel?" "Yes, he's a couple of hours in back of us." Charley laughed, "My magnetism draws them like flies."

Sandra was unloading the box Andy brought in from the truck; she was able to turn the small lab into a darkroom with blackout paper. The group would be doing their

lab work at night after the tour, so conditions were ideal. Putting the chemicals away, then cleaned up the dorm rooms and making the box lunches for the tour and she should be set for tomorrow. Andy was sitting in the library going over the trip route; he would drive as Sandra pointed out the scenes. Tom was vacuuming the van out over at the warehouse and making sure it was ready to go in the morning when the guest arrived.

Cindy pulled her Thunderbird up to the main gate. She got the 'no go' sign from the security force airman, who came up smiling and asked her to wait until his sergeant came over. Cindy put the car in park and waited. The sergeant walked over, smiling also and said, "Lt. Donner will be waiting for you at Hanger 32 with your gear." Cindy thanked him and proceeded through the gate. She wondered what that was about? They usually just flagged her through when they saw her sticker. She parked next to the old hanger with the large 32 painted on the side. She walked in to find Lt. Donner inspecting half of the squad; five men, they were all from the rapid response unit that were with her a few days before; Cindy thought that it seemed like years. Cindy looked over at the Pave Hawk that was warming up on the tarmac; she was a little self-conscious, her white blouse and slacks were not pressed and she didn't have any makeup on. Lt. Donner came over, "Good to see you again, your bag is on the table. If you want to put on your flightsuit, we are ready to go when you are." Cindy walked over to the table, unlocked her flight bag and pulled out her flightsuit. It was a mess, but would have to do. As she stepped into it, she heard Lt. Donner yell out, "Eyes forward!" Cindy looked at the men shifting their gazes from her to straight-ahead. As she pulled up the zipper the lieutenant came over to get her bag, "Sorry about that, there is a story going around here about a

desert princess in a blue swimsuit.” Cindy smiled as an adrenalin rush came over her; she then walked to the Pave Hawk with the lieutenant.

Scout returned to the hotel after lunch to find Blue gone, good. She wanted to check on that container in her flight bag and didn’t want him around when she did. She turned around as she heard the key in the lock, but she had put on the chain. “Hey, are you having fun with Linda without me?” Scout asked, “What’s the password?” Blue laughed, “I want to have fun.” Scout smirked, “That’s not the password.” As she walked over to the door. Blue sounding desperate said, “Come on, I got to go.” She took the chain off the door and he ran to the bathroom. She thought, “Men!” When he came out she informed him about Phillip James. She guess that Blue wasn’t told about the connection between Sandra and James, it was probably for the best he didn’t know. Blue gave her his baby blues, “Are we ready to go? We can stop at that Gyros place before we head up the mountain.” She said, “Maybe if you didn’t eat so much, you wouldn’t have to run to the bathroom so often? You are going to need a rich woman just to keep you in food.” Blue smiled, “Don’t you know that I can live on only love.” Scout laughed, “When I see you pass up food, then I know you are in love, and that will be the day.” They both picked up their bags and headed out. Phillip had to stop at home to pick something up before he went to meet his long lost friend; maybe now he could have closure with this thing that had worried him for a very long time.

The Chief followed Wanderer five miles out of Prescott before turning around and heading back to the Prescott airport. When he asked at information on talking to the

tower, he thought they were going to call the sheriff, but they directed him to a white courtesy phone and he was connected to the tower. "What can I do for you?" the voice asked. "You are going to have a military priority flight coming in shortly, I want to know where I can meet it." "So that is what that blip is coming in from the north. Can you tell me what kind of aircraft it is?" Chief thought he needed to play along, "It should be an Air force Pave Hawk." "Hold on we are getting the landing request now." The Chief thought, just tell me where you are going to park it! "OK, if you head over to terminal three, I'll taxi it there." "Thanks for your help." The Chief hung up and walked over to the small terminal and waited. Damn! Where were they heading? He was just about to go back to the truck and get his receiver, when he looked out the terminal window to see the Pave Hawk land in front of the terminal. He saw Brat and the lieutenant jump out of the side door of the chopper and run to the terminal door; where he met them. Brat was out of breath and said, "Chief what do you want the unit to do?" The Chief looked at the lieutenant, "You better stick around to see where this pans out." The lieutenant said, "Yes Sir, I'll just go get Cindy's bag." He then took off for the chopper. The Chief gave Brat that stern fatherly look, "What's this 'Cindy' business about?" Brat smiled, "Isn't he sweet? Did you know the pilot wants to put my name on the side of the helicopter?" Chief said, "We need to have a talk 'young lady.'" Brat asked, "What's this 'young lady' about?"

Jennifer was sitting at the console; she had just spoken to Fort Meade and asked them to switch over to heat-sensitive infrared sensors on the satellite since dawn and dusk are the worst time tracking ground objects. Doug had just gotten the call from Benny; Whiz and Ranger were at the staging area in Show Low. “Whiz what do you think?” “Major it looks like we are going to have to go with the original plan.” The Major tried to think of another way, “I agree, how does the FBI setup look?” Whiz didn’t want to jinx this, “We will be all right if everything goes according to plan.” The Major next asked, “How is Charley holding up?” Whiz laughed, “If this guy has a sensitive bone in his body I don’t know where it is, he acts like he is going to a church social!” “Whiz any time you think you need to pull the plug you have my authorization. OK, put him on.” Whiz stuck his head out of the door of the hanger office at Show Low airport, “Charley, the Major wants to talk with you.” Charley was checking the button transmitter that was attached to his shirt. “Hello Major.” “Hello Ranger. How is it going?” The Major was trying to pick up any voice irregularities, “Everything is set to go in the morning. Whiz said that we have a glitch with our star player?” “Ranger we need to get him there. If he don’t play I want you to get out, we will need you to track him down, understand?” Ranger was thinking that over, “If I can’t get the player there, pull out, I understand that, and if I can’t get out, wait for the Calvary.” The Major was trying to think of anything more he could say or do, “I know that this doesn’t mean much, but we are all proud of you for what you are doing, we will be praying for you.” Whiz said, “Major I don’t think he heard that, he just walked away.” “Whiz do you want me to put SOP3 on standby?” Whiz thought of the last time he saw the Commander, “Please don’t, it would be a bigger bloodbath with them.” The Major said, “OK, Whiz get some sleep.” He waited for Whiz to say good

night before he hung up. “What the hell is happening with Scout and Blue?” Jennifer didn’t like where this was going.

“I’m sorry Scout, but once this is over with, I’m going to shoot out Linda’s eyes.” “Do we have a fatal attraction here?” Blue laughed, “How anybody could be attracted to that, is beyond me.” Scout felt sorry for poor Linda, “I think she is kind of cute with her cowboy hat.” Blue asked, “What sodbuster did you get that hat off of?” Scout was trying to think what sodbuster meant; out of the corner of her eye she could see a car slowly coming up the highway, “Blue, we have a car sneaking up, throw another log on the fire fast.” Scout switched to night-vision on her scope, Blue did the same in back of the tent after throwing wood on the fire, Scout switched to a whisper, “It’s a brown Audi coupe, Arizona license number TMF-520. He is switching to parking lights only, It’s Phillip James.” Blue flipped the catch on his nine-millimeter’s holster and said to himself, “Come to Papa.”

The car slowly pulled into the space next to Scout’s truck, turning off his lights but keeping the motor running. He just sat there looking down the path to the campsite. This went on for ten minutes; Scout was getting worried, if he didn’t move soon, he would guess it was a trap. The flicking of the flames could only cover no movement from Linda for so long. Then she saw the dome light go on and the door open. He got out of the car fast, scared by the light. He shut the door and walked to the front of the car. Scout had proof she needed that he was up to no good, she slowly started crawling towards the road with her rifle on her back. Phillip James looked both ways down the highway; it was

now or never. He slowly walked towards the campfire where his old friend was reading a book, he hoped that it was Sean's book. Blue watched the man in the long coat approach, and then he slowly pulled a pump-action shotgun from under the coat. "Shit!" Blue started crawling around the tree to the other side of the tent, if he shot at Linda, he would be pulling pellets out of his teeth! By the time Blue had cleared the area he heard the shotgun go off and heard pellets whizzing through the tent. His 92F Beretta was in his hand, he didn't hear the slide cock, so he was holding an empty chamber gun. He looked around the tent to see the man looking at what was left of the book in the firelight; Linda was crumpled up on the side log, her cowboy hat sat in the fire pit burning. Blue got up and was going to come around the tent and ask the man to give up, if the shotgun didn't drop, the man would look like Linda. Just what he deserved after what he did to his beloved Linda. Suddenly three shots rang out, Blue hit the ground. When he looked up, the man was gone. Blue jumped up and over the fire pit and headed up the path. He heard the car shift into gear and watched as he peeled out down the road. "Scout?" she came out from the other side of the road, "What the hell happened?" Blue asked as he watched the taillights turn the corner, then they heard screeching tires and a series of loud thuds with what sounded like glass popping, then the explosion. Blue looked over at Scout, who had a blank stare in her eyes, he went over to her and put his arms around her, "Are you OK?" Scout came out of her daze; "Yes I'm fine, let's get out of here fast." They both put all the stuff in the truck including Linda's remains and cowboy hat. As they turned the corner on the road, they could see the skid marks where the car slid along the guardrail, and there was the car sitting up against a boulder, still totally engulfed in flames, with black soot staining the side of the boulder. Blue looked over at Scout. Her

eyes were focused forward just looking down the road, he figured that it was best if she didn't see the charred remains bend over the steering wheel silhouetted by the flames. The ride down the Catalina Highway and to the hotel went in silence; nothing needed to be said. Mission accomplished.

Chief and Brat had found Wanderer's abandoned van at Cordes Junction that night. The Major said that he was picked up by a Porsche, which they lost in minutes, but that is what the Colonel was driving. Luckily the FBI was tailing it and they headed into a place called 'Arcosanti' and they found the Porsche parked there and was able to lock on. The Major told Chief and Brat to get some sleep. The FBI was staking the place out and Brat could go in tomorrow and find out what they were up to. The Chief and Brat were able to get rooms in a motel down the road and Brat started downloading information on the place called 'Arcosanti.' When the Chief returned with Pizza they started to make plans for her going in. With the information Brat got from the Colonel's credit card they were able to find that the Colonel booked 'The Sky Suite' for the weekend. They weren't going to the White Mountains; it was up to Ranger to get him there.

Day 15- Saturday

The man came out of trailer holding a shotgun, "What do you want?" "I was told to come here by a friend." Ranger tried to act edge. : Does this friend have a name?" Ranger looked around like he was trying to spot something, "He said his name was Waters, Richard Waters." The man looked around like Ranger, "Why did he send you here?" Ranger acted scared, "Come on man! The FBI is looking for me and he told me to give the Colonel a message." The man said, "You wait there, I have to make a call." Ranger got into his beat up pickup truck and waited. It had taken him a while to find the compound, 15 miles off the main road and that was with Whiz giving him instructions. This was not the place to be, if the shit hits the fan. The man came out of the trailer, "The Commandant is on his way down, he will decide." Ranger looked at the gate; it was four I-beams upright and cemented into the ground with a latticework of rebar. Meshed on the top of the rebar were strips of steel. At the base of the gate supports they had started to cover it with concrete, Ranger could see a jeep with four guys coming down the road; he got out of the truck and waited at the gate. The four men got out of the jeep and the one with the black beret came over to the gate, the three others took off into the woods. "Where do you know Richard Waters from?" The Commandant asked Ranger. "I was helping him with a job down in Yuma. When I escaped he told me to get up here and give the Colonel a message." "What's your name and where is Waters now?" The three men returned and shook their heads as they joined the Commandant at the gate. "Name is Bo Murrey from Yuma and Waters is probably sitting in a federal detention center and so would I, if he didn't help me escape." The Commandant smiled, "What trouble did old Richard get himself into now?" Ranger spat on the ground, "I have been making my way

up here for four days on every back road in Arizona, I'm tired and hungry, and if you don't help me, it's your funeral." The Commandant motioned to the men and they opened the gate. Then the three men came up to him and shoved him down on the hood of the truck and proceeded to frisk him and go through the truck. "Are they still working on the bridge over the Colorado down in Yuma?" Ranger had been over that bridge three or four times over the last five years and there had been no construction on it, "They haven't worked on that bridge in ten years, what are you talking about?" The Commandant said, "Bring him up to the command post."

"Come on Scout, the Major wants us to go to a place called 'Arcosanti.'" Scout sat up in her bed, "Don't we even get a half a day off?" Blue frowned, "No rest for the wicked. While you're getting dressed I'll go bury Linda in a dumpster." He then proceeded out the door. Scout was trying to remember what 'Arcosanti' was. She knew it was between Phoenix and Flagstaff. Her dad was interested in the place at one time, but didn't think it would survive the test of time. It was started by an Italian architect named Paolo Soleri, who had a vision of a city of the future that combined architecture with ecology. He started building his dream in the middle of the high desert, that was in the sixties and he was still working on it. He made and sold these beautiful wind chime bells to finance the project. Scout thought, well at least she would be able to finally see the place. Blue came back and said that a C-130 was waiting at Davis-Monthan air base for them, so shake a leg. She wanted to shake a leg right into his keester!

“Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen and welcome to the Desert Research Station. My name is Sandra and I will be your guide and instructor for our desert photographic seminar. This is Andy, who will be our driver and this is Tom, the caretaker of this facility. Do we have any questions before we board the van?”

Jennifer and Doug were manning the console, Jennifer was monitoring the FBI communication traffic in the White Mountains with a hook up with Whiz, and Doug was monitoring the Spyglass 30 satellite over Arcosanti. He was transfixed with the strange forms and buildings “Chief to Major come in.” “Go ahead Chief.” “We have checked in with the surveillance team and informed them of the insertion. They have been ordered by Agent Green to comply with our instructions, waiting for orders.” Doug swiveled in his chair, “Jennifer, any input?” Jennifer asked, “Should they wait for Scout and Blue to arrive?” Doug thought it over, “An hour to two hours before they arrive on scene, we can’t wait.” Jennifer nodded. Doug pressed the send button on the microphone, “Chief, you are the on-scene commander, proceed at your discretion, over.” “Copy that, insertion commencing.” The chief turned to Brat who was wearing jeans, a pink tee shirt, and sneakers and handed over his truck keys, “Now you take good care of my baby, you hear?” Brat looked over his pickup and laughed, “You are worried about this?” The two FBI men looked at each other in disbelief. The Chief smiled, “You take care in there and we will send Scout in as soon as she gets here.” “Copy that chief.” Brat jumped in the truck and gunned it down the road. Chief looked at the two FBI men; “You see what I have to put up with?” The Chief saw that the FBI men would put up with whatever Brat had to offer.

“You don’t mind eating with handcuffs while we check your story out?” Ranger was sitting in the dining room table in the main house; “I’m used to these bracelets. When do I get to see the Colonel?” The Commandant smiled, “All in good time. He turned to one of his men, “If he tries anything shoot him.” He turned to another man and said, “Get me Frenchy on the phone.” As he walked out of the room, Ranger wondered who Frenchy was?

Whiz swiveled on his chair in the command post, “Agent Green, they are inserting our agent into Arcosanti and the man with the beret just came on the porch of the main building. We are also picking up a wireless transmission from the compound to North Carolina; the fix is Fort Bragg.” Agent Green looked down at Whiz, “Are you sure it’s Fort Bragg? Do you have any clue what that is about?” Whiz listened to his headset; “Transmission ended. It is going to take some time for the transmission to be processed, we will have to wait.” Agent Green looked at the man sitting in the other chair at the console, “Carlton, get me Deputy Director Ford pronto!”

Brat pulled the truck into the gravel parking area. The concrete structure two stories high on the side of a ravine looked out of place in the surrounding scrublands. Brat noted a dirt road leading off from the parking area, with signs saying ‘Staff only, Construction Zone.’ The Porsche was sitting in the same spot as on the satellite images. Brat went over to it; it was a classic sixties 911 built for speed, she wondered how the FBI Crown Vic kept up with it, he must have done the speed limit, what a shame! She felt like she was being watched and when she looked up at the top of the building where the

Sky Suite was located there was a man looking down at her, she smiled and waved. He returned the smile and waved. She then walked towards the entrance of the facility. Inside the front door there was a reception area manned by a pretty oriental girl, "Hello. Welcome to Arcosanti, would you like to go on the tour that is leaving in twenty minutes?" Brat guessed Japanese exchange student by the precise way she said it, "Yes my dear. That's the reason I'm here." The girl looked at her in amazement; "You are a American?" Brat smiled at her and said in a country twang, "Born and raised, does that surprise you?" The girl giggled, "We mostly get foreign visitors I thought maybe you were from Hong Kong with the way you are dressed, we get many tour groups from there." Brat thought of that old saying, 'you will travel around the world to see someone else's culture, but wouldn't bother to spend an hour seeing your own.' "Been to Hong Kong many times, but I like America." The girl smiled, "Yes it is a great country." Brat needed to get the ball rolling, "How much for the tour?" The girl said, "eight dollars is the suggested donation." Brat gave her ten dollars and said, "Keep the change." The girl giggled again, "I am so sorry, seeing a Asian talking American is amusing to me." Brat thought, oh brother!

The Colonel walked into the suite, Wanderer was sitting on the couch, "Hilly, I maybe getting some 'Pun-tang' tonight. There was a fine-ass woman looking at my car a minute ago. I better go down and introduce myself to her." Wanderer laughed, "As long as I get sloppy seconds." The Colonel laughed, "I don't know, you were awful sloppy with that 'Mama-san' in Phan Rang. Do you think CID is still looking for her killer?" They both broke out laughing.

“Frenchy here, what’s the problem?” The Commandant asked, “You reported on that incident near Yuma, were there any prisoners taken?” “The chopper pilot said they carted off six, one a woman.” The Commandant then asked, “Who do you think did the action, was it a pro?” “They were using military grade shit, you figure.” The Commandant hung up. “Let’s see what our friend knows about explosives.” The other man smiled.

“Hey, that was pretty good beef stew, what’s for dessert?” Ranger was wiping his face on his shoulder as the Commandant returned from an office in the back of the building, “Actually it was rabbit stew, no dessert until you answer a few questions.” Ranger gulped, “OK, what do you want to know?” The Commandant said, “Everything, from the time you met Waters.” Ranger had gone over the stories with Whiz and the Major, and they thought the Bo Murray story was the best choice, for it’s honesty, so that was the story he told them. “So Waters was the one who gave you the charges?” “Yes, they were strange little bombs, but they burned everything to the ground.” “So how did you escape?” Ranger laughed, “When they turned me and Lance over to the park ranger, Lance was mouthing off to the ranger all the way into Yuma. The ranger decided to teach Lance a lesson and pulled into an alley in the downtown area. I have to admit Lance put up quite a fight as the ranger beat the crap out of him. I decided just to walk away, my brother-in-law cut the cuffs off of me at his house and let me use that piece of junk he calls a truck.” The Commandant thought it was so ridiculous that it had to be true, “So when did Waters give you the message?” Ranger continued, “When they put us in that underground prison I was in the cell over from Waters, he said that if I could get a

message to the Colonel, you guys would take good care of me, but he warned me that the message was only for the Colonel.” The Commandant paced up and down the room for a couple of minutes, and then looked at Ranger trying to pick food out of his teeth with his cuffed hands. He decided he better call the Colonel.

“Did you enjoy the tour?” Brat turned to see the gray harried man that waved at her from the Sky Suite; “This place is far out! To think he just decided to do it, you know like, just do it! Man I wish I had my shit together like him.” The Colonel laughed, this was going to be an easy piece, “You’re not a valley girl are you?” Brat smiled, “Born and raised in the Sacramento Valley, how did you know?” The Colonel couldn’t stop laughing; “I was born in Sacramento, down the street from the Capital.” He lied, “Do you want to see the view from my suite up there?” He pointed up at the Sky Suite. Brat thought that this was too easy, “How about I meet you up there, I need to get my purse out of the old man’s truck, and go to the little girl’s room, if that is alright with you?” “Sure, my name is Fred, what’s yours?” Brat coyly said, “I like to be called Brat, see you in a bit.” She turned and walked towards the stairs leading up to the parking area. The Colonel followed her with his eyes; Hilly will have to wait for sloppy seconds. Brat bent over the truck seat, in case they were watching, and called in, “Brat to Chief come in.” “Chief go ahead.” “I’m in, the Colonel invited me up to the suite, will take the remote and beep you if I run into problems, copy?” “Brat let’s wait until Scout gets here, then you can go in.” Brat hated when these men worried over everything, “I’ll wait for awhile, when Scout arrives send her up to get me, that will be an easy out. This guy has only one thing on his mind.” Chief thought, they should be here any minute, “Copy that, will send

Scout up to the suite when she arrives, you will beep if there is trouble, Copy.” Brat put the emergency transmitter that looked like a pager in her purse, locked the truck and headed up to the suite.

Once the plane landed, Scout jumped into the truck while Blue undid the lashing restraints. Scout waited until the loadmaster had lowered the rear ramp before putting her truck in gear. Blue jumped in and yelled “Yippee eye aye!” as they drove out the rear of the C-130. It was only a thirty-five mile drive to Arcosanti. She hoped that Brat wasn’t having all the fun.

The Major was listening to Whiz, “The call just went out to the Colonel’s cell phone. I have a rush priority into Fort Meade for the conversation, but hopefully we should have some activity down at Arcosanti.” The Major was watching the satellite close-up of the Arcosanti complex. “Major to all units, the subjects are walking out to the parking lot. Subject ‘C’ is getting into his vehicle. Major to Chief what is the status of Brat?” The Chief didn’t know what to say, “I got her! She is on the Sky Suite terrace waving down at the subjects. Major to Scout, what is your ETA to site?” “Scout to Major, we just passed Mayor and should be there in twenty minutes.” Major to Chief, shall we let our cousins go?” Chief copied that he wanted the FBI stakeout team to follow the Colonel. “Chief to Major copy that, will wait for our backup.” Chief dragged the two flight bags out of the back seat of the Crown Victorian sedan, and wished the two FBI men, “Good Hunting,” they were surprised by this, but replied, “Thank you sir, the same to you.” They started the vehicle up and slowly crept out from their hiding place behind

an old abandoned truck stop across the highway. Chief was nervous; he reached into his bag and pulled out his Smith and Wesson model '60' and strapped on his gun belt, not knowing why. The Major was just going to go get some coffee when he noticed something on the monitor. Wanderer was standing over at a pickup truck in the parking area. The Major wondered if he was planning to take off too, but his van was parked at the interchange. Was he looking at the truck to steal it? No, It was the Chief's truck he was looking at! And then he was gone, and Brat wasn't on the terrace either. "Major to Chief, I think subject 'W' has made your truck, extract Brat as soon as possible!" "Chief copies, have backup pick me up on the road in." Chief took off running towards the highway underpass. AJ looked at the Major; "We can call the stakeout team back to pickup Chief. "No, we can't. Get the chopper on the way there. "SOP6 to AFH1 come in?" static, "SOP6 to AFH1 come in?"

Wanderer got up from the chair that was in front of the chair Brat was bound to. He thought, most people think sex is so intimate, but torture is much more personal than that. He wanted to say to her that she was trained well, but no one can train you for this. She had said nothing because of a hatred she had for him and she didn't even know him. He looked down at her battered face; crushed foot and the swollen left hand with the broken fingers pointed in different directions. He wished he could have known her better, they may have been friends. So he decided to offer her some comfort, as he stoked her long silky hair he said, "The pain will all be gone in a half hour." He picked up his bag and went down the stairway and found what he was looking for at the delivery dock.

The Chief was huffing and puffing down the access road when he heard a siren coming from behind him. He stopped and turned to see Scout's pickup coming down the hill across the highway with a sheriff's cruiser hot on her tail, she had to be doing ninety. When she made the turn after the underpass, her truck slid sideways off the road, over a drainage ditch and into a sign for Arcosanti. He couldn't see what happened because of all the dust and dirt kicked up. When the air cleared he saw the sheriff car pointed at her truck with two officers out of the vehicle pointing their weapons at her vehicle. As he stood there, he heard the truck start up and she was off again, towards him. "That's my Scout!" he said as the passenger door fell off the truck screeching to a halt next to him. "I'll take care of the deputies. You two find Brat. Watch out for that delivery truck!" A break truck was coming down the road in the opposite direction. Blue was loading two 9mm Berettas on his lap, Scout was wiping the blood off her forehead where there was a nasty gash above her right eye. Chief held on for dear life as the truck slid on the parking lot gravel into the construction sign. They all sat there not realizing that they were not moving, until the police siren brought them back to reality. Chief turned to see that the deputies were slowly coming toward them. They knew that they had them and weren't going to take any chances this time. Blue handed one of the Berettas to Scout, Chief reached into his back pocket and pulled out his bandana and gave it to Scout for her wound, "As I head for them, you take off for the front door." They both just nodded.

The Chief pulled out his wallet and opened it up, he decided that his Clamper Queho Posse membership card was the flashiest and put that the plastic window of the wallet. Blue and Scout caked in blood, sweat and dust waited as he got out of the truck

“Federal Agents on Official Business.” Chief said as he held up his wallet and slowly walked toward the two Sheriff deputies pointing their weapons right at him. Blue took off from the missing door with Scout right behind him. As they went through the entrance door a little oriental girl was standing at the door watching the scene in the parking lot. “Where’s the elevator up to the top?” Blue yelled at her, she put her hand to her mouth and pointed at the elevator. As they rode up they gathered their strength, Scout looked at the suite door and then at Blue, who nodded. She stuck her Beretta in the small of her back while Blue cocked his as he leaned against the wall next to the door. She gave the door two good knocks and yelled out, “Brat are you in there?” There was no answer. She stepped back, pulling out her gun and cocking it, as Blue fired one round down into the lock then kicked the door in. Their guns searched for targets as they entered the suite, but that only lasted for a minute until they saw what was sitting in the chair in the center of the room. Scout thanked God that Blue ran over to the body and started cutting the restraints, was that Cindy? Blue laid her on the floor and stuck his fingers in her mouth; pulling out two teeth and yelling at Scout to get ice and towels. Scout ran to the kitchen and returned with them, kneeling down next to him, “She is still alive, but is choking on her own blood, I’m going to do a tracheotomy. Go tell Chief we need Medivac now!” Scout stumbled to her feet and ran out of the suite.

When Scout got to the lobby there was a crowd of people standing there talking. The oriental girl pointed at her and two large men came toward her. Scout pulled out her gun, “Get out of my way!” The coldness of her voice froze everybody in their tracks. The two sheriff’s deputies had Chief handcuffed and over the hood of the cruiser. One of

them turned and pointed his weapon at her yelling, “Put the gun down NOW!” She just stood there, tears streaming down her cheeks, she said in a low-bewildered voice “Chief, she’s hurt bad, she needs help.” Scout fell to her knees dropping her gun, saying, “God help us.” The deputy lowered his weapon onto her and started walking towards her. They were all startled with a loud whirling sound and the sight of a large helicopter rising out of the ravine in back of Scout, it hovered pointing right at the deputy before slowly going over them and landing on the access road. A group of soldiers ran toward the bewildered group. Lt. Donner ran up and said to the deputies, “These are government agents, take off those handcuffs.” The deputies complied, “Chief, what do we got?” Chief said, “Bring the Doc and a stretcher and follow me. Put Scout in the chopper and tell them to get ready for takeoff to Prescott.”

Blue looked down and kept checking to see that Brat was breathing through the pen casing, then checked her pulse. Her face, hand and foot were all packed in ice and towels along with the two teeth that were in a glass of water. He noticed her right hand move from her side. He thought it was the shock causing convulsions, but when her hand started moving up her leg, he wished that she wasn’t conscious; the pain must be terrible. Blue reached down to hold her hand but she had strength enough to push his hand away and continue to slowly move her hand up to her jeans pocket where she pulled out a piece of paper. Blue took it and looked at the four words on the paper; then he grabbed her hand and this time she let him hold it. Blue started with the speech he had planned to give her the next time he saw her, “I love you Cindy. But we have to have something cleared up; I don’t want any of your money. We will live a modest life and if we have children I

want them to go to a normal public school like in Boulder City. We could use my trailer as a summer home in the mountains and I plan on keeping my truck until it falls apart. This is going to be an equal partnership or I walk; do you understand me?" Blue thought he felt her squeeze his hand when he heard a commotion behind him.

Sgt. Derrick better known as 'Doc' knelt down next to Blue. He scanned the body before him, "Get that stretcher over here, we'll start an IV and then we're out of here." Blue felt a hand on his shoulder and looked up at the Chief. "Come on Blue it's time to go." Blue stood up and watched as three soldiers gently put Brat on the stretcher. Sgt. Derrick picked up the glass with the teeth and they all headed for the elevator with Blue holding Brat's hand. When they got to the chopper, Scout was sitting with a blanket around her in one of the seats. The Chief grabbed Blue's hand that was holding Brat's. "She is in Gods hands now, we have work to do." Scout started unbuckling her seat belt. The Chief looked at her, "No, you go with Brat, and stay with her, that's an order." Blue let go of Brat's hand, and backed away from the chopper. Chief, with both his arms around Blue, watched as the chopper lifted off.

"Charlotte you know the rodeo is tonight, what's this about?" To an outsider, the man would look strange, a Stetson cowboy hat, Wrangler shirt and jeans with a big silver rodeo buckle wedged in between, and snakeskin Roper boots completed the ensemble. But at Prescott General Hospital he fit in and Nurse Charlotte was used to that rugged face. "We had a call from the airport that there was a accident over at Arcosanti, and that they were airvacating a woman in, Curley." Curley thought it was another car accident; he

better call Mabel to let her know. He walked down the hall to his office and hung his hat on the deer antlers, put on his green doctor's coat and made the call. He looked out at the parking lot that was converted into a landing zone. He didn't have long to wait; the large military helicopter made a perfect landing in the center of the lot. Soldiers got out and were handed a stretcher; they ran to the emergency entrance. Curley walked to the ER and was stopped by a soldier, and asked his business, "I'm the doctor that is going to put that woman together again." Lt. Donner walked over, "Sir, we ask that you stabilize her and we will bring in specialist to perform the necessary reconstruction surgery you specify." Curley laughed.

Curley came out to the waiting room twenty minutes later and went right for Lt. Donner. "Son you better come up with a good story for this abuse before I call the governor and have you all put in the deepest hole I can find!" Lt. Donner didn't know how to respond to that statement, since he didn't know about Brat's condition, but was saved from another tongue lashing by Scout. "Dr. Curley, good to see you again." Curley turned and smiled, "Well if it isn't little Amy Jensen, the best barrel racer this side of the Agua Fria, Are you involved in this business?" Scout put her head down, "That's my friend in there and some creep did that to her. Please tell me you can help her." Dr. Curley walked over to Scout and put his arms around her shoulders, "I'll do the best I can Amy, but we all need to pray." Scout bowed her head, "Yes Dr. Curley." Curley turned and walked into the emergency room barking orders, "Get her prepped for surgery, get me Dr. Norman; wake up Brandy and tell her I want her here in ten minutes! Where the hell is that new intern. I don't want him to miss this show!" Scout sat down with her head

bowed, Lt. Donner sat next to her, “Do you think it’s a good idea to have him work on Cindy? I was just going to call down to Luke air base and have them send up a medical team.” Scout looked up and stared at the far wall. “That doctor has been putting together cowboys for the past twenty years that have broken every bone in their bodies, and have been ripped to shreds by the meanest bulls and broncos on this planet. What do you think?” Lt. Donner took off his blue beret and started praying.

The Major sat at the console numb, watching the scene at Arcosanti, he wanted to jump on the next flight to Prescott and be with Cindy, but he knew it wouldn’t do any good. Jennifer was keeping busy with the scene unfolding in the White Mountains and fending off questions about Brat from Whiz. And where was the bastard? His van was still at the Interchange. The Sheriff’s department had searched every inch of Arcosanti and turned up nothing. An All Points Bulletin had been sent to every law enforcement agency in the southwest. Chief had called in and asked to return to base with critical information, which Doug granted; those guys had been through enough action. Scout had called in as they were rushing Cindy into surgery. She said that they had the best doctor for her injuries right there, but it would be touch and go for the next six hours of surgery. Now they were looking at another disaster waiting to happen in the White Mountains. Whiz reported that the Colonel’s tail had just gone through Show Low and they were expecting action to start this afternoon. He reprogrammed Spyglass 30 to the White Mountains location so that they could begin watching the scene on two monitors. He hoped that would help save Ranger.

Wanderer was cruising down Route 89 through Prescott. The break truck and driver would not be missed until the end of the day; he would dump both at Kingman and find a new ride to his hideout. He wondered what was happening at Arcosanti; he better call the Colonel and inform him of the mess he left there. What was the girl after when he caught her going through his briefcase? And then again it could all be a sad mistake. Maybe that wasn't Dex's truck with the BC sticker on it. After Monday it wouldn't matter, everybody in the southwest would be starting a new life.

The Colonel made the turn onto route 227 at Snowflake. He tried to call the compound to let them know that he would be there in a half-hour but the call wouldn't go through. He checked the battery and it was good. Then he tried to call his wife, but only got a busy signal. Luckily the compound had a satellite uplink and he would try again there. Whiz was telling Carlton that you had to alternate a dead signal with a busy signal, otherwise the subject would get suspicious. Agent Green turned around in the command trailer to see her chief come in the door. He handed her a flack vest and told her they were ready to go. She stepped out into the bright sunlight, and looked at the two black FBI SWAT armored cars and the two green armored personnel carriers of the National Guard. Agents and national guardsmen were milling around; it was then that it stuck her that they were going into battle, before it seemed so academic. There was one last thing to do, she handed the vest back to the chief and walked up to the back of the house of the Mormon Bishop and knocked on the door. The Bishop and his wife came to the door, Agent Green felt lumpy in the green coveralls, "Mr. and Mrs. Leavitt, I just want to thank you for your hospitality you have shown us in the use of your farm." The Leavitt's

looked at each other, then the bishop just said, “We take pride in doing our civic duty for our country.” Agent Green said, “I’m sure your government appreciates that, thank you again.” By the time she walked back to one of the APC’s everybody was on board, as she sat down, the rear-armored door slowly closed.

The Colonel walked up the steps of the compound command post and was met by the Commandant “Good to see you again sir.” The Colonel smiled, “Rusty, it looks like you made some improvements since I was last here.” The Commandant laughed, “You mean the road? We didn’t want your car getting stuck in the ditch again, so we graded the road.” The Colonel patted him on the shoulder, “Now where is this friend of Richard.” They both walked into the house. The Colonel walked to the back office while the Commandant collected Ranger from the dining room. Ranger was brought into the office where the Colonel was sitting behind a large metal desk; the Commandant closed the door behind him as he left. “Have a seat son and tell me about this message from Richard.” The Colonel said motioning to a chair in front of the desk. Ranger’s legs felt wobbly, but he figured that he would rather die standing up. “I’ll stand and I don’t have a message from Richard, but from the United States Government.” The Colonel laughed, “Oh really, what do those fools have to say?” Ranger looked at his watch, and the handcuffs on his wrists, “You have ten minutes to surrender, or face the consequences.” The Colonel rose from his chair and looked Ranger in the eye, “We have been facing the consequences of their actions for long enough! And I have no plan to ever surrender.” They both listened to the sound of Whoop, Whoop, Whoop, in the distance. The Commandant rushed in; “There’s a column of Hueys coming in from the north!” The

Colonel looked down like he was thinking, "They're coming to get us Rusty; our friend here has offered us surrender." The Commandant pulled out his Colt 45 and pointed it right at Ranger's head, "Shall I give him our answer?" The Colonel looked up, "No, let him go. He has guts, not like those politicians that are always lying to us. Rusty we better get ready for our guests." The Commandant dragged Ranger out of the room and told one of the guards to take off the cuffs and show him to his truck, then get ready for an assault of the compound. Ranger wondered if he should have tried to convince them otherwise, but there was that 'IF' again.

Ranger was led outside to the porch. He could see the Hueys dropping smoke and landing a half a mile off. The guard that was assigned to him grabbed his arm and unlocked the handcuffs saying, "Get the hell out of here." Ranger checked the compound as he slowly walked down to the truck, the other guard on the porch was ringing a bell attached to the porch support, men were coming out of the bunkhouse and mess hall armed with AK-47s. He looked over at the bunker; the Commandant was unlocking the chain link gate in front of the bunker. He thought he heard a little voice inside of him say, "Do what the man said, get the hell out of here." He started the truck and thought he was a goner because at that moment a large explosion rocked the truck. He then realized that was the main gate going up over a mile away. He reached at the corner of the door panel where Whiz had showed him and found the .38 caliber revolver and two speed-loader behind the panel. The Commandant had gotten the lock open and was swinging the gate open. Ranger gunned the truck right towards the gate; the Commandant looked in horror as the truck skidded into him smashing him into the fence and resting against the opening

of the gate. The Commandant was pinned between the truck door and the fence and was the first casualty of the engagement. As Ranger opened the truck door the window of the cab exploded from rifle fire. He crawled to the front of the truck where the Commandant was pinned and started returning fire. He thought he winged one of the guards on the porch, but there was no return fire because he was next to the commandant's body. He knew that it wouldn't last long. He turned when he heard metal hitting stone, two canisters had dropped right behind him. He thought, this is where I go out with a bang! But he was surprised when the smoke came pouring out of the canisters, and two black clad men dropped in front of the bunker doors. He looked up and saw more men scaling down the hill. The Calvary has arrived!

Twenty minutes later the battle was over, with the Colonel taking his own life in the main house. The score was seven dead militia including the Commandant and the Colonel, two wounded SWAT men, and three injured national guardsmen. As the door of the APC lowered Agent Green walked out to a somber scene. The bunkhouse and mess hall were totally engulfed in flames thanks to the air national guard. The seven dead militia were lined up on the main house porch. A Huey was taking off with the wounded and twenty prisoners were on their knees being searched and handcuffed. The SWAT Chief patted her on the shoulder; "they will be talking about this for years through the halls of the bureau. Congratulation Agent Green." She turned to him; "Did Ranger survive?" The chief pointed to two legs dangling on the back of the shot up pickup truck at the gate. "Survive! He took out their leader and provided cover for my men's assault. I want to kiss him!" They both walked over to the back of the pickup where Ranger was

laid out resting. Agent Green could only smile, “Ranger, are you alright?” Ranger sat up, “I’m going to be picking glass out of my hair for the next three weeks, but yea! I’m Ok.” The chief looked sternly at him, “You disobeyed direct orders” the stern look turned into a smile “And I’m sure glad you did.” Ranger smiled, “You cut off the head and the snake dies.” Agent Green laughed, “You better go tell Whiz you are alright, he’s worse than an expecting father.” Ranger looked up at the sky, “I think he knows.”

“Jerry you did really good in there, you saved Cindy’s life.” Dex said as they took Interstate 15 up towards Flagstaff. Jerry just kept looking out the window, “Dex I love her, and we’re getting married as soon as this is over with.” Dex asked, “Cindy agreed to that when?” Jerry got agitated; “Does it matter? I now see that I was always in love with her.” Dex looked over at him, “Hey, speaking as an old married man, sometimes wanting something, doesn’t make it happen. I’ve seen too many foot-loose bachelors get smitten, only to end up broken hearted.” Jerry looked over at Dex; “This is for real.” Dex smiled, “We’ll talk later when this is done with. Get the Major on the phone and find out what is happening up in the White Mountains.” Jerry dialed the number on the satellite phone and AG answered, “Hi AG, Chief wants to know what is happening with Whiz and Ranger.” AG heard the door close behind her, Mission is a total success. They are evaluating the scene now; our guys will be heading back tonight. Word from Prescott is that Brat is still in surgery, but the doctor is the best. How are you guys doing?” Jerry didn’t know so he handed the phone to Dex, “Hi AG, we will be back later tonight. Any word on where our friend took off to?” AG had another call on the line, “NO, everybody is looking for him. See you later tonight, bye.” AG looked at the monitor, Prescott

General Hospital. She pressed the button thinking the worst, “Hi Scout.” And waited. “AG is the Major there I need to talk with him.” AG didn’t hear her crying, but she didn’t think Scout was that way, “Scout he is on his way down to you, I got him a corporate jet, and he should be there within the hour, is everything alright?” Scout felt relieved, “Yes, Brat is still in surgery and we are still waiting. I will call you as soon as I find out.” AG could feel the tension in her voice, “Amy, I know this is tough on you, if you need to talk go right ahead, I’ll just listen.” This was too impersonal for her, “Thanks AG, I’ll be fine. I’ll call you when we get word. Good Bye.” She then hung up.

Agent Green was in the office of the main house going through the papers and documents of the compound with half a dozen agents. “OK people, I want you to scan it and then crate it. If you see anything that you think is urgent I want to see it.” Agent Ann Marie, the liaison agent from Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms knocked on the door. Agent Green motioned her in. “Agent Green, we got it inventoried. There is stuff in there you wouldn’t believe. There are stingers that belong to the CIA, anti-tank rockets from the Canadian Army, grenades from that Armory break-in, and enough C-4 to take out the Golden Gate Bridge.” Agent Green asked, “What about the Semtex from the truck hijacking?” Agent Marie handed her the inventory on a clipboard, “That’s the scary part, there if fifty pounds missing.” Agent Green was scanning the three-page inventory when an agent going through the charred remains of documents found in the wastebasket said, “You better see this.” She handed the clipboard back to Agent Marie saying, “Good work.” The young agent brought a burnt piece of paper over to the desk with a pair of tongs. The three agents looked at the corner piece of diagram with the words ‘Western

United States, Interconnection Transmission System, Department of Energy.’ Agent Green looked at the young agent, “Your name?” The young agent said, “Special Agent Ron Keffer, Phoenix Office.” Agent Green said, “Agent Keffer I want you on the next chopper out of here to Show Low Airport, where a jet will be waiting to take you to Washington. I want you to personally deliver this and the inventory to Deputy Director Ford, do you understand me?” Agent Keffer stuttered, “Yes Sir, I mean yes ma’am.”

“Sandra that sunset at Kelso Junction was so magnificent over the sand dunes.” Mrs. Roger and her husband were back in line for the second helping where the boys had set up the barbecue. It had been a long day touring the preserve; the ten people were mostly older couples with a few serious photographic students. “OK people, after dinner there will be two short films on the preserve and then you can look at the stars and the three-quarter moon or if you are like me, you will be getting your beauty sleep. We will be having breakfast at 8:00AM and then it’s another full day out at the preserve. I hope everybody enjoyed themselves today.” Everybody at the picnic table applauded.

Chief and Blue were making the final turn on the switchback into Black Canyon. Blue was checking out the pillbox bunker on the hill overlooking the Canyon. (During the Second World War troops were stationed at Hoover Dam in case any long-range Japanese bomber tried to bomb it. The troops were to set off smoke barrages in the canyon to hide the dam.) The final rays of the sun were creating beautiful shadows on the canyon walls. But Chief’s eyes were focused on the magnificent creation of man, Hoover Dam “I have been over this dam maybe thirty times and I never saw any...” As they went

pass the Arizona Lookout, it came into view, right behind the new visitors center, “I’ll be damned!” They both looked at the bridge in amazement. As they drove onto the top of the Dam it disappeared. Chief looked over at Blue, “I hope AG was able to get through to the Bureau of Reclamation.” Blue looked at the end of the road over the dam, “on your right, there is the road she said to take.” Blue thought he was back in Time Square, the place was crawling with visitors and the traffic in both directions was also at a crawl. It took the Chief two minutes to let the people across the two crosswalks before he could make the turn onto the road. After they passed the cafeteria, they saw the small building on the left; ‘Hoover Dam Police.’ They parked the truck in the back parking lot and walked over to the building where two officers were coming out the door to meet them. “You must be the investigators we were told to expect. I’m Chief Gerber and this is Officer Renton.” The Chief hated introduction, “I’m Chief and this is Blue.” The Police chief turned to the officer and smiled, “I get it, you are so secret that you don’t use names.” The Chief said, “I can give you a number to call that will verify us, if you like.” The Police Chief smiled, “When I get a call from the Director of the Bureau on my day off, I’ll believe anything”. It was the Chief’s turn to smile, “Well Sir, we have a story that you are not going to believe.”

Lt. Donner had left to make arrangements for his team to get rooms for the night. Scout was sitting in the waiting room with her eyes shut, the nurse had bandaged her wound and given her some extra strength pain killers for her head injury but it still throbbed and she would get dizzy if she stood up. “Scout.” She opened her eyes to see the Major standing before her, “Major I’m so scared!” The Major knelt down before her,

“We all are. Come with me. The nurse has a bed ready for you, you need to rest, I will wait for the doctor.” When Scout tried to get up she almost fell over, but the Major caught her and picked her up in his arms and carried her to a room where a nurse was waiting. He kissed her forehead as he laid her on the bed and held her hand as she drifted off into a deep sleep.

You should have seen that gate go up on the satellite; it was massive!” Whiz was so excited that he saw a battle in real-time. Ranger laughed, “I thought the truck had jumped and we were a mile away.” Whiz looked over at Ranger as they high-tailed it down Interstate 40. “Ranger what was on your mind when you crashed the truck into the gate? Do you have a death wish or something?” Ranger looked serious, “I was more afraid of the national guard shooting me that anything else and that guy would have blown me away in the office. Hey it worked out for the best.” Whiz laughed, “It sure did! The FBI wants to adopt you.” Ranger looked over at Whiz, “Is there some kind of rift between our two agencies?” Whiz was just making the turn off at Kingman, “It’s like this, we are like we don’t exist and the FBI are like the glory boys where ever they go. We just do things differently.” Ranger thought that over, “Glory can get you killed I like being invisible.” As Whiz and Ranger headed down the road to Hoover Dam, Wanderer was taking the road towards Bullhead City in a beat up old pickup truck. He had hot-wired it outside a closed service station. He thought that with any luck it wouldn’t be discovered missing until Monday and then it would be to late. He didn’t have any delusions about the bread truck and driver, they would be found tonight.

The Major was on the phone to AG getting the latest updates when the doctor went into the waiting room; his green scrubs were soaked in perspiration. "Hello, are you Doctor Curley?" The Major asked. The doctor looked around; "Do you know where Amy Jensen is?" The Major handed him his card, "She is resting in Room 143. I am Doug Remington, Cindy and Amy's employer, How is Cindy doing?" The doctor was defensive; "I can only give that information to her family or guardian." The Major handed him a legal form. "I see, will you come to my office?" The doctor said as he walked down the corridor. When they were both seated in the doctor's office, the doctor began, "It will be touch and go for the next forty-eight hours, but I think she will make it. She will need a lot of therapy over the next year, is she a fighter?" Doug looked serious, "That, and a pain in the ass on top of it." The doctor smiled, thinking I'm going to like this guy. "We induced a coma because of the swelling of the brain. Dr. Rogers was able to attach the teeth before wiring the jaw. The fingers are set and the nails will take some time to grow back. We could find no internal damage to the vital organs. But the cartilage in the foot was destroyed. It looked like he put the leg of a chair on top of it, then sat down and rocked back and forth on it. You know she will never be the same if she survives." Doug bowed his head, "Will she be able to live a normal life, I mean brain function and children?" The doctor rubbed his chin, "We won't know about her mental state until she comes out of the coma, but he didn't molest her if that is what you mean." Doug looked up and took a deep breath, "Doctor I know 'Thank you' is a poor substitute for the hope you have given us, is there anything you need or that would help Cindy in her recovery?" Curley thought for a moment, "It's in God's hands, you will have to ask

him.” Doug stood and walked out of the doctor’s office, he reached into his jacket for his phone, he dreaded the call he had to make to Cindy’s family.

As Cindy laid in the post-operation room she was dreaming of when she was a little girl riding the carousel with her brother at the church carnival during the Chinese New Year’s celebration in San Francisco’s Chinatown. Her father was back on leave and looked so handsome in his Marine uniform. He just stood there waving at them while her mother talked with a group of ladies.

AG was calling it a night after talking with the Major and getting the report on Brat’s condition. He was able to talk with Cindy’s father, who said that they would be coming down tomorrow. The Major asked if he could send the private jet for them, and her father said that would be very nice of him. As AG stood and stretched, a button lit up on the secure phone. She looked at the monitor, ‘Show Low Airport.’ “Hello, how may I help you?” “Hello this is Agent Green, would it be possible to talk with Professor Remington?” AG sat back down, “Sorry Agent Green, he is down in Prescott with our agent in the hospital there. Is there something I can help you with?” There was a pause, “We came across some documents on the western power grid, does your agency have any information on this?” AG looked over at where Cindy was sitting last time she was there. She felt that feeling of hopelessness creeping up, but reached over and picked up the printouts. “One moment Agent Green.” AG scanned the scenario and calculations Cindy made, “I have a report here from one of our agents that may help you, is there somewhere I can send a copy to you?” Agent Green was waiting for transportation to Washington,

the deputy director wanted her back there pronto! “If you send it to FBI Headquarters in Washington, care of Deputy Director Ford I will get it. And I want to thank you and your agency for all its help.” AG smiled, the hopelessness faded. “You are quite welcome Agent Green, Goodnight.”

Day 16-Sunday

Mr. and Mrs. Lo arrived at the hospital at 9:00AM and were greeted by the Major and Scout. Mrs. Lo was belligerent, "Who are you people? Are you responsible for my baby's injuries?" Mr. Lo didn't let it go any further, "That's enough Jackie! Can't you see that these people are her friends?" Mrs. Lo then sat down and started crying. Scout sat down beside her and put her arm around her. Mr. Lo said to the Major "I need a smoke, let's go outside." They walked out to the parking lot and Mr. Lo lit a cigarette, "Are you married Mr. Remington?" The Major simply said, "I'm a widower." Mr. Lo looked out on the street, "Women are strange creatures, with penned-up emotions. She wasn't lashing out at you. She is so hard on Cindy sometimes I want to scream. But I know she loves her. Please forgive her." The Major felt bad, "No, I am responsible for what happened to Cindy; she was blaming the right person." Mr. Lo gave the Major a long hard look, "When Cindy had that trouble at the sub base, she was about to resign her commission. But she told me about this man that gave her a second chance. She said that she had said too much already and not to say anything to her mother. I think that man was you." The Major looked down at the asphalt, "Your daughter is a special woman and I sent her off on a mission knowing it was dangerous and that this might happen." Mr. Lo smiled and put his hand on the Major's shoulder, "I thought you knew Cindy, she has always done what she wants to do, I just want to know was it worth it?" The Major looked Mr. Lo in the eye, "What she has done, has reversed a disaster that is unfathomable to comprehend. Our country owe her a debt of gratitude that it could never repay." Mr. Lo put his head down, "It's always good when a father hears he has raised a good daughter." They both walked back into the hospital. Mr. Lo went to his wife,

“Come Jackie, let’s see our daughter.” Scout helped Mrs. Lo up and into the arms of her husband. The Major and Scout watched as they went into the intensive care unit. The Major turned to Scout, “Are you ready to rejoin your unit?” Scout said without hesitation, “Yes Sir.” He smiled at her. “Take the rapid response team with you.”

Maps, diagrams, blueprints and photographs were scattered all over the conference table. Chief and AG were sitting at the console, the Chief looked at Blue, “How would you do it Blue?” “Hell you could put fifty pounds of Semtex in the back of a pickup and sit it on the bridge and blow it.” Blue didn’t seem focused when he said it. The Chief said, “When he got to the checkpoint at the warehouse the spectrometer and the gamma ray detector would be going crazy. The Bureau of Reclamation has timed it. If he escaped the hail of bullets at the check point, going at eighty miles a hour, slowing down to forty so he could bounce off the guard rail at the three turns, they would still have time to move the derrick truck into the road and he would go crashing into it fifty feet before the bridge. Let’s just say he got to the bridge and set it off. The truck and the main section of the bridge would be blown sky high. That would be an awful waste of explosives and would cause only minor damage to the bridge.” The Chief stood up, “If UDT (Underwater Demolish Team) taught me anything, it was that you don’t blow things up on the top but from below. Focus people! What is the objective here?” Whiz said “The generator station at the bottom.” The Chief turned to him, “Exactly! Where most of the security detail is watching for any intruders.” Scout asked, “What if he drove the truck off the bridge onto the top of the generator station?” Ranger said, “That’s one hundred

feet down. Odds are the truck would end up in the tide pool next to the station.” AG laughed, “OK Chief, how would you do it?”

“Remember the bridge is the key. If you set your charges at the base of the bridge it would bring the whole bridge and a good chunk of the rock hill it sits on sliding down into the four transmission towers, which would bring them down. And all of it would slide right on top of the generator station. I don’t know what the load limit for that roof is, but it wouldn’t last long before that caved in and took out the generators. Then we are talking massive power failure!” Ranger asked, “Where does that power go to?” AG said softly, “Brat’s calculations say Los Angeles and Southern California.” Whiz jumped in, “But they would be able to reroute power around, wouldn’t they?” AG looked at the Chief, “Yes, if three main transmission stations were working.” Scout looked at AG, “And if those stations were not working?” AG picked up the printout, “It would start a cascade effect. Once they started rerouting power and those three transmission stations were out, substations would be popping like firecrackers. The area would be dark for months.” Blue asked, “How big a area are we talking about?” AG looked down at the printout, “She figured that they would be able to shut down by the time it got to Oregon, Arizona, Idaho, and Utah.” The Chief laughed, “Look at the bright side, only California and Nevada would be screwed.” They all looked at him and wondered about his sense of humor. The Chief looked back at them, “Folks we’re not going to let it happen!”

Cindy laying in the intense care unit heard, “Lieutenant, Lin Ho is being held at the police station at Foochow, They picked him up and our contact trying to get to our

rendezvous point at Changio. We're scrubbing the mission." Cindy looked at Commander Eland as he looked at the chart table on the nuclear submarine USS Delphi. "You worried about a provincial police station? I'll need two days and it's going to cost you forty thousand yuan. Tell the boys to get suited up, I didn't come all this way for nothing!" A month later the world was surprised when Physicist Lin Ho walked into the federal courthouse in San Francisco and applied for political asylum.

The Major arrived right after Chief's joke. "Why all the glum faces?" AG was the only one who retained her sense of humor, "The Chief thinks we can save the world, at least California." The Major did not know what he walked into, "If the Chief think so, I'm with him." Whiz was the first to voice his concern; "We can't cover all those locations." The Major looked at AG, "Any word from our cousins?" AG just shook her head no." The Major looked up at the ceiling, "Well we will have to leave it in their capable hands." Blue jumped up, "I'm going to get that bastard no matter how many FBI men I have to go through!" Everybody looked at the Major who said, "That's going to really help Cindy, you dead or in prison. We did our part." Scout yelled, "We have to do something!" Whiz said, "Here's where they take all the credit again."

Agent Green arrived in Washington late Saturday night, and had a late briefing with Deputy Director Ford, Cindy's report was waiting for her before the briefing. The Deputy Director was ecstatic after hearing the report. He saw that Agent Green was on the brink of exhaustion and told her to report back in the morning. When she arrived back that morning she was shown to the situation room two floors under the building. As she

entered, The Director of the FBI stood and started clapping, which was joined by the twelve top echelon of the bureau around the conference table. Deputy Director Ford came over and escorted her over to the director, who said, "Agent Green everyone in this room is amazed at the brilliant operation you carried out yesterday and your intelligence on this threat we now face. Are you ready to give up the field offices and come work here?" A small laugh was heard around the table. "Mr. Director, I go where I am needed." The director turned to the others in the room, "The answer of a true patriot." Everyone in the room applauded. The director motioned her to a chair on his left, "Let's get down to business."

Agent Green listened as the deputy directors started listing assets that were being deployed, continuity plans that were being drafted, and emergency measures being contemplated. The President had been advised of the situation and offered his full support to the initiative. The director turned to Agent Green and asked, "Is there anything you would like to add?" All eyes turned to her, "Has professor Remington and his group been contacted for their input?" The director looked around the room to black stares, then Deputy Director Ford said, "I believe a communiqué was sent to the director of the National Security Agency." The director asked, "What input do you think they would have on this?" Agent Green thought this is where I cut my own throat! "Our victory yesterday was due to the intelligence and support of his group. It was his agents who risked their lives for the information we have on this planned attack we now face. I think as a courtesy we should consult them as to our plans." The director smiled, "Get me Professor Remington, I want to talk with him personally."

AG was in the kitchen stocking up the refrigerator; everybody had stayed over that night waiting on word about Cindy. The Major also wanted everybody to start writing reports the first thing in the morning. And no surprise to AG at 10:00AM everybody was still sleeping or at least still in their rooms. She almost dropped the jar of mayonnaise when the secure phone in the conference room started ringing, she had set the ringer on high, which was like a loud bell going off, in case a call came in from the hospital. She walked towards the conference room with the sound of doors opening, it turned into a procession with the rest of the group following her and plopping down in chairs around the conference room table. The term 'Sad Sacks' came to mind as she looked at them. She was surprised when she looked at the monitor, 'Department of Justice. Washington D.C.' But no number was listed. All she could say was, "Speaking of the Devil!" The bodies around the table were still crumpled, but all eyes were focus on her. AG looked at the Major, "We have FBI Headquarters on the line." All eyes turned to the Major, who coughed saying, "Well let's see what our cousins have to say." AG answered with her normal line; "Hello may I help you?" There was a dead silence in the room. She swiveled back around holding her hand to the phone, "It's the director of the FBI, he wants to talk with you." The Major slid into the seat next to AG at the console; "Yes this is he. Yes Sir that is very kind of you, we are hoping for the best for her. Our people were pleased to work with your too. Yes we would like to do our part at Hoover Dam. No I don't think that will be necessary. No offense, but it is a personal matter to us. Yes I understand. We will call if it is necessary. Thank you very much Sir. Good bye." The Major handed the phone back to AG; "We have been given Carte Blanche to do our

mission from the Director of the FBI, I don't believe it!" The Chief mumbled to himself then said, "Let's get to work before they call back."

Wanderer opened the door of the trailer to another beautiful spring day. He was confused; he wasn't able to get word to the Colonel. When he called the compound, an operator came on saying they were experiencing technical difficulties with their satellites, something about a solar storm. The other confusing thing was that there was no report on the radio about the girl or the bread truck driver. It didn't really matter, after tonight the 'Nazis' would have their hands full just suppressing the massive chaos engulfing the southwest. He walked over to the shed and opened it. The inflatable quicksilver boat was ready, the locked footlocker with his gear sat on the floor, and his climbing gear was in the pack. He laughed, wouldn't it be funny if he got to the dam and the explosives that he buried a year and a half ago were missing. All those freedom fighters in California would have to go home empty handed. He wanted to go down to the general store at the Techatticup Mine and get the water conditions on the river, but they may get curious about his new truck from out of state. There was nothing to do except wait for nightfall.

Officer Renton met the group at the checkpoint across from the dam's warehouse, "If you follow me I will take you to the staging area." They followed into compound in back of the transformer substation down the road. Chief Gerber was waiting for them. As they entered one of the trailers he asked, "Where's the FBI?" The Major said, "We are going to handle this ourselves." The chief of police gave them a startled look, "That is easier said than done." The Major asked, "Have you checked the detectors lately?" The

chief looked down at the map of the dam area, "They were all calibrated yesterday." The Major looked at the Chief, "Do you want to tell the chief our scenario for tonight?" Chief Gerber listened as Chief told him their plan and then asked him for his thoughts. Chief Gerber scratched his head, "Let me get this straight, if this guy gets pass our checkpoints and detectors, you will take him out at the bridge? Isn't that cutting it awfully close?" The Chief smiled, "That is what we think is going to happen tonight, but it may not be, and we don't want to tie up your people if we are wrong and he goes after another part of the installation." Chief Gerber looked at the members of the group, "I think you are right, If I was going to take out the generators that is the most logical way of doing it." The Major asked, "Chief this is your installation, how would you set up to prevent this from happening?" Chief Gerber looked at him, "You certainly aren't the FBI!" He then looked down at the map, "I would place my sharp-shooters at these locations." All members of the group looked down at the map, "and then I would place my backup people here." The Major looked at Chief and got the nod of approval.

As the nurse changed the IV at Cindy's bed she thought she noticed a flicking in her eyes. "Ladies I want to thank you for inviting me to your club meeting, I understand that you have some concern you wish to express?" A young wife stood up, "Admiral, our men are cramped on the boats for six months at a time, to put a woman in that environment is asking for trouble. Men will be men, and we heard that this woman is being called 'Pigtail' what are we to think?" The Admiral knew a witch hunt when he saw it. "Ladies, the lieutenant is accorded the respect of any naval officer. Commander

Leland may be able to answer that part about ‘Pigtail.’ Commander Leland stood up, “The lieutenant uses the pigtail hairdo as a cover when she is working overseas. Onboard ship she wears it in a bun under a ship’s baseball cap. The only thing I’ve ever heard her called is Lieutenant.” There was a hum of voices among the ladies. A lady stood, “I’ve met this officer, a very attractive woman I thought the same as you, then I saw the respect every man on that boat had for her, to them she was just another ‘Spook.’” Another hum of ladies voices. Comdr. Leland thought, ‘Thank you dear!’ That is something we can’t explain. Cindy thought that Mrs. Leland was probably the life of the meeting that night, as she slowly drifted in the coma.

Wanderer sat in his trailer and watched the road down to Nelson’s landing, the first public launch down from the dam. The weekend boaters were streaming back after a long weekend of merriment on the river. Pretty soon the sun would be setting and he could load the truck and head down to the river. He had spent the afternoon programming the electronic detonators. He figured that he would only need an hour for the charges on the bridge support hill, that should give him plenty of time to get back to the government launch area where he would hide the raft. He would cool his heels in Nelson for two days until the helicopter picked him up and they all headed for Mexico. There they would board the ship and study art for the next six months in the south pacific. In November the elections would take place and hopefully the people will still be outraged by the Southwest Disaster that they would vote those ‘Nazis’ out and replace them with more impotent leaders. Eventually the time would come for a strong leader like the Colonel to lead the charge and the money they got from the art heist would make a good war chest.

Sandra, Andy and Tom waved to the vehicles pulling out of the station's parking lot. It was a joyful weekend; over half of the people asked when they were conducting the next seminar. She smiled at Andy and Tom, she thought they had as much fun as the guests did. "Well boys, now comes the fun part, the cleanup." Tom was the first to voice his opinion, "I think we can wait till tomorrow. The only thing we need to cleanup is the leftover food and I can make that disappear real fast." They all laughed, and then Andy put his two-cents worth, "I think we should test out those newly painted chairs to see if they can handle our swelled heads. I wonder what the professor and his crew are up to? Probably off saving the world again." Sandra was wondering the same thing. They have not had contact with them since the professor stopped down last Thursday; maybe she should call that number he gave her?

The Major had given the group two hours to prepare themselves for tonight. Chief Gerber had brought them down to the police station at the visitor's center. This was to be his command post. Whiz would set up their command post in the van next to the station. Whiz had gone off with Scout and the Chief had wandered off with Ranger. Blue just walked over to the wall next to the spillway in the back parking lot. The Major thought that he better make his peace with him before the mission. The Major walked over to him, "Blue can I talk to you?" Blue looked over, "Sure Major, pull up a seat." The Major leaned over the wall next to Blue, "I want to say I sorry for getting Cindy...the Chief tells me that you are in love with her." Blue just stared down into the empty spillway, "Major we all know that the work we do is dangerous. And you are no more responsible for what happened to Cindy than I am. When I saw her bound to that chair, I thought I had lost her

and none of those high ideas I had about us not having a future were gone. I then asked God to just give me another chance and I promised not to screw it up this time.” The Major stood up and put his hand on Blue’s shoulder, “I think you two will make a great couple.” The Major could see the tears rolling down his cheeks, “If God just gives me one more chance!” The Major walked back to the police station. Blue wiped the tears away and decided that he would tender his resignation after tonight.

Scout and Whiz walked over the dam, the last rays of the sun had already turned the Nevada side into shadows, but the crowds of people were still holding court throughout the area. Whiz was at a loss for words. He wanted to ask Scout about Cindy but didn’t know what to say, “It’s like the United Nations around here, look at these people!” Scout smiled, “I have never been here before. I thought that engineer types would only want to look at a bunch of concrete, but this place has a magic that make you feel like part of the human race, a celebration of being human.” Whiz didn’t think of people as a whole much, “You’re right, they all seem happy here.” Scout stopped on the middle of the dam and looked over the edge, “Whiz can I ask you a favor?” Whiz looked down at the generator station and tide pool at the bottom of the dam, “Sure, what can I do?” Scout’s voice cracked as she asked, “If Cindy don’t make it, will you help me with Blue?” Whiz had to think for a moment, “I see what you mean. You know I’m not good with people, but I would do anything to help Blue.” Scout placed her hand on his, “You are a great help already.”

The Intense Care Unit was dark and quiet as Cindy dreamed. “Amy? Amy? It’s time to go.” Amy was staring off across the dry riverbed. Brat turned to the para-medical that was preparing an injection. “Just give me a couple of minutes with her.” Brat put her arm around Amy’s shoulder, “You know I was jealous of you and Devin because of the way he always looked at you, he loved you with all his heart. You know if he could, he would tell you there was nothing more you can do here. That you needed to go home and get some rest. He would say, “Sweetie I will always be with you no matter what.” Amy turned with tears coming down her blood stained cheeks, “I don’t know what to do Cindy, I don’t want to go on without him, I want to join him.” Brat pulled Amy to her, “No Amy, Devin would want you to go on to find those bastards and make them pay!” Amy broke out crying, and Brat led her to the chopper. The FBI people surrounding them thought better of stopping them, by the three men with angry looks on their faces in front of the women.

“I hear you saved the day in the White Mountains.” Chief said looking at the plaque to ‘Blackie’ (a little dog that ran around the dam site while it was being built; when he died the worker buried him there.) Ranger laughed, “The only thing I saved was my own ass.” Chief laughed, “A man after my own heart, but you did get the FBI to give away the crown jewels.” Ranger started walking toward the parking garage, “I can see you are another admirer of our cousins, but enough about that, what about Brat?” The Chief became serious, “What about her?” Ranger leaned over the wall in front of the bridge and was making calculations, “Was she another lamb for the slaughter?” Chief reached around and grabbed Ranger by the collar and spun him around so that his face

was right in his, “She knew what she was getting into, but she wasn’t as lucky as you.” Ranger didn’t flinch, “You answered my question! I’m sorry, but I needed to know if I can trust the people I work with.” Chief let go of his grip and backed off from him, “We don’t have any expendable people, I wish it was me instead of her.” Ranger needed a moment to get his breath back, “Will she be alright?” Chief turned away from him and looked at the copper colored visitor’s center, “We don’t know. If she survives she will need a long time to recover.” Ranger started to admire the way the Chief worked.

At five o’clock the group reported to the theatre in the visitor’s center. The visitor’s center was being locked up for the night. They were given their maintenance uniforms, checked their radios, and tried to hide their weapons the best they could in the maintenance carts. Then the Major gave them the speech; “We have been waiting for this day for over two years. And we still don’t know what is going to happen. I want you to be fluid, don’t take things at face value, we can’t afford any mistakes. This man is a trained killer and he won’t give you a second chance. We have been authorized ‘Direct Action with extreme prejudice.’ Off the record, the government does not want to bring him to trial. If you have a shot, take it. If you object to this I want to hear it now.” No one said a word. “Good, we all understand the situation. I want you to now think of Cindy and Devin; they are counting on you not to make their sacrifices be in vain. The people of the United States are with you. I am not a religious man but I pray that God be with us tonight. The Chief stood, “AG is central control; any outside assistance she will be in charge of, Whiz will be on-scene control; providing immediate response here, The Major and myself will be your support team, Scout will be stationed in the center’s observation

deck, Blue will be stationed on the service deck on the south side of the visitor's center under the bridge, Ranger will be a rover in the parking structure to the west of the bridge. If anything happens outside of the bridge area Chief Gerber and his police will handle it. We may have a long wait; so prepare yourselves with any provisions needed. The Major and myself will try to give you breaks when needed. Are there any questions?" There were none. "Ok, For Cindy and Devin. Go."

Whiz sat at the controls in the back of the van. The group was maintaining radio silence. The dam police were doing their normal security sweeps in case anybody was listening in. Two extra officers were in the station along with the chief and the dispatcher. The outer checkpoints were reporting normal traffic patterns for a Sunday night. The merrymakers were heading home, which meant double traffic leaving Nevada and light traffic coming into the state.

AG said to herself, let's see now, Spyglass 15, 21, and 32 are assigned to the FBI, and we will be using good old Spyglass 30 for the dam. Whiz had a downlink and was reading it clear. He had attached locators to the maintenance uniforms the group was using and she was picking them up on the graphic display of the dam area. The Major and Chief were in the center area of the visitor's center, Scout and Blue were on the south area, and Ranger was at the parking garage. The only bad thing about the system was that it had no depth of field. Ranger could be on any of the five levels of the parking garage, She could see Blue and Scout on the outside of the visitor's center on the normal satellite image on the other monitor, but like Ranger the Major and Chief could be on any of three

levels. The Radio check at five o'clock was five by five and was being recorded in the office. The Admiral had called and wished them well. Mrs. Conners had called to relay the good news of the seminar. Little things like that lift your spirits. She wanted to know if anybody was coming out this week so she could make arrangements. She could only tell her that she wanted to come and see the place. Mrs. Conners took the hint saying that it would be nice to meet her and would be expecting her call. Fort Meade had provided her with a link to the FBI network and those guys were making it sound like they were going to a full-scale war. She thought maybe they were when she looked down at Brat's blood stained note; 'Monday, Hoover Dam Bridge.'

Wanderer cut the little five horse-powered motor on the raft, he would have to paddle the rest of the way to the launch area; didn't want to be picked up by those new motion sensors. Eight-thirty, right on time. The full moon was his only enemy, but by the time he got to the bridge it would be behind the mountains. Darkness was his greatest ally and he would see to it that it served him well. He laughed, by tomorrow night, if all went according to plan, there would be a war going on in Los Angeles for control of the night.

Day 17-Monday

The explosion was massive; all the lights above the dam went out; road lights, the parking garage, visitor's center, and the police station were plunged into darkness. It took a few minutes before the dispatcher was able to switch over to emergency generator, but the call from the Nevada checkpoint was not good, the transformer sub-station was totally engulf in flames. Chief Gerber ordered both checkpoints in each state to shut down, sending all traffic back. He and his two officers got in their vehicles and headed for the sub-station. It took him five minutes to get up the hill with lights flashing and sirens blaring. The vehicle traffic in the dam area was treating it as a party with horns blaring and screaming out of their windows. Scout was able to look down at the generator building below; all their lights were on and the floodlights illuminating the dam were on. She could see the flames flickering behind the parking garage. There was no traffic on their net, so she continued to scan the bridge with her night-vision scope on her rifle. Underneath the bridge Blue had to put up with the noise from the vehicles going overhead, but like Scout continued to scan the bridge. The Major and Chief were standing on the ground level of the visitor's center. The Chief was the first to pop the question, "Do you think it is a diversion?" The Major just nodded; and switched on his radio microphone, "Steady people, focus."

Whiz was getting the satellite to switch to infrared imaging and was informing AG of the situation. AG asked if he had his locator display on? Whiz checked it, "Yea! I got everybody on screen." AG said, "For the past hour I was wishing Ranger would stop

moving throughout the parking garage. He's now stationary in the back corner of the garage." Whiz checked Ranger's location on the screen; it was the only one with no movement. The locator tracker would normally pickup movement of a few feet, the others were staying in their locations but you could see the flickering on the screen of normal body movement, especially now with the explosion. There wasn't any with his. "Whiz to Ranger come in?"

Wanderer listened on the headset; he was timing it. One more call and all the opposition would be looking at the garage, then he could go over the railing at the center of the bridge. "Whiz to Ranger, come in? Whiz to Major I think Ranger is down!" Both the Major and Chief pulled out their weapons and went through the door to the road. Scout raised her rifle and started scanning the parking garage. Blue had no view of the parking garage so he walked over to the door under the bridge leading to the escalators and peeked up at the parking garage. Wanderer slowly lowered himself to the rock at the base of the main bridge support. Whiz was zooming the satellite camera to the parking garage but stopped. He could see the Major and the Chief running there. Scout was still up in the observation deck, but he couldn't see Blue, unless that was him standing next to the center of the bridge. That wasn't right, then that image was gone! "Whiz to all units intruder is under the bridge!"

Wanderer was placing the primary charges around the bridge main support when he heard that they found him and it was only a minute before the first shot rang out. Just as he figured, they were playing catch up, and missed him by a foot. He now had the

shooter's location up in the observation tower; it was going to be a long shot with his .357 magnum, but he was set and they weren't. He aimed at the top of the tower and waited for the next shot, when he saw the flash, he fired and could see the shooter's rifle pointing up before disappearing. Now he could set the secondary charges at the base of the rock. He started to rappel down the rock when he saw a shadow across from him behind a wall. He started to reach down for his pistol but knew it was too late. The first shot blew off three fingers of his shooting hand, he cringed when he realized that this shooter wasn't going for a kill, he was going to make it a long death with much pain. Four slowly paced shots rang out. It took a minute for Blue to realize that it was over, and there was no satisfaction like he expected.

Blue called Scout on the radio, but there was no answer. He dropped his rifle and went through the side door of the visitor's center. As he raced over to the elevator, he wondered if there was another causality due to his screw up. The ride up to the observation deck seemed forever. When he stepped out of the elevator and saw Scout in a sitting position on the deck, a wave of relief swept over him. He ran over to her and asked her if she was hit? "I'm alright except I can't see, the shot he took hit the concrete wall in front of me shooting that junk right into my eyes. Did you get him?" Blue looked at her with relief, "Yes he's dead, it's over with." Scout yelled at him, " Well, let everybody know before someone slips on a banana peel!" Blue smiled she was alright, "Blue to all units, threat has been neutralized, need medical care for Scout. Out." Blue helped Scout to her feet and led her over to the elevator. When the Major and Chief got to the second level of the parking lot they found Ranger crumpled in the corner. They feared the worst,

but heard him grunt. His right arm and left leg were positioned at weird angles, both broken. Next to him was the maintenance cart with its radio emitting static. The Chief turned him on his back and straightened out his limbs; he issued a howl of pain. The Major leaned on the ledge of the wall looking over at the bridge. He saw the shots coming from the observation deck and then saw Scouts rifle fall back from the wall. He bowed his head thinking the worst again. He ran down the stairs of the garage towards the bridge. Then other shots rang out and he prayed they hit their mark. By the time he got across the bridge, he looked down to see a silhouette of a figure dangling on a rope with the illuminating dam wall serving as a backdrop. That is when he heard Blue issue the ‘all clear.’ He wasn’t going to take any chances. He reached down and pulled out his boot knife and cut the rope that was holding the body to the bridge saying, “Death to traitors.” It hit the gorge retaining wall before going over the side and disappearing down to the bottom of the canyon.

The Chief asked Whiz to get transport out here. Whiz said the rapid response force was on the way. Ranger asked the Chief if they got him. The Chief said, “We got him, and you’ve got to be the luckiest man alive!” Ranger told the Chief that Wanderer could have killed him but needed him alive.” The Chief rubbed his chin, “I get it, he wanted you to call for help on the radio, why didn’t you?” Ranger choked out a laugh, “And spoil the fun!” The Chief looked down at him, “Son, I’m going to need some time getting used to you.”

Jack Kilbar walked into the newsroom of the Las Vegas Mirror that morning, “Jane do you have my copy?” Jane turned from the Telex machine in the wire room, “They are on your desk, if that is what you call it.” Jack smiled, “Thank you dear.” Jack moseyed to his ‘pigpen,’ as he liked to call it. He removed his sport jacket and hung it on the back of his chair, as he loosened his tie he pressed the power button on his computer. He spied a full pot of coffee on the office coffee maker, so as he unbuttoned his collar, he got himself a cup. Returning to his desk he picked up the morning rushes off the wire. “Power Outage at Hoover Dam.” He laughed. He could just see two engineers in the generator room on their hands and knees in the dark trying to put the plug back in the outlet marked “Do not touch.” He read on, “At midnight, old transformer sub-station One, which has been in operation for the past sixty years caught fire and was destroyed, causing a power outage to the facilities on the upper level of the dam area. The outage lasted two hours until power could be rerouted from the Arizona side. Traffic was backed up for hours. Only one fatality was reported; a local resident of Boulder City thought the world was coming to an end and leaped off the Hoover Dam Bridge.” Jack sat down, ‘Hoover Dam Bridge?’ they probably meant the roadway over the dam. Jack smirked, ‘a resident of Boulder City? That place gives me the willies; the next Stepford Wives movie could be filmed up there.’ He moved on to the next dispatch, “The Governor of California today will hold a press conference to explain the massive raid conducted throughout the state of militia compounds by the FBI and ATF. Reports say that sixty people have been taken into custody.” Jack thought those were massive raids! “LAPD announced that they have broken an art heist ring at LAX airport, twelve people have been arrested.” ‘What happened to the good old days when Cary Grant would steal the

crown jewel off of Grace Kelly?’ Jack sipped his coffee and thought of his beautiful but spoiled teenage daughters who didn’t want to go to the cabin this summer, he better let Dana his wife handle it.

Agent Green walked into the office of the director of the FBI. He and his deputy directors were standing in front of the wall where six monitors were recording the California operations. He turned and waved her over to him. He motioned for the sound to be cut, “Gentlemen, I think we have found the new FBI liaison director for Homeland Security.” The twelve men applauded. Agent Green could only blush. Admiral Willard sat in his top floor office in the ‘Anagram Inn’ going over the daily reports. Damn! Half of his command is out of operational status and the rest of them have to be on the brink of exhaustion. Let’s hope there is no more crises in the southwest sector for a while. Gertrude Michell paced in the back of the White House situation room, rolling the eraser of a pencil over her lips. “We can’t wait any longer, let’s go Pete.” Motioning to her security man. The President was sitting in the Cabinet room with all cabinet members present. They were only told to report there because a crisis may be unfolding. Gertrude was ushered into the room and as she laid a report before the President, she whispered in his ear, “We have everything under control and no need for further actions.” The President smiled as she walked out of the room.

“Lieutenant Finch, I have a warrant for your arrest on the charge of Treason against the United States Government.” Two burley MP’s handcuffed him and led him away out of officer quarters at Fort Bragg. Agent Keffer followed them.

The Epilogue-Seven Months later...

“This is Admiral One requesting permission to land.” The chief petty officer in charge of the North Island Naval Air Station tower picked up the mike, “Permission granted Admiral One, land on runway one zero five.” “Copy one zero five.” The chief grabbed his binoculars and watch as the DC-3 ‘Dakota’ made it’s landing. He scanned the tarmac and there were three naval sedans waiting, one with the star designation of an Admiral. He thought to himself this should be interesting. The plane taxied up to the sedans and the hatch opened. The first to come out was an Air Force Major, followed by a luscious dish of a woman in a beautiful blue dress. Then a Naval Captain, who then helped another Naval Officer out of the plane. This one was a young beauty, who was wearing a blue beret. The chief thought there is only one outfit in the navy that wears that, ‘Naval Special Warfare Units!’ What do we have here? Another woman officer, this one wearing a maroon beret with jump boots, ‘Army Airborne’ who was followed by an Air Force Officer wearing a red beret. The chief thought, one of my compardras, a ‘Forward Air Controller,’ then two more Army Officer, one was wearing the tan beret of the ‘Rangers.’ He watched as the Admiral and his Adjunct came up to greet them after all the officers saluted him. “Chief, we are being hailed on the marine channel.” He turned to the aviation mate first class, “Well?” The mate threw a switch, “Flipper One to Tower, has our Big Bird landed?” The chief picked up the mike again, “Tower to Flipper One, Big Bird has landed, over and out.” The chief didn’t need his binoculars as he scans the coastline; he could see three wakes coming up the coast from Coronado. The aviation mate picked up the binoculars and looked out to sea, “Those are ‘swift boats.’ The chief

asked, "And who uses those boats?" The mate put down the binoculars and said in awe, "SEALS."

Admiral Yates asked, "That's a beautiful cane you have Lieutenant Lo." Cindy smiled holding up the cane to show him the head of a dolphin at the top, then looked at the other members of the group, "Aren't they sweet getting it for me?" She was fully recovered except for her right foot; she would have a limp for the rest of her life. The Admiral smiled, "Yes indeed, will you do me the honor of riding with me in my car?" Cindy said, "Yes Sir." They all got into the three vehicles for the ride over to the water taxi dock. When they arrived at the dock everybody was looking at the two swift boats doing figure eight's opposite of each other in the channel. At the dock was the other swift boat secured next to the water taxi. A group of men in tan shorts and Blue shirts with yellow trim around the collars and sleeves waved. Jerry asked Cindy what was going on. Cindy got a stern look on her face. The men held up strips of braided hairpieces, "PIGTAIL! Hooray, Hooray, Hooray!" Cindy turned to Jerry, "Those are the guys who got me in trouble. Wait till I get my hands on them!" Cindy saluted the Admiral, Major and Captain who were laughing hysterically. She then proceeded to go down the ramp waving her cane at them. Jerry was dumbfounded; the funny part was that the SEALS looked scared as she approached them. Jerry was relieved when he saw each man give her a big hug after saluting her. After introductions on the dock they all got in the water taxi for the ride over to Point Loma. The two swift boats acted as escorts across the channel. Jennifer looked at the big black shape they were heading for and thought, so that's a Trident sub.

“We are here to rededicate the USS Squid and to honor an officer who selfless dedication to duty is in the fine tradition of the United States Navy. As we stand before this nuclear submarine, we marvel at its power and technology. We tend to forget that without dedicated people, these boats are useless. Nowadays we focus on the newest, biggest, and best our technology has to offer, sacrificing our humanity in the process. We are facing a dilemma in our lives; our technology is getting more advanced than we are. Where the remote control is preferred over the human touch. We must take control over our destiny, before it is too late. It is good to rededicate the USS Squid, turning a mighty warship into a research ship. I hope the research and development it carries out will be for the betterment of humanity.” The Admiral looked over at Cindy, “Lieutenant Lo, front and center.” Cindy stood and walked with her cane until she was in front of the podium standing before Admiral Yates. She saluted him. Admiral Yates came around the podium and presented her with a bottle of Champagne, which she placed under her arm holding onto the neck of the bottle. The Admiral asked, “Lieutenant Lo will you do us the honor of christening this boat in the name of progress for Humanity?” Cindy said loud and clear, Yes Sir.” Lieutenant Nancy Huff came over, took her cane and helped her down the gangplank onto the boat. The USS Squid’s full complement of crew was standing at attention on the deck. It was decided that the christening on the bow for a ship already in the water was too difficult, so Cindy was escorted to the front of the conning tower where the ship’s plaque is. The families of the crew, guests, (including Cindy family,) and naval personnel all watched as Cindy grabbed the neck of the champagne in both hands and swung the bottle into the conning tower where it exploded on contact. The Stars and Stripes rose on the conning tower mast and the speakers on the dock blared

out 'Anchors Away.' As the crowd applauded Lt. Huff leaned over to Cindy and asked, "Where did you learn to swing like that?" Cindy smiled, "Little league and Berkeley."

The End.