

STRIKE OF THE BLACK MAMBA

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For Hantie, Elmarie and Tjaart

Thanks for all your love and support

Chapter 1

**Monday, 10 April, 11:30 Eastern Time (Daylight Saving Time).
Wilmington, North Carolina, USA:**

The big king mackerel darted in like a lightning bolt to snatch the bait. Ken Palmer felt the telltale tug on the line of his fishing rod before the mackerel took off on a reel-ripping run, dragging the line out to sea. As the reel started to sing, Ken sprang into action and set the hook with two light jerks of the rod.

“Fish on!” yelled Ken to warn his fellow anglers on the pier. With the rod bending like it wanted to break any minute, Ken started to reel in, but the mackerel decided that it was not going to land up on some human’s plate and it fought back fiercely. Ken had to give the fish more line and subsequently it became a real battle between him and the mackerel. The mackerel continued speeding deeper into the ocean and it seemed like the fish would take all his line out to sea, but Ken repeatedly reeled the line in, keeping the fish in check.

After twenty minutes of wrestling with the king mackerel, Ken’s muscular shoulders ached and his arms felt as heavy as two bars of lead, but he continued the struggle with the ferocious fish. Eventually Ken started to gain some ground, bringing the fish closer and closer to the pier. Finally, after

another five minutes of strenuous labor, he managed to land the magnificent silver fish on the pier.

It was a cool and slightly clouded morning in Wilmington, situated on North Carolina's Cape Fear coast. Ken Palmer was a tall, lean, and broad-shouldered man of about forty, with a square jaw, a suntanned complexion and wrinkles around the corners of his brown eyes. He was dressed casually in a pair of jeans and a red T-shirt.

Ken started to put new bait onto his line. He was in a good mood and he attempted to whistle a tune while the cool breeze brushed through his closely cropped light brown hair. Working for oneself has its advantages. He had given himself a few days off and decided to do some fishing. But, if only he had an inkling of an idea what was happening at that exact moment nearly 15,000 kilometers away in South Africa, he would not have been so content with himself.

Monday, 10 April, 18:42. The South African Air Force Test Flight and Development Centre near Bredasdorp on the Western Cape coast:

A westerly wind of 20 knots blew gusts of dust around the airstrip when Colonel Phillip Botha walked towards the lonely F/A-18 Hornet fighter aircraft waiting out on the tarmac. He clutched his flight helmet tightly under his left arm and there was a grim expression on his face as his thoughts centered on the thing that he was about to do that night.

Phillip Botha was of medium height, in his early forties, with blue eyes and closely cropped black hair with some grey flecks. He carried his body erect in typical military fashion and walked with a purposeful-looking gait.

The setting sun shed a long shadow ahead of him, almost touching the aircraft, although he was still some distance away from it. The sun's last rays accentuated the sleek, graceful design of the aircraft with its V-shaped tail plane, and it cast shades of gold onto the metal-grey fuselage. Phillip was oblivious to the scene of splendor since his mind was focused on the task that lay ahead.

Phillip stopped in front of the aircraft and greeted the four members of the ground crew standing next to it. He hoped that they would not be able to notice the anxiety building up inside him.

Phillip cracked a joke that he had carefully and repeatedly rehearsed an hour before to ensure that it would sound as natural as he could manage. To Phillip's relief it worked and after the laughter had subsided, one of the men stepped forward and presented Phillip with the aircraft's logbook. Phillip accepted the logbook and inspected it carefully, taking slightly longer than normally, since it helped to settle his nerves.

After he was sure all the required inspections had been carried out, Phillip signed the logbook and handed it back to the same man. Phillip walked around the aircraft to check for loose locknuts, loose inspection panels and any sign of fuel or hydraulic fluid leaks. Satisfied that everything was in order, he slid his helmet onto his head, climbed up the ladder leading to the cockpit and squeezed into the bucket seat. He fastened the straps connecting him to his parachute pack and ejector seat and connected the leads to his oxygen mask, radio and G-suit.

After taking a deep breath, Phillip closed the aircraft's canopy. He swiftly performed the complex pre-start procedures and pressed the starter button. The starter motor kicked in with a sudden whoosh of sound and the two turbofan motors started up with a whine and then emitted a loud roar. Phillip continued to perform the pre-taxi procedures and he mentally completed the checklist.

Phillip increased thrust and taxied the aircraft onto the runway where he applied maximum braking to bring the aircraft to a standstill. He called the control tower on his radio and requested permission for take-off. After receiving his take-off clearance from the control tower, he pushed the throttle forward to accelerate the motors to military rated thrust. He checked that the digital RPM readout displayed 100 percent for both engines and that they functioned correctly. He moved the flight controls and made a visual check to the outside of the aircraft to ensure that the control surfaces actually moved in conjunction with the controls.

Phillip advanced the throttles to maximum afterburner and checked on the digital display that Afterburner Stage Six was engaged. The afterburners ignited with a long flame from both engines and a thunderous roar. The aircraft's nose lifted distinctly as it fought against the brakes, like a dog straining on a leash, eager to chase after a cat walking by.

As Phillip released the brakes, he was immediately pressed backwards in his seat when the F/A-18 Hornet rushed along the runway. The runway markings seemed to shorten and marker signboards flashed past him as the aircraft started to accelerate. His trained eyes carefully watched the digital airspeed indicator in the heads-up display right in front of him. At 150 knots the aircraft started to lift up and as he gently pulled back on the stick, Phillip sensed how the wings jiggled faintly as the main wheels left the tarmac.

At 210 knots Phillip raised the undercarriage and the wheels thumped into position. Raising the nose at a 27-degree angle, the F/A-18 Hornet climbed into the darkening sky. Breaking the bonds of gravity with what seemed like hardly any effort, the aircraft shot upwards with thundering engines. A smile formed on Phillip's lips, since he always enjoyed the exhilaration of the tremendous acceleration.

A few seconds later, at 10,000 meters, Phillip disengaged the afterburners and leveled off at a speed of 460 knots. Phillip noticed the Indian Ocean sliding in underneath his aircraft. He turned the aircraft to his right to follow a westerly course over the ocean. He allowed himself one glance at the landscape of the Western Cape Province below the right-hand side of his aircraft. He always used to admire how the rivers would show up as silvery snakes on the dark landscape at this time of day.

After twelve minutes, when he reached the border of the Indian and the Atlantic Oceans about thirty kilometers south of the Cape of Good Hope, he slowly turned the aircraft to point into a northerly direction. The aircraft still flew over the ocean, but this time it was over the Atlantic Ocean.

Phillip continued to fly north for another twelve minutes and then he spoke into his microphone.

"Base, this is Foxtrot One-Four-One. I have a Mayday! I have a fire on board ... I cannot contain it!"

There was about two seconds of silence before the reply came on the radio receiver.

"Foxtrot One-Four-One, eject! I repeat: eject immediately!"

Phillip switched off the radio and started to make a steep nose-dive towards the ocean's surface. All his concentration was aimed at the airspeed and altitude indicators in the head's-up display. At an altitude of 450 meters,

a female voice suddenly called out: “Altitude!” It was the F/A-18 Hornet’s automatic female voice warning system, dubbed *Bitching Betty* by American pilots. Phillip responded and started to pull out of the dive. At a bare 40 meters above the ocean surface he leveled the aircraft out.

Phillip kept flying in a northerly direction, proceeding at 400 knots and skimming the surface of the Atlantic Ocean. He held the aircraft’s altitude at 40 meters above sea level to avoid detection by ground-based radar stations. Phillip made sure that the wings were level before he invoked the aircraft’s autopilot mode to steer to a pre-programmed waypoint whilst maintaining the current altitude and speed.

The world was getting darker outside the aircraft and Phillip decided to put on his night vision goggles. He switched the internal cockpit lighting system over to night-vision mode to accommodate the light magnification factor of the night vision goggles. The world outside showed up an eerie, incandescent green.

After half-an-hour’s flying, Phillip disengaged the autopilot and started to make a slow turn towards his right until he pointed in an easterly direction. He passed over the southwestern Coastline of Namibia exactly seventy-five minutes after take-off. He made small adjustments to his steering course by watching the second waypoint in his heads-up display that he had programmed into the F/A-18 Hornet’s computer earlier that day and then he put the aircraft into autopilot mode once again.

The night was very dark and below him were virtually no light sources, since he was flying over a very scarcely populated area. He was still skimming over the ground at a bare 40 meters. The area over which he was flying was very flat, and he knew it intimately from previous times, so he had no fear of suddenly crashing into some unknown obstruction.

Monday, 10 April, 19:52. A Kalahari farm, South Africa:

Jakob Vogelstruis, a farm worker of San (or Bushman as it used to be known) descent, sat on a foldout canvas chair outside his small house on a Kalahari farm in the northwest of South Africa, close to the borders with Namibia and Botswana and warmed his hands to the fire burning brightly from a camelthorn tree’s log. Next to him sat his wife Sara on a similar chair

and stirred the maize porridge cooking in a large pot next to the fire on some of its coals. Their small brick house was situated near one of the large farm's outposts where water was supplied to the sheep from a borehole and a wind pump. The farm was situated in a very arid region, referred to as the Kalahari Desert, which covers some parts of South Africa, Namibia and Botswana. Jakob's daily duties included looking after the water supply, watching the sheep and checking the fence in his large encampment for any signs of breaks, since jackal and other wild animals like lynx and hyena could quickly discover the break and get to the sheep.

"Listen, Jakob, I'm hearing a strange sound," said Sara.

Jakob cocked his head to catch the sound, but his hearing wasn't too good any more. "I can only hear the sounds of the night. Where is it coming from?"

"It's from that side, the west."

Suddenly, a loud, ear-piercing, whooshing sound came out of the sky. They both looked up and saw a dark object against the night sky moving right over their heads in an easterly direction. One moment it was there, the next it was gone, and it was as quiet as before. Jakob stiffly got up from the ground, since he had fallen from the chair due to the blast from the shock wave he had received. Never in his sixty years on this planet had he ever had such an experience. He had always lived in this area, since the day of his birth, and had never been to a big city. The only man-made flying objects he had ever seen were a few small propeller-driven airplanes and passenger jets 10,000 meters up in the sky.

Jakob looked at his wife. She sat on the ground where she had been thrown by the shock wave, clutching both upper arms with her hands. The wooden spoon that she had used to stir the porridge with was stuck into the sand because it had slipped out of her hands due to the fright she had received.

"Jakob," she said with a thin voice, "Do you think it is the second coming of the Lord?" The Vogelstruis' were very religious people.

Jakob picked up his chair and tried to regain his composure. "No, but I think we should ask Mister Van Niekerk tomorrow when he comes around."

Monday, 10 April, 19:57. Another Kalahari farm, South Africa:

Piet Meulman merrily pedaled his bicycle on a dirt road about 40 kilometers east of Jakob Vogelstruis' house towards the farm where he lived. He had just visited his friend Abram on a neighboring farm to take reception of his bottle of cheap sweet white wine, commonly referred to as *Vaaljapie*. He smiled as he felt the weight of the bottle in a knapsack on his back. Abram was lucky enough to visit the nearest town three times a week with his boss to help delivering eggs to a grocery store. Since Piet could only get to town twice a month, he had an arrangement with Abram to buy him a bottle of wine at least twice a week. Piet would visit Abram after his working day on the farm and pay him for the wine.

Without warning, a deafening whooshing noise filled the sky above his head. The physical blast effect from the shock wave threw Piet from his bicycle and he fell face down onto the sand. He picked up his head and was just in time to see a dark object in the night sky very close to the ground, moving like greased lightning.

Just as quickly as the object came, it was gone. Piet lifted his body from the sand and just sat there in the road, too confused and dumbfounded to do anything else. Eventually, after about two minutes of deep reflection, he wiped the sand from his face, then reached into his knapsack and pulled out the bottle of wine. For a moment he stared appreciatively at the unbroken bottle that he held in both hands, then opened the screw cap and took a deep swig from the sweet intoxicating liquid.

Monday, 10 April, 20:01. Phillip Botha's aircraft:

Phillip started to decrease the aircraft's speed, looking out for the marking lights of the makeshift landing strip where he was supposed to touch down. Eventually, after a few seconds, he noticed a row of lights on the ground, placed directly in his flight path. He decreased speed further until he reached 200 knots. He climbed to a height of 150 meters and saw another row of lights pass below him. Ahead of him he could make out more lights.

As he got closer to the new set of lights, he could make out that they were arranged in two long parallel rows, indicating a landing zone for him. There were also four bright spotlights illuminating the makeshift runway,

placed strategically next to each row of runway lights. Two spotlights were placed at one end of the landing zone and the other two were placed towards the middle of the runway. He circled the landing zone once, and then came in towards the end where the spotlights were placed.

Lining up his aircraft with the two rows of runway lights, Phillip reduced the throttles and applied the speed brake. He lowered the undercarriage and applied full flaps. The ground below him was lit up far ahead of him by the set of four spotlights. He adjusted the throttles to idle, released the speed brake and proceeded to lower the aircraft, carefully watching the airspeed indicator and altimeter. After the aircraft's rear wheels had touched the ground, he put the nose wheel firmly down on the ground and applied the brakes until the aircraft rolled to a standstill. He applied the parking brake, reduced the engine RPM to idle and shut down the engines.

Phillip opened the canopy and proceeded to unfasten his harness. He pulled the flight helmet off his head and inhaled the cool, sweet, night air, still blended with dust caused by the touchdown on the flat surface that was mixed with salt and sand. There was the sound of a vehicle approaching the aircraft and Phillip saw the vehicle's headlights closing in on him from his right-hand side.

Tuesday, 11 April, 17:20 Eastern Time (Daylight Saving Time). Ken Palmer's house in Wilmington, North Carolina, USA:

Ken Palmer drove his Jeep Cherokee onto the paving leading to the garage next to his house. He pressed a button on his remote control to open the automatic garage door and parked the Jeep inside the garage.

The house was medium-sized, built in a ranch style, and painted a sandy color outside. Ken unloaded his fishing rod from the Jeep's roof and hung it on brackets fixed to the garage wall. He unloaded the knapsack containing his fishing tackle and placed on the garage's floor. He closed the garage door and entered the house through an inside door that connected the garage to the dining room.

"No fish today," Ken mentioned grumblingly to a parrot in a cage on a table next to the door through which he entered the house. He went into the main bedroom's on-suite bathroom and took a shower. After the shower he

dried himself and dressed into a tracksuit. He fixed himself a whiskey and soda, sat down in a deep lounge chair and switched on the TV set in the lounge.

An attractive woman presenter with short blonde hair appeared on the television screen with a microphone in her hand. She was standing on a pier in some harbor, with a backdrop of water and ships, the strong breeze managing to move her short hair to and fro.

The sight of her on the television screen caused Ken's mind to wander back a number of months. He remembered the deep sky-blue eyes, the animated laugh that seemed to appear so easily, the laughing wrinkles materializing around her eyes, suggesting that her age was somewhat over thirty. He also recollected her sharp mind and how she could bewitch an interviewee with her charm and then suddenly take the wind out of his sails with a question or remark that he never saw coming. Before becoming too sentimental, Ken removed the thoughts from his mind and concentrated on the scene displayed on the large television set.

"... and members of the well-known international environmental organization, *Greenwoods*, as well as other local environmental groups are assembling here in Cape Town in anticipation of the Japanese plutonium-carrying vessel which is due to sail around the Cape of Good Hope in four day's time. Here with me is Jean Le Blanc who leads the *Greenwoods* mission all the way from France."

The television presenter turned towards the Frenchman with the long curly hair dancing in the wind. "Jean, tell us why you are here in Cape Town."

"Well, as you have said, we are waiting for the plutonium-carrying ship," Jean answered with a slight French accent. "We feel that this ship's cargo could present a grave danger to the environment and human life, should anything happen to it."

"What is the purpose of this cargo of plutonium, Jean?"

"The Japanese government decided during the oil crisis of the 1970's that it wanted to be as self sufficient as possible in its own energy needs and nuclear power seemed to be a logical alternative to petroleum. However, uranium was expensive at that time, and so Japan decided to build ordinary

nuclear power reactors and fast breeder reactors. Fast breeder reactors use plutonium to produce electricity and could theoretically produce more plutonium as a waste by-product than the amount of plutonium they originally consumed. Currently, Japan is building a nuclear fuel cycle facility to extract plutonium from conventional nuclear reactor wastes. In the meantime, since 1992, Japan has been sending reactor waste to France and England for reprocessing. They planned to ship the extracted plutonium back to Japan in as many shipments as required over the next twenty years. They try to keep the sea route for each shipment a secret before the time, but we usually manage to discover the route before the shipment starts.”

“So why have you only started to create a public awareness after so many years?”

“We were always active in creating public awareness since the first shipment, although not so much in your country. But we have felt at this stage that things are going too far, and we decided to step up our awareness campaign.”

“How are they shipping this cargo of plutonium?”

“The British freighter *Atlantic Merlin* carries fuel rods of highly radioactive nuclear waste packed inside fuel assemblies, which in turn are packed into 28 heavy-weight transport casks or containers. Each fuel rod is filled with MOX pellets. MOX stands for Mixed Oxide, because it contains a mixture of plutonium and uranium oxides. This shipment will deliver about 220 kilograms of plutonium and around 5 tons of uranium to Japan. There is another ship, the *Daihyousha Maru*, which is a 6,500 ton cruiser operated by the Japanese coast guard that will escort the *Atlantic Merlin* for most of its trip. This cruiser is equipped with light cannons and machine-guns, but is not equipped to withstand a missile attack.”

“Why did you mention the fact that the cruiser is not able to withstand a missile attack? Why would somebody possibly want to attack this ship and why is it necessary to protect the plutonium shipment?”

“You must understand that, although this plutonium is not classed as weapons-grade plutonium, the US government has stated that it can be used in the manufacture of nuclear weapons. In fact, the amount of plutonium in this shipment can be used to make about 45 nuclear bombs. Therefore, it can

be of great value to terrorists or rogue nations wishing to obtain plutonium for their nuclear weapons programs. I must also stress that this isn't the only reason that we are protesting against this nuclear shipment. The other danger is that of an accident occurring during the journey, which would present a grave danger to the environment and human life, as I have already mentioned. This cargo contains a more than 30 million curies of radioactivity.”

The camera focused on Karen Visser’s face and she mentioned that an interview prepared by one of their United Kingdom correspondents would be televised to report on the safety factors of the nuclear shipment. The person being interviewed was Alexander Gill, a spokesperson for *Transatmar*, the British company responsible for the nuclear shipment to Japan.

The scene changed and the television screen pictured a man in his mid-fifties with brown-grey hair sitting behind a clean desk in a sparsely furnished office. The title “Alexander Gill: spokesperson for *Transatmar*” was flashed at the bottom of the screen.

Alexander Gill looked straight into the camera and said: “Let me first state that these nuclear shipments to Japan are done with the full approval of the British, French and Japanese authorities. Whilst a company in France does the reprocessing of the nuclear waste, we do the transportation of the nuclear material to Japan.

“In order to ensure the safe transportation of this nuclear material, we first of all carefully select a route that avoids areas of natural disaster or civil disorder and to ensure the security of the cargo and the transport vessels. Secondly, the ships do not make any scheduled port calls en route.

“We furthermore ensure the safety of the ship carrying the nuclear cargo. This transport vessel is accompanied by an armed Japanese cruiser manned by highly experienced Japanese coast guard personnel. The transport vessel also has a team of the Civic Nuclear Constabulary, or CNC, on board. The CNC is a UK governmental authority that is specially trained to protect nuclear facilities and materials. These highly experienced and trained armed escorts operate independently of the crew and they are responsible for maintaining constant surveillance and protection of the nuclear cargo.

“The transport vessel is furthermore equipped with reliable communications systems that use advanced technology independent of standard navigation communications equipment. Every two hours, a secure transmission is sent out automatically from the transport vessel to the operations centre in the UK, containing information on the location of the transport vessel and the status of the cargo. These communications systems also provide for separate and secure communications between the on-board escorts and the operations centre, independent of the crew of the transport vessel.”

Alexander Gill took a deep breath and continued: “Other safety measures on the transport vessel include a double bottom and double hull structure for minimizing damage, and for safety in case of an accident, a modern radar and anti-collision system to protect the ship from collisions or grounding. There are also duplicated navigation, communication, electrical and cooling systems, a comprehensive fire fighting system, emergency sources of electrical power, and satellite navigation and tracking systems.

“The nuclear fuel transport casks exceed international safety standards for transportation of such material and are fixed in the hold of the ship.

“Measures have also been taken to hamper any attempted removal of the nuclear fuel at sea, such as making the cargo bay hatch removal mechanisms, as well as the on-board derrick or cranes, inoperable. The cargo bay covers are also welded in place at strategic points to further impede the opening of the cargo bays by unauthorized persons. The steel transport casks, which weigh about 100 tons each, are locked and sealed in order to prevent access to the nuclear fuel by unauthorized persons.”

After the interview with Alexander Gill, Karen Visser came into view again and she started with a fresh news item.

“Meanwhile, there is still no sign of the South African Air Force pilot whose aircraft crashed into the ocean off the Western Cape coast last night. Search aircraft and vessels are still combing the area, but no trace of wreckage of the fighter aircraft has yet been found. The name of the pilot has been released. He is Colonel Phillip Botha, a test pilot of the Test Flight and Development Centre at Bredasdorp, in the Western Cape. A spokesman for the Air Force said that Colonel Botha left no relatives behind. His wife and only child were tragically killed in an armed hijacking of their motor vehicle

barely a month ago. The cause of the aircraft accident is not yet known. Apparently the aircraft involved in the crash was a F/A-18 Hornet from the USA, which was being evaluated by the South African Air Force. The South African Air Force is currently busy to evaluate aircraft from a number of different countries since they want to replace some of their aging aircraft. The Air Force spokesman declined to comment if the crash would negatively effect the evaluation of the American aircraft. The Air Force is investigating the matter and will release details of the crash as soon as they have more information available.”

The presenter paused briefly. “This is Karen Visser for INN in Cape Town, South Africa”.

The television screen showed a news desk with a man continuing to read other news items. Ken sipped his drink and changed the channel to a football game.

The sound of the telephone ringing woke Ken out of his deep thoughts. He turned down the television’s sound and picked up the telephone on the table next to him. “Palmer,” he answered.

“Hi Ken,” the voice in the receiver replied. “It’s Brad Johnson. How are you?”

“Long time, no hear!” Ken replied “I’m well and you?”

“Couldn’t be better... still at the old job. Listen, I need to talk to you, but in person. Can I take you to lunch tomorrow or so?”

“Yeah, sure, tomorrow will be fine,” Ken said somewhat hesitantly. He wasn’t sure what his ex-colleague might want to discuss that could not be said over the telephone.

“OK, so where is your favorite eating-spot?” Brad enquired.

“For lunch it’s probably Noah’s Cottage, next to the Cape Fear River.” Ken explained the directions to Brad and they made an appointment for 13:00 the next day.

Wednesday, 12 April, 06:20. Donald Morse’s hideout on a farm in South Africa:

Phillip Botha stood with a steaming mug of coffee in his hand and watched how the sunrise colored the bank of clouds in the east with a yellow

tint. He always enjoyed this part of the day in the African veldt, far removed from any civilization. His thoughts drifted to his annual hunting trip to his brother's game farm in the bush veldt of the Limpopo Province in the north of South Africa. There he would also get up early, just before sunrise, and set out into the veldt on foot with his .308 hunting rifle slung over his shoulder. However, most of the time he would enjoy the solitary walking trips more than the actual hunting part.

Phillip was jerked out of his thoughts by someone calling his name. He looked around to a man standing close to a gas cylinder placed on the ground. The gas cylinder had a metal tube connected on top of it that came to about waist-height. A large disc-shaped frying pan was mounted on top of the tube.

“Let's start breakfast, shall we?” asked the man. “The *skottelskaar* is ready.” The *skottelskaar* referred to a disc plough that farmers had used many years ago in South Africa to fry their food when sleeping in the veldt, but now referred to the large disc-shaped frying pan connected to the gas cylinder, which had a similar shape to that of the disc plough.

“Okay, Otto,” said Phillip and walked up to the man. He placed his coffee mug on top of a folding table next to the gas cylinder.

They took some sausages from a plate on the table and placed them carefully into the frying pan where the hot oil immediately started to sizzle. While they were waiting to turn the sausages over, Phillip took a sip from his coffee and surveyed the area around him. They were standing in front of a large aircraft hangar that looked like a steel barn, close to the edge of a large dry salt lake, the same place where he had landed his aircraft on Tuesday night. The veldt around them consisted of flat sand dunes overgrown with some grass, small shrubs and sparsely distributed thorn trees.

The aircraft hangar's main door was open and inside the hangar three men clad in khaki overalls worked on his F/A-18 Hornet aircraft. Inside the hangar were also a large Super Puma helicopter, a small Hughes OH-6A Cayuse helicopter, a small refueling truck and a tractor, used to pull the helicopters and the F/A-18 Hornet in and out of the hangar. The Hughes OH-6A Cayuse helicopter was mounted on a large flat trolley with plenty of small wheels, since the Hughes helicopter did not have its own wheels, but

ski landing gear and had to be moved in and out of the hanger by means of the trolley.

Phillip heard the sound of a vehicle arriving. He looked up and saw a silver two-door Mitsubishi Pajero 4x4 vehicle coming to a standstill next to the hangar in a cloud of dust. A man got out from behind the wheel and walked towards them. He was of medium build, in his early forties, with neatly trimmed black hair graying at the temples and a set of piercing blue eyes.

“Good morning, gents,” he greeted jovially, “any chance of some coffee?”

“Yes, let me get you a mug, Donald,” the man called Otto answered and turned to a coffee pot standing on a small gas cylinder next to the table. “The water’s still hot,” he added.

“It looks like it’s going to be a nice sunny day ... as always,” Donald said to Phillip.

“Yes, I just love this climate, although a bit of rain is always welcome. You know, I believe there’s no better place on earth than the African veldt. You Yanks might think differently about this, but I can’t imagine living someplace else than under the African skies.”

“Actually, I totally agree with you. As you know, I’ve been in Africa a few times before, and each time I went back to the States, it always seems like something’s calling on me to come back here.” Donald put his hand on Phillip’s shoulder. “One of these days, Phillip, you’re going to own your own piece of African veldt.”

Phillip looked into Donald’s eyes and smiled. “You can’t imagine how excited that makes me feel.”

“You’ll be glad to know that things are running smoothly. We’ve received all the weapons taken from the army bases during the course of the night. Everything went as planned.”

After they had finished their coffee, Donald said to Phillip: “Let’s go and take a look at the plane.”

“Don’t be too long,” Otto called. “Breakfast will be ready in a minute.”

After greeting the three men working on the aircraft, Donald asked: “How is she?”

“Fuelled up and armed,” the one man answered.

“I’m nearly finished with the new emblems,” another man added. He was standing on a stepladder and was busy painting a large Jolly Roger symbol on the fuselage of the aircraft.

Donald pointed to the skull and crossbones on the side of the aircraft. “This was my idea,” he said with a grin to Phillip. “How do you like it?”

Phillip grinned back at him “I just love it...”

Chapter 2

Wednesday, 12 April, 13:15. Noah's Cottage Restaurant in Wilmington, North Carolina, USA:

Ken and Brad discussed the old times during their lunch, when both of them had worked for the FBI as Special Agents. Brad was still with the FBI, assigned to the head office in Washington DC. He was a middle-aged man with dark brown hair thinning out at the top and grey temples. He was dressed in a black suit with a white shirt and a black tie with thin white and maroon diagonal stripes.

“So what are you doing with yourself these days?” enquired Brad.

“I'm using my law degree and interest in computers and the Internet to consult companies on issues from computer security to software copyrights. From this I make enough money to take a number of breaks during the year, which I use for fishing and writing about my consulting work.”

After lunch Brad drank coffee and in an un-American fashion, Ken had a cup of black tea. An uncomfortable silence existed for a minute or two.

Ken broke the ice. “Well, I suppose you didn't come all the way up here to see how I'm doing these days?”

“No, you're right. I've actually got a little proposition for you. I suppose you've heard that Donald Morse escaped from prison about eighteen months

ago. There just wasn't any trace of him since then. But now he suddenly popped out as from nowhere. We ... uhm ...”

“And you would like me to go and bring him in again?” Ken completed the sentence for Brad.

“Yes, you couldn't have put it better.”

“I didn't resign from the FBI nearly two years ago just to go back again. I'm finished with the Bureau! I know you're only following orders, trying to recruit me again. But I've done my share. I've got a new life now. It might not seem like much, but I'm enjoying myself. “

“I understand your feelings, Ken. But I would just like you to know where Morse has surfaced all of a sudden...”

“Well, where?”

“In South Africa.”

“That will not help change my mind. You know I've got bad memories of that place.”

“Well, I thought you might like to see your girlfriend again.”

“It's over between us. After I got wounded in that armed robbery while I was on assignment in South Africa, I swore never to go back there again. There are just too many violent crimes after the new government got into power. When I got out of hospital, I asked Karen to marry me and come and live in the States with me. But she refused to leave South Africa. She said she still loved the place, had a good job, that she had family there, and wasn't ready to leave.”

“I'm very sorry to hear that.” Brad looked genuinely sorry, although it might also have been for the fact that he knew his trump card had now just been rendered worthless.

“You know, I'm still in love with her, but I'm not going back there, not even if it will give me a chance to see her again,” added Ken.

“OK, I can see I'm not going to convince you,” said Brad. “You know where to get hold of me should you decide to change your mind.”

After a brief period of silence, Brad spoke again. “Could you give me some background on Donald Morse?”

“Donald completed a graduate degree in electrical engineering at the University of Arizona,” replied Ken. “He then worked for the Stanlock

Missile and Space Corporation for a short while before starting his own arms manufacturing business with the aid of his father's money and a loan. Not only did he manufacture arms, but he also acted as middleman for international arms deals, selling arms from other companies for a hefty profit to international customers.

“He came into contact with the South Africans in 1985 or 1986 and supplied them with missile technology and other weapons. He also spent time in partnership with their own state-owned arms manufacturing industry to develop certain weapons for their defense force. All of this was done in spite of a UN arms embargo against South Africa. He made millions of dollars and led a lavish lifestyle between 1986 and 1990. He had several million-dollar houses, his own golf course and even owned a savings bank. He had one large yacht, a private jet and a small fleet of cargo ships.

“He was indicted in 1991 for transgression of the arms embargo, conspiracy, securities fraud, violations of the Arms Export Control Act and the Anti-Apartheid Act, money-laundering and filing false tax returns. He was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment without the option of parole.

“In his defense he said that he had helped the South Africans in the global fight against the threat of communism, a cause supported by America. He reckoned that America had withdrawn its support for the fight against communism in South Africa due to international pressure to denounce apartheid and to isolate South Africa economically from the rest of the world. He maintained that America had stabbed South Africa, and himself, in the back, by reversing their policies. In any case, that did not help him at all, and he went to jail.

“He became ever-increasingly disgruntled with the American system and started to show signs of far-right political views. He then escaped in 2000 and that was where I came in to help to catch him and get him behind bars again.”

Thursday, 13 April, 18:10. Ken Palmer's house:

Ken Palmer sat stretched out in a lounge chair and watched the television news from INN. When the focus switched to a report from Karen Visser

from South Africa, he picked up the remote control and turned the sound volume up.

“...a spate of robberies has occurred at various military bases through the course of the night. At the moment, we are standing next to the armory of the Tempe military base close to Bloemfontein, the capital of the Free State province. With us we have Lieutenant Colonel Abel Themba, the commanding officer of 44 Parachute Brigade.”

Karen looked at the colonel standing next to her. “Colonel Themba, can you tell us what happened here last night?” she asked and held the microphone close to the military officer’s lips.

“Last night some thieves broke into the weapons store and stole a number of weapons. They also stole a military transport vehicle, which was discovered early this morning about twenty kilometers from here. Unfortunately the truck was empty.”

“Colonel, is it possible to tell us what kind of weapons were stolen and the number of weapons that are missing?”

“We are updating the inventory of the weapons to determine what has gone missing. A large number of weapons have to be counted. At this stage I cannot divulge any information about the kind of weapons nor the numbers of how many were taken.”

“Was any ammunition stolen, colonel?”

“Yes, we believe so. But again we have to do an inventory to determine what is missing.”

“Do you suspect an inside job?”

“At this stage I cannot comment on that. The military police and the police are investigating the theft. I can assure you that we will leave no stone unturned in order to find the perpetrators and to recover the stolen weapons.”

“Thank you, colonel Themba.”

The camera focused on Karen’s face and she continued: “We have information that similar robberies have occurred at another four military bases during the course of the night. In a statement released by the South African Defense Force, they have acknowledged that the robberies had taken place, but declined any further comment on the matter until such time that more

information became available. This is Karen Visser for INN in Bloemfontein, South Africa.”

Using the remote control, Ken switched the television set off and got up out of his chair. He walked to his notebook computer placed on a desk in one corner of the room and switched it on. He went into the kitchen and made himself a cup of black tea. When he returned to the computer, it had already completed its start-up procedures and loaded the operating system. After seating himself in front of the computer, Ken took the mouse and clicked on an icon on the screen to open up his e-mail program. He scanned through the items in his inbox and read a few business-related e-mails.

After this, Ken spotted an e-mail message from an old friend and colleague of his, Charles Wood. The e-mail message discussed some UFO reports that Charles wanted Ken to look at. Since he had seen what he believed to be a UFO in his early teens, Charles always had a passion for this topic. The ridicule of his colleagues and friends had only strengthened his obsession with the subject and he left no stone unturned to convince his friends that UFO's did in fact exist. The reason why this particular e-mail caught Ken's attention was that it mentioned two UFO sighting reports from South Africa that had been taken from a newspaper report the previous day.

The report stated that there were two sightings on Monday night at approximately 19:30 in the Northern Cape Province, close to the borders with Namibia and Botswana. Farm workers who had been outside at the time had reported both sightings. The first sighting had happened about forty kilometers west of the next one. In both cases the farm workers had reported a very loud whooshing sound and a large low-flying object moving very fast from west to east. In both cases, the object had moved directly overhead and it had moved too fast in the darkness to determine its shape. Furthermore, in both incidents the witnesses had been flung to the ground by an unseen force.

Ken mused for a short while over the report, wondering if it couldn't possibly have been an aircraft that the people had seen. Shaking his head, he muttered to himself: “A lot of strange things happening in that country lately...”

Friday, 14 April, 01:20. The Atlantic Ocean, 160 kilometers west of Lüderitz on the Namibian coast:

Theodor Bartlett gazed intently at the three blips on the radar screen on the bridge of the *Ocean Rover*. Theodor looked every bit the general idea of what a ship's captain should look like. He sported a full grizzly beard on his craggy face and wore a black and white cap with unknown insignia.

He looked up at the sailor manning the helm. "Jenkins, decrease speed to five knots, we don't want to get too close yet," he ordered the helmsman.

"Five knots, captain," Jenkins replied as he obeyed the order. Although Theodor was not the captain of a military vessel, nor a vessel in a recognized merchant fleet, he still insisted to be called "captain" by everyone on his ship.

The *Ocean Rover* was a Panamanian-registered 3000-ton ex-oilrig supply vessel with a high foredeck and a flat afterdeck the size of about three tennis courts. The ship's bridge was crammed with state-of-the-art electronics communications systems and both surface and air radar systems.

A green Super Puma helicopter perched on the *Ocean Rover's* afterdeck. Inside the helicopter two pilots and twenty-two men clad in dark camouflage combat uniforms sat strapped into their seats and waited patiently.

"What are you picking up now, Randall?" Theodor asked a man sitting behind a console containing a computer screen.

"I'm receiving incoming signals from all three radars, captain."

"So they know about us," Theodor said to no one in particular. He walked up to another man sitting behind a small box fitted with an array of buttons and knobs and a computer screen. The man had a set of earphones on his head that was connected to the small electronic device in front of him. Theodor touched him on the shoulder and the man turned around with a quizzing expression on his face. Theodor indicated that he wanted to speak to the man.

"Have you picked up anything, Peters?" enquired Theodor after the man had taken the earphones off his head.

"Yes, captain, I've picked up radio transmissions from all three vessels. We know which frequencies they use."

“Great,” said Theodor, “now we just have to be patient for another twenty minutes.”

Friday, 14 April, 01:22. Phillip Botha’s aircraft:

The F/A-18 Hornet crossed the Namibian coast and for a very brief moment Phillip had a glimpse through his night-vision goggles of the waves breaking against the beach. The autopilot was switched on and the aircraft barely skimmed the surface of the Atlantic Ocean.

Phillip glanced at the radar screen to his right. On the left side of the screen he could make out three little green blocks grouped close together. A bit further to the right he spotted another little green block. He knew that the first two blocks on the left were the British plutonium-carrying cargo ship, the 7,000-ton Atlantic Merlin, and its Japanese military escort, the 6,500 ton cruiser *Daihyousha Maru*. The third ship in the group had to be the *Blue Dolphin*, the *Greenwoods* ship trailing the first two ships. He also knew that the ship on the right-hand side of the radar display was the *Ocean Rover*.

Phillip glanced at the heading tape in the aircraft’s HUD to make sure that he was still on an interception course for the first two ships on the left of his radar screen. As it had always been with him, just before the battle was about to commence, the familiar calmness was setting in, boosting his self-confidence for the task that lay ahead.

Friday, 14 April, 01:37. The bridge of the *Ocean Rover*:

The man named Peters looked up from his screen towards Theodor Bartlett. “Captain, the Atlantic Merlin’s automatic position heading and speed reports have just been transmitted to England.”

Theodor looked up from the radar screen. “Right, gentlemen, the time has arrived. We have two hours until the next automatic transmission is due. Activate the Radar and radio jamming. Hit the buttons now!”

Two men sitting behind built-in consoles containing electronic buttons, dials and display monitors, moved their hands simultaneously and pressed some buttons and turned some dials on the consoles in front of them. Everyone on the bridge was frozen for the next minute, waiting in silence.

“OK, Randall, how does it look?” Theodor asked the man behind the Radar Warning Receiver.

“No more incoming radars from the ships, captain. I’m picking up a signal from the aircraft, though.”

“Excellent!” Theodor walked to the man with the headphones on and touched his shoulder. “OK, Peters, tell us what you hear,” Theodor ordered after the man had lifted the headphones off his ears.

“All radio comms from both vessels have ceased, captain. Also, I couldn’t pick up any satellite phone or fax comms. I’ve also checked the VLF range. Nothing there.”

“This is it, gents!” Theodor barked. “Jenkins, full speed ahead! Anderson, tell the chopper to stand by for take-off!”

Friday, 14 April, 01:37. The bridge of the *Daihyousha Maru*.

Lieutenant Yasuo Imoto stared out of the windscreen into the darkness. It was just another night watch on their long journey home. Conditions were calm and clear and everything was running smoothly. A short while ago, they had picked up a radar blip of another ship coming up behind the *Greenwoods* ship trailing them, but so far the unknown ship had kept its distance and there was no need for concern yet.

Yasuo’s thoughts drifted to his girlfriend in the city of Yokohama. They were alone in her small apartment and he was just about to kiss her full red lips when he was jerked out of his reverie by a shout from the surface radar operator.

“Lieutenant, the surface radar is on the blink!”

Just as Yasuo wheeled around a call came over the ship’s intercom system.

“Radio room to bridge. We have lost all radio communications.”

“What the hell is going on?” shouted Yasuo to no one in particular. “Is the power down or something?”

Before Yasuo could get an answer to his question, the surface to air radar operator spoke up: “Lieutenant, the surface to air radar is also not operating properly.”

The long hours of training started to direct the confused state of Yasuo's mind to take control of the situation at hand.

"Go and wake up the technical support team," he ordered a Seaman on the bridge. The Seaman immediately left the bridge on a trot.

The intercom crackled. "Incoming aircraft from the east," the Seaman manning one of the outlook posts on the ship reported.

Yasuo's mind switched to overdrive. They had been prepared before the trip that there might be a possibility of a terrorist attack on the Atlantic Merlin, but the likelihood of that ever happening in real life seemed very remote. Given the current circumstances, his only deduction could be that such an attack was very imminent. The only problem was that the *Daihyousha Maru's* defense systems were now rendered useless, except for one possibility...

"Bring me the Stinger!" he bawled at another Seaman on the bridge. Yasuo stormed towards the door leading to the stairs, threw the door open and raced down the staircase leading to the ship's deck. The Seaman who had received the order first had to get the Stinger Surface-To-Air portable missile launcher, together with a missile round from the gun safe on the bridge.

On the deck, Yasuo could hear the engines of the F/A-18 Hornet aircraft as Phillip decreased speed to get a better view of the two ships. He turned around and spotted the light emitting from the aircraft's twin tailpipes.

The Seaman carrying the Stinger came to a halt next to him. Yasuo grabbed the grip stock assembly from him and with slightly trembling hands he inserted a battery coolant unit into its receptacle at the bottom of the grip stock. The battery coolant unit was used to energize the weapon's electrical circuits by means of a battery and to cool the infrared detector in the missile's seeker prior to launch. The grip stock was formed like a pistol grip and was used to fire the missile.

Feeling his heart pounding in his chest, Yasuo grabbed the missile round from the Seaman and fumbled to latch it onto the grip stock. Yasuo swore at his own clumsiness. He thought that it was all good and well to perform these procedures during training, but when the real thing eventually came your way, it was a different story altogether. Eventually, after what seemed like an eternity, the missile round was latched to the grip stock. The missile

round consisted of a one-and-a-half meter long tube, with the stinger missile contained inside. Lastly, he mounted the night sight onto the missile round. He switched the night sight on and lifted the Stinger onto his right shoulder so that the long blowpipe extended over his shoulder to his rear. He activated the battery coolant unit by clicking the safety and actuator device on the grip stock in place and releasing it.

Yasuo firmly grabbed the pistol grip with his right hand and balanced the lower front part in his left hand. He pressed his eyes against the eyepieces of the night sight and proceeded to acquire the aircraft in the sight. The infrared capabilities of the night sight gave him a clear view of the F/A-18 Hornet. Given the precarious circumstances that the ship and its crew were in, Yasuo decided to fire at the unknown aircraft. The only reason for the failure of the ship's radar and communications had to be that the ship was under attack. This meant that someone was after the nuclear cargo on the *Atlantic Merlin* and the *Daihyousha Maru's* purpose on the trip was to protect the nuclear cargo. That was exactly what Lieutenant Yasuo Imoto intended to do.

As the aircraft started to move away from the ship, Yasuo aligned it in the Stinger's sight. The slow rolling of the ship's deck under his feet made his task difficult, but he managed to track the aircraft for a long enough period to allow the infrared detector to detect the heat emissions from the aircraft's engines. After hearing the infrared acquisition signal, he squeezed the firing trigger. A tongue of flame emitted from the launcher tube as the Stinger fired and the missile was pelted out of the tube by the launcher's ejection motor. At a safe distance of about nine meters from the launcher, the missile's rocket motor ignited and it sent the missile darting towards the aircraft at nearly twice the speed of sound.

Friday, 14 April, 01:39. Phillip Botha's aircraft:

Phillip Botha decided it was time to gain some height to get a better view of the situation. He gently pulled back on the stick and leveled the aircraft off at 500 meters above sea level at a speed of 200 knots. He passed over the two ships and managed to identify them both by using the aircraft's Forward Looking Infra-Red (FLIR) camera.

Phillip heard a short beep in his earphones, the tone of which indicated that the aircraft's Radar Warning Receiver (RWR) has tracked an incoming missile. Phillip's reaction was instantaneous, since years of training and combat experience taught him that there wasn't any time to waste trying to think about how to handle the situation when a Surface-To-Air missile (SAM) had been launched at such a close distance from the aircraft. He immediately knew that the missile must have come from a hand-held launcher, since the RWR had not given him any prior warning of a SAM radar source tracking his aircraft. Phillip pressed a button twice in rapid succession to launch two flares and threw the aircraft into a hard right 90-degree turn to the right. Both flares immediately ignited with bright flashes.

The speeding missile's infrared tracking system now had to distinguish between the heat signal from the aircraft's engines and that from the two flares. These flares were designed to be fiery hot materials that would mimic the infrared signature of the aircraft's engines. Although the Stinger missile also employs a unique image scanning technique enabling it to discriminate amongst targets, flares, and background clutter, the mere fact that Phillip had reacted so quickly and had managed to turn the aircraft away from the path of the incoming missile, ensured that the missile decided to go for one of the flares.

A tense few seconds passed for Phillip as he continued the body-slammng G-force turn. When the sky lit up as the missile exploded against the flare, Phillip knew that he was safe for the moment, but he had to act fast before they could fire another missile.

Phillip decreased altitude to 40 meters above sea level and turned left to move away from the ship. He increased the aircraft's speed to 300 knots and waited until his aircraft was ten nautical miles from the two ships. He turned the aircraft in a sharp 180-degree turn to head back towards the ships. Phillip made sure of his altitude and checked on the radar screen that his aircraft was on the correct heading. After leveling the wings, he put the aircraft in autopilot mode.

Friday, 14 April, 01:40. The afterdeck of the *Ocean Rover*.

The *Ocean Rover* came to a stop. Four men standing next to the Super Puma helicopter on the afterdeck started to untie the mooring straps fastening the main rotor blades and the helicopter itself to the ship's deck and also released the wheel latches. The four men rushed out of range of the long main rotors. The helicopter's engine started with a whining sound and the rotor blades slowly came up to speed. After a few seconds the helicopter lifted off from the *Ocean Rover's* afterdeck and proceeded in the direction of the Atlantic Merlin.

Friday, 14 April, 01:41. The deck of the *Daihyousha Maru*:

Lieutenant Yasuo Imoto ordered the Seaman standing next to him to get more missiles from the gun safe on the bridge and to tell the bridge to sound the attack warning alert. The aircraft had disappeared from sight, but he was sure it was going to turn back to launch its attack.

At that moment, he felt a sickening ball tighten in the pit of his stomach. In the past few moments, everything had happened at such a pace that he had no time to think ahead. Although he had never experienced a situation such as this in reality, what he did know was that the aircraft most probably had one or more anti-ship missiles dangling from its wings. What he also knew was that most of this kind of missile could be fired by means of radar control, which meant that the pilot didn't have to have visual contact with the target ship. Another disconcerting thought was that it would be of no use for the ship to try and maneuver to a different position, since these modern missiles are of the fire-and-forget type. That meant that once such a missile was launched from the aircraft, it would use its own radar tracking device to stay locked onto the target and to follow the target, even if the target changed direction.

Friday, 14 April, 01:42. Phillip Botha's aircraft:

Phillip used the FLIR device to zoom in and select the *Atlantic Merlin* and the *Daihyousha Maru* on its screen. Phillip initialized the AGM-84D Harpoon anti-ship missile and made sure that it displayed on the FLIR screen. Although the Harpoon is an over-the-horizon missile, meaning that he could have fired it from a distance further than twelve nautical miles, he wanted to

make sure that the right target was selected. He surely didn't intend to blow up the *Atlantic Merlin* with its deadly cargo of plutonium.

Phillip used the FLIR to designate the target as the *Daihyousha Maru* and lock the Harpoon missile onto the target. He aimed for the bow of the ship where he knew that few people would be present. He made sure that the In Range cue was displayed on the FLIR screen before pressing the button to launch the missile from his aircraft.

The Harpoon missile dropped from the aircraft's wing and its turbojet engine started automatically, causing the missile to surge forward at a speed of over 800 kilometers per hour. The missile dropped further, until it just skimmed the surface of the ocean and swiftly cruised towards the *Daihyousha Maru*.

Within seconds the missile penetrated the *Daihyousha Maru's* hull. The Harpoon missile was designed to stay intact after ship-hull penetration to enhance the probability of secondary explosions within the target ship. The detonation of the high-explosive warhead that took place inside the *Daihyousha Maru* rocked the ship in the water. It blasted a hole in the ship's port side hull at the bow along the waterline and caused seawater to rapidly stream into the *Daihyousha Maru*.

Friday, 14 April, 01:43. The bridge of the *Atlantic Merlin*:

The crew manning the bridge of the *Atlantic Merlin* watched awestruck as the night suddenly lit up when the missile exploded inside the *Daihyousha Maru's* hull. Within a minute the *Daihyousha Maru's* bow started dipping into the ocean. The audible alarm on the *Daihyousha Maru* to abandon ship was sounded and the ship's crew scrambled to lower the lifeboats into the water. The *Daihyousha Maru* started to list to the port side, but the decks were cleared within four minutes and all the crew managed to get into lifeboats.

An alarm was sounded within the *Atlantic Merlin* to wake up the sleeping crew to assist with picking up the survivors from the *Daihyousha Maru*. The thirteen members of the Civic Nuclear Constabulary, the CNC, on board were also woken up to be on standby, since no one exactly knew what was going on.

Creaking, moaning and hissing, the *Daihyousha Maru* was pulled deeper into the ocean until the stern lifted out of the ocean and the ship's twin screws became visible. The ship twisted and the stern quickly started to disappear beneath the ocean's surface. The air escaping from the ship formed a mist around it and a number of large bubbles shot up from the ocean.

Some of the *Atlantic Merlin's* crewmembers came rushing out on deck and gazed at the sight of the *Daihyousha Maru's* sinking. Fixated on the events that took place on the starboard side, no one noticed the helicopter rising from the surface of the sea on the port side of the *Atlantic Merlin*.

The helicopter's cabin door was open and two men armed with Heckler und Koch G36C assault rifles kneeled inside the door aiming the rifles at the *Atlantic Merlin's* deck. Both men wore protective gas masks on their faces and each man's rifle was fitted with a 40mm under-barrel grenade launcher. The grenade launchers contained tear gas rounds, which were fired in rapid succession towards the people on the starboard side of the *Atlantic Merlin's* deck.

Panic quickly ensued amongst the people on the *Atlantic Merlin's* deck as the tear gas started to spread across the deck. With severely burning eyes and throats, people started to run towards the nearest cabin doors. Some tripped over deck equipment, since they could not see due to the excessive tears forming in their eyes. Some just lay down where they fell, struggling to breathe, others got up and ran forward again and some people lying on the deck were helped up by fellow crewmembers running past them.

In the meantime, the helicopter had moved closer to the deck and was hovering just one-and-a-half meters above the deck to allow twenty-two men to jump out of the helicopter's door onto the *Atlantic Merlin's* deck. All of these men were dressed in dark camouflage combat uniforms and wore protective gas masks on their faces, which caused them to look like alien life forms. They were all armed with Heckler und Koch G36C assault rifles.

Some of the men unloaded oxy-acetylene equipment from the helicopter, while others ran towards the ship's superstructure. These men entered at different doors leading to the bridge, the mess and kitchen, the communica-

tions room, the recreation area and the sleeping cabins and fired off tear gas rounds from the under-barrel grenade launchers on their assault rifles.

Six of the men started to cut through the welded sections of the cargo bay covers with the oxy-acetylene equipment, while two others started to place plastic explosives on the latch mechanisms of the cargo bay covers, which had been made inoperable before the departure of the ship as a safety measure.

In the meantime, the rest of the soldiers rounded up the people lying on the ship's deck, still incapacitated from the tear gas and dragged them through one of the doors in the ships' superstructure and left them in the passage. While six of the soldiers guarded the doors leading out of the ship's superstructure, the remaining eight went inside the ship and fired some more tear gas into the ship and thereafter locked all the crew and members of the CNC into the sleeping cabin area.

When the cutting of the hatch covers was completed, the men stepped back and the small explosive charges were fired off to release the latches of the cargo bay covers. After that, the helicopter moved in and hovered over the first cargo bay. A cable was lowered from the bottom of the helicopter. Four other cables were attached to the main cable. Four men each grabbed one of the extended cables and hooked them to hooks on each corner of the cargo bay cover. Once the cable had been securely hooked up, the soldiers in charge of the operation showed a thumbs-up sign to the helicopter pilot and the helicopter started to ascend. The cargo bay cover was lifted into the air and the helicopter moved to an open piece of deck, close to the ship's stern and lowered the large metal cover onto the deck. Four men had been waiting for the helicopter and moved in to release the four cables hooked onto the corners of the cover.

From the meticulous way that the soldiers conducted the operation on the deck of the Atlantic Marlin, it was clear that they were in no doubt at any point in time about what they were supposed to do. It was evident that a well planned and a well-rehearsed operation was carried out with military precision and effectiveness.

The procedure of removing the cargo bay cover was repeated twice more, until three of the cargo bay covers were removed and stacked on top

of one another near the stern. A pair of men used ropes to climb down into each of the three opened cargo bays and proceeded to loosen the bolts securing the nuclear fuel transport casks to the floor of each of the cargo holds.

The helicopter then proceeded to lift the first of the 100-ton nuclear fuel transport casks out of the cargo bay closest to the stern. The helicopter flew over to the nearby *Ocean Rover* and the ton nuclear fuel transport cask was lowered into the *Ocean Rover's* cargo bay. The process was repeated another eight times.

Finally, the helicopter flew back to the *Atlantic Merlin*, picked up the 22 soldiers and took them back to the *Ocean Rover*. Once the helicopter had been secured to the *Ocean Rover's* deck, the ship sailed off in a westerly direction.

In the meantime, the Greenwoods ship, the *Blue Dolphin*, sailed towards the *Atlantic Merlin* for assistance.

Chapter 3

Saturday, 15 April, 09:35. INN Studio, Randburg, South Africa:

Karen Visser sat next to the video editor in the editing room in INN's small studio in Randburg, Johannesburg, when Richard Mahlaba, her cameraman, burst into the room.

"You won't believe what I've just heard!" he said excitedly.

Before Karen could reply, Richard continued: "That nuclear carrying ship, the one we did the interview about in Cape Town, was robbed of its cargo last night!"

"What?"

"I'm telling you! We've just received the news. Apparently the military ship was sunk with a missile from an aircraft and then the nuclear material was stolen by soldiers from another ship. So you have to pack your bags. We are flying out to Namibia at two o'clock this afternoon."

"Why Namibia?"

"The ship turned back to the Walvis Bay port and we are going to get all the juicy interviews there!"

Saturday, 15 April, 17:06. Walvis Bay Airport:

Karen and Richard's flight landed safely at the Walvis Bay Airport, about 11 kilometers east of the town. The last part of the flight had been across a different world to what they had been used to – a world of flat, sandy plains, mountainous areas between sand dunes, and then the sand dunes themselves, an indication of the fact that they had been in the heart of the Namib Desert.

Walvis Bay was situated approximately in the middle of the coastline of Namibia, due west of the capital city, Windhoek. On the west coast was the Atlantic Ocean, with the Benguela stream going past the coastline, taking cold water from Antarctica northwards. On the east, the south, and the north sides, the town of Walvis Bay was surrounded by sand dunes.

As they got out of the airplane, a 30 knots southwesterly wind was pelting them with sand. Karen and Richard got their pre-arranged rental car, a white Volkswagen Polo 1400, and Karen took them to the tarred road leading towards the town.

“Did you know that Walvis Bay had been discovered by Diaz in 1487, but was only founded in 1793 by the Cape Dutch and only two years later it was annexed by the British?” asked Karen.

“No, but you surely do know a lot about his place. You should go on that TV show – *who wants to be a millionaire*.”

“Well, I've prepared some interesting facts that I might use in the intro to my interviews. And I was here before - a few years ago I took a holiday tour of Namibia.”

“What does the name, Walvis Bay, mean?”

“Apparently it referred to the whales that used to calf here in the calm waters of the bay. The word “walvis” is Afrikaans for whale. This place has quite an interesting history. It became part of the Union of South Africa back in 1910, because it was a British outpost, although it was very far from South Africa itself. And so it stayed part of the Republic of South Africa, which was formed in 1961. The town was only handed back to the Namibian government in 1994. It is the only deep sea harbor in Namibia, and therefore plays a big part in the Namibian economy.”

“So what do the people actually do here for a living?” asked Richard and watched a number of pelicans gliding high up in the sky in the air streams, wondering whether they were birds or aircraft.

“I think the main economic activities centre around the fish industry and the handling of shipments by the harbor. A secondary industry is the processing of sea salt – they have some large salt fields close to the town.”

“Have you given any thought to who might be responsible for this theft of the nuclear material?” asked Richard.

“Your guess is as good as mine,” replied Karen. “It could have been a country who wanted to build up a nuclear capacity very quickly, or some terrorist group. At this stage, I could not imagine which country would try to perform such an act, but one never knows. But a terrorist group seems more likely to me at this stage.”

“Do you think we will find out at the press conference tonight?”

“I don’t think so. Unless someone has proclaimed responsibility while we were on the plane today.”

Only a few kilometers out of town, they drove past some huge sand dunes on their right, which seemed to suddenly rise out of the flat sandy plains to the east of the sand dunes.

“There is Dune Seven,” said Karen and pointed to the closest of the huge sand dunes.

“Why is it called that?”

“I don’t know – there is some confusion around here about the name – but people reckon it is the largest dune in the area.”

The first thing they noticed about the town was the massive cranes in the harbor towering over the town’s low skyline. The town itself was very clean and Richard wondered whether it was due to the strong wind blowing everything out of the town, or due to the efficiency of the municipality and the people of the town.

“This place can have bad weather most of the time,” said Karen. “Apparently, nearly every morning there is fog around the town, sometimes very thick. Then the fog disappears later in the day, and then the wind starts up, blowing until late at night, after which the fog comes in again.”

“And still, people choose to live here?” wondered Richard.

“Yes, it seems they just accept the climate and work around it. If you take a look at all these wonderful green gardens and green grass in the place, you would not think that we are in the middle of a desert.”

“Where do they get the water from?”

“The drinking water is supplied by the Kuiseb River to the south of the town. It is usually dry, but there is plenty of water underneath the sand. I think the municipality also recycles waste water for the gardens.”

They had entered the town from the northeast and drove in a southerly direction towards the lagoon where the lodge was situated where they would stay over for the night. The lagoon was a calm stretch of water, reminiscent of a large dam. The lagoon’s waters were protected from the waves of the ocean by a stretch of land to the west. There were numerous birds wading about in the shallow water - many of them were gracious flamingos, but there were also a number of pelicans and a plethora of smaller wading birds.

“Look, there is our lodge,” said Karen and pointed to a double storey building close to the shores of the lagoon, painted in light yellow, with bright blue streaks of paint above the windows.

They checked in to their rooms and prepared themselves for the press conference that would be held that night at 19:00 at a hotel in the CBD area of the town.

Saturday, 15 April, 18:20. Ken Palmer’s house:

That night Ken Palmer watched the INN news bulletin on the television set in his home. He stared at the screen in awe as the events of the nuclear robbery on the high seas of the previous night unfolded through all the interviews and statements.

First, there was the press statement delivered from London by Alexander Gill, the spokesperson from *Transatmar*, the British company responsible for the nuclear shipment to Japan. Alexander Gill had a grim expression on his face as he sat behind a desk in an office, supported by one person on each side, no doubt some high-ranking officials from the company, each with an equally grim expression.

“We have been informed that the Japanese cruiser, the *Daihyousha Maru*, which accompanied our ship freighting nuclear reactor waste material to Japan, the *Atlantic Merlin*, has been sunk about two hundred kilometers off the Namibian coast. This incident happened at around 01:40, Namibian time, this morning. The *Daihyousha Maru* was sunk by an anti-ship missile fired

from an unknown military strike aircraft and four sailors were killed in that incident.

“Soon after that, an unknown helicopter dropped several armed soldiers from an unknown entity onto the deck of the *Atlantic Merlin*. They fired teargas onto the deck of the ship and also into the bridge and cabins, which incapacitated the ship’s crew and the members of the Civic Nuclear Constabulary. The soldiers proceeded to open the ship’s cargo bay covers with oxy-acetylene equipment where it had been welded shut and fired small explosive charges to release the latches of the cargo bay covers. The helicopter was used to open the cargo bay covers and to airlift nine of the 100-ton nuclear fuel transport casks to presumably another nearby ship.

“Afterwards, the helicopter picked up all the soldiers and disappeared into the darkness. No one was seriously injured during this operation. The *Atlantic Merlin* also managed to pick up all the survivors from the sunken *Daihyousha Maru*.

“The reason why both the *Daihyousha Maru* and the *Atlantic Merlin* could not detect the aircraft on the radar or send out any distress signals is that all their electronic communications signals were jammed, most probably by the unknown ships that removed the nuclear cargo. The *Daihyousha Maru*’s radar-controlled anti-aircraft gun systems were also affected by the electronic jamming signals and could not be used to fire at the hostile aircraft.

“The *Atlantic Merlin* has docked safely in the Walvis Bay port in Namibia today. At this point in time we have no idea regarding the identity of the assailants, or for what reason this incident took place. The situation is being assessed by a team of experts from our company and an update will be given as soon as more information becomes available.”

After the press statement, Karen interviewed Lieutenant Yasuo Imoto, from the sunken *Daihyousha Maru*, who had fired the anti-aircraft missile the previous night. Afterwards she also interviewed the captain of the *Atlantic Merlin*.

The last interview was with Jean le Blanc from the Greenwoods environmental organization whom Karen had interviewed a few days earlier in Cape Town. Karen asked Jean to give his commentary on the situation.

“You know, it was just like I had predicted would happen. If anything bad should happen to this terrorist ship that now carries the nuclear material, it could cause widespread contamination. At least the *Atlantic Merlin* has some protective measures built into the ship, but this terrorist ship could be any kind of ship. We do not know what kind of state this ship could be in.”

“And now,” Jean continued with excitement rising in his tone of voice, “the terrorists that stole this nuclear material will probably use it to construct their own nuclear bombs that could be used for who-knows-what. This is now the time to stop all nuclear shipments. It should ...”

Karen put an end to Jean’s ranting and raving with an excuse that their time for the interview was up. The view on the television screen cut away to a presenter in the studio who discussed other news items and after about two minutes the presenter said: “We have a very important announcement to make regarding the theft of nuclear material from a British ship last night.”

“We have received a statement from the organization responsible for this nuclear theft. Although it contains some astonishing announcements, we have no reason to believe that this is a hoax and will therefore continue to screen it. We have in our possession a DVD containing a video made by this organization, which was sent to our offices by courier.”

The television screen showed the picture of a man sitting behind a desk. This was a wide shot and the man’s features were indistinguishable. White text inserted by INN at the bottom of the screen proclaimed that this was the video made by the organization responsible for the nuclear theft. The camera zoomed in to show a close-up shot of the man’s face. Ken’s heart missed a beat or two and he instinctively moved forward in his seat when he recognized the man as Donald Morse, the man whom the FBI had requested Ken to find and take into custody.

“My name is Donald Morse. I am the leader of *MAMBA*, the *Mass Afrikaner Movement for Begotten Autonomy*. We were responsible for removing the nuclear material from the *Atlantic Merlin* on the 14th of April. In this communiqué I will present our motivation for doing this.

“This organization has been formed by Afrikaans-speaking South Africans who have the need to live in their own country, enjoy their own culture, speak their own language and live out their own ideals as a sovereign nation.

We consist of intellectuals, scientists, engineers, lawyers, academics, doctors, farmers, teachers and people from many other professions. We are not a bunch of right-wing hooligans or racists who hold rowdy political meetings and shout ideological statements from podiums. We know what we want, and with careful planning, we know how we are going to get what we want.

“Although I am an American citizen, I have distanced myself from being an American, because my own nation has turned its back on me in the past. At this moment, I am still being hunted by the FBI. I had just been loyal and faithful to my motherland in the past, but due to the political views of some people with much power, I am *persona non grata* in my own country. I fully associate myself with the people belonging to *MAMBA* and their ideals, and when we obtain our own piece of land, I will be the first to get full citizenship of our new country!

“We also have nuclear scientists amongst our members, and we have decided that a nuclear capability is of utmost importance in striving for our own country. Let me explain why this is a necessity. These Afrikaner people had their own country a little more than one hundred years ago. They actually had two countries, the Republic of the Orange Free State, and the ZAR, or Transvaal, as it was also known. In Britain’s urge for more land, natural resources, power and money, these two countries have been taken over by Britain in the Anglo-Boer war, also known as the South African war, between 1899 and 1902. After this, these Afrikaner people never got their own identity and sovereignty back and since the new democratic power came into being in 1994, these Afrikaners were marginalized more and more.

“Many pleas for a sovereign piece of land with the South African government and the United Nations fell on deaf ears. We have now decided it is time to take action to make this happen. If we do not do it ourselves, nobody is going to do it for us.

“And therefore the need for nuclear power, as you will no doubt learn in the days to come. I will communicate further regarding this matter in the near future. For now, I just wanted to introduce us and make our objectives known. I also wanted to share with you what we are capable of. For example, the aircraft that was used in the attack on the Japanese cruiser is the same

F/A-18 Hornet fighter aircraft that went missing from the South African Air Force on Tuesday. We are now in possession of this aircraft...”

On that ominous note the screen dimmed, and the view switched back to the studio presenter.

Monday, 17 April, 14:10. INN Studio Randburg, South Africa:

Karen Visser opened the INN station manager’s office door.

“Hi Karen, are you well?” the beaming Clifford Khumalo greeted her jovially. “Please take a seat.” Clifford gestured to one of the plush office chairs in front of his desk. Karen wondered where this sudden friendliness appeared from. Clifford and she had not always been on the best of terms, since she had always been adamant about being involved in the editing and post production work on her reports, while Clifford had always wanted her to hand the raw video material over to the in-house video editor for all the editing. There had also been other problems between them, one of these when Clifford had on numerous occasions tried to change her news reports before they were aired.

Before Karen could reply to Clifford’s question, he said: “Karen, I have some good news. This Donald Morse, who admitted the theft of the nuclear material from the ship, has contacted us again. He wants us to take a nuclear expert to his lair and do an interview with him. He also wants to allow the nuclear expert to inspect the nuclear weapons that they are making there to comment on the authenticity of those nuclear bombs. This Donald Morse then said that he only wanted you to do the interviews, and no one else. It seems that he is very impressed with your work.”

“What?” was all that Karen could utter. Her facial expression indicated she was in a state of disbelief.

“Yes, yes, it’s all true.”

“I don’t believe it,” said Karen, still in a state of shock.

“I will show you the DVD he has sent to us.” Clifford had a huge smile on his face. “Just think what big scoop this will be for you! Just think what it will do for your career!” Karen thought that Clifford was more concerned about the scoop for his news office than the advancement of her career.

“But this could be very dangerous.” Karen was surprised at her own first reaction to the news. She also thought that any journalist’s first reaction would be to jump at the opportunity to get such a scoop, but her intuition made her feel very uneasy about this invitation.

Clifford brushed his hand over his short hair. “He guaranteed that it would be very safe. He would personally see to your well-being.”

“I’m not so sure,” Karen protested. “If we have seen his place then why would he let us go again? We could tell the police where he is hiding out.”

“He has already addressed that in his video. He said that you would not be able to see where you are being transported to and that you will not be able to see where his place is. He will make sure of it”

Clifford’s expression turned serious. “Come, on, Karen. You have to do this. You know it’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Other journalists can only dream of something like this.”

Karen was still doubtful. “What about the police? He surely knows that we have to report it to the cops?”

“He has already covered that. He said we are welcome to tell the police, but you should not try to bring any satellite-tracking devices with you. You are going to be searched before you leave.”

Karen was still not convinced. “I have to think about it.”

“You only have until noon tomorrow. He wants to know by then.”

“Are you going to notify the cops?”

“Yes, I suppose I will have to. Someone from National Intelligence has already contacted me yesterday and requested that I let him know as soon as we get more communications from this Donald Morse. In the meantime, I have to search for a nuclear expert who would be willing to make the trip. I’m sure that we will have to fork out a tidy sum of money for someone like that. But then, what the heck, we are going to make a ton of bucks with this scoop.”

Tuesday, 18 April, 10:10. INN Studio Randburg, South Africa:

Karen knocked on the closed office door and the door was opened from the inside. Karen and Richard, her cameraman, stepped into Clifford’s large office and saw three men sitting in front of Clifford’s desk. There were two

more chairs and Clifford, who had opened the door for them, indicated that they should sit there.

After closing the door behind him, Clifford took place in his chair behind the desk and started to introduce the three men in his office. "Karen, Richard, this is Doctor Derrick Garrett, a nuclear scientist, Johnny Shabangu and Paresh Patel, both from the National Intelligence Agency, the NIA."

Doctor Derrick Garrett's wizened face indicated his age to be about seventy years. He was short and thin, but still very lively for his age and his light blue eyes still showed much sparkle. He had a tuft of white hair that curled over his ears, a high forehead and a white goatee. He wore gold-rimmed spectacles and was dressed in a green polo shirt and a pair of chinos.

Johnny Shabangu was tall and powerfully built and had a hint of a smile on his face. He was dressed in a black suit. Paresh Patel was tall and skinny with neatly combed hair and small black-rimmed glasses. He looked very business-like and was dressed in a navy pinstripe suit.

"Karen, I'm very delighted that you are willing to go on this trip," Clifford continued. "However, Mr. Patel has indicated that he wants to replace Richard with Mr. Shabangu."

"What?" asked Karen in with surprise in her voice.

"I think Mr. Patel should explain," said Clifford.

"We are a little concerned about your safety on this trip," Paresh Patel said. "Therefore, I suggest that we send Johnny as your cameraman. He is very capable and will be able to protect you and Dr. Garrett if something should go wrong."

"But what about the camera work? Richard is the best we have!" Karen expressed vehemently.

"I insist that we do it my way," Paresh Patel replied. "Johnny can be trained to handle a video camera. He just needs to mount it on a tripod, get the subjects in focus and press the record button. In any case, Donald Morse said that you cannot take your own camera with you. He will supply you with a video camera. I suppose it is to protect himself so that we cannot conceal any funnies like small weapons, satellite tracking devices, or GPS equipment in our camera."

“Karen sagged in her chair and shook her head from side to side. “I don’t like this,” she muttered. “I don’t like this at all.”

“Look Karen, yesterday you were concerned about your safety. Mr. Patel thought that the chances of something going wrong are very slim, but we want to give you this extra bit of protection, just in case things do go wrong.”

“Karen, it’s going to be better this way,” pampered Richard.

Karen would have liked to work with Richard on this assignment, but decided that she could not miss this opportunity and would have to stick with what may be the best for her.

“Okay,” she said. “Let’s just carry on with it.”

“Right, let’s go over the details,” said a very relieved Clifford. “You have to pack an overnight bag, since you will spend tomorrow night as Donald Morse’s place. You cannot take any electronic equipment with you. No cell phones, no computers, nothing. So, Karen, it’s back to the old days of journalism for you - just a pencil and notepad.

“Donald Morse will pick you up tomorrow night. You will sleep over at his place and do the interviews the next day. He’s got the equipment to put the video material on a DVD for you. He will bring you back safe and sound that same night.”

“My people just need to inspect your luggage before you leave,” Paresh added. “To ensure your safety, we have to be certain you have nothing with you that may make this Morse character suspicious.”

Monday, 17 April, 19:00. O.R. Tambo International Airport, Kempton Park, South Africa:

That same night at 19:00 Karen, Johnny Shabangu and Doctor Derrick Garrett stood on the pavement just outside the domestic arrivals of the O.R.Tambo International Airport in the city of Kempton Park. Paresh Patel sat in the front passenger seat of a white Toyota Camry about fifty meters down the road. There was a driver and another man in the rear seat with him in the car. Between the three people waiting on the pavement, only Johnny knew that Paresh and his men were there.

A white Nissan minibus stopped next to the pavement and the driver got out. He was the only occupant of the vehicle. He was in his thirties, had dark hair and was dressed in jeans and a white long-sleeved shirt. He walked straight up to the three of them and asked them to accompany him to the minibus. He opened the side door for them and requested them to get into the back of the minibus. As soon as he drove off, the Toyota Camry with the three men from the National Intelligence Agency, the NIA, inside started up and followed the minibus.

Both vehicles stopped to pay at the exit booth and then the minibus chose the R24 highway leading to the city of Johannesburg. The Toyota Camry followed in close pursuit. After about five minutes' drive, the minibus took the Barbara Road off ramp and turned left into the industrial area of Isando. After a short while, the minibus turned left again and traveled to a large warehouse where it was brought to a standstill. The Toyota Camry stopped about fifty meters behind the minibus. There was a three-meter high wire fence with a security gate in front of the warehouse.

The driver got out of the minibus and pressed the button of an intercom mounted on the side of the gate. The automated gate started to open and the driver got back into the minibus and drove into the premises of the warehouse. An automated garage door in the front wall of the warehouse opened and the minibus drove inside. The garage door closed behind the minibus.

Inside the warehouse, the driver of the minibus asked the three occupants to get out. The warehouse was completely empty. To the right were some offices and inside were two other vehicles, a small blue Renault delivery van and a larger white Mercedes delivery van. There was a logo painted on the side of the Renault delivery van that said: "*Speedway Courier Services*". A man got out of the front passenger seat of the Mercedes delivery van and approached them. He was tall with a powerful build; even bigger than Johnny. His blonde hair was closely cropped on his head and he had a long scar on his left cheek. He was dressed in a pair of jeans and a white T-shirt and Karen could see the muscles bulging under his shirt.

"Hi," he welcomed them with a friendly smile. From the drawl in his voice Karen immediately knew he was an American, but from which part of the country she had no idea. "My name is Allan. Would you be so kind to

step through this machine for us?” He indicated to a machine that looked like a doorframe, much like the security scanners used at airports. Their luggage also had to go through a separate X-ray scanner. Allan also produced another hand-held device and scanned the three of them, most probably for hidden electronic devices. After all three were scanned without any problems, Allan opened the side door of the Mercedes delivery van.

“Could you please get into this vehicle?” he asked. “We still have a long way to go.” They took their baggage and climbed inside the Mercedes delivery van. In the back of the van were long seats mounted on both sides and they took place on those, Karen and Johnny on one side, and Derrick on the other side. There were no windows in the back. There was a driver in the front, but he stared out ahead of him and did not even acknowledge their presence.

Karen turned her head and noticed that the driver of the minibus disassembled the security scanner and he loaded the security scanner, the X-ray scanner, and the other scanner into the Nissan minibus.

After about five minutes, the minibus came out of the warehouse and headed in the same direction where it came from. It drove past the Toyota Camry waiting at the side of the road. In the dim light provided by the streetlights Paresh could see that only the driver was in the minibus, unless the occupants had been ordered to lie down. He decided to wait and his patience was soon rewarded when another vehicle came out of the warehouse. It was a small Renault delivery van with closed sides and it also traveled past the waiting Toyota Camry. Paresh ordered his driver to follow the Renault delivery van.

In the meantime, the Mercedes left the warehouse through a garage door at the back of the building, and then drove through another gate in the rear fence, past the building behind the warehouse, and into the street behind the warehouse. Karen tried to see where they were driving, but it was very difficult to look past the high front seats with their headrests.

Inside the Mercedes delivery van Derrick broke the silence. “Why did you want to do this if you thought it may be dangerous?” he asked Karen.

“Simply out of journalistic curiosity and obviously also for the exposure that would be very beneficial for my career. In any case, we have been

assured that this assignment would be very safe. And you, why did you do it?”

“To do something worthwhile with my time. Being on pension can sometimes be a very boring pastime. And also for the money. This would come in very handy to support my wife and me in our old age. The pension is not all that great.” His face started to get a concerned look on it. “I hope you are already making provision for your old age. Time flies so quickly that you are at retirement age before you realize it, and by then it’s too late to do anything about pension.”

“Yes I am,” Karen laughed. “Well, at least that is what I think I am doing. But it may be a good thing to recheck my finances when we get back from this trip.”

“Are you married?” Derrick asked Karen.

“No, I don’t have time for relationships. My work just keeps me too busy and I’m always on the move.”

“Too bad,” muttered Derrick. He turned his attention to Johnny. “Are you married, Johnny?”

“No, although I used to be. I got divorced about four years ago.”

“I’m sorry to hear that,” sympathized Derrick.

“Where did you use to work?” asked Karen from Derrick.

“In the sixties and seventies I studied in the USA and worked for the South African government’s National Atomic Board. In 1980, I got an appointment as a lecturer at the Columbia University in the USA and a few years later obtained a professorship there. I returned to South Africa in 1998 in a semi-retired state and did some consulting work to keep the wolf from the door.”

Karen asked Derrick about his family and he grabbed the opportunity to talk about his children and grandchildren in such great detail and with such fervor that Karen regretted raising that topic.

Monday, 17 April, 19:22. Kempton Park, South Africa:

Paresh noted that the blue Renault delivery van traveled back in the direction of the O.R. Tambo International Airport. It traveled past the arrivals and departures terminals and entered the goods delivery terminal. Paresh

ordered his driver to follow the delivery van and they stopped behind it just as the driver of the Renault was busy removing a package from the back of the vehicle. At this point, Paresh knew that he had been deceived.

After briefly interrogating the driver of the Renault, Paresh established that he was from a legitimate courier company and had been requested to pick up a package from the warehouse at 19:15. He gave a description of what he had seen in the warehouse and also gave a full description of Allan and the Mercedes delivery van.

Chapter 4

Monday, 17 April, 19:24. Johannesburg, South Africa:

Karen managed to spot a few large overhead signs on the way and determined that they were driving on the M1-west highway, passing just south of the Johannesburg CBD. After about 45 minutes the Mercedes delivery van turned off the highway and proceeded along some side roads. After another 20 minutes it got darker inside the vehicle and Karen realized it was because of the absence of any streetlights. She figured that they have left the metropolitan area and were driving somewhere in the countryside.

Another 30 minutes of driving passed before the vehicle slowed down, turned left and stopped with the engine running. Allan got out of the vehicle and by the squeaking that followed, Karen imagined that he must be opening a farm gate. The vehicle moved forward about 10 meters, followed by some more squeaking and then Allen climbed back into the front passenger seat. The Mercedes delivery van slowly moved forward on a bumpy gravel road for another 15 minutes before coming to a standstill.

Allan asked them to exit the vehicle. It was parked next to an old farmhouse. Allan and his partner ushered them to enter the house through a back door. They entered a well-lit kitchen that was sparsely furnished with an old

stove, a dilapidated fridge, some old wooden cupboards and a table and six chairs in the middle of the room.

Allan pointed to some instant coffee, tea bags, sugar, milk and a plate of sandwiches on the table. “Please help yourselves. There is an urn on the cupboard with boiling water. If you need to relieve yourselves, the bathroom is down the passage, first door to the right. I suggest that you do so, because we still have a lot of traveling to do. And from now on, there is no way we can stop for a wee.”

Allan gave the three of them fifteen minutes to fill their stomachs and visit the bathroom. He then ordered them outside. They walked past the Mercedes delivery van and when someone switched on an outside light, they saw a large helicopter standing outside a large corrugated iron barn. The driver of the delivery van got into the van and parked it inside the barn.

Allan ushered Karen, Johnny Shabangu and Doctor Derrick Garrett into the helicopter. Karen saw a pilot sitting in one of the two front seats. She determined that the helicopter had about twenty passenger seats. Allan indicated to the three of them to get seated in the centre of the helicopter and requested them to fasten their seatbelts. Karen and Derrick were seated next to each other, facing forward, and Johnny sat across from them, separated by an aisle. After loading their luggage into the helicopter’s cargo hold, Allan and the other man got seated somewhere behind them.

Very soon, the helicopter’s engines started and it lifted off the ground. Karen watched how the farm’s lights became smaller and smaller. Derrick attempted to make some small talk through the noise of the helicopter’s engines, but finding that the other two were not much interested in a conversation, he kept quiet and soon fell asleep. Karen stared out of the window into the encompassing blackness of the night until she also succumbed to the sleep.

Wednesday, 19 April, 01:47. Donald Morse’s hideout:

Karen was jerked out of her dreams when the helicopter eventually touched down on the ground. On Allen’s command, she dragged her stiff limbs out of the helicopter and stretched out as soon as she touched the

ground. She shivered in the cool night air, but it served to clear her grogginess from the long sleep.

It was pitch black outside and she could not determine her immediate surroundings. She could only make out the form of a large building that was very close to them. She could hear the distant drone of what sounded like a large diesel power generator.

Karen was soon joined by Johnny and Derrick. Allan and his partner handed them their baggage. Before their eyes could get used to the darkness, Allan escorted them to a small door in the side of the building.

Allan opened the door and went inside the building. Allan's partner shepherded Karen, Johnny and Derrick inside the building. In the dim light coming from an office to their right, Karen saw that they have entered a huge open space that looked like an aircraft hangar. She was astonished to see a tractor, a small refueling truck, a small helicopter and the stolen F/A-18 Hornet aircraft inside the hangar. Karen took a quick glance at her wristwatch and saw that the time was 01:50, nearly seven hours after they had been picked up at the airport.

As Allan steered them towards the office on their right, Karen noticed two men clad in camouflage military uniforms and armed with sub-machine guns, standing guard in front of the office door. Allan greeted the guards, and one of them opened the office door for them. They went inside the office, which was bare, except for a trapdoor in the concrete floor. Allan lifted the trapdoor and indicated that they must climb down the stairs. Johnny went down first, followed by Karen, Derrick, Allan's partner and lastly by Allan.

Karen counted twenty-five steps as they went underground. They entered a long, empty passage with lights mounted on the side walls. The passage was about fifteen meters in length, the walls and ceiling were painted white and the floor was covered with a light brown rubber material. At the other end was a closed door with another armed guard in front of the door. The air inside the passage was cool and fresh, and Karen assumed that there must be an air-conditioning system installed in the underground area.

They went through the door at the end of the passage, just to enter another passage at right angles to the passage from where they had emerged.

This passage had a number of doors and other passages leading out from it. They turned left and Allan told them to enter the second door on the left. This was a steel door with another armed guard in front of it. Allan unlocked the steel door, and they entered another passage with six rooms leading from it, three on each side of the passage.

“You can each select your own room. Each one has its own bathroom. This first room on the right is a dining room, so I would not recommend to anyone to sleep there. Unfortunately, we have to lock this door at the end of the passage, for obvious reasons. There will be a guard outside the door at all times. If you need something, call the guard on the intercom next to the door. But only if it really is a crisis, otherwise the guard will not help you. We will see you tomorrow at seven for breakfast. Have a good night.”

With that, Allan turned around and he and his partner left through the steel door and locked it from the other side.

After wishing Johnny and Derrick a good night’s rest, Karen selected the bedroom next to the dining room, Johnny selected the bedroom next to hers and Derrick opted for the bedroom opposite Johnny’s.

Karen’s bedroom was about four meters in length and the same in width. At the opposite end of the room was a door leading to a bathroom with a bath, shower, washbasin and toilet. The bedroom’s walls and ceiling was painted with a cream color and it had a light brown wall-to-wall carpet. There was a single bed, a bedside table, a lounge chair, a small desk with a typist’s chair and a built-in cupboard. She switched on the bedside lamp and switched off the main light.

Karen took a bath, got dressed in her pajamas and climbed into the bed. She switched off the bedside lamp and noticed that the room was not pitch dark, but some light seeped in underneath the door leading to the passage. She was asleep within two minutes.

Tuesday, 18 April, 19:15. Ken Palmer’s house:

Ken sat in his favorite lounge chair and watched the INN news on television, which was being read by a presenter in the news studio.

“... In South Africa, there was no further communication from the leader of the *MAMBA* movement, Donald Morse, whose organization was responsible for the theft of a US military fighter aircraft from South Africa, as well as the theft of a shipment of nuclear material off the Namibian coast earlier this week. However, our news reporter in South Africa, Karen Visser, is on her way to the *MAMBA* hideout. She was invited by Donald Morse to accompany a nuclear expert to investigate their claims that they have nuclear weapons and have the capability to manufacture such weapons. She would also do an interview with Donald Morse himself. We will keep you updated ...”

Ken turned the television set off and slammed his fist on the coffee table next to him. “Damn it! Why, why, why did she have to go and do this?” he shouted out, but only his parrot in the cage by the door could hear him.

Wednesday, 19 April, 03:10. Donald Morse’s hideout:

Karen had a dream about Donald that night. Although she had never seen him in person, his face appeared in her dream as she had seen him in the video. Donald was chasing her with a bomb in his hand. He chased her through the corridors of a building, up a flight of stairs that just seemed never-ending, down another flight of stairs and finally out of the building.

It was dark outside with storm clouds in the air. Donald kept on chasing her. She felt how her energy started to diminish. He was soon going to catch up with her. There was a mountain in her way and she had to climb up the mountain to get away from him. She was moving slower and slower and Donald came closer and closer to her. Finally, she reached the summit of the mountain. But a surprise was waiting for her. There was a high cliff on the other side and it was the only way down. She was trapped!

Donald came closer and held the bomb out for her to see. He threw his head back and uttered a diabolical laugh. Karen turned around and jumped off the cliff. The darkness surrounded her and she had a feeling of impending doom...

Karen abruptly woke up and immediately sat upright in her bed. Her breath came in gasps and she felt drained of all energy. She got up and went

to the bathroom for a drink of water. She got back in bed and soon fell asleep, this time in a dreamless night's rest.

Wednesday, 19 April, 07:00. Donald Morse's hideout:

At exactly 07:00 the next morning, Allan knocked on their doors and announced that breakfast was ready in the dining room. A scrumptious English breakfast had been prepared for them. After they were finished with breakfast, Allan came in to announce that they would be meeting with Donald Morse at 09:00.

Allan came to fetch them promptly at 09:00. They left through the steel door in their passage, turned left in the adjoining passage and walked a few meters until they reached a closed door, which Allan opened for them. They entered what looked to Karen like a control room of sorts. Four television screens were mounted on one of the walls, and there were three personal computers in the room mounted on ordinary desks. One man was sitting behind one of the computers, tapping away on a keyboard. Another man sat in a comfortable chair with his back to them, watching INN news on one of the television screens.

The man watching TV turned around in his chair, and then got up and walked towards them. Karen immediately recognized him from the video as Donald Morse.

Donald extended his right hand to Karen and when she shook his hand, he said with a bright smile: "Hi, I'm Donald Morse." Karen introduced the other two and Donald shook their hands as well.

"Well, I'm glad you are here. I trust that you had a good night's rest and a delicious breakfast?"

"It was mighty fine, thanks," said Derrick and the other two expressed similar opinions.

"I'm sorry that we could not provide you with five-star accommodation, but we had to make do with what we had available here," said Donald. "But I'm sure you are as eager as I am to get to work, so let's get down to it."

Donald took them to an office that adjoined the control room, no doubt his own office. He indicated that they should sit down in some office chairs in front of his desk. The office was sparsely furnished, with two filing

cabinets, a bookshelf against the wall on the right, a large whiteboard against the wall behind the desk, and a personal computer and telephone on the desk. Karen noticed a small digital video camera mounted on a tripod in one corner of the office.

“Given the limited time that we have for this job,” said Donald, “I think we should discuss how we will go about this. I would suggest that we go to the workshop and magazine first so that you can see what we do here and what nuclear weapons we have available. Johnny can take the camera and capture our proceedings and the running commentary by Dr. Garrett. We can then come back to the office where Karen can do an interview with Dr. Garrett and then an interview with me and Phillip Botha, the pilot. How does that sound?”

No one expressed any objections to his plan and all three nodded in agreement. “OK, when we are finished, we link the camera to the PC with the USB cable and capture the video on the hard disk. I will then save it on a DVD for you – there is a DVD-writer in the PC – and then you can take the DVD with you to edit at your offices as you see fit.”

Donald showed Johnny how the camera worked and then requested them to follow him. Johnny screwed the camera off the tripod, made sure that the battery was inserted, and trailed behind the rest out of Donald’s office. Donald led them through the control room to a door on the other side. As they exited the office, Allan and an armed guard followed the procession.

Donald opened the door and led them into the workshop. Karen estimated the workshop to be about 25 meters long and 20 meters wide. Workbenches were mounted along two of the walls and inside the workshop were three more rows of workbenches and modern metalwork machines. There were two doors in the opposite wall, one at each end of the wall. Karen could only see one man clad in a white overcoat busy in the workshop.

The man in the white overcoat came up to meet them. He was of average height and build, about forty-five, and had thinning black hair and a black moustache. Donald introduced him as Dr. Lamprecht, one of their nuclear experts.

“I have asked the other nuclear scientists and technicians to stay in their quarters today. It seems Dr. Garrett may know some of them, and we do not want word to get out who we have here,” said Donald with a twitch of a smile on his lips.

“Ok, let me show you what we’ve got,” the man called Dr. Lamprecht said to Derrick. He walked to where the metalwork machines were placed. Johnny opened the video camera’s viewing screen, lifted the camera head high and started recording.

“Here we have the latest technology in CNC milling machines and lathes,” said Dr. Lamprecht. “These are obviously computer-controlled and monitored by laser beams. We need these machines, since we have to manufacture many of the components for the nuclear weapons ourselves. We also have a laser cutter and injection molding machine for making these parts.” He pointed to the door on their left side. “Over there we have a clean room for working on our sensitive electronic components and the nuclear materials that we use. The clean room ensures that no dust or impurities in the air can affect these sensitive materials and components.” He pointed upwards. “We also ventilate the workshop area with an electro-static air cleaner, especially since we are working with radioactive materials.”

“What does CNC stand for?” asked Karen.

“It stands for Computer Numerical Control, which refers to the control of machine tools by computer,” Dr. Lamprecht replied. “These machines can be used to repeatedly manufacture complex components from metal or other materials. First, the designers, or draughtsmen, draw a 3-D picture of the component or part on the computer. This is then transferred to the CNC machine, which programs the machine to actually manufacture the part with robotic control. Complex parts can therefore be manufactured to very high specifications and tolerances. Furthermore, there is no chance for human error.”

“Let me show you the nuclear bomb designs,” said Dr. Lamprecht. He walked to one of the workbenches against the far wall of the workshop. He picked up a large folded piece of paper, unfolded it, and pressed it flat against the counter top of the workbench.

“Here are the plans we work from. It is basically a two-stage thermonuclear device based on the Teller-Ulam design. I hope you are familiar with this.”

“Yes, yes, carry on,” said Derrick excitedly.

“This drawing shows you the main components. Here is the primary stage with the U-238 lined shell, the plutonium hollow core, the high explosive lenses and detonators, the U-238 tamper, the neutron focus lens and the end cap.”

It all sounded like Greek to Karen and she decided not to ask for explanations at this stage. She would have an interview with Derrick later on to clarify the terminology to uninitiated viewers.

“OK, this is the secondary stage,” Dr. Lamprecht continued. “Here is the neutron channel or gun carriage, the plutonium fusion tube or spark plug, the uranium fission blanket or jacket and the polystyrene polarizer. And over here is the electronic triggering device.”

“What type of fusion fuel does it use?” requested Derrick. “Is it lithium deuteride?”

“Yes.”

“So where did you source this material?”

“We pilfered it from the South African nuclear program years ago.”

“Can I videotape this?” asked Johnny, playing the part of the enthusiastic video cameraman. Derrick moved away from the drawing to allow Johnny access with the video camera.

“Right, here are the parts that we have manufactured so far,” said Dr. Lamprecht after Johnny had finished with the videotaping. He pointed to some metallic parts lying on the same workbench and a large cylindrical object resting in a special cradle. “We are basically waiting for the uranium and plutonium before we can put this baby together.”

“So where are you getting that from?” asked Derrick.

“From the nuclear shipment that we helped ourselves to the other day,” answered Donald with a wry smile. “We just need to extract the plutonium and uranium with a simple chemical process.”

“What is the physical size of this bomb?” asked Derrick.

“Over there you can see the parts of the outer casing,” replied Dr. Lamprecht. “It is 750 millimeters in length and has a diameter of 325 millimeters. It will weigh about 150 kilograms when it’s completed.”

“And what is the yield?”

“Two hundred kilotons.”

Karen noticed how the color drained from Derrick’s face as the details of the nuclear bomb were explained to him.

“Did you design these yourselves?”

“No, it would have taken far too long. And we do not have the facilities to test our designs. These were taken from the South African nuclear bomb development program in the early nineties.”

“But I thought they had never built any thermonuclear bombs in South Africa. Ex-president De Klerk said so himself just before the South African nuclear program was disbanded, I think in ’93. And as I understood, all the nuclear bombs - I think there were six-and-a-half simple gun-type fission weapons - were destroyed, as well as all the documentation and designs.”

“I was there, on the program, so I would know – we did have some thermonuclear devices. Here are the plans, as you can see, and Donald will show you that we actually have two of the completed bombs here with us in our arsenal. These weapons and designs were removed from the program by right-wing people when it became clear that South Africa was going to participate in a fully democratic election for all the people, and that power in the country would move from the white minority apartheid government to the black majority.”

“Let me show you our arsenal – that should convince you,” said Donald and started to walk towards the door on their right side. No one noticed that Johnny grabbed a screwdriver that lay on the workbench and dropped it into his shirt, in the opening between two of the buttons.

Donald opened the door to the arsenal and allowed everyone to enter the room. The room was about 20 meters long and 8 meters wide. It contained three metal storage racks, each about 15 meters long. Each rack was about 2 meters high and had three shelves. One of the racks contained a number of cylindrical devices made out of metal, two large ones, about one meter in length, six smaller ones, about 30 centimeters in length, and another ten,

about 15 centimeters in length. All of these devices rested in special cradles mounted on the shelves.

“These two big ones are the same as the thermonuclear device you’ve just seen in the workshop, except we didn’t manufacture them. These come from the disbanded South African nuclear program, as Dr. Lamprecht has just told you.”

“And the smaller ones?” asked a visibly stunned Derrick.

“This is our *pièce de résistance*,” said Donald with a sardonic smile. “They were also taken from the disbanded South African nuclear program. These are neutron-type weapons, but special smaller versions more commonly known as mini-nukes.”

“I thought it was just a lot of speculation and hype that there were ever such weapons manufactured by South Africa,” said Derrick with a look of disbelief on his face.

“Well, here they are, the cherry on top, so to speak,” replied Donald, still smiling.

Wednesday, 19 April, 09:30. Donald Morse’s hideout:

Johnny had the video camera set up on the tripod in Donald’s office. Derrick was sitting behind Donald’s desk, while Karen sat in front of the desk, going through her interview questions that she had written down on a piece of paper. Donald had left them for the time being, but he had left an armed guard in the control room.

“Can I use the white board to explain some stuff when we do the interview?” asked Derrick.

“Sure,” affirmed Karen. “Johnny must just set up the camera so that he can easily zoom in and out of the whiteboard.”

“Sure thing,” said Johnny, and started to adjust the video camera.

“As you know I used to be a university lecturer,” explained Derrick. “I used to be one of those who liked to ‘talk-and-chalk.’”

Derrick got up from the chair behind the desk and moved over to the white board behind the desk. He cleaned the board, which had some indecipherable scribbling on, and found some colored white board pens to use on the board.

“Are you ready, Dr. Garret?” asked Karen.

“Yes.”

“Are you ready, Johnny?”

“All systems go,” replied Johnny and viewed the scene in front of him through the little viewing screen of the video camera.

“Okay, Johnny, let her roll,” ordered Karen.

Johnny pressed the record button on the video camera and stuck his thumb into the air to indicate to Karen that she may start with the interview.

“Dr. Garrett, before we talk about what you have witnessed here today,” said Karen, “I want you to give us a background about the nuclear technology that is being used here, but in layman’s terms please. Just so that we can put everything into context later on.”

“Right, where shall we start?”

“Start at the beginning. Why are nuclear weapons so powerful? Why do we call them weapons of mass destruction?”

“Well, if you want to understand the power and destruction of nuclear weapons, you first have to start very small. You first have to understand the atom. Atoms are the basic building blocks of all matter in our universe, and cannot be chemically subdivided by ordinary means.

“Let’s now use the atom to understand how energy is created. We can start with familiar fuels like coal and petroleum. When a fossil fuel such as coal is burned, atoms of hydrogen and carbon in the coal combine with oxygen atoms in air. Water and carbon dioxide are produced and heat is released as a form of energy that can be used to produce electricity. This energy is typical of chemical reactions resulting from changes in the electronic structure of the atoms.” Derrick started to draw some pictures on the white board as he talked, to aid with his explanation of the subject matter.

“Coal therefore gets its energy from the electrical forces that bind one atom to another in chemical compounds. These forces exist due to the negatively charged electrons orbiting every atom’s tiny nucleus, which we call the electron cloud.” At this point, Derrick made a fist with his left hand to indicate the atom’s nucleus and formed his right hand into a bowl shape and moved it back and forth across the fist of his left hand to indicate the electron cloud.

“The nucleus is made up of positively charged protons and neutrons, which do not have an electrical charge.” Derrick pointed with the index finger of his right hand to his left fist to indicate the nucleus of the atom. “The nucleus is 2,000 or more times heavier than the electron cloud surrounding it. Since the protons are positively charged, they tend to repel each other strongly within the nucleus of the atom, but there is an extremely powerful nuclear glue or force that holds them together within the tiny nucleus.” Derrick made a tighter fist with his left hand to illustrate his point.

“Most atomic nuclei are stable, which means that the forces holding them together are considerably greater than the forces tending to make them break apart. A few types of nuclei are unstable. We first have to look at isotopes before explaining what happens when the nucleus becomes unstable.”

Derrick looked at Karen with a frown on his forehead. “Are you still with me?” he asked with a skeptical one in his voice.

Karen could recall some of the things Derrick lectured about from her high school science. “Yes, please carry on,” she said.

Derrick started to draw a diagram of an atom’s nucleus on the white board. “There are often variations on the possible number of neutrons in the nucleus for many types of atoms. These are called isotopes of the atom. The atomic weight of an atom is the sum of the protons and the neutrons in its nucleus. Uranium, for example, has isotopes with atomic weights of 235 and 238, which are called U-235 and U-238. In both isotopes, the number of protons in the nucleus is the same, but in U-238, there are 3 more neutrons in the nucleus than in U-235.

“The nucleus of an isotope that has more or less neutrons than the number of protons is unstable. An unstable isotope often doesn't occur naturally or remain in existence for very long. It will give off particles and radiation in order to obtain a stable nucleus and is therefore called a radioactive material. The radiation given off usually consists of dangerous gamma rays that can be harmful to humans, animals and even plant life.

“Although an unstable nucleus will decay into a stable nucleus, it doesn't necessarily do that immediately. Some may take a fraction of a second, while others may take years before they decay. The rate at which a radioactive

material decays is called its half-life. That is the amount of time it takes half of the material to decay.

“Scientists eventually discovered a way to release this energy on demand. Because a neutron has no electrical charge, an external neutron, or free neutron, can move towards and enter the nucleus without being electrically repelled by the positively charged protons. Scientists discovered that hitting the nucleus of an atom with a large nucleus such as U-235, also called a heavy element, with a neutron causes the nucleus to break apart, or to fission, with a huge release of energy.” Derrick threw his arms open to illustrate his statement. He took a drink of water from a glass on the desk before continuing.

“Absorption of the extra neutron into the nucleus makes the already oversized uranium nucleus slightly bigger, reducing the grip on the short-range nuclear forces in the nucleus which is enough to allow nuclear fission. When scientists learned that each such fission of U-235 releases two or more neutrons, they knew at once that nuclear explosives were a possibility. The neutrons released by fission could hit other nuclei to cause a quick chain reaction, which makes a sustained nuclear reaction possible. This chain reaction creates an ongoing release of energy from one U-235 atom to the next and therefore provides a continuous source of energy.

“The amount of uranium needed to start the chain reaction is called the critical mass. If more than the required mass to start the chain reaction is available, called the supercritical mass, the chain reaction would take place faster and grow exponentially. If the fission reaction is uncontrolled, it multiplies rapidly and can produce an explosion.” Derrick hit the fist of his right hand into the palm of his left hand to demonstrate his point. “However, in a nuclear reactor, fission is controlled. Only one neutron is then allowed to produce the fission of another atom.” Derrick paused to take a drink of water and then pushed his spectacles upwards on his nose.

“Many years before atomic fission was discovered, Albert Einstein already theorized that mass and energy are different forms of the same thing,” said Derrick as he continued with his lecture. “According to Einstein's well-known equation $E = mc^2$, even a small amount of mass inside the atom, called m in the equation, can be magnified by a huge number, the speed of

light squared, or c squared in the equation, to create enormous amounts of energy.” Derrick scribbled the equation on the white board.

“When one U-235 nucleus is fissioned, it releases 50 million times more energy than the combustion of a single carbon atom. Nuclear fission produces far more heat than burning a comparable volume of hydrocarbon fuel such as oil, natural gas or coal.

“This explosive energy that is produced when a nuclear material is fissioned and goes supercritical can therefore be used in a nuclear bomb. The power of these nuclear weapons of mass destruction is usually compared to the similar explosive power that would be needed with TNT. We normally talk about the mass of TNT required, and this is also referred to as the yield of the atomic bomb. For example, the first atomic bomb ever to be used in a war, the bomb called Little Boy, which the Americans dropped on Hiroshima in 1945, had a yield of about 13 kilotons. That’s equivalent to 13,000 tons of TNT explosives and it was enough to flatten the city of Hiroshima, to kill 80,000 people directly with the blast, and to kill another 60,000 people later on from the effects of radiation.”

“So far you have only mentioned uranium as a nuclear material used for the manufacture of atomic bombs,” Karen interjected. “Why did these people steal the plutonium from the ship? Why is plutonium so important to them if they also want to manufacture nuclear bombs?”

“The isotope plutonium-239, or Pu-239, is a key fissile component in modern nuclear weapons, because to it is relatively easy to get it to fission and because it is readily available, since it is formed as the by-product of irradiating natural uranium in a nuclear reactor. Furthermore, since critical mass decreases rapidly as density increases, the implosion technique used in plutonium bombs, where the plutonium is rapidly compressed into a supercritical state, can make do with substantially less nuclear material than the gun-assembly method used in uranium bombs, where one piece of uranium is basically shot directly at another piece of uranium to get the fission process started.” Derrick made sketches on the white board as he explained the two nuclear explosion techniques.

“Obviously, the distribution and use of plutonium is extremely well controlled worldwide, so that it does not fall into the wrong hands. Because

these people want to make nuclear weapons, it was therefore very important to them to get hold of some plutonium, and the only option available to them was to steal it somewhere.”

Karen’s head felt woozy from absorbing all of this scientific and technical information and she suggested that they take a short break before continuing with the remainder of the interview. They went to their bedrooms accompanied by a guard, and after fifteen minutes they re-assembled in Donald’s office to carry on with the interview.

Chapter 5

Wednesday, 19 April, 10:45. Donald Morse's hideout:

“Dr. Garrett,” said Karen when she continued with the interview, “tell us more about what you saw in the workshop and in the arsenal. Do you believe that they have nuclear weapons here and do you believe that they have the ability to manufacture them, or was what we saw here just a lot of smoke and mirrors?” Karen was sure she knew the answer to these questions, because she had seen how Derrick had been affected when seeing and understanding what was going on in this place, but she wanted him to tell it in his own words.

Derrick rubbed his goatee with his right hand and pondered the question a few seconds before answering. “First of all, the scientist who showed us around today knows what he is talking about and claims to have been part of the South African program for the development of nuclear weapons during the apartheid era. Secondly, they do have plans for a thermonuclear bomb, which is a fairly advanced design and he claims this also comes from the canned South African nuclear weapons program. Thirdly, they have a workshop fitted with very modern equipment that can be used in the machining of nuclear bomb components as well as the manufacture of advanced electronic equipment. Fourthly, they have shown us the components

of the thermonuclear device that they claim were manufactured in their own workshop. Lastly, they have shown us some completed nuclear weapons, thermonuclear and neutron bombs, which they claim was removed from the South African nuclear weapons program before it was canned.”

Derrick looked upwards for a short moment and then stared directly into the camera. “If we take all of this into account, I would say, yes, it’s very likely that they do have the ability to manufacture nuclear weapons, and it’s very possible that they do have completed nuclear bombs here. Obviously, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, as they say, and this can only occur when they actually explode one of these weapons, which I just hope will never happen. But to sum up, the threat is well and alive, and I would advise that we should not test them if they ever verbalize such a threat.”

“What are these atom bombs that they have here, the thermonuclear and the neutron bomb?” asked Karen.

“Allow me to briefly explain the history of the atom bomb first. This would make it easier to understand the thermonuclear and neutron bombs. The first nuclear weapons were very inefficient, in the sense that very little of the nuclear material being used, whether it was uranium or plutonium, actually fissioned to take part in the explosion. Therefore, scientists have always been looking out for ways to improve the efficiency of their designs, in other words, to get more explosive power with the same, or even less, nuclear material used.”

Derrick pointed to the sketches that he had made earlier on the white board and continued: “The gun assembly design basically shoots one piece of uranium U-235 at another piece, so that they can be forced together quickly enough to form a critical mass and a rapid, uncontrolled fission chain reaction. This was basically the design used in the Little Boy weapon that was detonated over Hiroshima.

“The problem when using plutonium in a nuclear bomb is that plutonium produces so many spontaneous neutrons that a gun-type device would very likely begin to fission before fully assembled, leading to very low efficiency. In a plutonium bomb, the implosion method is employed, which uses conventional explosives surrounding the plutonium material to rapidly compress the mass to a supercritical state. Although it is a more technically

difficult method, it is in many ways superior and efficient method than the gun-type device. The second atom bomb to be used in the Second World War was of this type. This was the Fat Man weapon detonated over Nagasaki, just days after the first atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

“Both the gun-type and implosion methods are also referred to as A-bombs, which stand for atom bombs. As previously mentioned, both of these types make use of nuclear fissioning for their explosive power.

“Nuclear fusion can be used as an alternative to nuclear fission to create a nuclear bomb that is much more powerful. Nuclear fusion is a process during which light atoms fuse together to form heavier ones. Nuclear fusion is also the energy-producing process that takes place continuously in the sun and the stars. In nuclear fusion, two kinds of atoms that are both isotopes of hydrogen, called deuterium and tritium, can be used. These are just hydrogen atoms with one or two extra neutrons in each nucleus.”

Derrick wiped the white board clean and started to make some new sketches. He pointed with the white board pen at the sketches and continued with his lecture: “In a fusion-type nuclear bomb, a nuclear fission explosion from what is called a set of atomic triggers is used to squeeze the block of deuterium and tritium atoms are into a super-dense mass. Nuclei of deuterium and tritium are therefore squeezed together by the force of the explosion. This force is so large that it causes the nuclei to combine, which leads to the process of nuclear fusion. The fusion process causes a new nucleus to be formed, namely helium. However, this new nucleus requires less energy to keep it together, and there is one less neutron needed. This excess energy, as well as the extra neutron, escape as radiation energy. Such a bomb can release a tremendous amount of energy - energy equivalent to the explosion of many millions of tons of TNT.

“This type of bomb is sometimes called the hydrogen bomb, or H-bomb, but is also known as a thermonuclear bomb. It uses a staging design, which means that a fission trigger is used to ignite a fusion process.” Derrick made some more sketches on the white board. “The fission trigger, which is in effect a fission atom bomb, is called the primary stage and the fusion bomb part is called the secondary stage. There is also a uranium outer casing, which would be detonated by the intense fast neutrons from the fusion stage. This

increases the yield of the bomb many times and also produces much more radiation.

“This is essentially the large bomb that we have seen here today, although their bomb uses a fusion fuel of lithium deuteride gas, which will produce tritium when bombarded by neutrons. They claim their bomb has a yield of 200 kilotons, which I can easily believe, and this means it is about ten times as powerful as the bomb that flattened Nagasaki during the Second World War.”

“And what about the neutron bomb?” asked Karen.

“I’m coming to that,” said Derrick a little irritably. “Now, the next type of bomb that we need to look at, namely the neutron bomb, is simply a derivative of the thermonuclear bomb. Thermonuclear bombs without the uranium casing just release a lot of energy and neutrons, killing people in the immediate vicinity without leaving a lot of radioactive fallout, and are called neutron bombs. The neutron bomb is also referred to as the clean bomb or the enhanced radiation bomb.”

Derrick again wiped the white board clean and started on some new sketches. “In actual fact, it is not all that clean. It does release a very high dose of neutrons as lethal radiation that can travel large distances. The neutron bomb delivers blast and heat effects that are confined to an area of only a few hundred meters in radius, but within a somewhat larger area it pushes out a huge wave of neutron and gamma radiation, which can penetrate armor or several meters of earth. This radiation is extremely destructive to living beings, but is short-lived. In a normal nuclear bomb, the radiation can linger for several days or months, but in a neutron bomb, the radiation disappears within an hour. Because of its short-range destructiveness and the absence of long-range effect, the neutron bomb would be highly effective against tank and infantry formations on the battlefield, but would not endanger cities or other population centers only a few kilometers away. It is therefore called a tactical, or battlefield weapon that can be delivered by missile or attack aircraft.”

“What were the smaller bombs that they have shown us, the ones called mini-nukes?” asked Karen.

“Those are essentially very small neutron bombs. The problem with conventional nuclear weapons, both fission types and fusion types is that they need a certain amount of nuclear material to start the fission or fusion process. This is also true for neutron weapons, because they also use a fission process in the first stage of the device.

“Therefore, the conventional weapons cannot be made much smaller than the one-meter long bomb that they have here. The US did develop the W-54 Davy Crockett warhead in the 1950’s. This warhead was the lightest ever put to use by the USA and weighed in at just over 20 kilograms and was about 40 centimeters in length. It could, however, only produce yields between 1 kiloton and ten kilotons. A number of nations have worked on the design of a smaller type of nuclear weapon, but officially no one has ever been able to design a smaller nuclear weapon.”

“And what is the unofficial version?” Karen wanted to know.

“There has been speculation that some type of chemicals, when exposed to conventional explosives, could produce enough heat energy so that it may be sufficient to start a fission or fusion process. One of these materials is called red mercury, but the existence of this is denied by many nuclear scientists world wide, although other prominent scientists do believe that the material exists.”

“What is red mercury?”

“It is supposed to be a chemical substance called antimony mercury oxide and it is supposed to be cherry-red, hence its name. The Russians have originally produced this substance, but there is speculation that South Africa got hold of the substance during the last years of its nuclear program through some shady deals on the international black market. Other people speculate that the South Africans have been able to produce a similar substance on their own, but based on red mercury. However, there was never any official statement of the manufacture of nuclear weapons using red mercury by South Africa.”

“How does red mercury help to make smaller nuclear bombs?”

“Like I have said, when exposed to high explosives, it can produce enough heat to start a fission or fusion process.” Derrick made some fresh sketches on the white board to clarify the inner workings of the mini-nuke.

“In the conventional hydrogen or neutron bomb that I have explained earlier, the primary stage, which is a conventional fission weapon, is used to squeeze the block of deuterium and tritium atoms into a super-dense mass. This force is so large that it causes the deuterium and tritium nuclei to combine, which leads to the process of nuclear fusion.

“With red mercury, you do not need a primary stage that is a fission weapon anymore. Conventional explosives are used to put the red mercury under an enormous compressive force. The red mercury would then be able to release such high levels of energy that it could also combine the deuterium and tritium nuclei to start the fusion process.

“If you do not require the uranium and plutonium in the primary stage any more, you can have a much smaller nuclear weapon, hence the name mini-nuke. It is believed that such a mini-nuke, the size of a grapefruit, has sufficient energy to blast a big battleship out of the sea. Now that is a scary idea.”

“Why is that so? Would one nation who wants to make use of nuclear weapons not just use the largest amount of nuclear power available to level its enemy to the ground as quickly as possible?”

“Yes, in a conventional war it may be true. But the mini-nuke allows a terrorist to put the weapon in a suitcase and smuggle it into another country undetected. This is why these bombs are also called suitcase nuclear bombs. With a few of these they could create havoc. It would make the 9/11 attacks on New York seem like child’s play.

“But,” continued Derrick, “seeing that the South Africans dabbled in so much of the nuclear technology, I’m just glad they did not produce any cobalt bombs.”

“Do you mean there is more?” asked Karen surprised. “What is a cobalt bomb?”

“The cobalt bomb is a thermonuclear weapon that uses cobalt in the shell, and the fusion neutrons convert the cobalt into an isotope of cobalt called cobalt-60. Cobalt-60 is a powerful long-term emitter of gamma rays. It would emit gamma rays for more than five years. This type of weapon is also called a salted bomb and variable fallout effects can be obtained by using different salting isotopes. Gold has been proposed for short-term fallout,

which would last for a number of days. Tantalum and zinc can be used for fallout of intermediate duration, which would last for a number of months, and cobalt could be used for long-term contamination.

“The primary purpose of this weapon is to create a tremendous amount of radioactive fallout, making a large region uninhabitable. The cobalt’s half-life, long enough to remain dangerous as it is dispersed over a very large area as micro fine dust, still may have a radiation intensity that is lethal to human beings. Most of the other types of nuclear weapons only produce fallout that is either short-lived, or less dangerous. The difference between this weapon and conventional nuclear weapons is that the half-life of Cobalt-60 is just long enough so that airborne particles will settle and coat the earth’s surface before significant decay has occurred, thus making it impractical to hide in shelters.”

“So this means that the cobalt bomb will produce a large atomic blast, including the normal radiation, plus an extended radiation that could be carried by the wind over a very large area, killing people and making the place uninhabitable for a long period of time?” asked Karen.

“That’s correct. Perhaps an even scarier idea that the mini-nukes.”

“Has someone actually built such a weapon?”

“Not that we know of. The British tried in the late 1950’s and did a test explosion of a one kiloton device somewhere in Australia, but they declared it a failure and never tried again.”

“OK, Doctor Garrett, I think that is enough for today. We thank you for your expert opinions on the subject.”

Wednesday, 19 April, 11:30. Donald Morse’s hideout:

Donald moved to his chair behind the desk and sat down, tilting his chair backwards until he found the most comfortable position. He looked very confident and in control of the situation.

“Let me first adjust the camera,” said Johnny and kept himself busy during the next few seconds to get Donald into focus. He gave a thumbs-up signal to Karen when he was ready.

“What is your organization, *MAMBA*, about, Donald?” asked Karen.

“We want to provide a home for Afrikaans-speaking South Africans who have the need to be a sovereign nation. We want to give them the opportunity to live in their own country, to enjoy their own culture, to speak their own language and to live out their own dreams and ideals. We want to provide a safe and secure future for their kids, where everyone has the same opportunities and where visions can be realized.”

“If you say we, who do you include in that?”

“I first and foremost include myself, and then I include everyone who wants to share these ideals. Although I am an American by birth, I fully align myself with the people who strive for the ideals that I have just mentioned.”

“Are you the leader of this organization?”

“For now, I am the operational leader. There are other people who have co-leadership roles, but they wish to stay anonymous at this stage, since they are still living within the South African community as private individuals, such as intellectuals, engineers, academics, scientists, doctors and so on. They will come forward after certain objectives have been met.”

“What are these objectives?”

“This will mainly be fulfilled when we have secured a piece of land that we can call our own where we can start a new sovereign nation.”

“Where is this land going to be?”

“It is going to be a large piece of land stretching from the west coast of South Africa, at least the northern part of the country, from the border of the Western Cape and the Northern Cape provinces, up to about the town of De Aar, and then it will go northward, just skimming the border of the Free State Province on the east, up to the border with Botswana in the north where the borders of the Northern Cape and North West provinces meet. So, the western border will be the Atlantic Ocean, and the northern borders will be Namibia and Botswana. It will therefore include the largest part of the current Northern Cape Province. It will roughly be about the size of Portugal.”

“How do you actually plan to achieve this? There have been groups before who have tried to secure more or less the same area for a so-called *Volkstaat*, a people’s state, and they have given up the fight to achieve the same thing.”

“But we have something that they did not have.”

“What might that be - nuclear weapons?”

“Exactly, but not only that. We also have a greater will to succeed.”

“So what is your plan of action?”

“I cannot divulge any details now, but you will learn about that very soon when the United Nations and America will force South Africa to hand that land over to us.”

“How do you intend to keep this land? Aren’t you afraid that some other country may take it away from you forcefully?” asked Karen with a skeptical tone in her voice.

“We have plans in place to secure it militarily. We have members who have had much military training and combat experience during the reign of the previous South African government before 1994. And obviously, we have the nuclear power to act as a deterrent to anyone who would be foolish enough to try and take it away from us.”

“What is going to happen to the people who currently live in this region?”

“If they want to stay and they fit our profile, they are absolutely welcome to do so. Otherwise, they will have to move to South Africa.”

“What will then to happen to their property in your new country? And how are they going to be accommodated in South Africa?”

“The UN and the USA will have to assist South Africa to compensate them for what they have left behind. They will also have to assist them with new houses and jobs in South Africa. But this is not really our concern.”

“If I may say so, don’t you think this idea of yours is preposterous? I’m sure that many people around the world will agree with me.”

“There are two reasons why it is not preposterous,” replied Donald with a serious tone of voice. “Number one - we have all the cards and we will make the play. This you will witness in the foreseeable future. Number two - these Afrikaner people had their own two sovereign countries, just over one hundred years ago, the Republic of the Orange Free State, and the ZAR. After the Anglo-Boer war, between 1899 and 1902, Britain destroyed everything the Afrikaner or Boer people had.

“Britain enforced a *scorched earth* policy and burned down most of their homes and land. During that war, Britain detained many of the women and children in concentration camps with appalling conditions where more than 26,000 women and children eventually died. Then Britain took over their land and enforced their own culture and language upon these people. They never got their land back.”

“What about the commencement of the Republic of South Africa in 1961 when the country became independent of Britain? Did they not get their land back then? And did they not even get more back? They got the whole of South Africa – the Transvaal, the Orange Free State, the Cape and the Natal provinces.”

“By that time they had to share it with the countless descendents of the English people, not to mention the black people in the country. It was a bilingual country – they spoke both Afrikaans and English, as you well know. They did not have their own country anymore. They have tried to get it back in an artificial way. They invented the Apartheid system to second-class the black people and to force the black people to move out to homelands that they have created for them. Some of these homelands even became independent of South Africa. But we all know the history – it could never work that way.”

“Did the country not originally belong to the black people? They had already lived in those areas when the *Voorrekkers*, the white pioneers, came from the south to move away from the oppressing role played by Britain in the Cape.”

“No, there had been tribes who had lived in certain areas, but they did not cover all of the land. And all the tribes had in any case been at war with each other. Also, the governments of the ZAR and the Orange Free State fairly compensated the black people who inhabited pieces of land which these two governments required at that time.”

“Many people will not agree with you, especially the black people of South Africa, but in any case, why don’t you just demand the reinstatement of the Orange Free State and ZAR countries?”

“Because of logistical reasons. There are just too many people living in these two areas now. And South Africa’s economic heartland is situated in

the southern part of what used to be the ZAR, which is now the Gauteng province.”

“This whole piece of land that you want is in a very arid region and even includes some parts of the Kalahari Desert. How will you be able to make a living from it?”

“The largest river in South Africa, the Orange river, runs through this region on its way to the sea. Therefore, there will be plenty of water. Currently, there is a lot of farming close to the river and some canal systems are already in place to feed water to farmers further from the river. We will have the expertise to turn parts of this region into a paradise. In any case, we can learn a lot from a country like Israel that also had to cope with an arid land.”

“Why would you as an American be accepted in this Afrikaner community?”

“Because I have forsaken my American identity. Because I have identified with the Afrikaner ideals and dreams.”

“What about the language?”

“I’m working on that. It will take some time, but I will get it right.”

“Why are Afrikaner people following you, an outsider to their community?”

“Like I have said before – I am fully identifying myself with their ideals. I am also living their ideals, and most of all, I am the one who can help them make it happen after many have failed before me.”

“What is your motivation to do this for the Afrikaners?”

“Because I had been in this country on many occasions since the early 1980’s and I have dealt with Afrikaner people and came to understand where they come from, how they think, what their needs are, and what their dreams are. I came to understand that this matter of an own homeland, a *Volkstaat*, is a burning issue with them. It is an issue that will never go away.

“Many people fail to recognize that the Afrikaners are in no way asking for special treatment in their desire to be a sovereign nation. They are but one of many minority groups throughout the world who desire independence. Some examples of minorities that got their wish are the Jews, the Scottish, the Welsh, the Irish, the Poles, and the Catalonians in Spain. We argue that Afrikaners should be treated in the same way, but the South

African government has flatly denied them this right. And no-one else in the world wants to assist them in striving for independence and sovereignty.”

“But why would you forsake your own country and your own identity for them?”

“I was forsaken by my own country, America, and even by my own family. In the early 1980’s my company supported the previous South African government in their fight against communism. As most people know, the government of today have aligned itself with the Communist Party of South Africa. And in those days it was the same – the ANC and the Communists were one and the same, and they were the common enemy the South African government was fighting against.

“America was always against the threat of communism throughout the world. America had always supported any country that had to fight against communism. In earlier years, America had supported the Apartheid South African government in its fight against communism, but then, due to pressure from many other countries, they had turned around in support of the abolishment of Apartheid.

“I was taken into custody because my company had continued to secretly supply the previous South African government with arms and components for the manufacture of arms and ammunition, although an arms embargo had existed at the time. I had only done what America and its people were always fighting against – the fight against the threat of communist expansionism. Communism was threatening the existence of the American dream, but I had to pay the price for an American government turning back on its own policies.

“I spent a long time in American jails and even today I am on the top ten most wanted list of the FBI world wide. I am being hunted everywhere I go. I have no home, and these Afrikaner people have no home, so we have come together to create a home for ourselves.”

“Where did you find the money to fund this operation?”

“I did make plenty of money when I still had my company and I had the money safely stashed away before I had been apprehended the first time.”

“Lastly, I want to ask you about the acronym for your organization’s name, *MAMBA*. Does it have anything to do with the green or the black mamba snake?”

“Yes, to me the black mamba is one of the most beautiful creatures on earth ... and also one of the most dangerous. Our name was chosen specifically to fit in with the name ‘mamba’. And what I want to tell the people out there is, ‘beware the strike of the black mamba!’.”

“Thanks, Donald, this will be all.”

Donald got up from his chair and sat down in one of the chairs in front of the desk. Phillip made himself comfortable in the chair behind the desk. He had a solemn expression on his face and also seemed to be a little tense.

Wednesday, 19 April, 12:10. Donald Morse’s hideout:

“Colonel Botha, what made you join Donald Morse’s organization?” asked Karen as she started the interview with Phillip.

“I will have to go many years back to describe my motives. After finishing school in the 1970’s I decided to join the South African Air Force as a pilot. In those days, the South African government made it compulsory for all white male citizens to do two years military training or face a jail sentence of the same duration. I had been interested in aircraft since my boyhood and decided to make the Air Force my career, if I could get acceptance as a pilot. It also meant that as a permanent member of the defense force I would get more privileges than the normal two-year conscripts.

“After my training, I was selected to join a Mirage squadron and very soon we got combat experience over the skies of Angola. During that time South Africa waged a war against the communists such as SWAPO, MPLA, the Cubans and even the Russians who wanted to take over Namibia. Namibia, or South West Africa as it was called during that time, was a protectorate of South Africa. This was authorized by the UN after the Second World War when South Africa captured South West Africa from the Germans.

“I started flying the South African built Cheetah fighters in the 1980’s, but the South African government and defense force pulled out of Namibia in 1989 before Namibia’s independence in 1990. Thereafter I had not been

involved in any major conflicts as a pilot. South Africa soon changed governments when the African people were granted voting rights in 1994.

“This led to an amalgamation between the South African Defense Force and the military arms of the major anti-apartheid resistance groups, of which the ANC’s military wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, was the most well-known. This caused many problems, due to huge differences in the management styles and cultures of the different organizations.

“It became more and more difficult for white members of the defense force to get promotions, since the new ANC government instituted a policy of affirmative action and many white air force members resigned from the force. I applied for a position at the SAAF Test Flight and Development Centre near Bredasdorp in the Western Cape Province, since there was very little operational flying being performed at the regular squadrons and I thought the TDFC would still present me with a challenge.

“I tested all sorts of new aircraft and variations on existing aircraft for the SAAF. For example, we tested a Cheetah fighter plane with a Russian-built engine. I also tested the Saab JAS 39 Gripen fighters purchased by the SAAF in 1999 and even went for training in Sweden.

“I got married in 1996 and our little girl was born in 2001. During that time I saw an increase in crime in the country, a decline in government services and a worsening situation for white members of the defense force. My wife and I discussed moving overseas to a country such as Australia, but it was too difficult for us. We loved South Africa too much. It was the country we were born and raised in.

“I had some contacts with right-wing elements, but I never actively got involved in any of the movements, since I could not really associate myself with their leaders at the time. Then, about a year ago, Donald Morse contacted me out of the blue and said he wanted to see me with a business proposition. He explained to me more or less what he had in mind, but did not give me all the details of how he intended to achieve everything at that time.”

“Have you met Donald before he contacted you?”

“Yes, we have actually had a few conversations in the 1980’s when his company delivered weapons to the South African Defense Force and I had to test some of his air-to-air and air-to-ground missiles.”

“I was reluctant to join him. A few people had already tried to take the notion of a *Volkstaat* forward, but no one had succeeded. It always just stopped at a dead end.”

“Why did you decide to join him then?”

“Two months ago, my wife and little daughter were shot dead by car hijackers in the driveway of our home in Bredasdorp. They did not even take the car. It seems my wife was too slow to respond and then they just fired shots into the car and when the neighbors came to investigate, they just fled. It was too late then, they were already dead. This event shook me and pulled the rug from under my feet. It was just the last straw. A week later I contacted Donald and told him that I was ready to join his organization.”

“Why was Donald so interested in your aircraft?”

“He needed an aircraft to attack the Japanese cruiser that escorted the *Atlantic Merlin*, the ship that carried the plutonium.”

“Could he not have fired ship-to-ship missiles from his boat or used his helicopter to fire the missile?”

“The problem with firing a missile from a ship was that we wanted excellent accuracy in order to minimize the loss of lives. That could not be done from his ship. He could have used the helicopter to fire the missile, but the helicopter’s main duty was to get his men on board the *Atlantic Merlin* as quickly as possible and to remove the nuclear cargo and then get his men out of there as quickly as possible.

“One other reason for an attack aircraft is that we can also use it to strike quickly wherever we want to and it also shows how serious we are to achieve our objectives. It shows to what extent we are prepared to go to achieve our objectives.”

“Was there a reason why he selected that specific aircraft – what is it, a Hornet something?”

“It’s a F/A-18 Hornet. I was busy evaluating it under South African conditions after I had received my training in Pensacola in the USA. The US government decided to donate twenty of these aircraft to South Africa to

replace some of their aging Mirage and Cheetah fighters. I assume it was done to improve relations between the US and South Africa, since the US views South Africa as a very important strategic partner for relations with the rest of Africa. The US Navy and Marines are also going to upgrade their F/A-18 Hornet's with the new Super Hornet aircraft, and decided to donate some of their F/A-18 Hornet's that were still in excellent shape. This aircraft has a sturdy undercarriage, which makes it ideal for landing in remote areas where a proper landing strip does not exist. It is also capable of carrying the Harpoon anti-ship missile that Donald could provide us with."

"What is your view on attacking other innocent people and stealing someone else's property?"

"I now see myself as a freedom fighter for the Afrikaner cause. Just as the ANC had their freedom fighters in the struggle against Apartheid in South Africa, I am also a freedom fighter for my cause. Just as the ANC's military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, was responsible for killing innocent people, I will also have to kill innocent people if they get in the way. Obviously, I will first try to prevent any loss of life, but if it does happen during an operation, it is just very unfortunate. But it is all part of the bigger picture – the fulfillment of our cause.

"Just as the world turned its eyes away from the killing of innocent people by Umkhonto we Sizwe during their anti-Apartheid struggle, so I expect the world to turn its eyes away from the killing of innocent people during the struggle for my cause."

"But surely you cannot compare your cause to the ANC's struggle during the Apartheid years. The oppression that the black people of South Africa was condemned worldwide and also by the UN. They had a legitimate struggle."

"Although my struggle isn't recognized by the UN, and not many people in the world know about it, it should be as legitimate as the ANC's struggle had been. Firstly, as Donald had mentioned earlier in his interview, the same struggle for independence had been noted world wide for other minority groups such as the Jews and Catalonians and others. Many of these minority groups have been granted independence and a place to live and govern themselves. Why should we be the exception to the rule? Why should we be

excluded? I believe that we have the same rights and therefore the same legitimacy for our cause.

“Secondly, it is true that there is a kind of reverse discrimination and oppression against white people in South Africa, especially white Afrikaans-speaking people. We are being marginalized, because we cannot find jobs due to the system of affirmative action. Our language and culture in schools is under immense pressure from government – they want us to forsake our language and culture and become immersed in the greater mass of people, the so-called rainbow nation. I would go so far as to say I believe that the majority of the people in the government do not feel a thing for us and they would be glad to get rid of us. They would be filled with joy if we could all pack up and leave the country for good. This makes my cause just as legitimate as the ANC’s had been.”

“Doesn’t it seem strange to you that most of your fellow Afrikaners are relatively satisfied with the way that things had worked out in the end and that they are not at war with the black people and that they accept a thing like affirmative action as a means of addressing the injustices of the past?”

“No, it’s not strange. People are accepting circumstances for the moment, because they want to keep peace and many still have jobs. They have become complacent with their situation. That will soon end – they are going to be forced out of their jobs, one way or the other. The circumstances are slowly deteriorating and it is going to deteriorate to such an extent that getting a job is going to be close to impossible. What are we going to live from? In the end, it may just as well lead to a civil war. Our way is therefore better – we avoid a civil war and have a place for our people to live and work and govern themselves in peace. As soon as this place has been established, you will see how the people will flock to it.”

“Do you really believe that your organization will achieve its goals?”

“Yes, definitely. You will have the privilege of seeing that in the very near future.”

“Thanks, Colonel Botha, this is all I wanted to know,” said Karen.

“Are we done?” enquired Donald.

“Yes, and thanks for the opportunity,” replied Karen.

“I know that you will do a good job. That’s all I required. Right, I’m starving. Let’s go and grab some lunch.” Donald got up, and the rest followed.

Chapter 6

Wednesday, 19 April, 12:50. Donald Morse's hideout:

While all of them filed out of the office into the adjoining control room, Johnny was busy checking the recorded video on the video camera. The guard stayed behind in the room to keep an eye on him. Johnny sensed that the guard was relaxed and did not expect any trouble. He did not even look at Johnny and his eyes followed the people walking out of the office. Johnny was bent over the camera with his left side towards the guard. He pushed his right hand that was out of the view of the guard into the front of his shirt, between two of the buttons. His right hand reappeared with the screwdriver he had taken earlier that day from the workshop. He switched the video camera off and proceeded to walk out the office door.

Out of the corner of his eye, Johnny noticed that the guard followed him. Suddenly, Johnny swung around and stuck the screwdriver into the unsuspecting guard's throat. Instinctively, the guard grabbed at the screwdriver in his throat with his left hand, while his right hand started to bring up the Uzzi to defend himself.

Johnny kicked the guard between the legs and the guard yelled out and doubled up with pain. Johnny used his left hand to rip the Uzzi out of the

guard's hand and knocked the guard against the side of the head with his right elbow. The guard fell to the floor in a daze.

Johnny stormed out of the office and met up with the others as they turned back to find out what the commotion in the office was all about. Donald was in front of the rest after they had turned back and it made it easier for Johnny to push the Uzzi into his face and grab him with his left hand by the collar. Johnny was much larger and more powerful than Donald and with one movement he swung Donald around and pressed his left arm tightly around Donald's throat. Johnny held the Uzzi against Donald's temple and moved away from the group of people so that he had his back against the wall of the control room, while holding Donald tightly to his body in front of him. Everyone else in the room was completely stunned and did not move.

Donald tried to wrestle out of Johnny's powerful grip, but it only had the effect of Johnny pushing the Uzzi's muzzle into Donald's mouth, knocking a tooth loose in the process. Donald wriggled with pain and gave a shriek that only resulted in a gagged sound, but Johnny held him so tight that he could barely move. A small stream of blood flowed slowly from the corner of Donald's mouth where the Uzzi had cut his lip.

One of the men working at a desk in the control room pressed a button and a loud alarm sounded, piercing their hearing, while a red light mounted on the control room's wall flashed on and off. Very soon two armed guards came storming into the control room.

"Throw down your weapons, or I'll shoot him!" shouted Johnny.

The guards hesitated, but one look at the panic in Donald's eyes forced them to lay down their Uzzi's on the floor.

"Are you mad? Why did you do it?" yelled Karen.

"Keep quiet!" shouted Johnny. "Everyone will do as I say, or else I swear I will shoot him! And shut off that damn alarm!"

The man who had initiated the alarm pressed a button to switch it off and a welcome silence settled on them.

"We are going to move out of here and get outside," said Johnny. Karen, you get in behind me and hold on to me. Stay very close to me. Derrick, you

move in front of us, with your back towards to Donald. The rest of you, start moving out. And I do not want any funny business. I will shoot to kill!”

“I’m not going to do this,” said Karen, shocked by Johnny’s outrage.

“Shut up and do as I say!” shouted Johnny. “Come-on, let’s get a move on! You people there in the control room – get up and get out!”

Johnny started to push Donald forward and slowly the small crowd turned around and moved towards the passage, constantly looking over their shoulders. Derrick walked in front of Donald and Karen moved in behind Johnny and stayed very close to him, holding on to his shoulder with her left hand.

Johnny very soon realized that it was very uncomfortable to keep the Uzzi inside Donald’s mouth and walk at the same time with Donald’s body pressed tightly against his and their feet bumping against each other in the process of walking. He pulled the gun out of Donald’s mouth and pressed the muzzle against Donald’s right temple.

Johnny’s attention was focused on Donald in front of him and he did not notice Allan peeking around the corner of the door between the passage and the control room. Allan quickly summed up the situation and moved back into the passage. He quickly ran back to Karen, Derrick and Johnny’s sleeping quarters. The door to their sleeping quarters was open, and Allan turned right into this door and just stopped around the corner where he waited for the procession to walk past him.

Allan had made a mental note of the order in which the procession walked. He knew he had to get ready for action the moment that he saw Derrick walking past the opening into the passage that he was hiding in.

Allan waited patiently as the group of scientists, technicians and guards filed past him one by one. Allan’s back was firmly pressed against the wall of the passage he was in, facing in the same direction as the procession walked. He did this to make sure that the chances were slim of someone spotting him and giving away his position. Allan looked to his left at the procession and started to tense his muscles when he saw the guard in front of Derrick walking past him.

When Derrick walked past and he could see Donald’s feet, Allan flexed his muscles, turned to his left and lunged himself at Johnny who was walking

past the opening to the passage at that exact moment. Johnny's right arm was extended and bent at the elbow to press the gun against Donald's head. Allan pushed his right arm into this opening between Johnny's shoulder and elbow so that his right hand could grab the Uzzi. Using his right hand, Allan forced the Uzzi forward and upwards and simultaneously pushed his body against Johnny and used his left elbow to give Johnny a hard blow on the left temple.

Johnny was taken by surprise and staggered to his left while the Uzzi was forced away from Donald's head. As Johnny fell to his left, two shots rang out from the Uzzi, but they slammed high into the wall on his left side, causing small chunks of cement to fly out from the wall. Karen shrieked, turned around and ran back towards the control room. The people in front of Donald fell down on the floor to get out of the way of any more bullets that might start flying around.

Johnny, Donald and Allan fell to the floor, with Allan on top of Johnny. Allan was as big as Johnny and even more powerful and he started to punch Johnny in the head and face with his fists. Johnny had already been dazed by Allan's elbow blow to the head and he tried desperately to protect himself against the blows, but his reactions were just too slow. In the process, the Uzzi fell out of his hand and clanged to the floor.

Donald, at last free from Johnny's tight grip around him, managed to crawl forward while the brawl between Allan and Johnny was still continuing. The two guards in front of them turned around and came to Allan's aid. Very soon they had Johnny pinned down on the floor, and more punches and kicks rained on Johnny's head, face and body. After a few seconds, Johnny lay still, obviously unconscious.

Allan pulled the two guards away from Johnny and got up on his feet. He first switched his attention to Derrick, but Derrick lay flat on his stomach, with his hands covering his head, with no obvious threat to them. Allan then turned to Donald and helped him to get back on his feet. Allan looked around to where Karen should have been and he realized that she must have run back to the control room.

"Go and get the lady," ordered Allan and pointed one of the guards in the direction of the control room.

After ten minutes, Karen, Derrick and Johnny were sitting on the floor of the control room with their backs against the wall. Donald, Allan and three armed guards were standing in front of them. The guards pointed their guns at the three of them sitting against the wall. Johnny's hands were tied up behind his back and he was slowly regaining consciousness, groaning from pain.

Johnny's face looked like that of a second-rate heavyweight boxer who had just lost a fight against the world champion. Some blood was still dripping out of his nose, his lip was badly cut and also smeared with blood and both eyes were swollen up. His right eye was basically swollen shut and he squinted out of his left eye to try and assess the situation.

Karen's cheeks were smeared with her makeup and it was evident that she must have been crying. She had a worried expression on her face and looked up to Donald, wondering what he intended to do with them. Derrick seemed completely bewildered and stared down at the floor, slowly shaking his head from side to side.

Donald held a handkerchief to his bruised and cut lip. "Karen, Doctor Garrett, I am very sorry about this situation and I believe you are innocent in this incident," he said slowly. It was obvious that it was very painful and uncomfortable for him to talk.

"However, I want to get to the bottom of this," he continued. "I am sure that Johnny is not really your cameraman and that you were forced to make use of him by some or other government security agency. I want to know who ordered this little scene today, but I am not going to question you, even though I am sure you can provide me with some of the answers.

"Although it may be much easier to get the information out of you two, I would rather take Johnny here for some questioning." Donald turned to the guards next to him. "James, Steven, take Johnny to the snake pit. We will soon get the information out of him. And shoot him if he tries anything funny."

While the two guards lifted Johnny up by his armpits, Karen softly started to cry again. "I told them that he should not come with us," she mumbled softly between the sobs.

“Allan, please take Karen and Doctor Garrett to their sleeping quarters and lock the door,” ordered Donald. “Arrange some lunch for them. We will decide later on what to do with them.”

The two guards took Johnny through to the passage leading to the exit from the underground complex. The guard in the passage opened the trap door for them and helped them to get Johnny to ascend the stairs on his rubbery legs. Once inside the aircraft hangar, the two guards pushed Johnny outside through the side door that they had used the previous night to enter the building.

They walked out on a large concrete slab which was used as a landing pad for the helicopter. At the western edge of the concrete slab, they followed a twin track dirt road towards a house about fifty meters away. The house was a single storey, painted in white with a red sloped corrugated iron roof. They turned left in front of the house and walked around to the back side of the house. The house made a U-shape and had two short wings attached to the main structure. The U-shape had its opening at the back of the house.

A small square brick structure was erected between the two wings at the back of the main house, but it was not connected to the main house. This structure, which measured about six by six meters, had a flat unpainted corrugated iron roof and a wooden door in the wall that was closest to the house. The door was mounted closer to the right-hand side of the wall. The structure also had small windows in each of its four walls. All the windows were open, but the openings were closed off by thick burglar bars.

The guard named Steven produced a key from a bunch of keys dangling from his belt, unlocked and opened the door of the structure. The two guards forced Johnny into the building. Johnny entered a room with a concrete floor, a small wooden table and three wooden chairs in the middle of the room and a wooden cupboard next to the right-hand side wall.

There was a thick glass wall on the left that divided the structure in two. On the other side of the glass wall was a room of about the same size. There was a wooden door with a metal frame inside the glass wall. The wooden door had two small windows and the glass panes of these windows were secured by burglar bars. On the inside of the glass wall was a metal grid made from square tubing, obviously to keep people either outside or inside the

room. The floor of the other room was about a meter lower than the floor of the main room.

A shiver went through Johnny's spine when he saw the occupants of the other room. Through the glass he noticed quite a number of snakes lying around on the concrete floor, on large rocks scattered around in the room and even on branches of some dead trees mounted in the room.

The temperature in the room was unbearably hot, having very little ventilation and its corrugated iron roof, without a ceiling on the inside, being baked by the fierce rays of the sun all day long.

Steven took one of the chairs and placed it in front of the glass wall. "Go and sit on the chair and take a look at the snakes so long," ordered Steven. Johnny sat down on the chair provided for him and the two guards sat down in the other two chairs behind Johnny, their Uzzi's pointing towards him.

Donald arrived about ten minutes later, his face now cleaned up. Donald kicked Johnny in the back. "Get up and move to the back wall!" he ordered. Johnny did as he was told and Steven placed his chair against the wall. He pointed with his Uzzi to the chair and Johnny sat down on it.

Donald opened the cupboard and took out a snake tong, which was designed to assist humans to handle snakes without getting bitten. It had a long aluminum shaft, just over half-a-meter long, with a grip handle on the one end and a pair of small jaws on the other end that could be opened and closed by means of a lever mounted in the handle.

Donald looked through the glass to see if any snakes were not close to the door. Satisfied, he took a key from a bunch of keys in his pocket, unlocked the door and opened it. He stepped inside and down onto the sunken floor. He slowly looked around and saw the snake that he wanted. He carefully moved towards the snake, half hidden under a large rock, with the snake tong extended in his right hand. He slowly placed the tong's pair of jaws around the snake's body, close to its head and pressed the lever gently to close the jaws around the snake's body. He moved closer and grabbed the snake's body in his left hand, close to its tail. The snake had a brownish-grey body with a light belly. Holding the two meter long snake in front of him, he climbed up the stairs next to the door. When he entered the other room he asked the guard named James to close the door to the snake pit.

Donald walked closer to Johnny and stopped about a meter in front of him. He extended the tong with the snake in it so the snake's head came to about twenty centimeters from Johnny's face. Johnny did not look happy at all and his gaze was fixated on the snake's tongue flicking in and out of its semi-opened mouth that was black on the inside.

"Right, Johnny, now I want some answers. Who do you work for and who sent you?"

Johnny did not reply. Donald's response was to bring the snake closer to Johnny's face. Johnny closed his eyes.

"Do you know what kind of snake this is?" asked Donald.

There was no response from Johnny.

"Okay, I will tell you. It is a black mamba. It's one of the most poisonous snakes in the world. Black mamba venom is highly toxic and just two drops of venom are enough to kill you. A mamba can have up to 20 drops of venom in its fangs, so there is enough poison to kill you many times over.

"What makes the venom so dangerous is that it contains both neurotoxins and cardio-toxins. The neurotoxins affect the nervous system, and the cardio-toxins attack the heart. After it bites you, you will have paralysis of all muscle groups and you will have an increased difficulty to breath. You will eventually die from inability to get oxygen into your bloodstream or your heart will simply cease to pump and you will die from heart failure. You will die between thirty minutes to an hour after being bitten."

Johnny stared at the snake's black eyes that seemed fixed on his face, the head moving up and down, left and right, the tongue flicking in and out of the half-open mouth. He could see the two fangs inside the black mouth – the fangs that contain the poison that would kill him. The snake's head moved closer and closer to his face. It seemed inevitable that the snake would strike forward at any moment and bite him in the face. Johnny had already started to sweat profusely due to the intense heat inside the room, but now it seemed like the perspiration ran down his face like streams on the side of a mountain. He had been scared to death of snakes all his life and he could not stand this treatment any longer.

"Okay, okay, I will talk," Johnny said hastily, but softly, so that the snake would not be scared. "Just get this thing out of my face."

Donald held the snake about a meter away from Johnny's face and listened intently as Johnny started to tell him everything he knew. After Johnny had stopped talking, Donald pondered for a moment in silence.

"I'm going to put you in the snake pit for the night," said Donald eventually. "You have nearly killed one of my men, and you've put me into a lot of pain. Now it will be up to you to survive the night."

"No, you can't do that! I will die in there!" shouted Johnny and tried frantically to get up from his chair. Steven kicked him in the stomach so that he fell back into the chair.

"Keep quiet, or I'll shoot you!" said Steven menacingly. "You will be dead before you even enter the snake pit."

Donald asked James to open the door to the snake pit for him. Donald entered the snake pit and gently released let the black mamba. The snake slithered away harmlessly and hid underneath a rock. Donald got out of the snake pit and watched as Steven and James pushed a screaming Johnny into the snake pit. Johnny fell down the steps onto the concrete floor and Donald quickly locked the door leading to the snake pit. Johnny hastily crawled into the nearest corner where there were no snakes at that point in time. Without a word, Donald turned around and walked out of the building, followed by the two guards. Donald locked the outside door and they walked away from the building.

Donald, Allan, and Steven entered the section where Karen and Derrick were held captive. Allan called Karen and Derrick out of their respective rooms. He asked them to sit around the table in the dining room.

"Look, I know that both of you were innocent in this thing and that it had been forced upon you to accept Johnny as your cameraman. I also know that you were told he was only sent along for your protection and you did not know that he was sent along to pull such a stunt.

"Therefore, I would like to let you both go, but unfortunately I have decided to keep you as a safeguard for us. Believe me, I would not have done it if everything went smoothly."

"What you mean is that you are keeping us as hostages, just in case someone wanted to stop your operation from going ahead," Karen hissed.

“You will be treated well. You will have enough to eat and drink. I will install a TV set here in the dining room so you can keep yourselves up to date with current events. We will buy you some additional clothes and toiletries. Karen, there is a lady in the house outside who will visit you and find out what you need. Dr. Garrett, I will also send someone to gather your needs.”

“How long are you going to keep us?” Derrick asked.

“For as long as it is necessary. I do not know at this stage. If everything works out well, it should only be for a week or two.”

“Where is Johnny?” Karen asked.

“He is recuperating from his wounds,” Donald replied.

“Why did you take him to a snake pit? What is that?”

“It was just something to scare him a little bit. I just wanted to get some information from him.”

“What about all the interviews? Are you still going to use it?”

“Yes. You can help me to edit it and then I’ll send the DVD to your news station. You must please excuse us now. We still have a lot of things to do today.”

With that, Donald turned around and left the room, followed by Allan and Steven.

Wednesday, 19 April, 20:35. Ken Palmer’s house:

That night, Ken watched the INN news broadcast intently, hoping that Karen would be back from Donald’s hideout and presenting the news. To his dismay, there was no news about Donald. The announcer did mention that Karen, Johnny and Derrick have not returned from Donald’s hideout and that they did not have any knowledge regarding their whereabouts.

Ken felt frustrated, not knowing what was going on. *What is the problem? Were they just delayed in getting back, or did something happen to them?*

Thursday, 20 April, 09:00. Donald Morse’s hideout:

The next morning at nine o’clock, Steven and James went to the snake pit. They looked through the glass door and saw Johnny’s lifeless body lay in the middle of the floor. Not sure whether he was only sleeping, Steven

knocked hard on the glass wall. Johnny did not move. Then they noticed it: a snake came up from behind Johnny and slithered over his body. Johnny did not even flinch. Apparently, he was not in the land of the living any more.

Thursday, 20 April, 15:00. Richmond, Virginia, USA:

Ken had to see a client in Richmond, Virginia, regarding an urgent matter about a breach of IT system security. He had traveled the 370 kilometers by car, leaving very early from his home that morning. When he left the client's offices at three o'clock that afternoon, he had to walk two city blocks to the parking garage where he had left his car. He passed a magazine stand and noticed the banner for one newspaper blaring it out: *Nuclear terrorists take journalist and scientist hostage.*

Ken stopped to buy the newspaper and started reading as he walked. After bumping into a number of oncoming pedestrians, and eliciting some rude remarks from them, he closed the newspaper and hurried to his car in the parking garage.

Once in his car, Ken read further. The news report stated that Donald Morse had sent another DVD to the INN head office in South Africa. The DVD contained the video material of the nuclear workshop and arsenal, the interviews with Derrick, Donald and Phillip. It also contained a statement from Donald, in which he described Johnny's attempt to detain him. Donald further mentioned that he would keep Karen and Derrick indefinitely at his hideout. Donald finally made a statement regarding Johnny's 'unfortunate' death and mentioned that Johnny had been bitten and killed by a black mamba, as Donald had put it in the statement, 'one of the most poisonous snakes in the world'.

"If that was an unfortunate death, I will kiss his ass," Ken thought aloud. "Damn, I knew this was going to happen," he said to himself with Karen in his mind. He immediately knew what he had to do and wondered what he had done with Brad Johnson's business card. He vaguely recalled putting it in one of the drawers of his desk in his study at home. He decided to start driving home and to use his cell phone to try and contact Brad at the FBI's head office.

Ken quickly typed the FBI's head office telephone number, which he still remembered from the time he had worked there, into his cell phone. He started his car and drove out of the parking garage. As he merged with the traffic in the street outside the parking garage, he plugged his Bluetooth headset's earpiece into his ear and dialed the FBI's number. Brad was not in the office and the receptionist was not authorized to give out his cell number, so Ken left a message, stating that it was very urgent.

Thursday, 20 April, 17:25. Ken Palmer's house:

That night, Ken watched a re-run of the videos shot at Donald's hideout on INN. He wanted to see it for himself and not rely too much on a newspaper report that may tend to over-sensationalize things. Brad still had not contacted him, and Ken thought it might be that Brad did not get back to the office to receive the message. After the report on television, Ken was convinced that he would be doing the right thing to contact Brad Johnson. Ken went to his study to look for Brad's business card. He found it in the top drawer of his desk and immediately sat down to phone Brad from his cell phone.

"Johnson here," Brad answered the call.

"Hi Brad, its Ken Palmer."

"Ken! I'm glad to hear from you. I've actually been expecting your call after the news we got today."

Saturday, 22 April, 06:00. Wilmington Airport, North Carolina, USA:

Two days later Ken took a 06:00 flight from Wilmington Airport to Charlotte. At Charlotte Airport he got a connecting flight to Ronald Reagan National Airport in Washington DC, where the plane touched down on schedule, at exactly 09:07.

Ken took a cab to the FBI headquarters on Pennsylvania Avenue. It was a mild sunny day with mostly blue skies and some clouds in the distance. The cab exited the airport facilities and turned north on the tree-lined George Washington Memorial Parkway. They merged with the traffic onto the I-395 north and crossed the Potomac River.

Ken watched the familiar landmarks pass by with some feeling of anxiousness. It was nearly two years ago that he had left this place, hopefully never to return – at least not to work for the FBI again.

Ken spotted the Jefferson Memorial on his left and the cab driver decided to start a conversation. “Pity you didn’t come here last week. You’ve just missed the blossoming of the cherry trees over there. Are you here on business or pleasure?”

“Business,” Ken replied bluntly. He did not feel like taking part in a conversation right now. The cab driver blabbered away, commenting on the scenery and current sports and news events, but it was mostly a monologue, with no effect on Ken’s private thoughts.

They crossed the Washington Channel and on his right Ken noticed the colorful boats moored at the marinas. The cab driver took the 12th Street exit and he followed the road curving left across the highway towards L’Enfant Promenade. Ken watched the L’Enfant Plaza passing on his right as they had to slow down due to higher volumes of traffic. They crossed Independence Avenue and traveled past the Smithsonian Institution building on the right. They carried on between the Museum of National History on the right and the Museum of American History on the left.

When they traveled past the Old Post Office Pavilion on the right, Ken had fond memories of spending many lunch hours in the restaurants in that building. They crossed Pennsylvania Avenue and turned right at E Street NW. The cab stopped at the FBI headquarters on their right. Ken got out, collected his luggage and paid the cab driver.

The J. Edgar Hoover building, the national headquarters of the FBI, was situated on a block of land halfway between the White House and Capitol Hill. Ken looked up at the vast cream colored building, and recalled how he had always thought of the architectural monstrosity as a cross between a large battleship and a fortress.

Saturday, 22 April, 09:50. J. Edgar Hoover building, Washington DC, USA:

Ten minutes later Ken was sitting with Brad Johnson in a conference room on the fifth floor of the J. Edgar Hoover building. There was a large

table in the centre of the room with a number of office chairs around it. A white board was mounted on the one wall. The door opened and two men, both dressed in suits, walked in. Brad introduced the taller of the two as Ethan Barber, Deputy Assistant Director of the Counterterrorism Division and the other man as Lucas Sharpe, Deputy Assistant Director of the Criminal Investigative Division.

Both were in their early fifties. Ethan Barber was skinny with grey hair and gold-rimmed glasses. Lucas Sharpe was stocky with black hair graying at the temples.

After the small talk, Lucas indicated that they should take seats around the table in the centre of the room. Lucas took the lead in the meeting.

“Because of the disturbing video material that Donald Morse has sent out to the world, we thought it best to bring Counterterrorism Division into this as well,” Lucas said. “That’s why Ethan is here, if anyone has wondered about his presence in the meeting.”

“Palmer,” Lucas continued with a stern look on his face, “I did a background check on you. One of the things that I have learnt is that you are more of a loner than a team player. That came out of your own mouth, so to speak. As you will probably remember, it was one of your reasons for resigning from the FBI – that you did not fit in well with the team culture.

“However, we cannot allow you to go alone on this mission. You know that is not how we work. We have assigned a partner for you. Her name is Special Agent Angela Reynolds.”

“I’m sorry, but I need to work alone on this one,” interrupted Ken.

“Well, you either go with a partner, or you don’t go at all,” said Lucas firmly.

Ken pressed his lips together and gave no reply. Lucas took that as an affirmative reaction.

“In any case,” Lucas continued, “We have chosen Reynolds, because she will be of great value to you on this trip. She is part of one of our antiterrorism task teams, or also known as the flying squads. She is an expert hostage negotiator. She is also very capable and knows how to handle herself.

“Well, it seems that I have no choice in this matter,” said Ken reluctantly.

“Johnson, go and bring Agent Reynolds in,” ordered Lucas.

Brad Johnson left the room and closed the door behind him. Two minutes later the door opened again and a tall attractive woman in her thirties walked in with Brad following her. She had dark brown eyes, a bit of a pointed nose, and black hair of shoulder length that she wore in a ponytail. She was elegantly dressed in a grey chalk stripe jacket, with matching pants and an aqua blouse. Brad introduced her as Special Agent Angela Reynolds.

Ken nodded in acknowledgement. He had to admit to himself that a hostage negotiator may just come in very handy.

Lucas spoke up again. "In South Africa you will meet up with Ray Lombardi. He is an Assistant Legal Attaché at the *Legat* there and will be your guide from our side, so to speak." The *Legat* referred to the FBI's Legal Attaché office in South Africa. "He will be your liaison with the South African intelligence and security services. He will also ensure that you have a South African intelligence officer assigned to your team so that you can find your way around and don't get bogged down by local regulations."

"Ken, do you have an idea how you are going to tackle this? Where will you start?" asked Ethan.

"There are a few places to start. Firstly, we can contact the couriers who delivered the DVD's to INN. Maybe we can find out something from them. I don't know what their police has done up to now, but it may be worth our while to follow all these leads again. We may just stumble upon something that they have missed.

"Secondly, I want to visit the place from where the hostages have been picked up by Donald Morse's people to see if there may be any leads. Thirdly, I want to talk to the person who reported the sighting of Morse in South Africa to the FBI. Fourthly, I want to talk to someone who has worked on the South African nuclear program to find out about the allegations that Morse has made. Fifthly, I want to study the video material from Morse again. I will need some copies of those that I can view on my notebook computer.

"I would also like to have information about the particular model of aircraft that Morse has stolen, especially its capabilities. I would particularly want to know how much fuel it carried and what type of weaponry it had on board. I would like to know the aircraft's flight path up to the point that it

went missing. I would need pencils, erasers, a ruler, a pocket calculator and a protractor. Then I would also like to have detailed maps of the Southern African region.”

Lucas made notes of all Ken’s requirements. “I will work on this immediately,” he told Ken.

“We can have an antiterrorist SWAT team over there in 24 hours if you should find Donald and need our assistance,” said Ethan. “Unfortunately, we cannot take the team across right now, because of our relationship with the South Africans. We are only supposed to provide assistance to them. But when the situation really gets hot we will be able to convince them to send the team over to help you.”

“Yes, please remember that you cannot make any arrests while you are over there,” Lucas added. “Just find Morse and let the South Africans make the arrests.”

“There’s one other thing that concerns me,” said Lucas. “Ken, I understand that the lady journalist who was taken hostage by Morse used to be your fiancée. Is that correct?”

“Yes.”

“I’m just afraid that your emotions will get in the way and will mess up this whole thing.”

“No, I can assure you it won’t. It will make me even more determined to solve this problem and get the hostages out safely.”

“I’m taking your word for it. If it had not been for your good work to arrest Morse on the previous occasion, I would not have sent you to South Africa.”

“I know that if there is one person who can find Morse, it’s Ken,” said Brad. “He has this uncanny way of knowing how Morse thinks.”

“Can you read his mind, or what? Or are you just such a good profiler?” asked Angela.

“I’ve known Donald Morse since he was five years old. I was three years old when my parents moved in next door to their family in Wichita, Kansas. We were friends until our university years. Therefore, I’ve come to know him very well. You could say that I understand how he operates and that I know his value system, or lack of one”

“What happened during your university years? Did the friendship break up?” asked Angela.

“No, not really. I came into contact with other people and got a wider perspective of the world around me. When we were at school, I had a sort of admiration for Donald, because he is two years older than me and I used to look up to him. He was like the older brother that I never had and he used to teach me things and sort of looked after me.

“But as the years passed I came to realize just how many flaws he had in his personality and that we did not really have that much in common. You could say that I learned to stand on my own two feet.”

“Seeing that you know him so well, what do you make of this operation of Morse?” asked Ethan.

“I’m not so sure that he is doing all of what he mentioned in the videos for the Afrikaner people, who are supposed to support him.”

“Why do you use the word *supposed*?” queried Lucas.

“I don’t think he has all the support amongst the locals that he is boasting about. That is also one of the things I want to check out with the South African intelligence services. Surely, if such a big operation was planned there, they must have got wind of it. I think that Donald Morse is using it as a smokescreen for something else.”

“What may this *something else* be?” asked Ethan.

“That’s exactly why I am going over there – to find out. At this point in time I have no idea.”

After more discussions and planning, Lucas eventually said: “You are flying out tomorrow at 12:00. We will book you into a local hotel for the night. You will leave from Washington Dulles International and make a stopover in Atlanta before heading for O.R. Tambo International in South Africa. It will be a 21-hour flight, so you will have lots of time to discuss the case and watch the DVD’s.”

“Ken,” Lucas continued, “we also have to sort out your appointment to the FBI and get you a badge and ID-card. This will only be a temporary appointment and it will terminate when we have Morse in custody. Your contact in South Africa will ensure that you receive firearms when you arrive there so that you don’t get delayed at the airports. Unfortunately, the South

Africans have recently passed new gun control legislation and is implementing it over-zealously.”

“Yes, it’s true,” added Ethan. “I’ve heard from my brother who is a professional hunter that when he recently visited South Africa on a hunting trip, he was detained for four hours at the airport because he wanted to bring one hunting rifle in the country with him. And it did not help that his South African guide came to assist him and that he had all the required paper work done to the letter.”

Lucas continued: “We will also issue each of you with a credit card – obviously with limits to what you can spend. Your South African contact will further issue each of you with a cell phone and they will also ensure that you get a car over there. I suggest that you take lunch now so that we can prepare everything that you need for the trip and then we will get together here at 15:00 again.”

Ken and Angela decided to walk to the Old Post Office Pavilion to have lunch. They bought sandwiches at the ground floor food court and took the elevator to the third floor. Since it was still early they had no trouble finding a suitable table on the third floor that provided them with a view of the ground floor.

“How long have you known that you would have to go on this mission?” Ken asked.

“I only heard yesterday.”

“That didn’t leave you much time to get prepared, did it?”

“No, but I’m used to it. As a hostage negotiator I get called in any time of the day or night. Hostage-takers don’t wait for office hours to do their thing.”

“It must be hard on your family?”

“Yes,” replied Angela. “I got divorced three years ago. Luckily there were no kids. But I’m in a serious relationship right now. We plan to get married at the end of the year. I’ve made a resolution to resign and find a less dangerous and stressful job. But not that it will have any negative effect on my work in the meantime. I will still give my best for any task that I’m assigned to. So you can be assured of my uttermost commitment towards this mission.”

“And you? Do you have a wife and kids?” asked Angela. “I suppose you’re not married,” she quickly corrected herself. “As they’ve mentioned in the meeting, you and the kidnapped journalist had a thing going.”

“I used to be married, but my wife died of cancer ten years ago. I only became a G-man after her death. We also had no kids. Being part of the Bureau gave me a new lease on life, because I could live for my job and the challenges it presented, and I could work as many hours as I pleased, with no-one at home to worry about.”

“I’m sorry to hear about your wife.”

Ken nodded and continued. “I met Karen two years ago while I was on assignment in South Africa, and it was love at first sight. But then I got wounded in an armed robbery that had nothing to do with the assignment. After that, I wanted to resign and stay in the States. I asked her to marry me and join me here, but she did not want that. She still loved her job over there and she was not ready to leave her family.”

“So why did you decide to take on this assignment?”

“I still love her. I can’t get her out of my system. And I just couldn’t leave her in the claws of that psychopath Donald Morse.”

“Are you certain you would be able to find him?”

“I’m going to give it my best shot. I have done it before, so I’m sure I can do it again. There is no question about it - I just have to do it.”

After they had finished their sandwiches, it was still early and they decided to take a stroll to the National Mall and enjoy the fine spring weather before heading back for the office.

Chapter 7

Saturday, 22 April, 20:30. *Adair* hotel, Washington DC, USA:

Ken set at the small desk in his hotel room in the *Adair* hotel and scanned the papers containing information about the aircraft that had been stolen by Donald Morse.

He learnt that the F/A-18 Hornet had originally been ordered as a dual-role fighter and attack aircraft intended to replace the US Navy's A-7 Corsair II and the F-4 Phantom, and to supplement the more costly F-14 Tomcat. The first production F/A-18 Hornet was delivered to the Navy in May 1980. Later on, the F/A-18 Hornet also formed the backbone of the Marine Corps' air power. The aircraft had also been sold to a number of other countries, such as Australia, Canada, Finland, Kuwait, Malaysia, Spain and Switzerland.

Ken learnt further that the F/A-18 Hornet's special design features, combined with its reliability, resulted in an aircraft which could meet the need for an effective weapon system, easily deployable in remote areas. Originally designed as a carrier based aircraft, the F/A-18 Hornet adapted well to maintenance hangars and shelters. At a height of 4.7 meters high and a length of 17.1 meters, it could fit into confined spaces without difficulty. By folding the wings, the wingspan could be reduced even further.

Since the F/A-18 Hornet was designed for service aboard aircraft carriers, it provided significant advantages for operations at scattered sites such as designated highway strips. Being designed as a carrier based aircraft, the F/A-18 Hornet had also been equipped with a sturdy undercarriage that could also assist it in landing on gravel landing strips in remote areas. Furthermore, the aircraft had a low approach speed and could easily be flown on steep approaches to reduce landing distances. While taxiing, the F/A-18 Hornet could turn around on a 9 meters wide landing strip. The F/A-18 Hornet required no special fluids or liquid oxygen for servicing, provided its own power and cooling for ground operations and also had a built-in boarding ladder, assisting the pilot to get in and out of the aircraft at remote landing strips.

The F/A-18 Hornet was powered by two General Electric F404-GE-402 turbofan engines, which were capable of pushing the aircraft to a top speed of Mach 1.8 at 12,000 meters, even with missiles on the wingtips and fuselage stations. The aircraft's combat radius was listed as 768 kilometers in an air-to-air mission, and 1176 kilometers with three drop tanks.

The digital fly-by-wire control system added to the aircraft's excellent maneuverability. It also allowed the pilot to focus more on the weapons and computers than on the actual flying.

The F/A-18 Hornet could carry a wide variety of weapons. For air-to-air combat, the F/A-18 Hornet was equipped with an internal M61A1 Vulcan 20 mm gun, and it could carry close-in AIM-9 Sidewinder missiles as well as BVR AIM-7 Sparrow missiles. For air-to-surface combat, the aircraft could carry Mk 82, 83 and 84 general-purpose bombs, AGM-84 Harpoon anti-ship missiles, cluster bombs and smart bombs, such as laser guided bombs, AGM-65E Maverick missiles, AGM-62 Walleye glide bombs, and AGM-88 HARM high-speed anti-radiation missiles.

What particularly interested Ken about the aircraft was its ease of deployment into remote areas. He thought all along that the aircraft must have been taken to a remote area so as not to generate any attention to it. He opened the maps of the Southern African region and started to plot the flight path of the aircraft up to the point where it had gone missing. He learnt from the information supplied by the South African Air Force that the

aircraft had carried one full load of fuel, no additional fuel tanks, and no external weapons. He calculated the aircraft's remaining flight distance and started to plot a circle on the map that would indicate the aircraft's maximum range.

He was certain that the aircraft must have landed somewhere in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa, the southern part of Namibia, or the southwestern part of Botswana. Namibia and Botswana were neighboring countries of South Africa. This covered a vast area and since he was not sure which parts were very remote and with low population densities, he decided to jot down a few notes and ask his South African contacts for assistance when he got there.

There was something nagging at the back of Ken's mind, something important, but he couldn't lay his finger on it. It was something that kept on bothering him as he started to look at the maps and study the aircraft. It was like his thoughts were blocked by a brick wall. Ken mentally shrugged it off and went to bed.

Monday, 24 April, 06:20. O.R. Tambo International Airport, Kempton Park, South Africa:

The transatlantic flight from Hartsfield International Airport in Atlanta on board the South African Airways Boeing 747 had proceeded uneventful. Angela, in the seat next to Ken, had tucked in early, and it had given Ken the opportunity to study the video material from INN a number of times on the FBI's notebook computer. Afterwards he had also managed to sleep a few hours.

They touched down on O.R. Tambo International Airport in Kempton Park, South Africa, at 07:10. After getting their luggage and passing through customs, a lanky man with wavy brown hair and a brown moustache came up to meet them.

"Hi Ken, Angela?" he asked. When they nodded in agreement, he introduced himself. "I'm Ray Lombardi from the local *Legat* based in Pretoria. I'm sure you've been briefed about me."

"Yeah, sure," said Ken with a smile and extended his right hand. "Pleased to meet you."

After shaking Ken's hand and then Angela's hand, Ray said: "Let's get to the car. I'll first take you to the hotel to freshen up and then I'll pick you up so we can discuss our plan of action."

Monday, 24 April, 08:10. *Sunfield* Hotel, Pretoria, South Africa:

The *Sunfield* was a pleasant four-star hotel situated on a plot of land in the eastern side of Pretoria with lots of rolling green lawns and terraces, large Jacaranda trees and a sparkling pool. When they arrived, Ken did not appreciate the scenery much, since he felt sweaty and tired and in dire need of a shave and a shower. After doing exactly that, he met Angela in the dining room for breakfast. Afterwards, they met on the terrace for a drink. He only had a fruit juice, since he wanted to be fresh for the day that lay ahead. Angela followed suit with a mineral water drink.

When Ray arrived at 10:25 he found them on the terrace, relaxing in the mild autumn sun. He declined a drink with them and they left shortly afterwards for his office in the US Embassy building in Pretoria.

Ray drove a small white two-liter Chrysler Neon. They entered Pretoria, the capital city of South Africa, from the east into Pretorius Street, the same street that the US Embassy was situated in. Pretorius Street was a three-lane road directing traffic only to the west. The street was lined with Jacaranda trees on both sides, similar to many of the streets in central Pretoria, which is also the trademark of Pretoria.

As they approached the intersection with Orient Street, Ray pointed ahead and to the left. "There she is - our piece of the States in South Africa."

Ken noticed that the US Embassy appeared like a fortress from the side of the building where it had virtually no windows. It seemed like a fairly new building with large extended blackened windows on the front side. The building appeared to be about three or four floors high and Ken spotted a number of antennas on its flat roof. The embassy had tidily cut lawns around it and a few small neatly trimmed trees on the premises. The whole building was surrounded by a strong palisade fence that seemed about three meters high.

As they passed the front side of the building in Pretorius Street, Ken noticed a pedestrian entrance in the fence that consisted of a small building of

its own. On the right side of the main building was an undercover parking area, inside the perimeter of the building. Ken also noticed a large satellite dish and another smaller one on that side of the building. Both dishes were mounted on the ground level, a short distance away from the building.

They turned left into Eastwood Street, and left again to enter the building via the guarded vehicle entrance. Ray parked his car in a designated spot and they walked to the front entrance of the embassy.

Monday, 24 April, 10:50. US Embassy, Pretoria, South Africa:

They walked up the stairs to a conference room on the third floor where two men were waiting for them. It was exactly 10:50 when they entered the conference room. Ray introduced the tall skinny Indian gentleman dressed in a navy pinstripe suit as Paresh Patel from South Africa's National Intelligence Agency, the NIA. The other man was of medium build, somewhat stocky, freckle-faced and had short red hair in a crew cut and a thick red moustache, covering most of his upper lip. He was dressed in khaki chino pants and a pale blue short-sleeved shirt. Ken judged him to be in his late thirties. He was introduced as Inspector Danny Coetzee, from the National Investigation Service branch, or NIS, of the South African Police Service, or SAPS.

They all sat down and Ray ordered coffee and tea.

“Okay, lady and gents, we all know what we are here for,” Ray said. “Special Agent Palmer was brought over because of his special knowledge of how Donald Morse operates and because he has already succeeded in the past to find Morse and to apprehend him. Special Agent Reynolds came with as his partner on the task, but also as an expert hostage negotiator, since we now also have a hostage situation on our hands.

“Mr. Patel was involved with sending Johnny Shabangu of the NIA with Karen Visser and Doctor Derrick Garrett to Morse, where Shabangu acted as the cameraman. As we all know by now, Shabangu was killed at Morse's hideout – most probably murdered. Inspector Coetzee is running the section responsible for intelligence gathering on right wing subversive military activities in this country. He may be able to assist with information regarding Morse's organization. He is also part of this team because neither the FBI in

South Africa, nor the NIA has any rights to arrest someone in this country. That can only be done by the SAPS.”

The tray with tea and coffee and tea arrived and they first helped themselves to the refreshments before Ray continued.

“The five of us around this table form the task force team to bring Donald Morse and his cronies to justice and to ensure the safety of the two hostages. I will be the team coordinator and also act as liaison between the team and the FBI headquarters in the States. I will also assist Special Agent Palmer and Special Agent Reynolds with any particular needs that they may have from the FBI’s side. Mr. Patel is the liaison between the NIA and South Africa’s National Intelligence Coordinating Committee, NICOC, and the team. Inspector Coetzee will provide intelligence on right wing activities and will also act as Special Agents Palmer and Reynolds’ guide. Special Agent Palmer will run the operational side, and Special Agent Reynolds and Inspector Coetzee will both be on the operational team. Any questions?”

“Yes,” said Danny Coetzee, “what’s our plan of action?”

“I want us to first visit the warehouse from which the three were taken away to Donald Morse’s hideout, and I want to speak to the owners of the warehouse,” replied Ken.

“We’ve already done that,” interjected Paresh. “There were no leads.”

“I’m, sure you did,” said Ken. “But we may be able to spot something that you have missed. Not because of any bad detective work,” he added quickly, “but because I know Donald Morse, I know how he thinks and operates, and I know what to look for and what questions to ask.”

“I’m sure it will do no harm,” added Ray swiftly, attempting to ease Paresh’s damaged ego.

“To continue,” said Ken, “I also want to interview the driver of the vehicle that drove off from the warehouse, the one the NIA followed. Then I want to speak to the person in Cape Town who saw Donald Morse there a while ago. I want to speak to the couriers who delivered Morse’s DVD’s to INN. I also want to find out from Inspector Coetzee about right-wing activities in this country. Then, very importantly, I want to talk to someone who has worked on the South African nuclear program, someone who used to be high on the pecking order.”

“Our chances of finding the hostages will diminish by the minute,” added Angela. “Therefore, we should act as quickly as possible.”

“I will immediately start working on your request,” said Ray. “We will set up the interviews with someone at the warehouse and the driver of the delivery vehicle this afternoon. We will arrange for a flight to Cape Town tomorrow and set up the interview there. We could most probably set up the interview with the courier company tomorrow evening.”

“I will give you your guns and cell phones after the meeting,” said Ray to Ken and Angela. “Your car is also ready and waiting in the car park downstairs. I will arrange for you to test the weapons at a shooting range before you leave for the interviews this afternoon.”

After the meeting, Ray handed Ken and Angela their cell phones. They tested the phones and exchanged telephone numbers with Paresh, Ray and Danny. Ray then presented them with their hand weapons and hip holsters. They each received a black Sig Sauer P226 9mm pistol which was familiar to both of them, plus some additional ammunition. Ray also provided them with a roadmap covering the Pretoria and Johannesburg areas and handed them their car keys.

The meeting was adjourned and Ray took Ken and Angela to their car, which was a white Chrysler Neon, similar to Ray’s own FBI-issued car.

“Well, I have to get used to driving on the wrong side of the road again,” complained Ken when he and Angela got into the car. “And it’s a stick shift, making it even more difficult to adapt.”

Ken and Angela followed Danny in his car to a nearby McDonald’s where they had a quick lunch, while Ray proceeded to arrange the interviews. The three of them enjoyed their meals outside under an umbrella.

“So, Danny, what is your background in the police?” asked Angela.

“I joined them about twenty years ago,” replied Danny. “I first did my mandatory two years military service straight after school. In those days, all white male South Africans still had to do the military training. I did not know what to do with my life and the two years made me decide to choose between a military career and the police. In the end the police won. After the new government came into power in 1994, the scenery in the police also changed. Whereas the old government put a lid on crime activities, crime just

started to escalate after 1994. As a normal policeman, your life is in danger every day of your life. The new breed of criminal has no respect for life, not even for a cop's life. They are armed with illegal handguns, AK-47's and South African R5 sub-machine guns. They would kill a person for as little as a cell-phone. So, when the police came out with their new organization structure, I opted for the NIS."

"Well, isn't that also dangerous work?" asked Ken.

"Yes, sure, it can also be dangerous. But it's not the same as roaming the streets day and night and meeting up with drug-infected criminals, determined to make an end to your life, nearly every day of your existence – which may not be very long under those circumstances."

"Are you married?" asked Angela.

"No. I was, but the stresses of the policeman's life took its toll a long time ago. My wife left me about seven years ago. I'm living with someone at the moment, but it's difficult to commit myself again to marriage. It seems to be harder to break up when you are married, so I am a bit of a coward in that respect." Danny gave a chuckle after his last remark.

"Do you also find the problems that Donald Morse has mentioned in his videos?" asked Ken. "I mean that it is hard for an Afrikaans-speaking person to find work, and that your language and culture is being marginalized?"

"I'm not an Afrikaner in the true sense of the word," replied Danny. "My father was Afrikaans-speaking, but my mother was English. My father left us when I was about six years old, so I grew up with English as my home language. But I must admit, I am fluent in Afrikaans, because my father kept regular contact with me and always spoke to me in Afrikaans. And both Afrikaans and English were mandatory languages at school, up to the highest level."

"Yes, I've read somewhere that the uprisings amongst the black youth in Soweto in 1976 were due to the fact that Afrikaans was imposed upon them as a school subject," said Angela.

"Yes, that's true," replied Danny. "To come back to your question, Ken, I do find that affirmative action has an influence on my life as a white South African. My career possibilities are now severely limited and many of my colleagues have left the police to find other work or start their own busi-

nesses. But the police service is still a calling for me. I will have to see what the future holds for me, but at the moment I am still enjoying my work.”

Danny, in turn, enquired about Ken and Angela’s respective backgrounds. After lunch, Danny took Ken and Angela to an indoor shooting range in central Pretoria to test their new weapons. While they were still at the shooting range Ray telephoned Ken and said that the two interviews had been set up for 15:30 and 17:00, both in Isando, Kempton Park. He gave Ken the addresses and the names of the contact people to meet.

They left the shooting range at 14:45, with Ken and Angela following Danny in his unmarked light blue police car, a Mazda Etude. They took Troye Street out of Pretoria and headed towards the Fountains Circle south of the city. They went round the circle and turned left at the traffic light onto the R21 highway. They continued south on the R21 highway towards Kempton Park for about 30 minutes and as they passed the O.R.Tambo International Airport on their left hand side they followed the split to the right onto the R24 highway and continued west in the direction of Johannesburg. They took the first off-ramp, Barbera Road, and turned left into the industrial area of Isando. It took them two more minutes to reach the warehouse.

Monday, 24 April, 15:30. Warehouse, Isando, South Africa:

The front side of the warehouse was fenced off with a three-meter high wire fence. Ken noticed a large sign hanging on the fence sign that said: “Warehouse for rent. 1000 m2. Contact Martin Cohen - 212-6685.”

A security guard opened the automated gate for them and they parked in front of the warehouse. There was only one other vehicle parked there, a gold-colored Mercedes Benz 300E. As they got out of their cars, a short, thickset, bald man dressed in a grey business suit came out of the main entrance door and walked towards them. Ken judged him to be in his late fifties.

“Are you from the police?” asked the man.

“Yes,” replied Danny. “I’m Inspector Coetzee from the SAPS and these are special agents Reynolds and Palmer from the FBI.”

“Hi, I’m Martin Cohen, the owner of this warehouse.” Martin Cohen greeted each one in turn by hand. “What can I help you with?”

“Can you give us some details of the company who rented this place last?” asked Ken.

“Yes, please come inside,” invited Martin.

They entered the reception area and Martin opened a briefcase lying on the bare reception counter. Ken noticed there was no furniture in the reception area. Even the walls were bare.

Martin took a document out of his briefcase. “Here is a copy of the rental agreement. I have already given a copy to the gentleman from the NIA last Wednesday, I think.”

“We know,” said Danny. “We are just re-investigating to see if we did not miss anything the first time round. This is a very important case we are working on – a case that may affect our national security.”

Martin nodded solemnly to indicate that he understood the importance of the matter. “The rental agreement was signed on the first of March and they insisted to pay six months’ rent in advance. What businessman would not accept such an offer?” asked Martin with a big smile, not really expecting an answer from them. “In any case, when the gentleman from the NIA contacted me last Wednesday to get access to this place, there was no-one here. When I came out here on the same day to open the place for them I saw that nothing was left here. The place was obviously vacated.”

“Did you try to contact the people who rented this place?” asked Ken.

“Yes, I did, but the phone number on the rental agreement does not exist.”

“Can we also have a copy of the rental agreement?” asked Ken.

“Yes, sure, you can have this copy.” Martin handed the document to Ken.

“Can you still remember what the person who signed this contract looked like?” asked Ken.

“Yes, I think so,” replied Martin. “He was big – very tall and broad-shouldered. He was a white man of, I would guess, about thirty-five. He had short hair, light in color. He was neatly dressed in a business suit and well spoken. In fact, I remember he had an American or Australian accent. The

most distinguishing thing that I remember is that he had a long scar on his left cheek.”

“Would you mind if we got a police artist out to capture the description into a picture?” asked Ken.

“We actually make use of identikits,” said Danny.

“Sure,” replied Martin. “Anything to help avert a national crisis. Boy, do these people have *chutzapah!* I hope you can catch them soon.”

“I will arrange the identikits,” promised Danny.

“What was his name?” asked Ken and took the contract from Martin. “J.J. Oliver,” read Ken from the contract. “Most probably a false name,” he added. “I think I know the man from the description and he definitely has another name.”

“We can check out the business address on the contract,” said Danny. “But I’m sure that is also going to be false.”

“How did the people who rented this place manage to get out and bypass the NIA who waited in front?” asked Angela.

“The man from the NIA also asked me that question,” replied Martin. “It was quite simple actually. There is a gate in the fence between my warehouse and the premise behind us. It was put in a few years ago when the two premises were rented by the same business. The guys who rented my place simply cut the lock on the gate between the two premises, traveled to the front gate of the premise behind us, and cut the lock on that gate too. The premise behind us did not employ any security guards.”

Danny thanked Martin for his cooperation and Danny, Ken and Angela walked back to the cars.

“Who is the guy that Martin just described to us?” asked Angela.

“It sounded very much like Allan Dawson, Donald Morse’s sidekick for the past five years. He also escaped with Donald from jail.”

They traveled to the courier company, which was just five minutes’ drive from the warehouse, back across the R24 highway. The building looked uninspiring and painted in white. It carried a large sign that said: “Speedway Courier Services”. They parked in designated customer parking bays in front of the building and entered the reception area.

Monday, 24 April, 17:00. Speedway Courier Services, Kempton Park, South Africa:

“Good afternoon,” said Danny, greeting the lady behind the reception counter. “We are from the SAPS and are here to speak to Mr. Thusi Dlamini. We have an appointment with him.”

The receptionist made a telephone call and indicated that they could sit and wait for him. Thusi Dlamini appeared after about three minutes. He was of medium build and dressed in brown pants and a cream long-sleeve shirt and wore a pair of brown leather shoes, in fact the most brightly polished shoes that Ken has ever seen.

Danny made the introductions and asked if there was a place where they could talk. Thusi took them inside the building to a vacated office. There were only two chairs in the office and Danny indicated that Angela and Thusi should sit down in them. Ken and Danny sat on the desk.

“Well Thusi,” Danny said. “We know that you have already been interviewed by the NIA about the package you had to deliver on the night of the 18th of April. We are from the SAPS and the FBI and would like to clarify a few points. This is a matter of national security, so it’s very important to tell us everything that you can remember.”

Thusi nodded in agreement. “OK, no problem.”

“Can you describe the people that you saw in the warehouse that night?” asked Ken.

“I saw two men when I came in. The one guy opened the warehouse door and said that I should drive inside. He then closed the door behind me. I thought I had to drive inside, because I had to pick up a large package, but in the end it was such a small package. The one guy I could not see properly. He sat in the driver’s seat of the delivery van, but I think he was white. The other guy was also white. He was very tall and looked like he works out in the gym, like he is doing bodybuilding. I think he has light brown hair, very short. He has a scar on his left cheek. Yes, that I can remember very clearly. He spoke English but had an accent – it sounded like yours.” Thusi pointed to Ken.

“We are going to send someone to you to make up an identikit of that person,” said Danny. “Is it OK with you, Thusi?”

“Yes, no problem.”

“What did you see inside the warehouse, Thusi?” asked Ken.

“There was a big white delivery van, a Mercedes I think. One of those turbocharged jobs. There was nothing else – it was empty. I found it very strange. Oh, yes, I remember now. There was a sort of security scanner machine that they use at the airports that you have to walk through to check if you carry weapons. And there was another machine that also looked like an X-ray scanner that they use at the airports for the passenger’s luggage. There was also another small scanner-type machine, but I don’t know its purpose.”

“Did they give you the package immediately?” asked Ken.

“No, the tall guy said I must just wait a short while – someone will bring the package to them. I said I cannot wait too long. I had packages to deliver at the airport before a certain time.”

“So what happened?” asked Ken.

“I got back in my vehicle and waited. I didn’t feel very comfortable being in that place. After about five minutes the door opened and a white minibus appeared. The driver and three other white people got out – two men and a lady. The big guy asked them to get into the Mercedes delivery van. It was then that I could make out their faces. The lady looked kind of familiar.”

“Don’t worry about them, we know who they are,” said Ken. “Can you describe the driver of the minibus?”

“I could not see his face properly from where I sat. He had dark hair and had jeans on and a plain shirt – I think. That’s all I can tell you about him.”

Ken’s cell phone rang and he said to Thusi: “Excuse me, I just want to take this call.”

“Hi, it’s Ken speaking.”

“Hi, Ken, its Ray. I just want to let you know that your flight to Cape Town is departing at 07:30 tomorrow morning. Your appointment with Louis Lubbe in Cape Town is set for 10:30. He is the owner of the *Freedom* restaurant at the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront.”

“Wait, let me just write this down,” said Ken and took a notepad and pen out of his pocket. He wrote the details supplied by Ray into his notepad.

“Okay, Ray, continue, please.”

“Right, Ken, your return flight is departing at 15:30 from Cape Town International tomorrow afternoon. I’ve also set up an appointment for you with the courier company that delivered Donald Morse’s DVD’s to INN. This meeting is scheduled for 20:00 tomorrow evening in Johannesburg. I will give you the address details later on. I still have problems to set up an interview with someone who had worked on the South African nuclear program, but believe me, I’m working on it. I’ll fill you in as soon as I’ve got news. Talk to you later. Bye.”

Ken greeted Ray, put his cell phone in the inside pocket of his jacket, and turned to Thusi. “What else happened, Thusi?” asked Ken.

“Before the three people who got out of the minibus could enter the delivery van, they had to walk through the scanner equipment and also had to pass their luggage through the X-ray scanner. They were also scanned by the other device. I thought it was very strange. The big guy took a package out of the minibus and handed it to me. We completed the paperwork and then they opened the door for me to leave. So I drove out and went to the airport first to deliver my packages. The next thing I knew, this man from National Intelligence stopped me and asked me about the warehouse and the package.”

“What happened to the package?”

“He confiscated it. We heard from them the next day that it only contained empty writing pads and that the package’s delivery address in Cape Town did not exist. They said we did not have to worry about it, because the company who gave it to us also did not exist. They just used us to put the National Intelligence on a false track.”

“Could you recall any of the other vehicles’ registration numbers?” asked Ken. “They would most probably be false as well, but we have to cover all possible leads.”

“No, I did not happen to look at them. At the time I obviously did not think it was important to look at them.”

Ken thanked Thusi and the three of them walked outside to their cars. He gave Danny and Angela the details about the next day’s itinerary.

“I don’t know about you Angela,” said Ken “but I feel like having dinner at the hotel, a shower and then a good night’s rest. This jet lag is catching up with me.”

Angela agreed and Ken and Angela headed off to their hotel in Pretoria.

Chapter 8

Tuesday, 25 April, 02:30. Katse dam, Lesotho:

A small inflatable rubber boat was being rowed slowly and silently by two men across the waters of the Katse dam. They were heading towards the dam wall. There was no moon and they made excellent progress in the nearly complete darkness without being detected.

Lesotho is a small landlocked country falling completely within South Africa's borders and it is situated nearly in the centre of South Africa. The highlands of Lesotho form the watershed for most of the large rivers flowing through South Africa. The largest river in South Africa, the Orange River, has its origins here in Lesotho, and then flows out to the Atlantic Ocean, where it forms the northern border of South Africa with Namibia.

The Lesotho Highlands Water Project was busy building a series of dams to export water and hydro-electricity to South Africa. The project was Africa's largest ever water transfer project. The aim of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project was to attend to the growing water needs of South Africa's rapidly expanding Gauteng province, which generated almost 60 percent of the of South Africa's industrial output and 80 percent of its mining output. Although it was by far the smallest province in the country, Gauteng was also the province where over 40 percent of South Africa's

population lived. The Gauteng province required more water than its main source of water, the Vaal River, could provide.

The massive Katse Dam in the centre of Lesotho formed the focal point and centerpiece of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. The Katse dam from Mafika Lisiu Pass and the flooded valleys carried on for about 45 km. The dam wall with a height of 185 meters was the highest concrete arch dam wall in Africa.

When the boat was about fifty meters from the dam wall, the men stopped rowing. One of them picked up a cylindrical object, nearly 15 centimeters in length, in both hands and let it silently drop into the water, without causing the water to splash. The two men picked up their oars and rowed the boat back in the direction from which they came.

Tuesday, 25 April, 09:30. Cape Town, South Africa:

As the South African Airways Boeing 737 descended over the Western Cape Province region known as the Boland, Ken looked out the window and soon got a glimpse of rolling hills, mountains, green grass pastures and plenty of vineyards. There were some low-level clouds blocking his view. A few moments later the scenery changed to urban dwellings and then to the metropolitan area of Cape Town. On their final approach to the airport he noticed the shacks of the Khayelitsha squatter camps.

They touched down at Cape Town International Airport at 09:40, having traveled nearly 1500 kilometers from O.R.Tambo International Airport. After entering the terminal building, Ken walked to a rental car office and picked up a pre-arranged rental car's keys. He handed the car keys over to Danny.

"You drive," said Ken. "I'm sure you are more familiar with this place than we are."

"Where are we going to?" asked Angela.

"The *Freedom* restaurant at the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront," replied Ken.

"More commonly known as the V&A Waterfront," added Danny.

Their rental car was a small, but comfortable, 1600 Mazda 3. Danny exited the airport and merged onto the N2 highway. This was Ken's first visit

to Cape Town, the southernmost city in Africa. Ken particularly admired the view of the magnificent Table Mountain with its flat top, towering over the city and the distant ocean. Danny pointed out some landmarks along the route.

Danny continued to drive for nearly 18 kilometers and then followed the lane with the M6 – Sea Point – Waterfront sign. He turned right at the traffic light into the main gate of the V&A Waterfront and found a suitable parking spot. It was 10:20 when they got out of the car and started to walk into the V&A Waterfront area. The morning was cool, but sunny with some clouds in the air and a light southeastern breeze.

The V&A Waterfront was situated between Robben Island and Table Mountain. Robben Island was famous for the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela and other ANC activists during the apartheid years. The V&A Waterfront was a development of the old Cape Town harbor area that brought shops, restaurants, world-class hotels, entertainment locations and even office spaces together against a backdrop of impressive sights of the harbor, sea and mountains. It was no wonder this area had become one of the favorite visiting places of tourists in South Africa.

“Do you know where to find the *Freedom* restaurant?” asked Angela.

“I’ve got an idea it may be upstairs,” said Danny, aiming for a set of stairs in front of them.

As they ascended the stairs, Ken noticed that the next floor represented what he thought was the deck of a passenger ship. They continued to walk past restaurants and shops until Angela spotted the *Freedom* restaurant.

Inside the restaurant, Danny asked one of the waiters to see the manager, Louis Lubbe. Within a few seconds the manager appeared and greeted them warmly. Danny made the necessary introductions. Louis was in his late forties, tall and with a slight potbelly. He had long intermingled brown and grey hair tied down in a ponytail. A neatly trimmed grey beard covered his face and he wore a pair of small rimless glasses. He was casually dressed in cream chinos pants and a navy golf shirt.

“Shall we sit outside?” asked Louis. “It looks like such a nice morning, a little cool perhaps, but it will soon get warmer.”

They all agreed and Louis led them to a table on the outside deck where they had a magnificent view of the harbor area and the ocean.

“What can I get you to drink?” Louis asked after they had taken their seats. He beckoned to one of his waiters to come closer. The waiter took their drink orders and sped away into the restaurant.

“Did you have a good flight?” enquired Louis.

“I’ve enjoyed it very much,” answered Angela. “I’m sure Ken did too. For Danny it must’ve been old hat. But there was so much to see and learn. And isn’t this just the most breathtaking city? And this Waterfront area is just as wonderful.”

“I’m glad you’ve enjoyed it,” said Louis. “We do a lot of business with the tourism trade and if they are as excited about the city and the Waterfront as you are, we’ll have a lot of work for years to come.”

“I’m sure you are all eager to get on with your work, so let’s start,” continued Louis. “How can I assist you good people?”

“You can start by telling us how you’ve managed to recognize Donald Morse,” replied Ken.

“He came in here about two months ago with two other guys. They had lunch here.”

“But how did you know it was him?”

“I used to work in the South African arms industry a number of years ago. We did a lot of business with Donald’s company in America and at one stage I had to work closely with him.”

The drinks arrived and they waited for the waiter to hand out the drinks before continuing the conversation.

“How did you end up here in Cape Town, then?” asked Danny.

“Since the work in the arms industry had decreased and affirmative action came into being, I was offered a retrenchment package, which I accepted. I used the money to start a small restaurant in Cape Town. It was very successful, so I sold it after four years for a good profit and bought the *Freedom* restaurant.”

“In any case,” continued Louis, “I immediately recognized Donald when he came into my restaurant that day. He had grown a close-cropped beard, but I could still determine it was him from his facial features, his eyes, his

voice and his mannerisms. I only walked past their table once, but he did not even look up. Thereafter I kept in the background, because I knew he was on the FBI's top-ten list of wanted persons. I also tried to get a telephone number for the FBI in South Africa, but did not immediately succeed in doing that, so I first surfed to the FBI's web site and sent an e-mail to them."

"Did you recognize the other two persons with Donald?" asked Angela.

"No, not at the time. But when I saw the photo of the missing pilot the first time, I immediately recognized him. But then it was too late. I only saw his photograph after they had stolen that load of plutonium from the ship. The other guy that was with Donald was built like a nightclub bouncer – he looked like a very dangerous man to confront. He was tall and well built and had a scar down his left cheek. I also found out who he was when I looked at the FBI's website for the most wanted people."

"I assume it was Allan Dawson?" asked Ken.

"Exactly. You know him?"

"You could say so," answered Ken. "I was responsible for putting him behind bars. I was also responsible for the scar on his face."

Angela drew in her breath. "Really?"

"He surely must have a score to settle with you!" laughed Danny.

"I should think so. I will be extremely cautious of him, and I would advise you to do the same if you should ever come face to face with him."

There was a moment's silence while the four of them sipped on their drinks.

"What are your chances of finding Donald and putting him in the slammer again?" asked Louis.

"Very slim at this stage, but we are working on it," replied Ken. "I am determined to make an honest convict out of him."

"We would really appreciate it if you would not discuss any of this with the press," said Angela. "It may hamper our case if they got hold of it."

"Will do so," said Louis.

After leaving the *Freedom* restaurant, Ken, Angela and Danny decided to scout the V&A Waterfront until lunchtime and then find a suitable place to have lunch. They walked around for another hour and then found a suitable

Italian restaurant, the Papa Luigi's, at the Pier head, just across the way from the Victoria Wharf shopping centre.

Ken and Angela decided to taste a South African wine and ordered a Sauvignon Blanc, a dry white wine produced by one of the famous wine farms in the Western Cape region. Danny settled for a local beer, a Lager. All three decided to only have a main course. Angela ordered the *Risotto Al Pesce*, a risotto with Cape seafood, such as crayfish, prawns, mussels, calamari, and fish such as kingklip and sole. Ken ordered the *Bistecca Di Struzzo Porcini*, which was a grilled ostrich steak topped with a wild mushroom flavored sauce. Danny ordered the *Bistecca Alla Fiorentina*, which was basically a T-bone steak.

The drinks were duly served and they waited for the food to arrive.

"Danny, did you get any wind of Morse's plans from the right-wing organizations?" asked Ken.

"No, strangely enough, we did not. But it may have happened just as Morse has said in his video interview. He did not choose to work with the normal right-wing organizations. He chose to work with the thinking person who might have right-wing inclinations, but never got around to admit it. It is possible that there is such an underground organization that steers clear of the mainline right-wingers and therefore we do not know about them."

"So that's a dead end for us," commented Ken. He lifted his notebook computer case onto the table and took out the maps of Southern Africa that he had studied on Saturday night.

"I want to ask for your assistance on these maps, Danny." Ken put his notebook computer's case on the floor and folded the maps open on the table in front of them. "I have started to trace the stolen aircraft's flight path on these maps. I believe that we can use it to work out more or less where it was landed that night. I think that the aircraft must be very close to where Morse's hideout is, because the pilot was on hand to do an interview with the TV crew. This is just a hunch, but I think we have to start somewhere."

Ken took a sip from his wineglass and continued. "What I have done was to work out the remaining distance that the aircraft could fly after it went missing. Now, as you can see from the map, I have drawn a circle that

represents the maximum distance the aircraft could have traveled from the point of being reported as going down.”

“It’s an excellent idea,” said Angela. “Even if the aircraft and the hideout are at separate locations, by finding the aircraft would improve our chances of finding the hideout.”

Danny and Angela hunched closer to the map to have a better view. “What I am sure of is that the pilot must have taken the aircraft very close to the ground after reporting the fire to avoid any detection by radar systems,” said Ken. “I believe that this limits the areas that he could have flown to. It would not have made sense to fly so low over densely populated areas, even at night. The noise would have alerted just too many people. This also restricts the number of areas that we have to look at.”

“Now, Danny, this is where I need your help,” continued Ken. “I think the areas include the Northern Cape Province, the southern part of Namibia and the south-western part of Botswana. Perhaps you could give us an indication of the lowest populated areas.”

“Ken, is it not possible that the aircraft landed on an aircraft carrier of some nation that is in cahoots with Donald Morse?” asked Angela.

“It is a possibility,” replied Ken, “but a very unlikely scenario. An aircraft carrier would be too easily detectable by our spy satellites. It may be worth our while to contact the CIA or the US Naval Intelligence to find out if any aircraft carriers had been in the region on the same night. I will contact Ray to get the information for us.”

“I would say the northern part of the Northern Cape Province, the southern part of Namibia and the south-western part of Botswana are all areas with low population densities. I’m sure the population densities in the southern part of Namibia and the south-western part of Botswana are much lower than they are in the northern part of the Northern Cape Province.”

“But where is such an airfield to accommodate this type of aircraft?” asked Angela.

“Well the beauty of this F/A-18 Hornet aircraft is that it was designed to be able to land in remote areas, even on gravel landing strips,” replied Ken. “I’ve done some research on the aircraft and what I’ve learnt there just

strengthen the idea in my head that the aircraft could be found in one of these remote areas.”

“But it’s such a vast area,” said Danny. “Where will we start looking?”

“Now that is the million-dollar question,” said Ken. “At the moment I have no idea.”

“What are these little round areas on the map?” asked Angela and pointed to a number of grey round and ellipsoidal figures in the area of South Africa between Namibia and Botswana and also in Botswana itself.

Ken took a closer look. “I’ll be damned! Those are salt lakes, Angela!” He suddenly gave Angela a hug. “Angela you are brilliant! Thank you so much! How could I have missed it?”

“What is the meaning of the salt lakes?” asked Angela.

“It means that it could be used as a landing strip for the aircraft!” replied Ken. “In the USA we have salt lakes where they attempt land speed records with cars and bikes.”

“Yes, we have such a famous salt lake in South Africa too,” said Danny. “It’s called Verneukpan.” Danny moved his finger down on the map and pointed to an area more South of the other salt lakes that Angela had noted. “There was a world speed record attempt many years ago, I think in the nineteen-thirties. It was attempted by a Brit – I cannot remember his name. But I remember his car’s name – it was called the Bluebird. I learnt about this in school in Geography – its one of the few things I can still remember from my school career.” Danny gave a wry smile.

“But, Ken, do you really think they could use the salt lake as an airstrip?” asked Danny.

“Well, if the aircraft can land on a gravel airstrip, I’m sure it can do the same on a salt lake.”

“I’m not so sure,” said Danny. “I think a gravel airstrip may be more concealed. It may even be part of an existing gravel road, which will make it much harder to find.”

The waiter arrived with their food and Ken folded the maps away. “I will have to give it some more thought,” said Ken, “but I’m still certain that the salt lakes are a good place to start looking.”

Danny mentioned that Angela and Ken could start to eat their lunch, because he had an important phone call to make that he had forgotten about. Danny walked out of the restaurant and spent about five minutes talking intently on his cell phone before returning to enjoy his lunch.

Tuesday, 25 April, 15:00. Donald Morse's hideout:

Donald Morse sat in his office, working on the personal computer placed on his desk when Allan entered his office.

"You wanted to see me?" asked Allan as he sat down in a chair in front of the desk.

"Yes. I had a phone call a short while ago about an old friend of ours. Mr. Ken Palmer. Or should I say *Special Agent Ken Palmer*?"

"You mean he's a G-man again?" asked Allan.

"Yep. And he's here in South Africa."

"Let me guess," said Allan. "He's after us again?"

"Yep. He's sniffing our tail and getting a little bit too close."

"Then we'll just have to do something about it," said Allan.

"Here's how we are going to take care of it: Gerald, Simon, Hank and Joshua are still on the Magaliesburg farm, aren't they?"

"Yes," replied Allan. "They are supposed to come back tonight."

"Okay, inform them that we have a little job for them tonight. They can come back tomorrow night. This is what they have to do..."

Tuesday, 25 April, 17:40. O.R.Tambo International Airport, Kempton Park, South Africa:

The flight from Cape Town touched down at the O.R.Tambo International Airport at 17:40 that afternoon. Ken, Angela and Danny decided to have dinner before heading out for their 20:00 meeting in Marlboro North. They left the airport at 18:30. Danny drove in front and took them on the R25 through Kempton Park to miss the rush-hour traffic at the Gilooly's interchange on the highway. They drove in an easterly direction on the R25 for about 25 minutes, past the towns of Modderfontein and Edenvale, and then turned north on the N3 highway. They drove for about 10 minutes and turned left on the Marlboro Road off-ramp.

They drove east on Marlboro Road for another 10 minutes and then turned right into an industrial area and reached the office of the *Pervide* courier company. A security guard opened the gate for them and they parked in front of the building.

They were met by Mandisi Makwana, the Managing Director of the company. He was short and stocky with a bald head and had a continuous smile on his face. He led them to a boardroom and asked them to sit down at the table. He asked if they wanted to have anything to drink, but they all declined.

“Mr. Makwana,” said Ken, “we would just like to enquire about the origin of the packages from Donald Morse that your company had to courier to INN’s offices.”

“We never knew that the packages came from Donald Morse,” said Mandisi. “What happened was that we received the packages from the Post Office’s own couriers. Each time that we received a package, it had originated from a different Post Office throughout the country. The NIA has already tried to trace the origin of the packages, but in each case a false name and address had been supplied. Inside each package was another package with INN’s address on it and instructions for us to courier it there. There was also a proof of payment of the required amount into our bank account, so we complied with the instructions each time.”

“Could you please give us copies of the documents that came with each package from the Post Office?” asked Danny. “We could send our men to each of those Post Offices and investigate if someone could not perhaps remember what the person looked like who brought the package into the Post Office. It’s a long shot, but we must try every avenue.” Ken thought that it was a waste of time, but he decided not to mention it to Danny. At least Danny had some manpower available to perform the investigations.

“I will arrange that,” said Mandisi, “but you must give me time until tomorrow. There is no-one left at the office tonight that can assist me.”

“That’s fine,” said Danny. “We’ll send someone here tomorrow to collect it.”

When they walked out to their cars Danny said to Ken and Angela: “On the way here I heard over the car radio that there was a big accident at the

Allandale road crossing on the N1 highway that caused a major traffic jam, and they expected it to last several hours. Unfortunately, from here it is going to be the shortest road home, but I have an alternative route that we can take that won't be much longer."

"Okay," said Ken, "what do we do?"

"From here we get back onto Marlboro road, but in the opposite direction from which we came. We are quite close to the M1-North highway, and we could use it for a while, but I suggest that we turn right just before we get onto the highway. This road is called Pretoria Main Road. This road runs more or less parallel to the highway and goes past the Buccleuch suburb, where the road's name becomes the Old Pretoria Road. We will carry on with this road until we get to Midrand. There we will still carry on with the same road until we get to New Road, where we turn left towards the N1 highway, and then we turn right after crossing the highway to get onto it. This means that we would have bypassed Allandale road and then it should be plain sailing to get into Pretoria."

"Ken, let me drive," said Angela. "You've done all the driving up to now."

"Thanks," said Ken. "Here is the key."

Chapter 9

Tuesday, 25 April, 20:45. Buccleuch, South Africa:

Very soon they were on Old Pretoria Road that ran past the Buccleuch suburb, situated on their right. It was already 20:45. They drove in a northerly direction and Ken estimated that the highway must be on their left, although it was too far off to see it. There were no buildings on their left side. The road was very dark, since there were no streetlights. The only lights that they could distinguish were the taillights of Danny's car ahead of them. There was also very little traffic on the road.

"This is strange," said Ken. "One would have expected more traffic on this road. I mean if there is an accident on the highway, more people should know about this road and use it to bypass the accident."

"Yes, now that you mention it, it is somewhat strange. Maybe the accident was cleared up much sooner than expected and the traffic is flowing on the highway again."

"Yes, maybe."

The road had a speed limit of 80 kilometers per hour, but Danny was doing 120 kilometers per hour. Angela had to concentrate hard to keep up with him. The road was descending in front of them and curved to the left just before a small bridge across a stream.

A car moved in behind them and started to overtake them on their right. Ken and Angela did not take notice of it and they did not see the muzzle of the Heckler und Koch G36C assault rifle pointing towards their vehicle from the left rear window of the other car. Four shots aimed at their front right wheel rang out in quick succession. One of the bullets penetrated the tire and it burst, causing the car to swerve to the right. The other car swerved to the left, bumped into their left side and pushed their Chrysler Neon to the left side of the road.

Ken realized what was happening, but he was powerless to do anything about it. Angela struggled to keep control of the car. She pressed hard on the brake pedal, but they had already left the side of the road and were moving downhill across the gravel, rocks and grass at high speed. Trees flashed passed them as the car jumped up and down and Ken just prayed that they did not crash into a tree. Ken heard scratches of metal against metal and saw sparks fly as the car burst through a wire fence. The car's nose suddenly dipped down into a wide ditch and the nose smashed into the opposite side of the ditch. The two front airbags inflated in a flash and Ken felt the airbag pressing into his face.

Ken managed to release his seatbelt and opened his door. "Angela, are you okay?" he shouted. "We have to get out as quickly as possible!"

"Ken, help me!" shouted Angela. "My door is stuck. I can't get out!"

"Get out on my side!"

"My foot is also stuck! Please help me quickly!"

"I'm on my way!"

While Ken got out of his door, four figures with flashlights in their hands came running down the slope towards the car. One flashlight caught Ken just as he was about to climb over the smashed front end of the car to go to Angela's assistance. Two gunshots rang out, both hitting the body of the car very close to Ken. Ken ducked out of the way and more shots were fired, the bullets flying harmlessly over his head and slamming into the side of the ditch.

Ken ran along the ditch, away from the car, to escape the shots being fired at him. He wanted to fire back, but he realized he must first get himself into a position of relative safety, or else his attackers will mow him down.

Up to that point in time, only pistol shots had been fired, but suddenly an automatic sub-machine gun joined in. Ken ran for his life and he managed to escape the searching flashlights, causing the attackers to fire blind. Ken fell once, but immediately got up and ran on. He spotted a large rock to his left and decided to use that for cover.

Ken maneuvered himself in behind the rock, sank to his knees and peered over the rock. The shooting has stopped, since his attackers realized they were wasting their bullets. Ken saw only two flashlights moving in his general direction.

Ken knew he had to go and help Angela before it was too late. The only way to get to her now was to fight back. Ken pulled the Sig Sauer P226 out of his hip holster, cocked the gun, and tried to aim in the general direction of one of the flashlights. He pulled the trigger twice, saw the light drop to the ground and heard a scream of agony.

He saw the other flashlight go out. His attacker most probably did not want Ken to shoot at him as well. Suddenly Ken's cell phone started to ring and Ken nearly jumped up from the fright he got. He pulled the phone out from his pocket and decided to leave it on the ground next to the rock. He scampered away from the rock and then heard the sub-machine gun firing again. He looked around and saw sparks flying from the rock. His cell phone kept on ringing.

Ken wanted to circle back to the car. He had to get to Angela! He put the gun back in its holster and climbed up the left side of the ditch. Once out of the ditch, he could hear his pursuer's footsteps behind him. As Ken started to run away, a few small loose rocks fell into the ditch and focused the attacker's attention to that point. The flashlight came on once more and the Heckler und Koch G36C assault rifle started to fire again as the attacker got a glimpse of Ken's feet in the light.

A bullet cut through the side of Ken's right shoe and knocked him off balance. He fell down and knocked his head against the ground. Somewhat dazed, he stumbled up and started to run just as his attacker was climbing up the side of the ditch. Ken pulled the gun out of its holster, stopped and turned around, but it was just darkness around him, He fired off two quick

shots in the direction from which he had left the ditch, and then ran forward again.

A burst from the sub-machine gun sounded again, but was off target and the bullets flew harmlessly past Ken. Ken increased his pace. Time was running out. *I simply have to get to Angela!*

Ken's foot caught on a branch lying on the ground and he fell down heavily, his gun scattering away from him. He got up on his feet and scurried away to his right to confuse the attacker.

Ken's feet suddenly gave way under him and he fell through some undergrowth into another ditch, much smaller than the one the car had crashed into. As Ken fell down, his head slammed against a rock in the side of the ditch and he everything went black. Ken's feet hit the bottom of the ditch first and his body rolled down a slight slope, but Ken was unaware of what was happening. His body came to a standstill, but he was out cold, and therefore he was not able hear Angela's screams that cut through the quiet night air.

Ken's attacker ran straight on, past the ditch into which Ken had fallen. He stopped to hear where Ken was running to but there was no sound. He thought that Ken may be lying somewhere, waiting for him and so he did not dare to switch on his flashlight. He started to walk slowly forward to be able to hear when Ken would start to run again. His shoe kicked something as he walked and there was a metallic sound as the object moved over the ground.

He stopped and his hand swept over the ground. Then he felt the object and picked it up. It was a gun! He knew that he could switch on his flashlight now and started to look around him, but he not see anything. After searching around for a minute or two, he walked back to the car to get some help.

Ken slowly came out of consciousness and wondered where he was. He gradually remembered what had happened. He had a splitting headache and felt the side of his head. He could feel a swelling and a little blood.

Ken heard footsteps and voices close to him. The sounds seemed to come from above him. He noticed that he was lying in a ditch and there was a large natural hole in the side of the ditch next to him. He crawled into the hole and covered up the entrance to the hole as good as he could with branches, grass and leaves that he found in the ditch.

The sounds were getting closer. "Look, here's a ditch," said a male voice. "Maybe he's down here."

"Yeah, let's take a look," said a second male voice.

Ken heard shuffling noises as the two men descended down to the floor of the ditch. "No, there's nothing here," said the first voice. "Where could he be?"

"I've got no idea," replied the second voice. "But we'd better get out of here. The cops will be here soon. I'm sure the others will be finished with the lady cop by now."

"But I'm sure I've hit him," said the first voice. "He fell down and dropped his gun."

"But there's no blood around here."

"It's so dark that we easily may have missed it. I wish we had night-vision equipment with us. Maybe he crawled away and lies dead under a bush somewhere."

"You'd better hope that is the case. I he's still alive your head's gonna be on the block."

"Well, if he hadn't shot Simon, we would have got him."

Ken listened how the two men climbed out of the ditch and how their footsteps and voices faded away. He had a sick feeling in the pit of his stomach. He was sure they must have done something to Angela and he cursed himself for not being able to get to her in time.

Something about the voices bothered Ken. Then he knew what it was. The voices were definitely American. *They must have been some of Donald Morse's cronies. But how did they manage to find out where we were? They must have had inside information. But from whom? Could it be Danny? If not, who else? Maybe Danny had radioed in and someone was eavesdropping on the police frequency.*

Ken shook his head to try and clear it. There was a constant throbbing pain on the left side of his head and it felt that he could not think clearly.

A piercing pain shot through Ken's neck and head when he crawled out of the hole and tried to get onto his feet. He felt dizzy and his knees buckled under him. He had to push his hand against the side of the ditch to keep himself upright. When the dizziness subsided, Ken slowly climbed out of the

ditch. The pain in his head was excruciating and he felt nauseous. He had to sit down for a few moments to wait for the pain to release its grip on him.

Feeling somewhat better, Ken started to walk in the direction of where he thought the car would be. It was difficult to find his way in the darkness, but eventually he spotted the car's back end pointing out of the ditch. He wondered what they had done to Angela.

He climbed into the ditch and walked up to the left front door of the car. The door was closed. He couldn't remember closing the door when he got out of the car. Everything had happened so fast that that he was sure he would not have closed the door.

When his hand closed on the door handle, he suddenly pulled his hand back. He had felt something like half-dried cement on the door handle. Some of the substance stuck to his fingertips and he rubbed his fingertips against each other. He was sure it felt like half-dried cement. He reached out to open the door again.

Tuesday, 25 April, 21:25. Donald Morse's hideout:

Karen and Derrick sat in the dining room of their suite of rooms in Donald Morse's underground complex, watching the television.

"Why do you think Donald told us to look at the TV tonight?" asked Derrick.

"Hopefully he is going to announce our release," replied Karen, "but I doubt it. I think he is rather going to release an important statement regarding the nuclear weapons to his disposal."

The television showed the INN newscast. The announcer stated that they had received another DVD statement from Donald Morse and subsequently the image cut over to Donald's video. Donald's face appeared on the screen.

"I have an important announcement to make. I want everyone to listen very closely, because that may just save many lives. I have placed a nuclear bomb in the Katse dam in Lesotho. This dam supplies much needed water to the Gauteng Province in South Africa, the heartland of its economy. On Thursday 27 April, at 12:00 noon South African Time, the nuclear device will explode, unless my demands have been met before that time.

“My demands are simply the following: I want an area in South Africa, as described in my interview with Karen Visser of INN, to be declared a sovereign country belonging to my organization, by the South African Government and the United Nations. I want this area to be handed over officially to my organization and that South Africa and the United Nations will agree to work out a compensation mechanism for the people who have to migrate to South Africa in one month’s time.

“The nuclear device in the Katse dam is a mini-nuclear bomb that will generate very little radiation, but will have more than enough blast power to burst the dam wall and to let all the water in the dam spill out. This will cause the Gauteng Province to have a shortage of water for a long time to come.

“Naturally, people who live downstream from the dam wall will have to be evacuated for many kilometers from the site. Any attempt to remove the nuclear bomb will result in an immediate explosion. Please be warned and take this threat very seriously.”

With that, the view switched back to the INN studio presenter. Karen suddenly thought about the dream she had on the first night in Donald’s hideout. *Was it just a figment of my sub-conscious imagination or was it a premonition of things to come?*

Tuesday, 25 April, 21:27. Buccleuch, South Africa:

Ken opened the car’s left front door and peeked inside. The car’s courtesy light switched on automatically and he saw Angela still sitting in the driver’s seat. The airbag had been deflated and she sat with her head tilted backwards and to the side. Her hands had been tied together behind the seat with some rope. Her eyes were open, but Ken could immediately see that she was dead.

Ken climbed into the passenger seat, leaned over, and closed Angela’s eyes with his fingertips. He looked at her face. Her mouth was open, her teeth bared – or what little he could see from her teeth. Her whole mouth and most of her teeth were covered in semi-dried cement. Streaks of cement ran down her throat and neck onto her clothes. It looked like the attackers dumped wet cement down her throat until she suffocated.

“Damn! What a terrible way to die,” said Ken to himself. “You bastards!” shouted Ken. “May your souls rot in hell! And Donald, that goes for you too! I will get you for this! I will get you for taking Karen hostage and I will get you for murdering Angela! If it’s the last thing I ever do, I will get you for this!”

Ken felt sick and got out of the car. The throbbing in his head got worse. He sat down next to the car for a few moments and took a number of deep breaths. He knew he had to contact someone and put his hand into his jacket’s inside pocket. His cell phone was not there. Then he remembered what he had done with it. He walked to the rock where he had left the cell phone and it was still lying behind the rock. He picked it up and walked back to the car.

Standing next to the car, he pressed a button on the cell phone to turn the screen’s light on. He saw that there was a missed call on his cell phone. He remembered that the phone had rung when he had been hiding behind the rock. It was Danny’s number. He saw that a voice message had been left and he dialed the number to retrieve the message.

It was Danny: “Hi Ken, its Danny. I haven’t seen your car’s headlights in my rear view mirror for a while. I’m pulling to the side of the road and will wait for a few minutes. Just carry on straight with the same road. Please call me when you get this message.”

Ken decided to call Ray first. He selected Ray’s number and waited while the phone rang in his ear.

“Hi, Ken! How did it go today?”

“Hi Ray. I’ll tell you about that later. But for now I’ve got some bad news.”

“What is it? What happened?”

“Angela and I were attacked on our way back from the interview tonight. Ray ...” There was a lump in Ken’s throat and he had to swallow hard. “Ray, Angela is dead.”

“No!”

“Yes, she was killed in the most gruesome way. I’ll tell you about it later on.”

“This is really shocking news. And you? Are you okay?”

“Yes, I just got a bump to the head, but I’m okay.”

“Where’s Danny?” asked Ray.

“I don’t know. He drove in front of us, but our car was ambushed and I assume he did not notice anything. He left a message on my cell during the attack to say that he was looking for us. I haven’t called him back yet. Ray, I’m worried about him. How did the attackers know how to find us? Danny said that we should follow a side road past Buccleuch, because there was a big traffic jam on the N1 highway. I thought that he may have radioed in on the police radio and our attackers had been eavesdropping.”

“Yes, that’s a possibility. We could always have it checked out. But at least he did call you when he noticed that you were not following him.”

“It may just have been a case of ‘CYA.’”

“Cover your ass?”

“Yes. But there’s another way that we can check it out. Could you find out if there was a traffic jam due to an accident on the N1 highway tonight? It was supposed to be at the Allandale road crossing.”

“That’s a good idea. But where are you Ken? I want to get to you before there is another attack.” Ken described his position to Ray.

“I’ll be on my way immediately,” said Ray. “I’ll also organize another place for you to stay tonight. It is going to be too dangerous at the hotel. Don’t tell Danny about it for now.”

“Okay. See you later.” Ken hung up and phoned Danny.

“Hi, Danny speaking.”

“Danny, its Ken.”

“Huh, what? Ken? Where are you? What happened?”

“Angela and I were attacked. She is dead.”

“What? Did you say she is dead?”

“Yes, it’s true.” Ken described his position to Danny.

“Okay, I’ve already turned back a few minutes ago to look for you. I should be there soon. I’ll notify the police as well.”

“I’ve already broken the news to Ray,” said Ken. “He is on his way here.” Ken thought he should let Danny know, just in case.

Ken felt for his gun and felt the holster was empty. He remembered that he had dropped his gun earlier and that one of the attackers had mentioned

picking it up. He wondered if they had taken Angela's gun. He bent into the passenger side of the car and placed his hand on Angela's left hip, where she carried her gun. He tried not to look at her face. The gun was still in its holster and Ken removed it and placed it in his own holster. It made him feel a little bit safer.

Ken walked to the side of the road to await Danny's arrival. The road was quiet and only two cars passed him before Danny arrived after about seven minutes. Ken indicated to Danny where the car was lying in the ditch and Danny went to take a look at it and to see what had happened to Angela. Ken waited by the side of the road for Ray's arrival. He did not feel like joining Danny.

Danny came back after a few minutes, shaking his head from side to side, and said: "It really looks bad. These guys were definitely trying to make a statement."

"Yeah, like 'don't mess with us,'" said Ken.

"I think I've got a flashlight in my car," said Danny and started to scratch around in his car. He appeared with a flashlight in his hand and switched it on to check if its batteries were still good.

"I'm going back to your car to take a closer look," said Danny and disappeared into the darkness.

Ken leaned back against Danny's car and waited. Ray's car appeared after another fifteen minutes. Ken walked with Ray to the car in the ditch and they met Danny there. Danny handed the flashlight to Ray and he also went in to take a look at Angela.

"It's horrible," said Ray. "I've never seen anything like this."

Two policemen arrived in a marked police pick-up truck, a sergeant and a constable, and started to ask questions. Danny showed his credentials and told them that he would be in charge of the investigation. Ken gave a brief account of what had happened and mentioned that he was sure that he had shot one of the attackers.

"We'll monitor all hospitals for admittance of someone with a gunshot wound," said Danny.

"I'm going to take Ken to the hotel," said Ray. "He can write a report tomorrow. He's been through enough already today."

Danny agreed and said that he would handle things from there on. He would arrange for Angela's body to be taken to a morgue. Ken took his notebook computer from the car. Ken and Ray drove away in Ray's car and left Danny and the police on the scene.

"I've booked you into a guesthouse in the east of Pretoria," said Ray. "It is owned by a friend of mine and I therefore could get you a room this late at night. But first, I am taking you to hospital to take a look at that head of yours and then we'll stop by your hotel and pick up your things."

"Don't worry," said Ken. "My head is fine. I've just got the mother of all headaches."

"Okay, I'll ask my friend at the guesthouse for some antiseptic and headache tablets and to just clean that wound of yours before I leave."

On the way to the hotel, Ken informed Ray about everything that had occurred during the attack.

"We will know about Danny's involvement in the attack by tomorrow," said Ray.

"What's on our plate for tomorrow?" asked Ken.

"We have a tight schedule tomorrow," said Ray. "At 10:00 we have an appointment to see Dr. Josef Meyer, the retired head of the South African nuclear development program. We have to leave at 07:30, since it's a two-and-a-half hour drive to his farm. Then we've got a meeting at 14:00 with NICOC, the South African National Intelligence Coordinating Committee, and the Lesotho Government. It will be held at the US Embassy."

"By the way," said Ray, "Donald Morse has sent out another statement on video. And this time he has made a threat." Ray continued to tell Ken about the threat to blow up the Katse dam.

"I knew it wasn't going to be long before he started revealing his cards," said Ken. "I don't know what his real intentions are at this stage, but I'm sure we will figure it out soon."

After picking up Ken's belongings from the hotel, Ray took Ken to the small *Jacaranda Flower* guesthouse, situated in Faerie Glen, a residential area in the eastern suburbs of Pretoria, where the owner, Bill Gibson, was waiting for them. Bill was a warm, friendly person, befitting of a guesthouse owner. He was middle-aged with a round face and a potbelly and was an American

who had settled in South Africa a number of years before. He showed Ken to his room and Ray helped Ken to get his luggage into the room. Ray cleaned the cut on Ken's head and put a piece of plaster on it. Bill also gave Ken two aspirins for his headache.

After Ray had left, Ken took a shower and went to bed. He first searched for a re-run of Donald's statement on a television news channel and viewed it. Then he switched the television off and tried to sleep. However, he had trouble sleeping. Every time that he would close his eyes, Angela's face with the gaping mouth and cement dripping from it appeared in front of him. Eventually, at about 02:00, his worn out body could take it no longer and he fell into a deep sleep.

Wednesday, 26 April, 07:30. *Jacaranda Flower* guesthouse, Pretoria, South Africa:

The sun was shining brightly when Ray picked Ken up at the guesthouse. They took the N4 highway in an easterly direction towards the Mpumalanga Province. Ken tried not to think about the previous night's events, but to focus his mind on what he needed to ask Dr. Josef Meyer later on.

After an hour's drive, they passed the town of Witbank and ten minutes later Ray stopped at the petrol station and rest area next to the highway, just after a tollgate. Ray filled up his car and they coffee and tea at the takeaway restaurant.

A few minutes after getting back on the highway, Ray's cell phone rang. He talked on it for a few seconds and hung up.

"Looks like your hunch about Danny was right," said Ray. "There was no accident, nor a traffic jam, apart from the normal rush-hour congestion, on the N1 highway near Allandale road last night. Also, no radio station sent out such a traffic report last night."

"Did you manage to find out whether Danny sent out a radio call on the police radio about the route we were going to use?" asked Ken.

"No, not yet. This is a bit trickier and somewhat sensitive, but we are still working on it."

"And where's Danny now? Do you know?" asked Ken.

“No, nobody has seen him today, and his cell phone is switched off. My people are going to work through the correct channels in the police to try and get hold of him and failing that to put out an order for his arrest.”

“But that may take too much time. If he’s involved in all of this, it will simply give him the opportunity to slip away permanently.”

“Unfortunately, this is the situation,” replied Ray. “We are in a foreign country and have to observe protocol and work through the correct channels.”

They passed the town of Middelburg after five minutes and after another thirty minutes later they turned left off the highway and entered the small town of Belfast. They carried on through Belfast and drove for another fifteen minutes when Ray slowed down the vehicle to look for the farm’s entrance. He spotted the sign and turned left off the main road.

Wednesday, 26 April, 10:00. Dr. Josef Meyer’s farm near Belfast, South Africa:

Ken had to get out of the car to open the gate for Ray. They drove for another ten minutes on a twin-track dirt road and stopped in front of the farmhouse. It was a house built in the nineteen-fifties with white walls and a red corrugated iron roof. Two large Rottweilers charged up to the car and barked viciously.

“I’m not getting out here,” said Ray. “Let’s wait for the owner.”

Soon a man dressed in khaki clothes, hiking boots and a brown leather hat appeared from behind the house and shouted at the two dogs. Immediately, they calmed down and with distrusting looks on their faces they walked back from the car, but still kept the occupants of the car in their field of vision. Ray and Ken got out of the car and the man came up to greet them. He was about seventy years old, but still had the gait of a much younger man. His face and arms were suntanned and sinewy. He was of medium height, had grey hair and a grey beard and wore gold-rimmed glasses. He extended his right hand and introduced himself: “Good morning, I am Josef Meyer.”

Ray introduced Ken and himself.

“Let’s go and sit on the porch,” said Dr. Josef Meyer. “It’s such a fabulous day.” He led them up the stairs to the large porch covering the whole front side of the house. Josef Meyer indicated to a table and chairs and Ken and Ray sat down.

“Can I get you some coffee or tea?” asked Josef.

Ken asked for black tea and Ray settled for coffee. Josef disappeared inside his house to place the order. When he came back, he sat down beside them.

“Okay, gentlemen, why did you want to see me?”

“We are busy investigating this character, Donald Morse,” said Ken, “who has stolen the plutonium from the ship and claims to have South African scientists working for him to produce his own nuclear bombs. What particularly concern us are the claims that he has made about the nuclear weapons that his helpers have provided him with – weapons that supposedly came from the disbanded South African nuclear program – weapons that officially do not exist.”

“So what exactly do you want to know?”

“Do these weapons really exist? I mean, were these weapons actually designed and manufactured by the South African nuclear program?”

“Which weapons are you talking about, exactly?” asked Josef.

“The thermonuclear weapons and the mini-nukes,” replied Ken.

“Officially, no. Not even the president of the country at that time knew about them. Our official stance was that we had managed to manufacture only six-and-a-half gun-type fission weapons. And these were the weapons shown to the president and the world.”

“Why was the information about the thermonuclear weapons and the mini-nukes not disclosed?” asked Ken.

“It was top-secret information. The gun-type fission weapons were only built as a smokescreen, and we were allowed to disclose information about them. Although it was widely known that we were working on thermonuclear devices, no-one knew that we had actually completed the designs and built some of these weapons.”

Josef Meyer cleared his throat and continued: “But there was also a lot of pressure from inside the program. There was a right-wing faction who was

scared about what would happen if a black government should take over the country. They wanted an insurance policy. Just before we disclosed our program, we discovered that some of the thermonuclear bombs and mini-nukes were removed by the right-wing group. The rest of us had sympathy for how they felt, so we did not report it.

“Also, we have worked on the nuclear program for many years. It was born out of a dire need to protect our country against the Communist threat. We have struggled as a team to design and develop these weapons over many years. As scientists, we were extremely proud of what we have achieved. We would have hated to see our life’s work being destroyed. Collectively, we decided that no one would get access to our designs and weapons, ever. Although, no one could ever use what we as scientists had developed, it gave us a sense of satisfaction to know that we had been able to design and build these things, and they are still out there. It would be like a monument that no one could see.

“The right-wing group also promised us that the weapons they had removed would only be used if the white man’s existence in this country was ever threatened. So we made a pact amongst ourselves. The weapons and designs would be hidden and we would never talk about it again. No-one could sell the technology to any other world power or terrorist group and the completed weapons would never be used in any conflict.”

“Until some of the right-wingers have done so after joining up with Donald Morse,” commented Ray.

“Why are you disclosing this information to us now?” asked Ken from Josef Meyer.

“Because Donald Morse and his scientist already admitted that it existed. There’s no need to cover it up any more.”

Josef’s wife brought the coffee and tea out to them on a tray, placed the tray on the table, and went back into the house after the introductions had been made. They helped themselves to the drinks before continuing the conversation.

“Can you give some background on the nuclear development program?” asked Ken.

“It all really started with the nuclear explosions on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of the Second World War. In the aftermath of the war, America and Britain wanted to assert Western military superiority in the post-war world and they hunted globally for stable uranium supplies for their proposed nuclear weapon programs. They discovered that the Witwatersrand gold-mining area around Johannesburg produced uranium as a by-product. They secretly approached South Africa’s then Prime Minister, Jan Smuts, to make the uranium transfers between South Africa and the other two countries possible. America and Britain also assisted with the finances to organize the separation of the uranium from the gold and South Africa provided most of their uranium needs between 1950 and 1964.

“This prompted Jan Smuts to establish the autonomous Atomic Energy Board, or the AEB, in 1948 that would be in charge of the control of fissile material. However, Jan Smuts was also ousted in the elections in 1948, and control of the country was taken over by the National Party, the later Apartheid government. It is therefore important to understand that the entire history of the AEB also coincided with the establishment of Apartheid.

“In 1957, America agreed to supply South Africa with a nuclear research reactor, train additional scientists and reactor technicians, and provide fuel for the reactor. This agreement ensured that South Africa had a firm foundation to conduct its civilian nuclear R&D program. Initially the program was housed in Pretoria, but in 1961 it was moved as the Nuclear National Research Centre to Pelindaba, about 30 kilometers west of Pretoria.

“The AEB also started a secret project in the early 1960’s to develop a unique uranium enrichment technology. In 1969 it was decided to start with a pilot uranium enrichment plant at Pelindaba, and this was commissioned in 1974 as the Y-Plant.

“The shifting of the focus on military applications intensified from 1975 onwards, with the withdrawal of Portugal from its colonies, Mozambique and Angola, and the subsequent Communist governments in those countries. This was followed by large-scale intervention in Central and Southern Africa by the Cuban military, which eventually totaled 50,000 troops. The strategic implications of the Soviet involvement in Africa, as well as the ongoing

guerrilla warfare by the Soviet-backed ANC and SWAPO within South Africa and Namibia, only served to strengthen the South African government's need for military nuclear development.

“Until 1978, the nuclear devices were experimental and not linked to any delivery system. With the worsening security situation in South Africa, it was decided that the ability of South Africa to not only build the weapon, but deliver it as well, would increase its credibility as a deterrent in case of a severe external threat. This prompted the responsibility for designing and building the nuclear explosive devices to be reassigned to Armscor. In those days Armscor was the state-owned Armaments Corporation, which is now privatized and called Denel.

“The main nuclear bomb program was moved to the Kentron Circle facility, about 20 kilometers west of Pretoria, which was in the middle of a large existing Armscor facility called Gerotek. The Kentron Circle site was later renamed Advena. Gerotek used to house a large test track for military vehicles. Today it is used as a private test track for motor vehicles.

At the peak of the nuclear development program a separate, more secret program was also established nearby at a place known as Landberg. It was at Landberg where most of the hi-tech weaponry was developed and stored.”

“How did you test the weapons?” asked Ken.

Josef laughed. “In the beginning it was actually very crude. We did not have a place to secretly test the first gun-type weapons, so we performed what was known as ‘tickling the dragon’s tail.’”

“Tickling the dragon’s tail?” asked Ray, not sure that he had heard correctly.

“Yes. The term came from the Manhattan project during World War Two when America was developing its first nuclear bombs. It was an extremely dangerous process where two hemispheres of uranium were brought close to one another very slowly, but never allowed to touch. It was done with a two pairs of screwdrivers held in the person’s bare hands on top of a metal table. A blue glow in the air around the two hemispheres of uranium, caused by ionization of the air itself, indicated that a chain reaction was about to take place and then the two pieces had to be moved away from each other very quickly or the whole place would be blown sky-high. If the

uranium hemispheres were to meet, a true rapid chain reaction and nuclear explosion would not have been produced, but it would have produced a meltdown and a chemical explosion from heat and it would have spread huge amounts of radioactive debris around.”

“I suppose when you actually wanted to explode the bomb, you would ‘tug the dragon’s tail?’” commented Ray with a chuckle.

“Yes,” said Ken, “the dragon will turn around and actually bite your head off!”

“I suppose you could call it that,” replied Josef. “In any case, later tests were performed in deep holes drilled in the Kalahari Desert, although some had been discovered by a Russian satellite. The Russians squealed to the Americans and Jimmy Carter forced us to close the holes. Other tests had been performed in the Southern Indian Ocean, near Prince Edward Island, owned by South Africa. One of these tests was also detected by an American spy satellite. Later on we had developed computer models to do the testing for us.”

“Why did the right-wingers not go in and get the weapons at a later stage?” asked Ken.

“The underground facilities where the weapons are being hidden were sealed off in 1993, and the buildings have been converted into commercial enterprises. The Landberg site is currently used by a private company developing and manufacturing components for the arms industry, such as the electronics used in different kinds of missiles. The premises are also under constant guard. Before we left in 1993, we scientists had managed to lock the designs and weapons left over away in underground vaults that will be very difficult to find. That place is a labyrinth of underground tunnels and vaults.”

“Can the right-wingers get information on the whereabouts from you or anyone else who helped you?”

“No. We took the plans and the keys to a lawyer for safekeeping and we told the right-wingers so.”

“Can you give us names and details of these right-wingers?” asked Ray.

“No, I’m not prepared to do that,” replied Josef.

“We can get a summons for you to testify in court,” said Ray.

“Then do that if you wish,” said Josef. “But I first want some protection.”

“That can be arranged when the time comes.”

“You will have to work with the South African government to get the rest of the weapons out of Landberg and destroy them.”

“Yes, I can do that now that everything is in the open.”

“I want to know some more about the bomb that Donald Morse claimed to have put in the Katse dam in Lesotho,” said Ken. “What is your opinion of this weapon? Will it work, and if so, what type of damage will it cause?”

“If it is one of our mini-nukes, I’m afraid it will work. It will definitely have more than enough power to break the dam wall. I do not know what type of damage all the water will cause downstream.”

“What about the radiation?”

“It is a neutron bomb,” replied Josef, “therefore the radiation will be localized and short-lived. It should dissipate within an hour.”

“How will this bomb be triggered?” asked Ken.

“I assume it will have a timing device so set it off at the pre-determined time. It may also have an anti-tamper device built in, so that the bomb will explode if it is disturbed. In addition, it may have a remote-controlled trigger that will work on ultra-low frequencies, since normal radio waves do not travel through water. The remote-controlled trigger can be used if anyone is seen to get close to the bomb.”

“What would happen when the bomb explodes?” asked Ken.

“The explosion will create a bubble of intensely hot gasses and steam and when it bursts through the surface of the water, a hollow column of water and spray will be shot upward. This may reach a height of about 2,000 meters and it will all happen within 2 seconds after the explosion. A rapidly moving underground shock wave or pressure wave will break open the dam wall and the dam’s water will be let out. A crater will also be formed at the bottom of the dam. A large wave, or multiple waves, will be formed on the surface of the water and travel outwards to the shores of the dam. There will also be a shock wave in the air, which will move slower than the underwater shock wave. The shock wave in the air may be of sufficient strength to

knock any airplane or helicopter, which may venture too close to the explosion, out of the air.”

“Did you tell me everything about the weapons that you have designed and developed in the program?” asked Ken. “I mean, are there any other weapons that you are not telling us about?”

Josef first gazed into the distance and then turned his face to Ken. “No,” replied Josef. “This is it.”

Ken handed Josef a piece of paper. “Here are our telephone numbers if there is anything else that you want to discuss with us in future.”