

CHAPTER 1

"I'm not going to have this fight with you, Bornbazine," Motavato said patiently to his spouse. The apartment was newish and boasted the most modern appliances available, a gift from his father, including an actual refrigerator instead of an icebox.

"But why not?" Chupco-Ben-David asked his husband. "We've been married less than a week. Every other soldier in the OCP gets at least two weeks! Isn't that a rule or something?"

It was, and Motavato knew it. Births, deaths, marriages and other life-altering events were afforded a standard two-week leave time, more if necessary. But they'd been met at the apartment door by a note telling him to call his command as soon as he could.

That's when he made the first of what turned out to be an avalanche of mistakes. He'd called, and the telephone had been answered before the second ring.

"Manna-hata (New York City) Headquarters. Sesquiplicarius (Corporal) Bidder speaking," the answer at the other end came with military precision.

"Sesquiplicarius, this is Ohitika (Lieutenant) Ben-David," he nodded yes to Bornbazine while speaking on the phone, who was holding up a bottle of wine. "I had a note to call taped to my door?" he asked. It was unusual, but so was his father's occupation. He might have left him a note of encouragement or congratulations. With David Ben-David, one just never knew.

"One moment, Ohitika. I'll connect you with the duty officer."

"Senior Meoquanee (Major) Soctomah," came the simple answer on the other end of the line as Motavato had his first sip of wine.

"Senior Meoquanee, this is Ohitika Ben-David," he reported.

"You're late," the superior officer's voice remonstrated him over the phone.

"Senior Meoquanee, I'm on authorized leave," Motavato defended himself. "I just got married."

"Exigencies of the military, Ohitika. You're to report to your duty station, now."

"Senior Meoquanee, it's eight o'clock at night," Ben-David replied.

"Yes, I know it's 8:00 o'clock at night. Your orders, Ohitika (Lieutenant), are to report for duty upon receipt of notification. Your phone call is being logged in as your acknowledgement of that fact. You now have twenty minutes to report to the Manna-hata Military Complex. Your failure to appear, Ohitika, will appear in my report," the Senior Meoquanee (Major) informed him.

"Thank you for the conversation, Senior Meoquanee," Motavato said politely, and put the receiver back in the base carefully when his immediate desire was to throw it across the room.

"What?" Chupco-Ben-David asked. He brought the wine bottle over to his husband.

"I've been called up and have to report immediately," he explained. "No more wine for me tonight, I guess. I'll call as soon as I can," he hugged his husband. His stiff response suggested to Motavato that he was wounded by his decision to leave him in the middle of the night. That's when the argument began.

"I'm not going to have this fight with you," the Ohitika repeated.

"I can't believe you're leaving me," he whined.

"I said I'd call. There's tens of thousands of other men and women on the frontline that aren't getting to call anyone tonight," the Ohitika said.

"Fine," Bornbazine slammed out of the room and went into the bathroom.

Well, it was a fun week while it lasted, Motavato thought reaching for the front door knob.

The four-engine, converted bomber droned incessantly despite the sound deadening material in the passenger cabin. The bomb bay doors were sealed shut, of course, and the machinegun position had been carefully covered, so that only a practiced eye would know where to look. The cavernous fuselage was filled with larger than airline-type seating bolted to the floor, but surrounding tables in clusters of five and six chairs. There were men and women around acting as waiters and waitresses, as if they were in a modern cafe, but it would be incorrect to misidentify the KMAKA agents as servants. It would be just as ridiculous in thinking a shark was a porpoise.

Leaving Tenskwatawa (Kansas City) following the wedding, the party consisting of the Great Council, Altsoba Abooksigun Toikiming, David Ben-David, and various functionaries crowded into the rear of the aircraft departed for points west. In fact, so far west that it was going east to the Land of the Rising Sun. Their first stop was Camp R west of Tsetsehestahese (Denver). The three members comprising the Great Council allowed themselves to be ushered around the secure grounds of the Camp without interrupting Hausis Chupco and her explanation of the various processes and what the final product would look like. None of them understood it any more than Ben-David did. For Toikiming it was the first time he'd heard anything about the project and what it would mean to the nature of war. He wasn't sure he liked it.

Boarding the modified aircraft two days later at Tsetsehestahese Airdrome, none of the five brought up the secret of *Mapiya keezheekoni* (Sky Fire), as if they were absorbed in the long-term implications of the project. Normally, and most expeditiously, the flight would have traveled to Suquamish (Seattle) and then to Kiksadi (Sitka), before heading to Edo, the Eastern Capital of the Japanese Empire. But this flight was not only an opportunity for the Great Council

to meet with the Nippon Emperor, but also a chance to visit with Wolakota (Pacific) Island friends and allies. As the customized bomber lifted off from Tsetsehestahese, it headed west over the Iyaxesica (Rocky) Mountains, next stop, Atsugewi (Sacramento) the Western Capital of Our Confederated Peoples.

Marquesas (Hawaii) was within range of the aircraft, but it was a long ride regardless. The OCP had been long allied to the Sunset Peoples, as they called the occupants of the various islands between Amerindian and the Asian Continent. Ships, and later airplanes, were welcome at those destinations, and it behooved the Great Council or their representatives to *treat* with the Polynesian allies.

As the five principles gathered around a square table, Ben-David dismissed the guards/waiters. The conversation needed to be had, but it didn't need to be overheard by anyone not completely briefed on the situation.

"Commissioner Ben-David, explain to us the progress of *Mapiya keezheekoni*," Quay Li demanded of Kimi Akicita's (KMAKA) chief, as he settled himself around the table.

At seventy-four, Quay Li was the Council's elder, revered by all and loved by none. As a boy, he'd been raised in the fishing village Bayougoula (New Orleans), from which his family harvested the fruit of the Gulf for ages. Li was educated in undistinguished schools, content to make his living as a fisherman. That was until his thirteenth year when he was introduced to *The Books of Angwusnasomtaqa*. The knowledge of the prophet flowed through his veins with the turning of the final page, and in that moment he dedicated his life to the betterment of all people. Bespeaking of his Asian heritage, Li wore his hair in one single braid.

"Now that we have Hausis Chupco back, the project should be concluded and ready for a trial sometime in the spring," David answered honestly. Hausis was trapped behind the

European Command's line while visiting her boy friend on Beothuk Island (Newfoundland). Her rescue had been affected by David's two sons, along with two of his best agents. She was immediately returned to complete her work enriching fissionable material. That had cost the program almost an entire year.

"Councilor Quay, this *Mapiya keezheekoni* . . ." The Altsoba questioned. His previous position as a commander in the field carried with it no special knowledge, but his elevation to his current status demanded that he be included in the tour of Camp R.

"David," Councilor Pules Montauk indicated Ben-David should fill in the empty space in the man's education.

"What Ealahweemah Flo, Dr. Rowtag Ohsweken, Abedabun Eskalapia and the others have been doing at Camp R is building a bomb," David began, hoping he could find the words necessary to explain an abstract concept.

Abooksigun grunted. He was a military man; had been all his life. The military was always improving weapons of war. That was no surprise and for a moment he wondered why the Great Council would involve themselves in such a petty matter.

"Get used to the idea, *one bomb; one city*," David said, immediately gathering Toikiming's attention.

One bomb; one city? The Altsoba's mind inquired of itself. "How can this be?" he scoffed.

"If I could tell you, you wouldn't understand it any better than I could," David promised him. "We're talking about an explosive device that literally can lay waste to a city the size of Mashauwomuk (Boston)," he said to describe the magnitude of the detonation that would alter the complexity of war. "*ATSILA* was the name of the first fission weapon, but we've moved

forward since then. Now, we are in the final stages of *Mapiya keezheekoni*. Think of the power of the weapon I have just described to you and now think that as only being a trigger for a much large detonation – on the order of ten, fifty, a hundred times larger.”

"Sorge!" the military man swore.

"Indeed so, Altsoba," Huritt Kagan assured him. Younger than Quay by almost half his years, the forty-three year old from Hochelaga (Montreal) was the leading proponent of the quick development of nuclear power for use as a weapon. He reasoned that if the EC could gain a toe-hold on Beothuk Island, then radical means would be necessary to dislodge them.

"Indeed so," Kagan said in a quieter voice. He ran his hand through his short, European-style hair, an affectation his generation and the current one embraced. "As powerful as the Europeans are becoming, we'll have need of such weapons as soon as they can be developed."

"I caution that the Great Council must ultimately maintain control of these weapons," counseled the former professor of health care at Tenskwatawa Universita (Kansas City). Her double braided hair wasn't the result so much of tradition as it was practicality. Even as a homeopathic healer, there were times surgery was necessary. When that occurred, it was much easier to tuck under her cap. Pules Montauk was born and raised in Suquamish (Seattle), the large city on the West Coast of the nation. Landlocked for many decades now, she was looking forward to returning home and enjoying her final years on the beach.

Altsoba Abooksigun Toikiming didn't necessarily like that response. If the device was a weapon of war, then rightfully it belonged with the military. He was the military. The Altsoba was, in fact, the products of the OCP Army. His own mother had been a proud Taxiarchos (Colonel), who moved from one military installation after another during his youth, his father - a school teacher - and their one son following along. His mother passed away over the years and

he'd become estranged from his father, who never enjoyed his wife's position in the military and had encouraged him to do something better with his life.

Abooksigun shook his proud head with the double braids of a warrior. "What of the OZKI?" he asked about the military intelligence involvement in the secret.

"KMAKA has that privilege," replied David Ben-David. It had been in the notes he'd purloined escaping from the Continent that advanced the OCP's research in the critical area in the first place. "*Mapiya keezheekoniI* is guarded by my organization."

As a young Jew growing up in Germany, he'd known prejudice and discrimination all of his life. But living in the Jewish quarter of the city to a large degree inoculated him from the day-to-day second class citizenry. It wasn't until he turned of age and drafted into a labor and reeducation camp that he understood the totality and finality of what being a Jew really meant. Given the opportunity, David made a run for it.

The opportunity came to him in the form of Jewish scientist, sent to the camp once his religious identity was discovered. The man had been bright enough to steal a suitcase full of documents detailing Germany's advancements in the field of nuclear fission. That alone would have gained him passage to Yvateamerika; that he was on the run from the German Secret Police guaranteed it.

"I can't say I like it much that this secret is being hidden from my own people," Toikiming openly complained.

"Altsoba, we are all your own people," David assured him with the assent of the Great Council, each of which nodded their agreement. "This is the first opportunity since your promotion that we've had to speak of this matter," he told him.

Again, Abooksigun grunted. "How close . . . ?"

"Very," Kagan answered for the Great Council. "We expect word of a successful detonation any day now."

Again a nod of understanding from the sage military man.

"Altsoba, what is the situation on Beothuk Island?" Quay asked.

A shadow of doubt was cast over the commander's face. "It is in doubt, Counselor," he confessed. "We took back much of the island last year, but with our naval forces crippled in the south, we haven't been able to interdict them as we should. They've been able to rebuild their forces, including naval and air power, and we haven't been able to do much to stop them, yet. I judge two, three months before they will be launching their offensive."

"In that case, I submit the device could not be timelier," Huritt Kagan offered. "It would do us well to demonstrate the power of the OCP to the European Collective. That ought to give them pause to think twice about trying to expand in our continents."

Or give them reason to accelerate their own programs of mass destruction, both Ben-David and Toikiming thought independently of each other.

"There are no military secrets, Councilor," the Altsoba said finally. "What we know today, our enemies will know tomorrow."

"Spies?" Li interjected.

"Science, Councilor Quay," replied David, understanding the commander's direction of thought. "What we will have done is prove that this is possible. The *how* of the matter – well, the Germans have been working on that longer than we have. By proving to them it's possible, they will simply triple their efforts until they achieve something similar or superior."

"Ahhhh," Counselor Montauk uttered, a new understanding coming to her, and she hoped, to the remainder of the council.

"If you'll forgive me, Counselors," Altsoba Abooksigun Toikiming said, interrupting the moment of revelation, "why is it that Commissioner Ben-David's in charge of the security of this project? I would think it more natural for OZKI to have that distinction," he suggested.

The three members of the Great Council looked at each other for their assent, before Pules Montauk responded for them all. "David has a unique relationship with the project; and no, I don't want to get into that any farther," she added, seeing that the Altsoba was on the verge of asking follow-up questions.

"As you wish," Abooksigun relented, but still he wondered.

"Flash message, Gruppenführer," the Hauptman knocked on her door and opened it before she had time to respond, granting him entrance to her domain.

Aimée Roux looked up from the stack of paperwork that absorbed her attention. *The damn General Staff wants further evidence against Heinrich Weibeck*, she muttered to herself. Roux saw the former Governor General of Newfoundland taken into custody following the military fiasco that had almost cost the EC its base in the Northern Continent of the Western Hemisphere. *Instead of doing the honorable thing - the right thing - of asking for a pistol, he'd pissed in his pants and pled for mercy*, the Gruppenführer recalled bitterly. As a result, instead of shooting the worm, the EC was going to extraordinary lengths to try the man publically. That necessitated they follow some semblance of due process that demanded the State bring evidence instead of accusations. Even in the State controlled EC press, innuendoes - there wasn't an exact editorial, per se - demanded that a case be proved against Weibeck.

Their latest demand was that she send a signed statement from Britany Marques, the former Governor General's lover. *How in the hell can I do that?* Roux demanded of herself.

She'd shot the girl with her own pistol when they took Weibeck into custody. *Damn! Damn!*

Damn!

"Gruppenführer?" the Hauptman said again, still holding the message in his hand.

"Yes, yes, Dirk. Sorry," she brought herself around from her thoughts to the matters at hand. She reached for the offered message.

The message was brief and to the point.

TO: Gruppenführer Aimée Roux
FROM: Kreigs Ministry - Berlin
SUBJECT: Pending offensive

In the name of the Führer Horst Küssel you will upon receipt of this message submit your timetable for this summer's offensive. Said offensive must:

1. include a timetable indicating the attack will be mounted within two weeks of the final shipment of men and material to your position.
2. include the taking of all of Newfoundland Island.
3. include plans for prisoner disposition.
4. include plans for the following spring invasion of the mainland.

Kaspar Schultz
Feldmarschall
European Command

Aimée Roux wondered what that was all about and signed by her uncle and not his adjutant AND, most important of all, when Uncle Kaspar had been named a Feldmarschall. Hers was a military family and deaths and promotions were always communicated at light speed to all of the relatives. A promotion of this magnitude should have been on her desk within a few moments of its announcement. Or had she been in the field, within two days delivered by an officer courier.

"Hauptman, get Konteradmiral Achenback and the rest of the senior staff together in thirty minutes," she ordered. "I want a final review before I send the requested data to Berlin."

Roux wasn't surprised that the General Staff wanted all the details. *Küssel just loves tinker with war, as a child does clay*, she thought to herself words that would never be spoken aloud.

"Yes, Gruppenführer," the captain popped to attention, saluted and left the room in a hurry to do his leader's bidding.

Lieutenant Raven Abrahamson idly tossed small stones into the Loch Broom on the northwest coast of Scotland. She was lost in her thoughts of what had transpired during the last two years, and what role she'd played in the defense of her nation, much of which was only a foggy memory that Sergeant Major Ruggles had filled in for her.

According to Linden Ruggles the European Command (but really the Germans and their cannon fodder the KOS - Jewish Slavs put in uniform to either fight or die) invaded England at Felixstowe Port twenty kilometers to the east of Ipswich, which they had secured with an airdrop in the pre-dawn hours. Actually, all they needed to do was secure the bridges in and out of the city and wait for the main invasion fleet. Commander of the British Home Guard, Field Marshall Alden Dabney, had been caught looking the wrong way - he'd expected and prepared for an invasion straight across the Channel from Calais to Dover. It took the Field Marshall twenty-four precious hours to figure out his mistake, during which time the EC owned Ipswich and were in the suburbs of Colchester. Dabney rapidly removed his forces from Dover to meet the threat, leaving that port vacant for the most part and an easy landing for Phase Two of the German forces. Phase Three of Obergruppenführer Wessel Lang's plan for English conquest was landing a third army at Colwyn Bay, just southwest of Liverpool. The Germans didn't bother with conquering the major city, rather they were supposed to swing south of it to take Sheffield and Leeds, thus cutting off the British retreat. But the British hadn't been as accommodating as the

Germans hoped, and moved their main army west through Worcester and then Aberystwyth, from which they hoped to be evacuated to Dublin, Ireland to carry on the fight. That necessitated Wessel Lang to move his third army south to interdict that British notion. He did so knowing that some of the enemy was going to slip by them to the north, but that couldn't be helped. The main British Army had to be met and defeated decisively and not be allowed to slip away.

Four days later, Dabney was in the sack and London declared itself an open city in order to spare itself from unnecessary bombing. Most of the British General Staff, unsympathetic members of Parliament - including the Prime Minister, the King and Queen, and as many other nobles and notables as could be found were put on trial for crimes against humanity, found guilty, and publically hung in Trafalgar Square. It was brutish and brutal, and it was effective.

. . . at least that was what Ruggles had told her. The last thing Raven Abrahamson remembered, she was in a concrete trench facing the beach at Felixstowe Port in command of what Major Penny had humorously called a *squad* of home guard. That was a handful of regulars, two civilians, and Linden Ruggles, who had been a Sergeant of the Suffolk Constabulary at the time. They'd fought the best they could with the Jerries pouring onto and over the beach. Of her command, Company Sergeant Major Kyla Fitzpatrick, Private Gallagher and private citizen Harris Keyes, armed with his own shotgun, went down before the invaders reached her position. Not to be slowed down, the Germans tossed in some grenades into her position and kept moving. The explosions peppered her legs and knocked Raven unconscious, leaving her temporarily blind when she woke up. All she could remember for the next week or so was that she was on the move, most often slung over Constable Ruggles' shoulder.

They made it to the relative safety of Norwich and from there to Cromer. Abrahamson vaguely recalled being pulled onto a boat, and she was regaining something of her vision, allowing her glimpses of the foggy, dirty-gray sea as the boat chugged north. By the time the ship docked at North Berwick, Scotland, she'd regained all of her sight and most of the use of her legs, which still oozed from the grenade fragments. She was surprised at the number of ships crowding the harbor, so many that they spilled back out into the Channel. Troops carrying their own personal weapons disembarked orderly, some even being rowed to shore in tiny craft.

Brigadier Wayne Baines, who commanded the BEF (British Exiled Force), decided to fight a delaying action at Carronshore, while his main body slipped north to reinforce Perth, Scotland. The ruggedness of the landscape allowing for few other options, the EC would be forced to follow him, he hoped into a trap.

It had happened at Carronshore. Raven's squad ambushed a German advance patrol wiping them out at the cost of two dead and three wounded British soldiers. Ruggles was among the wounded and his grievous injury caused him to lose his left arm. It was now Abrahamson's turn to care for the Constable, who had been promoted to Company Sergeant Major by Colonel Clifton. She commandeered a civilian auto and drove to the battalion hospital at Perth, where Ruggles' arm was amputated. Raven found him a safe place to hide during the next three days with a wonderful family north of the town and returned to her duty. It quickly became apparent that Baines did not want a decisive battle here, but only to force the EC to slow its advance. By brigades, the BEF continued north, stretching and pulling tight the German's supply lines. Dunkeld, Pitlochry, Aviemore, towns with names she could not remember, the BEF continued into the Scottish Highlands; and as if a magnet, they pulled the Germans along with them.

Finally, they stopped them cold at Inverness. The enemy simply couldn't provide enough petrol, munitions and manpower to keep up the pace. And every pace they took was at a horrific loss of life and limb. For two years, the two forces faced each other along the Mallaig-Fort William-Inverness line, which on a map appeared to be a crude fishhook. The command center had been established at Ullapool and the mountain passes defended with light cannons. The EC bombed and strafed the BEF, but they could not dislodge them, nor force them to surrender. The summer before, the Germans had tried a landing behind the BEF's lines at Dingwall and had been ingloriously pushed back into the sea by the Scottish Home Guard commanded by Neil Lyne

Hauptscharführer (Battalion Sergeant Major) Kurt Frueh buttoned the top button on his uniform before wrapping his leather belt around his narrow waist. He and Obersturmführer Gustaf Waechter virtually commanded an entire Division of Kämpfen oder Sterben (Fight or Die) soldiers along with a handful of other Totenkopfverbände commanders. *Who would have thought a Sergeant and Lieutenant could command that many men in the field*, he thought to himself. Since he volunteered for duty with the KOS he'd experienced rapid advancement in rank, extra rations, and even *occupation* pay to supplement his base salary, which was a pretty handsome income all by itself.

With the extra money, he'd been able to afford a few luxuries: a used auto, transfer of funds back to Germany for his retirement, his own apartment, and Gisela Kalb, the tight body, small breasts ethnic German blonde warming his bed. He enjoyed the girl so much that in moments of fantasy, which meant when she had him incredibly aroused sexually, he thought about bringing her back home with him to set up a little cottage he'd been able to purchase during his service in the village of Erdorf snuggled in the Eifel Mountains. But then he'd shake

his head clear and decide that was a stupid idea. His mother would never accept a barmaid into her home, and when it came down to it, Kurt's mother was much more important to him than a rather nice roll in bed.

Gisela leaned on her elbows, so that her breasts hung provocatively between her and the sheets, watching him as he finished dressing. "You're going now?" she asked rhetorically, throwing her elegant legs over the side of the bed and picking up his cigarette still smoldering in the ashtray unashamed of her nakedness.

"Yeah," he replied. "*Officers'* call," he laughed at the phrase. It was going to be him and Waechter telling a bunch of *officers* that comprised the division what to do and how to do it. "Spring's coming. New offensive, I would guess," he did guess at what he and Obersturmführer Gustaf Waechter would talk over before meeting with the KOS officers.

"Don't go, Kurt," she pleaded with him. "We can move to Glasgow, maybe even further south. You can find a job. There's ways of getting new papers showing you as a British citizen." The term *subject* had gone out of use with the death of the monarchs two years earlier and replaced with the noun *citizen* to identify inhabitants of the British Isles. "We can do it," she got out of bed and threw herself into his arms weeping uncontrollably.

Frueh puffed up his cheeks and allowed the air to escape before he tried to speak. "Liebchen . . .," he allowed the word to dangle alone in the room for a moment. "This is all I know how to do. I do not have the skill of a baker or carpenter," he confessed. "I know only how to lead men in battle."

"You could learn, damn you!" she beat his chest with her tiny fists. "If you weren't such a selfish bastard, you'd learn to do something and we could leave Scotland. Alive. Together."

One hand gripped her wrists. "Liebchen," he tried to calm her. "It wouldn't be like that. They'd look for me - for us. And they'd find us. The Totenkopfverbände doesn't just allow people to walk away," he promised her.

She shook her hands free from his and walked back to the bed, taking a long drag on the cigarette as she went thinking of what she'd say next.

"You will go and you will die," she said as if she saw the future. "I will not be here when you return, Kurt," she informed him not as a threat, but as a statement of fact. "We have no future," she shook her head sadly, as if her best friend had just died.

"Liebchen, liebchen, liebchen," he repeated over and over as he knelt next to her. "Darling, it is nothing. Gustaf and I will meet with the division's officers for most of the day. Tomorrow morning, I'll take two companies up to Fort Augustus, which will make a probe of the British lines there. I won't even be going with them, darling. Four days, five at the most, I'll be back. Will you at least wait until I get back to make your decision to leave? That will give me time to figure out a plan. When I get back, we can see what steps we can take next for our future. Alright?"

Fighting back tears, Gisela Kalb nodded her head in affirmation, lifting her head and mumbling, "Alright," barely audibly.

"I promise," he kissed her gently on the forehead, "I'll be back before the week is out. Then we can plan our lives together," he pulled her tiny frame to his massive chest.

"Thank you, darling," she caressed the back of his head. "I'll be the best woman you could ever have," she promised him.

"You already are, Liebchen," he said standing suddenly. "I have to run or they'll throw me in jail," he laughed at the concern written on her face. "Just an expression," he bent and kissed her on her perfect lips.

"Bye, darling," she whispered as he went out the door, careful to lock it behind him, so as to protect her from home invaders.

But you're the invader, aren't you, you fuckin Kraut! her mind screamed watching the bolt slide home, because of his key turning in the lock.

Without bothering to put on a stitch, Gisela walked over to the closet and threw open the crowded storage room. Taking fully five minutes to pull the things from the closet, she finally got down to a trunk. This she tugged with all of her strength. Its weight finally gave way to her muscles and it slid along the wooden floor. Once out of the wardrobe, she was able to loosen three boards from the floor and pull them up. In the crawl space, she lifted a suitcase out and hauled it to the bed. Once there, she opened the hasps revealing a radio built into the container.

Gisela waited impatiently until the dials came to life and she could tap out her report. It had always amazed her instructor's that she could think of the message and convert it to code without writing it down. Quickly, the dots and dashes were pounded out of the transmitter:

Two companies KOS to Fort Augustus. Probing only, she tapped out quickly before signing off. The frequency was monitored twenty-four hours a day, and there was no need to wait for confirmation. Besides, the EC were nothing if not efficient counter-detecting illegal radio transmissions if she stayed on the air longer than thirty seconds or so.

When she'd first met Kurt Frueh, she'd told him her brother Dirk had been killed at the Battle of Dingwall. Dirk Kalb had died in that battle, but he wasn't her brother; he'd been her lover, and she'd just taken his last name. What she didn't tell him either was the Dirk was a

member of the Scottish Home Guard under Neil Lyne and not a member of the European Command.

Revenge, Gisela Kalb, came in as many forms as the colors of the rainbows. This was hers.

Spies are spies, Bat-Ami Oskilahna caught herself thinking. What made her a successful agent would make someone else the same - and hopefully no better.

"How did you get your job?" Linda Matoaka asked. She was on one side of the hallway mopping the wide corridor and working her way to the end, while Bat-Ami was on the other side. They usually worked twelve hour shifts, four days a week, but not always the same days and not always together. The other three days they were free to do pretty much what they wanted. In fact, if they were ambitious, as the Oskilahna girl seemed to be, you could work overtime on those days off and receive extra pay. If you didn't care about the extra money, you could take a bus into Tsetsehestahese (Denver), but that took most of a day to get there and another getting back, so it was hardly worth the effort.

"Ad in the newspaper," Bat-Amit replied, stopping to dip her mop in the bucket of sudsy water and wringing it out. It amazed her how dirty the floor could become in a single day, given the high level of sanitation maintained in the facility. While there were scientists that worked this time of night, too, the majority of the night creatures were sanitation crews and maintenance workers. Theirs was the never-ending task of picking up trash, cleaning out ashtrays and mopping the tile floors of the facility.

"My uncle worked here building the place," Linda told her. "He said that I might be able to get on if I applied. Places like these, they always need help. So far out of the way that no one really wants to travel this far. In fact, if room and meals weren't included, I wouldn't either."

Unlike other military installations that dotted the nation, there was no town to support Camp R. For as far as a human could see - further really - the land was held by the central government. Those few inquiries that were made to purchase some of the land next to the facility in hopes of becoming wealthy selling goods and services to the employees were met with stone silence. If interested parties persisted, they were helped to leave at the point of a rifle.

"Mind what you're doing," the man on the tall ladder changing light bulbs called down to them as they neared his precarious loft. He had a large canvas bag on his right side from which he took fresh light bulbs and one on his left side that he placed the spent bulbs he'd removed. It was an endless process that was not without its own inherent dangers of crawling up and down the ladder endless hours at a time.

"Pay him no mind," Linda Matoaka whispered to her coworker. "That's just Togquos Sassacus. He thinks he owns this camp. He was here before me and I suppose he'll be here the day it closes," she smiled at the other woman, before plunging her own mop in the bucket. Bat-Ami Oskilahna had been fully briefed on the Camp and what it contained, or so it had been explained to her. She'd already spotted the concrete bunker, which she'd been told to look for. It contained ten secret weapons of a nature which had not been explained to her; however, in addition to her other assignment, she was to keep an eye on anything suspicious in regards to this building, especially if there was any attempt to load any containers.

Her briefing officer told her exactly what had been explained to her, but that wasn't all of it. As formidable as KMAKA was, OZKI wasn't without its own resources. Reasoning that any

device of a military nature belonged with the OCP armed forces, they undertook an operation to compromise two of the guards; and in a breathtakingly startling operation, military intelligence removed four of the nuclear weapons, replacing them with dummies. The counterfeits looked good enough to pass any cursory inspection; and since it had been decided by the Great Council to bypass fission for fusion, they had little to worry about being discovered.

Secretary to the Great Council Bass determined the best distribution of the weapons was for two of them to be moved to Hochelaga (Montreal) in case they were needed in the war against the European Command, and the other two were secreted to Suquamish (Seattle) for no other reason than there was a large military complex there and the devices could be easily lost among the hardware inventory.

"And I say you are wrong, Counselor Kagan," Pules Montauk reiterated. "If we take possessions outside of the continent, that makes us no better than the Europeans. Less than really. We know better and have them as an example," she said emphatically.

What brought on this discussion was the plane's stop at Marquesas (Hawaii). The visit with the Sunset Peoples, as the indigenous Polynesians were called, had been nothing more than a courtesy call intended to maintain a good relationship. The OCP needed the islands that dotted the Wolakota Minita (Pacific Ocean) more than the inhabitants needed the few trade goods the nation delivered. It was essential that Our Confederated Peoples' vessels had berths in which to dock and landing strips to land as they traded the region.

"History is on my side, Counselor Montauk," Huritt said confidently taking his place around the table. "I have no desire to subjugate other people, but if the cost of protecting the security of my nation is that, then I'm willing to do so," he announced, startling David Ben-David

and Altsoba Abooksigun Toikiming. It did not surprise either other counselor. They had often heard the man's description of the OCP's rightful place in world affairs.

"History may be, Huritt, but humanity isn't," she counselled. "We have been able to achieve what we have as a society by peaceful means," Pules insisted.

"Really? And the War of Unification in 5659 was a peaceful reconciliation?" he taunted her.

"It was necessary to achieve the vision Angwusnasomtaqa had for His people," she replied in the quiet confidence of the religious.

"It was a convenient excuse," Huritt scoffed at her simplistic answer. *These old people, he thought, they never understand what we could achieve if we just have the audacity to take it. The audacity that the Europeans have. The audacity we could - should - have to take the next step and become a world power.*

"And what about Chichi Jima?" Kagan asked of the tropical island south of Japan, held by the OCP for well over a century. The OCP was dependent on trade with two primary partners: China and western Africa. When the Europeans conquered China and restricted trade with Our Confederated Peoples, the nation found it necessary for survival to capture an island close enough to the Asian mainland that would act as a trading port, not unlike what Greenland had been between the OCP and Europe, before the EC took control and closed it.

"A shameful period in our history," Montauk said.

"A necessary reason," interjected Quay Li for the first time. Li was aware that he had many, many more years behind him than he had before him. His life fishing around Bayougoula (New Orleans) taught him many life lessons. Chief among those was when you unexpectedly find your boat in a school of fish, you drop the net to catch what you can of it. He saw his nation

in the same situation. They swam in a world of countless peoples, who for the most part were ignorant of good governance. *Isn't it our duty to bring order from chaos?* he asked himself often. Unfortunately, he failed to remember that in the same waters in which there were schools of fish, there were also sharks.

"Don't you see, Pules, if we don't take the opportunity to seize lands and expand the nation then we will become the EC's next meal," Kagan said. "There are only two creatures in the forest, the hunter and the prey."

"This is dangerous talk," Montauk said. "I will have no more of it," she pushed away from the table.

"It's time for the conversation, Counselor," Quay Li forced the conversation. "In fact, it's past time," he added meaningfully.

"Commissioner, Altsoba, will you excuse us?" Quay ordered Toikiming and Ben-David from the room. Neither of them wanted to leave, but neither of them had the rank to demand to remain.

Ohitika (Lieutenant) Motavato Ben-David had been to the Manna-hata (New York City) Military Complex often enough that he knew his way around. As soon as he was granted entrance by a rather serious-looking young lady that he guessed must have been in uniform three or four weeks, he turned left and began looking for the extraordinarily ordinary two story brick building with two flag poles in front of it. Across the street, he knew would be a gravel parking area. It wasn't much of an area, intended for personal automobiles of those assigned to the building since recruits weren't permitted personal cars and transients weren't there long enough to worry about it.

The tires crunched over the gravel, and Motavato was careful to go slow. The last thing he needed to do was throw stones up and mar his paint finish. *Bornbazine will have my ass if I come home with the car all scratched up*, he laughed at his own humor. Fortune favored him, and he found an open spot immediately across from the cavernous entrance to the building. He carefully turned the engine off and . . .

. . . the passenger and left rear door opened simultaneously, and two people entered his car without permission and in less time than he would have thought possible.

"What . . .," he uttered excitedly, attempting to open his own door, so as not to be trapped in a vehicle with two unknown assailants.

"Stay still," the voice behind him threatened and the cold barrel of a pistol caressed his neck.

Motavato's fingers gripped the steering wheel.

"Drive," came the single word order.

Without responding, Ben-David put the car in reverse, backed out of the spot and threw the gear into first, spinning the tires as he let the clutch out too quickly.

"Where are we going?" he asked as calmly as he could manage.

"Rifle range," the man in the backseat said, apparently uninterested in a protracted conversation.

Coming to the end of the block, Motavato turned right and followed the road fourteen kilometers to the far end of the complex. Here new inductees were taught basic marksmanship. *And at this time of night, there won't be anyone there*, he shuddered involuntarily.

The drive ended almost as soon as it started. There wasn't much traffic on the installation anyway, and even less once the sun went down. His lone vehicle lamps were the only ones he'd

seen for the last five kilometers. He frantically searched his mind for an avenue of escape, but the two men had him hemmed in so that it was impossible.

"Some place specific?" he asked driving past the unoccupied guard shack. Even the military, which did the most mindless things he had observed, didn't have a guard where there was nothing to guard.

"Here. Pull over," the man in the back said.

Motavato did as he was ordered, turned off the engine and set the parking brake. He tensed for the next moment, waiting for what he was sure was the end of his young life.

"Turn the interior light on," the voice in the back surprised him by saying.

The young Ben-David did so and found the hand of the man in the back reaching over the front seat to hand him a black identity holder.

"Senior Centurion (Colonel) Nogai Drell," he presented himself. "Your father led me to believe that you were more cunning than what you just demonstrated to me. If you can't think better on your feet than that, your stay with the Kimi Akicita is going to be painfully short," he said of his father's organization, the KMAKA.

Motavato nodded his understanding, rather than trying to excuse his actions - or inactions, as the case may be.

"This is Sesquiplicarius (Corporal) Dennis Bidder," Nogai introduced the man in the front seat. "You talked to him earlier this evening. He's one of Matthijs De Keizer's KOS troops. Bidder's not his name, but you don't need to know his other one."

Motavato knew who De Keizer was. To a large degree it was why he was still alive, an Ohitika and married. If the KOS hadn't deserted the EC and come into the battle on the OCP's side, things would have turned out much differently for him.

"Senior Centurion, I'm a little confused," he confessed.

Drell laughed. "That's to be expected of Ohitikas, Motavato.

"Senior Meoquanee (Major) Levi Soctomah, with whom you spoke this evening also, is going to offer you a new job," allowed Nogai.

Motavato grunted, remembering vividly his unsatisfactory conversation with the man.

"The mission, I'm going to allow him to tell you. The job is with military intelligence, the Ozuye Kimi," Drell said of his rival agency, the OZKI. "We want you to accept the mission. It comes with a promotion; but as part of the deal, you want Bidder here to be assigned to you. Get the idea?"

"At the risk of sounding suspicious, Senior Centurion, how do I know you're not OZKI and the Senior Meoquanee isn't KMAKA working for my father. OR that you've just smoked a little too much peyote and not just crazy?" he asked suspiciously.

It was now Drell's turn to grunt. "When you were thirteen, do you remember what happened in your grandparent's barn?" he said as if disinterested in the subject.

"Yes? Do you?" he answered angrily.

"I wonder if your brother will ever forgive you?" Nogai continued. "There he was with - what was the girl's name . . . ?"

"I don't remember," Motavato said untruthfully. "Why don't you tell me?"

"Karen. Karen . . ."

"Alright. I believe you," Ben-David interrupted him. The only way he would have gotten that story would have been if his brother told him, and he knew his brother worked - as did his father - for the KMAKA. The young lady was to be Chitto's first sexual conquest, although he believed it was true love at sixteen. His brother had spent an hour convincing the

young maiden that he'd forever love her and that she was the only one for him. When she finally consented and allowed Chitto to remove her clothing, Motavato dumped a pail of ice cold water from a bucket he had with him in the loft. Chitto had chased him in the dark with a pitchfork for the better part of the night.

"You're not going to tell me what it's about?" he finally asked.

"No," the Senior Centurion said flatly. "I want that to come as a surprise to you. But I'll tell you this, as part of the deal you'd better negotiate some time with Bornbazine. It'll be a long time, if ever, before you get to see your husband again."