

The Butterfly Effect

It started on 9/11



Alex Blackwell

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White Seahorse

Please Note

This is a work of fiction. The characters in it are imaginary with the exception of some individuals who shaped historical events. Actual historical events portrayed have been altered to work with the story. Where characters from this novel are involved, this description is fictitious. If certain characters resemble people in real life, it is because often people in real life resemble characters from a novel.

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About the Author

Alex Blackwell is a frequent author writing about sailing technology and sailing adventures, contributing to several magazines, websites and e-zines. He has enjoyed a professional career as copywriter, marketer and speaker. Born in Chicago, Alex and his family moved to Clew Bay, Ireland when he was 14.



Because of his mother's German heritage, Alex went to school in Germany, where he earned a Master of Science degree in Marine Biology. After starting an oyster hatchery in Ireland, he went to America for a six-month research project. As many people do, he stayed for 20 years. There he was a partner in a marketing support services firm and commercial printing company which included a book printing division.

9/11 changed everything for Alex and his Ukrainian-American wife, Daria. In 2008 they left their high-powered lives behind, boarded their boat and sailed across the North Atlantic to resettle in Ireland.

The Butterfly Effect: It started with 9/11, Alex's first novel, is strictly fiction. It is woven out of the fabric of historical events, his personal experience, and his fertile imagination. After successfully publishing a book about boat anchoring (*Happy Hooking - The Art of Anchoring*) and an oyster cookbook (*Oyster Delight by Jonathan Mite*), a novel was begging to come out. The next novel is already completed, and other projects are constantly in the works.

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*“To every action there is always an equal and opposite reaction”
- Sir Isaac Newton’s third law of motion.*

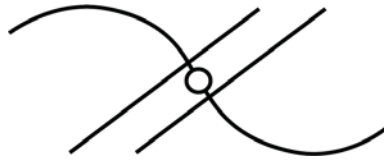
*What people tend to forget is that this law applies to all things in
life, including (and perhaps in particular) in global politics.*

And then there is the ‘Butterfly Effect’.

The Butterfly Effect – It Started on 9/11

The Butterfly Effect

It Started on 9/11



By

Alex Blackwell

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Prologue

September 11, 2001 will forever be etched into people's minds as 9/11 – no doubt reinforced in the US by the emergency call number 911. The al-Qaeda attack on America was an atrocious and senseless assault against humanity.

9/11 temporarily brought the mighty USA to its knees. Life came to a halt for several days while Americans in general, and people living in the NY metropolitan area in particular, came to grips with what had happened. The silence of the next few days in the otherwise bustling NY metro area was deafening. There were no planes overhead. There were no trains or busses. In fact, there was no traffic of any kind. The loudest and often only noise was birds twittering in the trees.

For people living in the area there was also an extraordinary sense of disorientation after 9/11. Almost anywhere you went in northern New Jersey or southern New York State you had been able to see the mighty twin towers. With that visual, one had a geographic reference point. When they were gone, this anchor in people's lives was also gone.

This strike was clearly designed to topple the US from its lofty perch as a superpower. In this it was a total failure. Granted the economy took a serious nose dive in the ensuing months, but it was soon to be business as usual. The momentum of the American machine is simply too great for an isolated event to bring it to its knees – or is it?

9/11 was the first major attack against Americans on their own soil in recent history. America had become complacent

and this was a significant wake-up call. Helplessness was replaced with heightened security everywhere. To protect its citizens from the evil within and from the outside, measures that would not have been tolerated before 9/11 were introduced and generally welcomed everywhere. Most public buildings now have metal detection and closed circuit TV systems. Security checks at the airports make travel time consuming and tedious. Security agencies that had previously had funding difficulties are now given resources to do whatever is needed.

What nobody knew at the time is that the attack also set other things in motion. Similar to the '*Butterfly Effect*', coined by Edward Lorenz where a butterfly flapping its wings may result in an apocalyptic event elsewhere in the universe, the attack may have been the catalyst for something far greater and far more menacing – something that could actually bring down the United States of America after all – and with it most of the rest of the western hemisphere.

All the security in the world is powerless against a solitary individual. A group or an organization such as al-Qaeda must communicate internally and therefore be circumspect in their action. Communication and activities are precisely the triggers security people and their vast array of automated data collection devices are on the constant lookout for. If there is little or no communication, and no discernible activities leading up to an event, then there is nothing that might alert the agencies to a person's intent. An individual can easily hide in plain sight.

1.

The day started like any other.

Marissa turned on her monitors at precisely 7AM and logged into the system. There appeared to have been an unusual amount of chatter collected by her eavesdropping computer systems that morning. Something was clearly amiss. Marissa set to work to determine its particulars. Once she had that, she could map out what her next step should be and who she would need to bring in on this.

After about an hour she had worked out that there was clearly something afoot. It had to do with airport security. Fearing that there might be an attack on one of the region's major airports, Marissa initiated a security warning that went out to the authorities via the FBI.

She continued delving ever deeper into the data collected overnight. There was so much of it in addition to the 'other' chatter feeds she was following that she knew she would be at her desk until late that evening – perhaps even right through the night.

Marissa took a moment to send an email off to her cousin Sandy cancelling the dinner they had planned. She also sent one to her husband Jason telling him not to call her at the apartment that evening. She would in all likelihood not be going home. The only saving grace was that she had a very comfortable cot next door where she could grab a few minutes to refresh herself – that is, if and when she might need it.

At a quarter to nine Marissa got up rubbing her eyes and went over to the coffee maker, which had been kept busier

than usual that morning already. Just as she reached out for the pot, there was a terrible explosion somewhere below her in the building. Everything shook, just like during the earthquake she had witnessed in San Francisco two years earlier.

Something serious had happened, and it was definitely not good.

A 'serious incident' was an eventuality she had rehearsed many times before – in each of her previous similar jobs. It was possible there might have been a breach of security, that the terrorists she was constantly trying to find had in fact found the nerve center of the clandestine American Institute for Material Matters (AIMM), and that they were about to attack.

She knew what she had to do: Initiate and supervise the 'wipe-out protocol' she herself had written. At the same time she would have to shred any paperwork there might be. All would not be lost, as she still had her backup in the mine shaft in Pennsylvania, a duplicate computer system. Once the system here was wiped, she would proceed downstairs as if nothing had happened and go to her apartment. Someone from the Agency would contact her in due course.

The power went down. The backup generators kicked in, but they kicked in a moment too late. This caused the massive Cray computers to commence automatic shutdown. They all had stand-by batteries, which had just enough power to enable the computers to turn themselves off without loss of data.

With only the generators running Marissa and her technicians rebooted the data servers. It took an agonizing 15 minutes waiting for the computers to come back to life.

There was another massive explosion. Her building did not shake as badly, but it was still very terrifying.

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Marissa spent the following 20 minutes going through the wipe-out protocol, erasing everything her baby had so painstakingly collected, analyzed and stored. The backup tapes were brought out to her by the head technician. He was white as a sheet and said nothing. He stood there waiting for instructions.

Marissa took each of the twenty three tapes out of its metal box and swiped it over a powerful electromagnet she kept under her desk. "Michael, can you turn on the TV. I want to see if there is anything on about these explosions."

Her head tech went to the corner and flicked it on. The picture that filled the screen was as horrific as it was devastating to the two of them. They were looking at a picture of the building they were in and its neighboring twin tower. There was smoke billowing out of their building roughly 10 floors down from where they were. There was a scene being replayed in a loop. It was of a jet plane crashing into the South Tower of the World Trade Center. Marissa and Michael stood rooted to the spot, staring, unable to move.



The Twin Towers, 9/11/2001

"You guys get outta here," she said quietly. "I'll finish up and follow you down."

Michael opened the door to the server room shouted for his colleagues and then ran to the stair well door. Dense black smoke physically pushed him back. He slammed the door coughing and looked at Marissa in dismay.

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The other technicians burst into the lobby and were heading towards the stairs only to be headed off by Michael.

"It's no good"" he simply said.

They stopped in their tracks while, as one, they turned their heads towards the TV set. They knew their end had come.

Realizing that they had no hope of getting out, Marissa called Jason at home using her cell phone. He had flown to Ireland on business the previous Monday and was due home about then.

When he did not pick up she left him a message "Hello my love, It's me. I'm calling from work. I'm afraid it's not looking too good for us right now. There was a terrible explosion in our building and we saw a plane hit the South Tower on the TV. I love you so very much my darling."

"The boys are working with me, and we are going to try the stairwell now. It's full of smoke, but I am sure we'll make it. I'll see you on the Cape this weekend. If anyone calls you about me, tell them not to worry; we got rid of everything. I love you, I love you, I love you. Goodbye, Jason my love. I miss you so."

Marissa sat back in her chair and started sobbing.

2.

The coastal freighter *Chang Da-12* docked at the west wharf in the Port of Karachi, Pakistan precisely on schedule on March 21st, 1980. Built sixteen years previously, she was Hong Kong Chinese owned and had a Cambodian flag of convenience. Three months previously in Osaka, the Burmese crewmen had been joined by a big Irish man known only as Jack O'D. He would sail with them as far as Karachi, where he had some business to attend to.



The 114 meter long, 8700 dwt bulk freighter Chang Da-12

The crew did not know anything about Jack. In fact they knew little of each other for the most part. Every man had his own reasons for shipping aboard. The one big difference here was that Jack hailed from Ireland. This was a place some of the men had heard of, but none actually knew where it was. The most knowledgeable of the regular crew maintained steadfastly that Ireland was where the little people lived. The Irish were also called leprechauns.

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Accepting this at face value the others just looked at Jack, who stood a good foot taller than any one of them, and came to the conclusion that he must be a spy. He certainly could not be Irish, he was way too big. They had seen a pygmy once in Jakarta. An Irishman must certainly be smaller than that.

Nevertheless, Jack was well liked by all the regular crew. He was bigger and much stronger than any of his oriental shipmates and was always at hand if anything needed doing. There was constantly plenty to be done on a coastal freighter like the *Chang Da-12*. They all called him 'OD' as they had difficulty pronouncing 'Jack'. He had quickly picked up their odd mixture of Burmese, Chinese and Indonesian and was always ready with a quick joke or a sea story from some far off land. His shipmates would miss him, as he was staying on in Karachi.



Jack O'Driscoll had misspent his youth in the streets of Dublin, Ireland. Abandoned by his parents as a young boy, he had been picked up by the police and was eventually put into foster care. At 18 he stowed away on a ship bound for New York. For three years he worked as a stevedore on the docks in Elizabeth, New Jersey. He grew tough and he grew hard. Confrontations were part of life, as they had always been. .

For some reason he couldn't put a finger on, Jack enlisted in the navy when he was 22. When the recruiters saw that Jack was highly intelligent besides being very capable at defending himself in a street-smart sort of way, they marked him for special training. Jack felt reborn and was quickly singled out and transferred to the SEALs, the US Navy's principal special operations force. Most would consider the more than two and a half year training program to be brutal. For Jack it was an affirmation of his purpose. Nothing his instructors threw at him fazed him in

the least. When a situation seemed impossible, he would briefly close his eyes, take a deep breath, and center his being. The result was explosive and often took his tormentors off guard.

It was shortly after his thirtieth birthday that Jack came to the attention of Maurice McWilliams, the Director of the American Institute for Material Matters. The Director wasted no time recruiting Jack. He needed a field operative with his skills. Jack had been with the AIMM ever since.



The largely Burmese crew aboard the *Chang Da-12* considered her their home. Back in Burma (modern Myanmar) they had nothing prior to shipping aboard, nothing but misery and desolation at the thought of feeding their families. No, to a man, the crewmen were very grateful for the meager wages they were able to send home. For them the money was good money.

Chang Da-12 regularly plied the seas from the Persian Gulf in the west to Japan. On board this time was a load of US wheat, some much needed machine parts, as well as various other items picked up along the way. Most of her cargo had been trans-shipped from a large transoceanic freighter in Osaka, Japan. From there they had travelled nearly 6,000 nautical miles, stopping several times to offload or take on other cargo. Their first stop was Taipei, Taiwan. They had then continued on to their owner's home port Hong Kong. Next they sailed to Singapore and on to Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka.

In a few short days, *Chang Da-12* was scheduled to head back from Karachi to Indonesia, where she would take on her usual load of 6,000 tons of bauxite and tin destined for China. Karachi was a new and exciting destination and, since for once they would not be involved in the offloading of their ship, which was not to commence until the

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morning, everyone except their Chinese skipper was granted shore leave. This was a little unusual, but the members of the crew had learned long ago not to ask questions. They knew to accept every day as it came. And when it happened that they were granted an extended shore leave, well that was just fine with them.

The local dock workers had told the crew that the Kharadar district and Allah Rakah Park was where the best women and entertainment would be found. They also warned them to stay close together, as Karachi was known for its lawless violence. Nobody would pass any notice if someone were to disappear.

Off they trudged two miles up West Wharf on a beautiful warm spring evening. They were on the lookout for a small café they had been told about where they might be able to play sittuyin, a chess-related Burmese board game. They played this constantly while off watch at sea and were passionate about placing bets on the game's outcome – bets they very much intended to win here.

Jack had other plans and was not to join them. This was Jack's fourth and most significant trip to Karachi. Despite being somewhat larger than most men in the area, Jack was an expert in blending in. Each time he had changed into the traditional Shalwar dress worn by both women and men in the Pakistani Punjab province. The pajama-like trousers he wore were wide at the top, and narrow at the ankle. Over this he had put on a long shirt called a kameez. Jack had memorized the local street layout and had no difficulty darting in and out of alley ways in case some of the locals tried to follow him.

3.

Though not exactly a spy, Jack was indeed not the seaman he professed to be. He was an undercover field operative of the American Institute of Material Matters (AIMM), a highly clandestine organization loosely linked to the CIA.

The US government saw the Soviet backing of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in the mid-seventies as a significant step forward in the USSR's desire to expand south through Afghanistan to attain a warm water port. Jack's trips there constituted a big part in the US government's efforts to stymie this.

The Soviets supported the PDPA with shipments of small arms, ammunition, a few aircraft, as well as a million gold rubles. Consequently, the Americans sent Jack to provide the opposition with financial backing in an effort to overthrow the incumbent government and oust the Soviets.

During their first 18 months of rule, the PDPA imposed a program of Soviet-style reforms aimed at 'uprooting feudalism' in Afghan society. The conservative Muslims viewed this as opposing the tradition of Islam. A rebellion quickly ensued. Militants from the Jamiat Islamic party along with Gholam Wazir, a native of Kabul who was to become Jack's contact with the insurgents, attempted to overthrow the government by starting an uprising in the Panjshir valley some 100 kilometers north of Kabul. They were quickly defeated by the government forces. The rebels sought refuge in Pakistan where they enjoyed the support of the government's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

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Pakistan was also the base of the Mujahidin resistance, who quickly recruited Gholam and the other rebels. Being a natural leader, Gholam and his brother Abdul later brought a band of rebels across the mountains and attacked the local military garrison in the Nuristan region of eastern Afghanistan. The government brooked no opposition to the reforms and responded with violence to the unrest. Civil war soon spread throughout the country.

Gholam and the Mujahidin rebels were supportive of Vice President Amin, who openly opposed Prime Minister Taraki's pro-Soviet stance. While Taraki courted his northern neighbors receiving advisors and arms from them, Amin hired assassins to purge his opponents, including Soviet loyalists. Amin also reached out to countries having poor relations with the Soviet Union.

This was of course cause for specific concern to Taraki and he ordered Amin killed. Hearing of this, Gholam and his brother led a Mujahidin raid and suffocated Taraki with a pillow. This enabled Amin to seize power. It also resulted in total chaos as the rebellion escalated despite the change in leadership.

At a loss of what to do, Amin called on the Soviet Premier Brezhnev to assist his forces in the north of the country. On October 31, 1979 the troops in the north were mobilized. The Soviet machine was indeed set in motion – just not quite like Amin had anticipated.

Brezhnev saw this invitation as an opportunity. He had the telecommunications links between Kabul and the outside severed, isolating the capital. Amin was kept 'appraised' of the situation by his Soviet advisors as the troops worked their way south to Kabul razing villages to the ground. Soviet airborne forces began to land in Kabul on December 25. Two days later the Soviet Spetsnaz special forces dressed in Afghan uniforms launched *Operation Storm-333* and overran the presidential palace killing President Amin

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along with his 200 personal guards after just 104 days in office. They simultaneously occupied all major governmental, military and media buildings in Kabul. The operation was fully complete by the morning of December 28.

Under the auspices of the reinstated PDPA, the Soviets leveled most of the villages south and east of Kabul. Anyone including many village Mullahs even remotely suspected of being Mujahidin was either locked up or summarily executed on the spot. The people's hatred of the government and the Soviet infidels intensified vehemently.

4.

Jack had been introduced to Gholam Wazir by contacts in Pakistan's ISI. On his first three trips in the late '70s he had delivered large sums of cash in a mission that was thinly veiled as 'limited humanitarian aid to Afghan refugees'. During these visits the two men built up a close relationship despite their ideological differences.

The American currency Jack provided was vital to the Mujahidin cause. With it they were able to escalate the revolt, but they needed more.

Jack's first trip to Afghanistan had been in 1976. That time, as with the two subsequent trips, he had flown in to Jinnah International Airport on a cargo plane. From there it had been a roughly two mile walk to the Makka Masjid Mosque in the crowded Green Town district south of the airport where Gholam had been waiting for him.

En route two of the locals tried to mug Jack. He took their menacing approach as a challenge. He had been watching them close in on him from two directions as he ambled along a small side street. He stopped, as if to tie his shoe and smiled thinly.

The bigger of the two suddenly lunged at him from his left side wielding an ugly looking knife. Jack leaned towards his assailant knowing his mate would not be far behind. He suddenly spun around clockwise taking half a step backwards at the same time. The man lunged into nothing. Using his centrifugal momentum Jack gave the man a massive right handed karate chop to the base of his skull. Though he easily could have killed him, he did not want to.

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He barely noticed the first man crash like a felled tree face first onto the stone pavement, as the second thug jumped at him from his right. Still spinning, Jack landed a sledgehammer-like blow squarely in the second man's face. The knife aimed at Jack's heart clicked off his shirt button. He felt cartilage crush and bone crack under his fist. This man fell, hitting the back of his head on the pavement with a loud thud.

The two would be robbers had been no match for Jack. He left them lying broken, but still alive, as a message to their brethren to leave him alone. It would be a long while before either of them would be able to accost anyone again.

5.

Several months before shipping aboard the *Chang Da-12*, Jack had found himself aboard an Israeli warship. It was en route to intercepting a coastal freighter suspected of carrying a cargo of Soviet weapons to Iran.

It was one of those cases of convoluted and twisted logic one finds in international politics. The US President had just initiated the Carter Doctrine embargoing grain shipments to the USSR. As they were determined that the Soviet expansion south to establish a warm water port had to be halted at all costs, they could not allow the Russians to ship arms to Iran, a neighbor on their southern border. US National Security Advisor Brzezinski therefore had enlisted the Israelis, who were incidentally selling American manufactured arms to Iran, to provide the AIMM with the warship to capture the suspect cargo vessel.

When the two ships came together, the freighter's captain immediately hove to fearing the worst. Back in the Israeli port of Haifa the ship was inspected and the Soviet armaments removed. The next day they were loaded onto another small freighter that happened to be owned by a CIA front company.

Under direct orders from US President Jimmy Carter and his National Security Advisor Brzezinski, Jack clandestinely moved this same shipment of Soviet weapons half way around the globe and back. The confiscated arms were finally packed in crates marked as machinery parts in the cavernous holds of the *Chang Da-12*.

Instead of 'just' sending money to aid the rebellion against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the US would now

supply the Mujahidin with Soviet made weapons. There would be no link to the US. Jack was on hand to make the connections and see that all went smoothly.



Jack's masters at the AIMM had been unable to contact Gholam with the news that 'more' was finally on its way. Word reached Jack just prior to boarding the *Chang Da-12* that Gholam had been captured by the Afghan Regime.

When they arrived in Colombo, Sri Lanka the company shipping agent handed the Captain a sealed envelope addressed to Jack. A few minutes later, in the privacy of his small cabin, Jack was frowning over its contents. Gholam had been executed. His captors had gotten bored with torturing him and had slit his throat, falsely assuming him to be a mute beggar accidentally scooped up by the police. Gholam was one of perhaps as many as 27,000 prisoners, who were executed at the notorious Pul-e-Charkhi prison.

The letter went on telling Jack that Jamil Khan would be his new contact. A photo was enclosed. Jack wasn't happy about this. He had put a lot of effort into building his relationship with Gholam. Now, there was a great deal of unknown thrown into the equation – and this was the most significant shipment to date.



In Karachi, once his shipmates were out of sight, Jack quietly crossed the half mile over to the opposite side of the wharf. His senses were on high alert. The slightest misreading of a situation or a lone gunman would render his hand to hand combat skills useless and he would become another statistic – that is if his body was ever recovered. Such were the facts there on the wharf. Countless thousands lived out their lives and died there. A man's life might be taken for a pair of shoes.

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Jack felt eyes watching him from the shadows all around. Going solely by the fact that he neither saw nor heard anyone gave him both cause for concern and confidence. His presence here was clearly expected – the area had been cleared so there would be no trouble, or so he hoped.

He stopped to one side of the Karachi Fishery Authority building and scanned the thousands of local vessels, homes to the myriad of workers tending to the visiting ships. Packed so tight into their part of the harbor you could literally walk from one side to the other, only a scant few of these boats had been moved in recent memory. In fact, were they ever to be relocated from their sanctuary, many would most assuredly break apart and sink.

Jack recognized Jamil from his photograph at once as he walked up from the harbor.



Born in the outskirts of Kabul, Jamil Khan had been with the resistance since the beginning of his memory. Although most of his family was still alive, the Mujahidin had to a great extent been responsible for his upbringing, and of course for his education. He was given his first gun on his tenth birthday – sort of a coming of age. Jamil had been living and working in Karachi almost five years now. Like many of the dock workers, Jamil was fluent in several languages, including Arabic and Russian. In the 1980s, many Afghans were Russian language proficient. He had left his wife and three children behind in Kabul, a long way to the north, at the behest of the Mujahidin.

A natural leader Jamil had far reaching connections and was known on the docks as a fixer. He organized transport, workers and safe passage for people or goods that needed to stay below the radar. The men he led eagerly obeyed his every order without question. They were working for Allah, and of course received better pay than their peers.

The PDPA regime sought to purge the country of any opposition. They knew about Jamil and his Mujahidin connections and had long been trying to establish his whereabouts. One month ago to the day, they had captured his father, tortured, and ultimately killed him. That same day his family had fled south. His wife, three gangly teenagers, both her parents, and his mother had all fled their homes. They had set off on foot on the arduous journey over snow covered mountains, following river courses, and hacking their way through the dense undergrowth. One fateful evening, just before dark, his wife's mother had slipped on a rock and plunged head first into a raging river. She was never seen again.

Three days ago they had arrived in Karachi. After much searching his family had joined him on his little sampan jammed in the middle of the harbor. Now, they were all there. The refugees posed a great burden on Jamil's meager resources. He would never complain, as it was his obligation to look after his family. This was after all, the Will of God.



And then just a week ago, to his great and secret relief, a stranger had sought him out. He brought word from the Mujahidin. Jamil's skills were needed and he would be rewarded. Things were suddenly looking much better. With some additional income, he could buy a bigger boat and better food for his family.

More significantly, he was to personally accompany an important shipment all the way to Kabul. He would become an integral part of the cause, the fight against the Russian infidels and their Afghan lackeys.

Jamil was instructed to meet a big westerner at the north end of the Fishery Authority building. Jamil did not like westerners. They were infidels – non believers. He knew

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from previous encounters that they thought little of Islam in general and Muslims in particular. He had his orders and would do as instructed. He was to receive a shipment of machine parts and a box. This would bring about the turning point of the Holy War against the Soviets, also Infidels. If this particular Infidel happened to have an accident along the way, it would be the Will of God, "in sha'Allah".

"Salām; *Peace be upon you*" said Jack as Jamil approached from the harbor.

Surprised at Jack's fluency in Arabic, Jamil replied "Wa `alaykumu s-salāmu wa rahmatu l-lāhi wa barakātuh; *may peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon you,*" while grasping Jack's hand and giving him a hug indicating to any casual observer that they knew each other and this was a normal encounter.

They wandered off in no apparent particular direction turning corners and doubling back all the while pretending to be engrossed in conversation. When he was sure they were not being followed, Jamil ducked into an alleyway, quickly followed by Jack. There Jamil softly knocked on a large garage door.

A small Judas door built into the larger garage door, that Jack had previously not noticed, opened inwards. A hand appeared from the gloom and beckoned them in. Jamil and Jack were swiftly led into a cavernous dark room where Jack could just make out roughly twenty men and four decrepit looking trucks. He glanced quizzically at Jamil, who merely returned a faint smile.

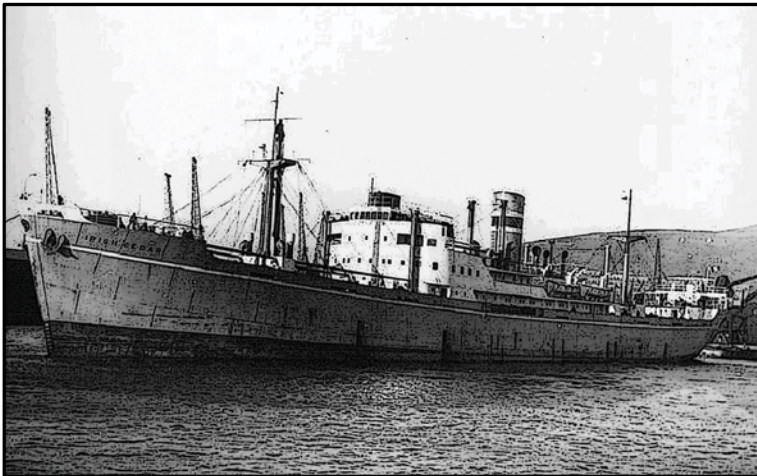
These were in fact brand new KamAZ-4310 general utility military trucks that Jamil had recently been given by al-Qaeda, another organization supporting their cause. Jamil had squirreled the trucks away for just this kind of a job. Two other depots concealed the further six trucks needed

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for this operation. His men had done a masterful job of making them look shabby while ensuring that mechanically they were in perfect condition – better than anything the actual military in Afghanistan was using. Their payload on the cross-country terrain they would be experiencing on the trip to Kabul was limited to six tons apiece. For the last part of the trip they would not be able to travel on paved roads. Each truck was already pre-loaded with two tons of fuel and spare parts. What was not used to service or maintain these vehicles during their journey was badly needed where they were going.

6.

Originally from Clones, Co. Monaghan, just south of the border to Northern Ireland, Jason Geraghty unwittingly emigrated to the US in 1965. He was fresh out of college with a degree in computer science. His teachers at University College Dublin had tried to convince him to stay on, but he 'needed to see the world'. Not having any money to speak of, he shipped out as 'working' passenger in early August aboard the *Irish Cedar*. Built in 1949, she was a freighter owned by Irish Shipping. She had just delivered a cargo of phosphates from Casablanca to Dublin for Goulding Fertilizers. Her next port would be Boston for refueling before heading to Houston Texas to pick up a load of grain destined for Cyprus. Such was the life of a tramp steamer.



The 136 meter long, 8,700 dwt Cargo ship Irish Cedar

In return for his fare, Jason agreed to keep the crew area clean and to do the ship's master's bidding, which included serving his meals and making drinks. In fact, Captain

Jackson was a good sort and life aboard the *Irish Cedar* was easy. The seas proved to be calm for the entire journey and it passed without incident.

Jason disembarked in Boston, where he stayed with his Aunt Mary and Uncle Tom Geraghty, his father's elder brother. They had left Ireland to visit Boston for a week almost thirty years ago. At the time, Tom had just graduated and was about to join the Garda Síochána, the Irish police force. He and his fiancée, Mary, thought a holiday abroad would be on the cards before settling down to a career, getting married, and starting a family.

Tom's cousin was in the Boston Police Force. He convinced them to stay for a while, and stay they did. Tom was now a sergeant. He and Mary were quite comfortable in their two story colonial on Highland Street in Revere, a suburb of Boston, just a half mile from the beach. They had had three children, all of whom now had families of their own nearby. Tom and Mary were thrilled to have a visitor from the auld sod and loved Jason's stories about friends and family.

Jason's plan was to get a job and travel the east coast of the US for a while before moving on. As it happened Uncle Tom had a friend, who had a friend... the usual story. Within a week of arriving in Boston, Jason travelled the 20 miles west to Maynard, MA, the home of the world renowned Digital Equipment Corporation. DEC was the leading American company in the computer industry and a leading supplier of computer systems, software and peripherals worldwide. With their rapid expansion, DEC were on the constant lookout for new blood. Jason, was young, bright and a top graduate in computer science. He was just what they were looking for.

His DEC managers thought very highly of Jason's prospects. They tried him out in several departments and then put him to work with the development group for the PDP series computers. They gave him the use of a corporate

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apartment until he found something nicer for himself. They even sponsored his US citizenship. DEC wanted to keep him.

Jason was thrilled. The PDP-6 (Programmed Data Processor-6) was DEC's first 'big' machine. It used 36-bit words, in common with other large computers at the time from companies like IBM, Honeywell and General Electric. Addressing remained 18-bit, as in earlier DEC machines, allowing for a 256 kilo-word main memory. Memory was implemented using magnetic cores; a typical system included 32,768 words (equivalent to 160 KB in modern terms). The main memory of the PDP-6 was therefore a whopping 1.25 MB.

Their current PDP-6 was not selling well, even though it was truly an amazing piece of equipment. Worldwide, only 23 PDP-6s were sold, the smallest number of any DEC machine. It was complex and expensive to build, as well as difficult to install and get operational at the customer's site. It filled a room and needed specialized air cooling equipment. The PDP-6 was soon dropped in favor of the smaller, cheaper PDP-8. Jason soon wound up on the team developing the new and highly secret PDP-10, a truly 36-bit machine that would change everything.

7.

Designing a computer is a highly complex issue. On the one hand is the actual hardware with its capabilities and constraints. On the other hand there is the software running on it with its peculiarities and needs. Jason's forte was making the hardware tick. He had an amazing ability to remember each transistor's characteristics and was able to select the right one more accurately than the designing software they were using. His software counterpart and often opponent was in the room next door. With an IQ that was off the charts, Marissa was a certified genius. She was constantly coming up with infuriating ideas of how to simplify the coding and thus necessitate a circuitry change. At the same time she would demand that the system be modular and infinitely expandable. The underlying programming of the machine would enable programmers using the computer to do their work in a new language called Basic, each word of which combined some of the many logical operators that Marissa and her team had to take into consideration.

Marissa's parents were Hungarian immigrants. She had studied Business and Informatics at Harvard and graduated top of her class (Summa cum Laude). She was snapped up by MIT to help develop a new curriculum focusing on collecting and processing data about businesses and forecasting their success, which they called Business Intelligence. Within a year she was head-hunted away by DEC for several times her previous meager salary. It was the challenges of this work that she really loved. The extra cash was also gratefully received and stashed away for a rainy day.

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Her fiery red hair foretold her disposition towards opposition and left little to guess about her emotional explosiveness. Jason and Marissa fought at every encounter. Jason hated her. The feelings were mutual. There was nothing he could do that she would accept as even adequate. At the same time she would make demands that were downright irrational. There were good weeks when they hardly exchanged a word, but they were rare.

Co-workers constantly complained about their bickering to management. However, these two were simply the best. The work they did was amazing.

By pure chance, or was it fate, Jason and Marissa happened to meet up one day in a local restaurant just after Christmas. Both were in a sentimental mood and in need of company. Jason had spent yet another Christmas alone far away from home. Marissa had spent hers with her brother's family, who she rarely otherwise saw. Her father had passed away several years earlier and her mother had recently moved into a nursing home with early stage Alzheimer's.

As neither was inclined to take their work home, Jason broke the ice by telling her about his family home back in Ireland – about walking through the countryside along the canal near Clones, about fishing trips west to Donegal. She in turn told him about growing up in Boston as the only daughter of immigrants, who had arrived with nothing but the will to survive.

It was as if this was the first time they had met. Jason was stunned by her beauty. Her fiery red curls offset her jade green eyes. Marissa could not get over having never seen how utterly gorgeous he was. It was love at 'first sight'.

They got together whenever they could and took weekend trips far and wide. Their first actual date took them up to Sugarbush Mountain in upstate Vermont on a skiing

adventure over the long New Year's weekend. Jason had been there before on several occasions. He was a novice but rapidly learning skier. Marissa virtually grew up skiing, but she had not skied for several years having had a bad accident tearing most of the ligaments in her left leg.

Chancing his luck, Jason called the Hydeaway, his favorite Inn. Of course they were booked up. Next he called Carpenter's Farm, where he often stayed. Carpenter's was an insider's place and always had a vacant room. It was a real working farm with several, sometimes interconnected guest rooms. It was a good way out of town, down snow covered country lanes.

On the way there they talked up a storm both trying to learn who the other was. They were jumping in at the deep end, and they both knew it. They grabbed a bite to eat at a roadside diner and arrived late at the Inn. As usual, Mrs. Carpenter had left a note for Jason on the hall table explaining which room they were in.

Exhausted from the drive and yet slightly giddy in their excitement they quietly crept to their room. Jason opened the door for Marissa. He followed her in and gently closed the door. Marissa took off her coat and turned to face him standing at the foot of the bed that occupied most of the room. She made no further move but looked at Jason with a blank expression.

Puzzled, Jason stopped and asked "Is everything OK?"

"Sure," she replied, her lips curling into a slight smile while a wicked glint seemed to appear in her eyes.

Jason felt rooted to the spot, suddenly unsure of himself. There was a sofa outside and he would spend the night there.

Marissa stepped towards him and embraced him gently kissing him full on the lips. She unzipped his parka, brushed

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it off his shoulders letting it drop to the floor. She kissed him again awakening him from his momentary stupor.

Her breasts caressed his chest. They felt so hot that he thought they might burn his flesh through their clothes. He opened his mouth and probed hers with his tongue.

Reflecting on it later, Jason never did figure out just how they came to be standing naked, hand in hand eating each other with their eyes, neither of them stirring.

Ever so slowly, without moving their feet, they drifted together. Flesh pressed against flesh. The temperature in the room increased perceptibly. They kissed deeply, each drinking in the scent of the other.

Jason closed his eyes and let his fingers explore her body, once again seeing her for the first time. Her breasts were small and firm; the nipples hard as marbles. He bent down and sucked one into his mouth flicking it with his tongue. Marissa shuddered.

The next thing he remembered was that they found themselves on the bed, under the bedclothes, falling off the bed, and stumbling into the bathroom, all the while making wild, frantic, passionate love.

When they were both fully spent, they held each other closely for the longest time before drifting off into a deep and peaceful slumber.

Early the next morning, they awoke refreshed and showered together, once again savoring each other's bodies. They took turns lathering the other with soap, all the while playfully exploring every inch. They both felt newly born.

Not wishing to miss the morning's fresh new snow, they dressed hurriedly before finding their way into the kitchen for a hearty country breakfast. Starting with a glob of

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porridge with cream and honey, they wolfed down sausages, eggs, and anything else Mrs. Carpenter put before them.

The fresh snow was perfect – light, powdery, and not too deep. Marissa rented equipment for the weekend and was a bit unsteady at first. They started on a beginner slope just to be sure, and immediately progressed to the intermediate runs. It was a glorious sunny day and they were in love.

As evening approached, they completed their final run, changed in the base lodge, and drove the short distance to the Hydeaway for an après-ski cocktail. Jason felt compelled to show Marissa his favorite hang-out.

Bill, the barman, saw Jason coming in. They had spent many a weekend together, skiing by day and reminiscing in the evening. Bill beckoned them over asking a couple of his patrons to make some room. By the time Jason and Marissa got there, he had two Jameson's on the rocks on the bar for them.

Marissa looked quizzically, as she normally drank Vodka.

"Have you ever tried *Irish* whiskey?" he asked smiling.

"No, just Scotch, and I didn't like it."

"I promise you'll like this."

And like it she did.

A second drink quickly followed the first. But after that they took off to change clothes and find some place for dinner. It was New Year's Eve and Jason had neglected to make a reservation. He was quicker and went to the foyer to see if there were any brochures listing the local restaurants.

He wandered about in his quest and happened into a small sitting room where he saw a sight that would haunt him years later. There were seven young Arabic men sitting

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around the table in deep conversation. What made it so memorable for Jason was that one of them had until recently been the owner of the Mobile gas station just down the road from where he lived. They had been on quite friendly terms having long chats every time Jason pulled in. It had come as quite a surprise when Yusuf had suddenly been replaced by a distant cousin who was then the new owner. And here was Yusuf at Carpenter's Farm of all places in the world.

"Hello Yusuf, how are you? Have you been skiing? Wasn't it wonderful up there today?" Jason stammered.

Strangely, Yusuf did not react.

Not sure what to do, in a questioning tone Jason said, "Yusuf?"

Yusuf looked up at Jason. Recognition came into his face and he smiled. Finally he answered Jason's question: "We're just here for the holiday. I am afraid we are not skiers."

By then all seven were staring wordlessly at Jason. With the sole exception of Yusuf, their look could not be described as friendly. There was an underlying menace to the ensuing awkward silence that made Jason quite uncomfortable. He put on a smile and bade them a 'Happy New Year' before going back out to the entry hall.

Marissa came down at that moment so they hopped into their car in search of dinner. Yusuf and his friends were out of sight and out of mind.

The first two places they stopped were booked up and could not accommodate them. The third was a new restaurant Jason had not seen on his previous visits. It was a modern looking place sparsely decorated with African carvings. Each table had a small spotlight pointing at it from the ceiling. They did not take bookings, and 'yes', they did have a table for two. Knowing that this would be their

only option, they looked at each other, smiled, and accepted the offered table.

The waiter was the spitting image of Telly Savalas, the television character Kojak. Jason and Marissa dreaded what the food might be like and were overjoyed that it turned out to be excellent. After dinner it was back to the Hydeaway for the New Year's celebration. The place was packed and the party was already in full swing. They were immediately presented with the obligatory silly hats and noise makers. Drink flowed freely. As midnight came around the noise was deafening. Everyone toasted with a complimentary glass of bubbly, which was not a great mix with everything else that was being consumed, but it was all great fun.

The next morning, not quite as early as the previous, Jason and Marissa stumbled, rather than walked, to the kitchen where Mrs. Carpenter put the world to right with a wonderful breakfast. "Are Yusuf and his friends still here?" asked Jason.

"Yusuf? I don't know no Yusuf," replied Mrs. Carpenter.

"I know him from home and I saw him here in the sitting room with his friends yesterday evening," said Jason in confusion.

"Ahh, I s'pose ya mean the group o' young men that was stayin' here. They finished their breakfast an hour ago and left a day early sayin somethin' 'bout an ill auntie they had to go an' see." Mrs. Carpenter bustled off to tend to the tea kettle which was screaming its head off on the range.

Jason was puzzled but had no difficulty in putting it all out of his mind. Marissa did that to him.

The remainder of their New Year's adventure was wonderful. Having skied to exhaustion, they partied the evenings away. After that it was back to Carpenter's where

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they luxuriated in each other's embrace making up for all the time they had worked together without seeing each other.

Having returned to their respective homes two days later, their relationship blossomed. Jason and Marissa fed off each other and both grew and matured emotionally. The work days flew by as they no longer bickered. When they 'disagreed' it was still explosive and their colleagues fled as before. However, contrary to their old times, these arguments caused them both to rethink hard and fast. The project progressed at an unprecedented rate and their respective bosses were thrilled. For a long while they were able to keep their relationship quiet. Corporate policy forbade dating let alone marriage between employees. It was deemed bad for morale. In the end they could wait no longer and were married on a beautiful summer day in 1969.

Jason gladly accepted a generous pay-out by DEC having already tired of his work on the PDP-10. He left the company to find a new job. He wanted something challenging with constantly changing situations.

On the recommendation of a friend at their local Irish pub, he started training to become an air traffic controller. As it happened, the government had just initiated a major hiring push having realized that most air traffic centers were woefully understaffed. His time at DEC stood him well. The school ignored the usually-required US college bachelor's degree in favor of his resume, his excellence in remembering things, and his effortless ability to crunch numbers. He spent the final 12 weeks of training at the newly reopened FAA educational facility in Oklahoma City. It was a long time to be away from Marissa, but he was hooked on the sheer adrenaline of the job.

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For the next ten years, Jason and Marissa were totally engrossed in their careers. They were both young and successful and a family could wait.

Jason had wound up at Boston's Logan Airport, one of the busiest in the US. He held the record for fastest qualification at Boston Tower and was the youngest controller to be selected as an instructor at the FAA Academy. His resume was swollen with countless performance awards.

Once a week Jason would get together with his colleagues and fellow members of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) to talk about how the stress and the long working hours were affecting some of their number, and how their pay was far from where they felt it should be. For Jason this was particularly poignant. Marissa spent three days at DEC, worked from home for the remaining two, and brought home over twice what Jason was making, pulling grueling eight hour shifts five days a week.

8.

In 1980 Marissa was approached about a new job with an obscure State agency, the American Institute for Material Matters (AIMM). Her new salary was stupendous. She was in charge of programming and data analytics, something that she excelled at. She had always had the uncanny knack of finding the proverbial needle in a haystack at first glance, and of knowing intuitively how it got there and where it came from. At her personal and exclusive disposal were banks of modern Cray computers – the fastest and most powerful to date. The AIMM offices were in downtown Boston, so the two of them could commute in to work together, and Jason could take the car on to his job.

Just like while working for DEC, there was a tight veil of secrecy surrounding her work. She and Jason were both used to that. Besides, they both had so much else to talk about that they never brought their work home. Jason was never to learn who Marissa worked for, nor did he ever even think to ask. He only knew it to be a secret Government agency. To anyone else, Marissa was running an office in downtown Boston, which was just fine.

Based on Marissa's salary, they moved to a beautiful house on nearby Cape Cod. Situated right on the water with a private dock, it was a dream come true. They quickly acquired the requisite fleet of boats, and would often spend weekends fishing for striped bass, digging for soft shell clams (steamers) and quahogs, or having a picnic on a nearby island. Lobsters, scallops and fresh fish were delivered right to their dock by one of the local fishermen whenever they had the desire.

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The disparity between their salaries caused Jason to become ever more disgruntled with the way the Government was treating him and his colleagues. He was starting to dislike going in to work and did his job strictly by rote.

9.

In the 1980 presidential election, PATCO (along with the Teamsters and the Air Line Pilots Association) refused to back the incumbent President Jimmy Carter, instead endorsing Republican Party candidate Ronald Reagan. Carter was blamed for the Iran hostage crisis, in which the followers of the Ayatollah Khomeini paraded the captured American hostages in public, burned American flags and effigies of Carter, while chanting anti-American slogans. Carter's critics saw him as an inept leader who had also failed to solve the worsening economic problems at home.

Labor relations with the FAA under the Carter administration were poor, and Ronald Reagan had committed himself to helping the air traffic controllers stating, "If I am elected President, I will take whatever steps are necessary to provide our air traffic controllers with the most modern equipment available and to adjust staff levels and work days so that they are commensurate with achieving a maximum degree of public safety."

That clinched it for Jason and for PATCO. Reagan won by a landslide becoming the 40th President of the United States.

When his promises came up empty, PATCO declared a strike on August 3rd, 1981. They sought better working conditions, better pay, and a 32-hour workweek. Along with nearly 13,000 of the 17,500 union members Jason Geraghty walked off the job.

On the same day during a press conference regarding the strike, President Reagan stated, "They are in violation of the law and if they do not report for work within 48 hours they have forfeited their jobs and will be terminated."

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Only 1,300 of the controllers returned to work. On August 5th Reagan fired Jason and the 11,345 striking air traffic controllers who had ignored the order. He also banned them all from federal service for life.

Something snapped inside Jason that day. He was changed forever.



Jason was devastated. His life as he knew it was over. The fall from the high adrenaline, fast paced job in Boston Tower to the unemployment line caused him to plummet into a deep depression. He spent much of his time in Heneghan's pub on Broad Street in Boston's Irish district, ostensibly looking for work. If it wasn't for Marissa's job and the money she brought home, they would be in deep trouble.

He was beside himself with anger at Reagan for his bald faced lie during the election and turning around and stabbing him in the back. He was angry at America for letting him down and angry at himself for letting it happen. Twice he had already gotten into a serious fight with another patron just for saying something positive about Reagan or the government.

One afternoon the barman asked Jason to do him a favor – he would be paid for it. He was to go around to the Irish pubs in South Boston and retrieve the collection boxes for the "Widows and Orphans of the Troubles", dropping off empty ones in their stead.

"Sure," said Jason, grateful for something, anything to do.

He was even more grateful that it was a totally mindless task. At that point in time, the last thing Jason wanted to do was think.

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From that day on, Jason was busy. Still incapacitated mentally by his depression and constantly fuelled by his rage, the simple task of going around to all the bars helped him focus. He embraced the work as a drowning man might grab a thrown rope.

He was out and about, meeting people, talking about Ireland and how he missed going home. Much of the talk was about the Troubles in Ireland, and he was now doing his bit to help.

Jason soon became quite creative about increasing the amount of money he would pick up from each location. He would convince patrons to put cash into the box insinuating that if they didn't do so, they were supporting the British. From the owner of the establishment he then demanded matching funds, which in turn spurred the patrons to put ever more in the box. As he did his rounds he kept a running tally in his head of what he had collected week by week. This gave him the clear goal of the amount he had to exceed for the subsequent week.

His enthusiasm for his 'job' quickly brought him to the attention of Michael Joseph McConnell, known locally as "Mickie". Besides using the money he collected to expand his empire, and of course line his own pockets, Mickie's primary objective was to supply the Irish Republican Army (IRA) with much needed financial support.

Local folklore depicted Mickie McConnell as a Robin Hood-style social bandit dedicated to protecting the neighborhood and its residents. Mickie had an 'in' with the feds, supplying them with information on the inner workings of the Italian American Luciano crime family, who were encroaching on his territory. But there was more to Mickie than protecting the poor and ratting on the Mafiosi. He had an intricate plan for collecting revenue.

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Mickie would periodically summon drug dealers from in and around Boston to his headquarters. Flanked by his associates Mickie would inform each dealer that he had been offered a substantial sum to assassinate him. He would then demand a large cash payment not to do so. He also had his rules. One was no sales of drugs to children. If anyone did not comply, he disappeared.

Gradually, Jason became Mickie's personal assistant, moving from collecting for the benefit of widows and orphans to delivering messages to pubs, drug distributors, and gambling operations. His anger against Reagan and the Americans that had engulfed him when he and his fellow members of PATCO had been fired developed into ruthlessness any time anyone crossed him.

Mickie's operation was vital to the IRA, and Jason was an integral part of it. Slowly, his depression faded. He adopted Mickie's zeal as his own and channeled the anger that still dwelled deep in his soul against the Brits who meddled in his homeland.

Soon Jason started collecting thick bundles of protection money for Mickie. His computer skills were no longer his most valuable asset. Now it was a head for numbers, his loyalty, his wit, and his ability to personally mete out punishment to transgressors that mattered.

It wasn't long before Jason also devised schemes to deliver the cash to the IRA in Ireland. Sometimes he packed the bundled banknotes into a small parcel and mailed it, stating that it was a book on the customs form. More often it was delivered in person by a 'courier'.

Jason thus made frequent 'business' trips himself. At other times he financed family vacations back home for a trusted employee, who would carry a package for him in their luggage. Only once was the delivery found. It was stashed in the seat of a baby stroller. The customs officer was Irish

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and closed both his eyes when he learned that the money was intended for the widows and orphans in Northern Ireland.

10.

The one thing Jason looked forward to more than anything was being with Marissa. Despite the new challenges of his work, he felt an inner emptiness when he dropped her off on Monday morning. He was always overjoyed when she hopped into his car for the ride home. He instantly became an entirely different person. Once there, they would sit together out on the porch sipping a glass of wine in the summer, or in front of a blazing fire when it got too cold to be outside.

They didn't see that much of each other so it was hard for them to notice that they were both changing. She was growing more lonely and withdrawn; he was growing more outgoing and confident again. It was almost as though they were switching places.

Of course, neither one of them could or wanted to talk about their jobs. Both sworn to secrecy, it made conversations flow easily about everything that mattered most. They both respected the other's privacy. Unlike other couples, they didn't talk incessantly about work and co-workers. They talked about the sunset and their cottage, the fishing and the future. Their love for each other continued to flourish.

One such evening Marissa gave Jason a quizzical look. "I've missed my period," she stated simply.

Knowing full well what this meant, Jason was elated. His world was back together. He was enjoying the challenges of his job and was by then earning good money – all of it cash. Now, they would have a family. Marissa would come home and be the doting wife his friends had and he so longed for.

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They would have a big family, like the 'good Catholics' they were. He imagined them all sitting around the big open fire in their house on the Cape on a blustery winter's evening. Surrounded by his children, he saw himself gazing lovingly over at his adoring wife, who had given him everything he had ever wished for. Of course, Marissa's views on the matter were just a wee bit different.



Three months later it was all over. Marissa miscarried. Her doctor determined that Marissa would probably never be able to have a pregnancy come to full term as she had a form of autoimmune disease. He explained that with autoimmune-induced miscarriages, the woman's body may attack the growing fetus or it may prevent normal pregnancy progression. Either way the likelihood of Marissa carrying a baby to full term was quite poor.

Jason knew in his heart that this was in reality all due to the stress of Marissa's demanding work schedule. 'He' should be providing and she should not need to work. If she had been safely at home, none of this would have happened. It was all the fault of that bastard Ronald Reagan, him and the lying and deceitful people she was working for whoever they were. The volcano in his soul came a big step closer to erupting.

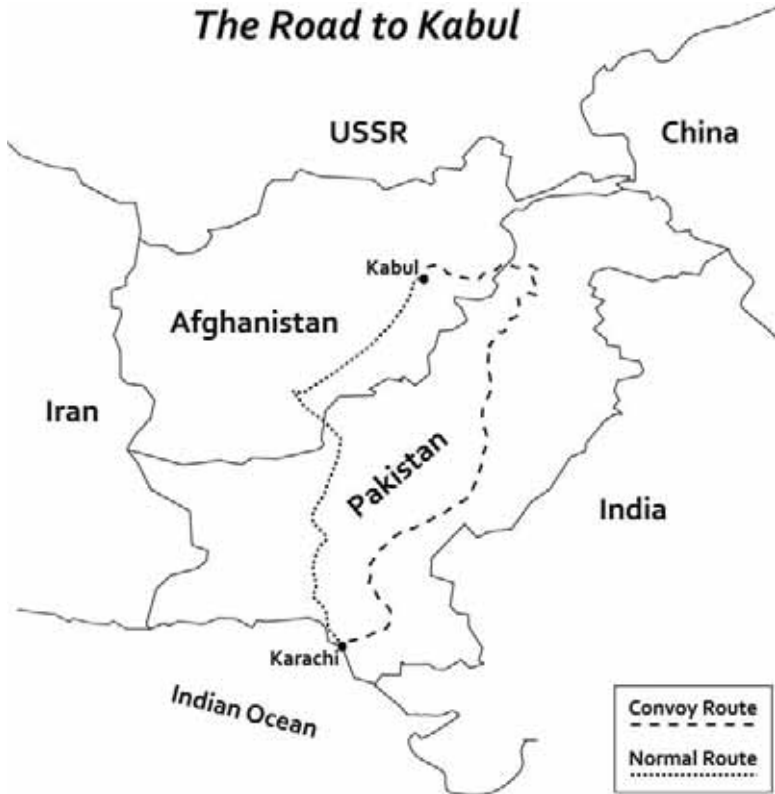
11.

The first of the KamAZ-4310 military trucks roared to life precisely at 12 midnight on March 22nd. The others were fired up almost immediately after it. The din in the confined garage in Karachi was mind numbing. Jack and Jamil hopped aboard the trucks along with 20 men who had been dozing in the shadows. All the men were Mujahidin fighters from Afghanistan. There were 60 men in all to load 40 tons of cargo and then guard the convoy as it made its way north to Kabul. There they would be able to spend a few precious days with their families prior to accompanying the trucks back to Karachi. All were experienced dock workers and had done many jobs like this before.

The normal route to Kabul from Karachi is about 1400 km. It goes northwest and crosses the border in southern Afghanistan skirting the mountains that divide the two nations further north. The convoy would be taking a longer route roughly paralleling the Afghan Pakistan border staying in friendly Pakistan until they were somewhere east of Kabul. From there they would take to small unpaved country roads and mountain passes known to the local fighters to cross the border. This added about 600 km to the trip and meant it would take at least a week if all went well.

One by one the ten trucks wound their way through the docklands to the deserted freighter, each taking a slightly different route. The streets were full of the usual bustle and nobody took the least notice of these old trucks with half asleep workmen peering out of their cargo bays. When they arrived at the dock they pulled up in a line abreast of the freighter.

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A man climbed up into the cab of the nearest crane and swung its boom out over the *Chang Da-12*. At the same time 15 others boarded the freighter and proceeded to open her cargo hatches. They clearly knew what they were doing. One group of men stayed by the trucks while the remainder fanned out, blending into the shadows around the periphery of the activity. They were well armed – just in case.

Jack held his breath when the first net full of crates appeared out of the hold. The workers quickly and efficiently started to load the cargo into the waiting trucks. There was a tense moment as Jamil pried open a random box labeled 'steel pipe'. Inside was indeed what looked like steel pipes wrapped in greased paper. However, when he

then unwrapped one, he found it to be a perfectly clean 'surface to air' (SAM) missile launcher. Jamil grinned from ear to ear. Jack breathed a sigh of relief.

Jack then boarded the *Chang Da-12* himself and made his way to his quarters to retrieve his bags. One duffle he had used daily contained his clothes. The other identical one was locked and he did not have a key, though he knew what it contained. Jack made his way back to the gangway and down to the dock, where he deposited the bag with his belongings into the truck he would shortly be boarding. The other he then brought over to where Jamil was overseeing the loading of the convoy.

When Jamil saw the duffle bag he smiled saying, "I thought you might have forgotten this one..."

Knowing full well that this was an attempt at humor, Jack smiled back and watched as Jamil produced a small key from a chain around his neck and unlocked the bag. There it was, half a million US dollars in well used banknotes. Jamil relocked it and beckoned over one of the workers, who took it and slid it into a special compartment hidden in the under-body of the nearest truck. Taking out another larger key, Jamil locked this. He then pulled a metal plate over the compartment door securing it with rivets. The compartment was concealed from anything but the most detailed inspection.

The last of the crates was lifted out of the hold just after two in the morning. The men working on the ship followed it ashore. When the all of the crates were stowed, the men boarded the trucks and made themselves as comfortable as possible. It would be a long trip.

Jack and Jamil climbed into the cab of the first truck and sat next to the driver. It pulled away immediately. Jack would be accompanying the convoy only until it reached the Afghan border. Beyond that even Jamil's influence would

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not be able to fully protect an Infidel. In Pakistan, he would be relatively safe. The government was after all supporting him as well as the Mujahidin.

Mindful of being noticed by undesired eyes, they drove slowly as far as the city's outskirts. None of the ten trucks took the same route and none within eyesight of another. They all stayed on the small side roads and avoided the major thoroughfares where the watchers might be lurking. They drove through residential districts, industrial areas, and the shanty towns moving ever northwards. Just after dawn the first truck with Jack and Jamil aboard arrived at the road that would bring them east and then north, up the middle of the country. As they embarked toward their destination, they were followed at irregular intervals by the other nine vehicles. So far everything had gone without incident, exactly as Jamil had planned.

Just a short hour later the trucks pulled onto a dirt track leading into a wooded area well away from the main road leading to Hyderabad. There were tire marks under the trees and it was clear to Jack that this spot had been used as a stopping place in the past.

Jack asked, "Jamil, why are we stopping?"

"We're trying to avoid drawing attention to ourselves, so we'll be travelling by night and sleeping by day. There are Afghan spies everywhere. At night we will be indistinguishable from the countless other truck convoys on the roads. During the day someone might notice my men riding in the backs of the trucks. If nobody takes note of our convoy we may just pass all the way through to Kabul without running in to any opposition. Our trip north through Pakistan will be safe enough, but if the Afghan government forces learn about us, there will be trouble after we cross the border."

"That makes a lot of sense," said Jack as he watched the other trucks stop in an irregular pattern under the trees. "However, it does look like this wood has been used frequently in the past. Don't you think someone might be watching it?"

Jamil smiled. "There are many watching this spot. I pay them well."

The two men went off to supervise the camouflaging of the trucks. The Mujahidin fighters were pulling camo-netting over them.

"We park the trucks in no clear pattern and then cover them with the netting in addition to the trees to avoid detection from the air, or even by satellite," said Jamil "I hope you don't mind cold food, as we won't be lighting fires until we reach Kabul."

That evening, just as it was starting to get dark, Jamil came to Jack and said, "We will go now."

Jack realized that he must have dozed off as he rose to make his way to the waiting truck. Most of the other men were already aboard their assigned vehicle. The first of the engines had come to life. With Jamil and Jack aboard the lead truck, they moved out of the wood and turned onto the main road. Shortly after resuming their journey they left the main road heading almost due north through the mountains.

"Why have we turned off?" asked Jack. "I would have thought that we would make much better time following the main road along the Indus valley."

"That is true, but there will be fewer eyes this way," replied Jamil.

"Are you not afraid of being attacked and robbed up here in the mountains?"

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"The possibility does exist. But praise Allah we have travelled this route many times already and have encountered no problems. My scouts routinely patrol the area and have visited most of the local farmers. Some have relations we employ."

Jamil continued, "This cargo that Allah has provided us with through your good services, should help us purge the Soviet infidels from our country. They have much blood on their hands – blood that must be avenged. We have therefore taken many extra precautions to ensure our safe passage.

Jack peered out into the gloom as they bounced along the mountain road. He saw nothing, and then realized that there was nothing out there. Desert surrounded them. Nobody stirred as they passed through the occasional village.

"Where are all the people?" asked Jack.

"Inside and out of sight," replied Jamil smiling for once. "They know that if they see nothing they can say nothing, safer for them and safer for us."

Jack wondered grimly what it had taken to make all these naturally curious villagers and farmers look away when Jamil passed through, just so that there would be deniability should they be asked about a convoy passing though their village.

The convoy's next stop was a disused factory on Manchar Lake, which is near Sehwan Sharif on the west bank of the Indus. Jack had read that Sehwan was a beautiful city with much antiquity. He would have loved to have spent some time there, but contented himself with knowing he had a job to do.

"Jamil, have you ever been to Sehwan?" asked Jack conversationally, as they were settling down for their daytime rest.

"You ask too many questions, Infidel," retorted Jamil angrily. "It is none of your concern where I have been or what I have done." He stormed off and spoke quietly with the men clustered around their truck.

He came back to Jack and said with a menacing tone to his voice, "You will ride in the back from now on. If you say anything, I have instructed my men to slit your throat and dump you over the tailgate. Your remains will not be worthy to be carrion for the vultures once the other trucks have ground them into the dust."

Jack was dumbfounded. He had thought he was making inroads with Jamil. Whereas Gholam had been truly dedicated to his cause and had been honestly grateful for the help delivered by Jack, Jamil was a true fanatic, or so it seemed. Having literally been fostered by the Mujahidin, according to the brief Jack had received from the AIMM, his cause and his fanatical beliefs were apparently one and the same.

Four days later they reached Peshawar in northern Pakistan. The trip had gone well thus far. It was the end of the road for Jack. Sore and tired, he climbed down from the back of the truck and reached in for his bag thinking that he should be grateful to be alive. He was going to have to work his way into the city on foot from here.

Perhaps just for show for his men, Jamil embraced the big infidel one last time without any expression on his face. Jack returned the embrace knowing full well that under different circumstances they would likely be mortal enemies. In fact, he was not so certain whether Jamil might not kill him then and there. Nevertheless, he felt admiration for Jamil and was certain that their paths would cross at some point in the future. This man was a true leader. Yes, he was a fanatic, but he was a mastermind at planning and execution.

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Jamil was now to take the convoy to town called Landi Kotal where he would cross the mountains to Afghanistan. This was in the Khyber region of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), governed by Pakistan and claimed by Afghanistan.

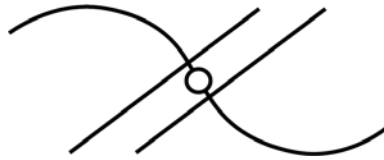
They would then roughly follow the Kabul river before cutting north on small unmarked mountain roads to where their camp was. Jamil and his convoy would be greeted as heroes.

This first shipment of arms from America was the catalyst to Jamil's meteoric rise in the Mujahidin and later in a logical progression in al-Qaeda. It was a development that would puzzle analysts, who knew nothing of the AIMM's activities, decades later.

The Butterfly Effect – It Started on 9/11

The Butterfly Effect

It Started on 9/11



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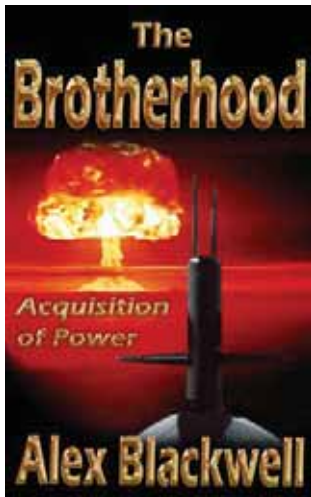
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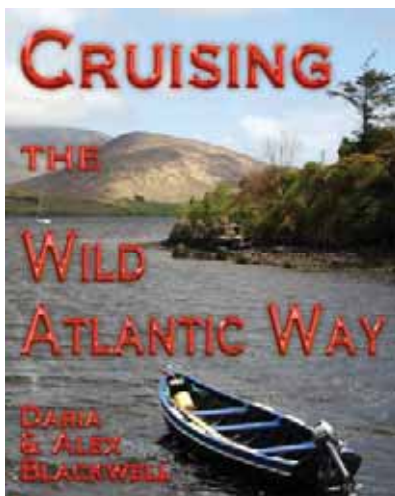
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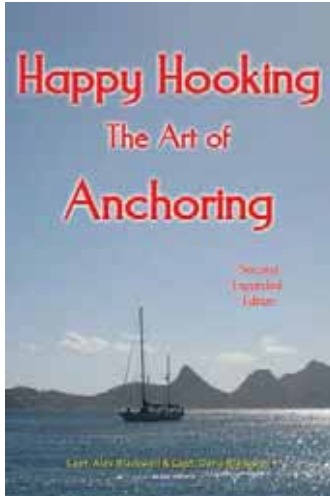
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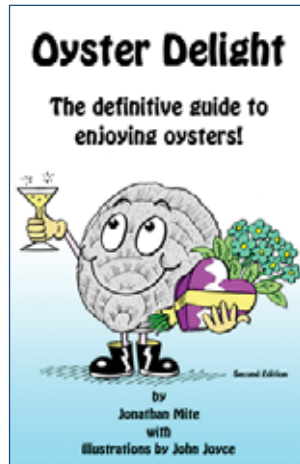
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