

Chapter Two

Cliff Tanner had been on vacation during the attacks. Down in the Grand Canyon, you don't get news broadcasts, nor want to. For the past week, all Tanner cared about were the beautiful sights and the peace of gliding down the river. Even the wild rapids, though cold and potentially deadly, served to relax him.

It was just now, after returning, that he heard the horrific details. He had family and friends who no longer existed! His ex and kids, parents, brother and his family, were all gone! He had trouble believing it. His motel room television showed scenes from hell. Of course, the news reporters didn't know what was happening, resulting in wild speculation and commentary from knowledgeable 'experts'. Bottom line was that nobody knew what it was all about, except that a lot of people were dead.

It would be some time before the world would know what had really taken place. The previous morning, on receipt of a radio transmission, containing a code word, fifty "packages" were delivered worldwide.

Many suitcase-sized packages were simply dropped into the ocean by ordinary looking fishing trawlers, merchant ships, and in one case, an aircraft. The devices sank quickly, some to a pre-set ocean depth, others to the bottom of harbors.

There were three types of devices used. The first was set to detonate a prescribed amount of time after water eroded a seal and entered a trigger chamber where electrical contacts activated the timers. The second type was activated as a typical mine, by the passage of a ship overhead. The third were simply suitcase bombs, exploded in crowded air terminals of many nations.

The devices of the first type were laid on the bottom of harbors that housed naval bases, NATO, U.S., and other nation's military bases. The timing of the detonations was not long, enough for the dispensing units to clear away from the blast areas.

Devices of the second type, the contact mines, were boldly laid in the path of oncoming warships. Those setting these mines were possibly martyrs who were prepared to die along with their warship targets.

The third type was exploded in mid-sized cities that were the location of military facilities of some importance. These devices were restricted to inland cities rather than coastal ports.

As it happened, all of the explosives worked perfectly, with not a single technical failure. This was probably due to their simplicity of the devices. In less than three hours, the United States and many other countries were hit with a sledgehammer blow. It was a blow from which they would likely never recover.

Tanner spent over an hour watching TV in his motel room, so shocked that he was unable to do anything else. Like people everywhere that morning, he was frozen like a deer in the headlights.

Seven o'clock in the morning found him still in bed, a rare occurrence no doubt a result of all the fresh air and exertion of his canyon trip. Flicking on the TV right after the bedside light was a habit of long standing.

The usual routine of shower and shave drowned out the words of the commentator. Getting dressed was when he actually started taking notice of what was being said.

With one sock on and his shirt still unbuttoned, he just sat there on the bedside and watched the agony of a world waking up to fear and loss. There seemed to be no sense to it and nobody could even make intelligent guesses as to what to expect next.

Finally, Tanner came to his senses and quickly finished dressing. The holiday was over. He needed to get to Washington and back to work. The TV was switched off next because he knew the real information would not be heard there. He reached for the telephone.