

Chapter 13**Thanks**

Kand rolled the icon over and over in his hands. He seemed to meditate while looking at it. Doug watched him for a few minutes, before he finally took the strap and put it on.

“What is that, really?” Doug asked.

“It is kind of a compass.”

“Like on a map?”

“In a way. The compass rose on a map tells you which way is North, South, and so on.”

“So that grid gives you direction?”

“Grid? I’ve never heard it called that.”

Doug paused. If he was a member of the Free Majority, he would definitely have heard it called the same thing they used. “I thought it was called the Global Grid.”

“No, Global Grid is wrong. Grid makes it sound rigid. It is actually very flexible.”

“I don’t understand,” Doug said. He truly didn’t.

“You said that it would give me direction, but that’s not really right either. You make your own direction. This compass helps civilization stay in balance.”

Doug remembered that Dr. Currier had used the same word. This was more confusing than the interrogation he had just gone through.

Kand sat back and kept talking. “These symbols represent the nine basic needs of a civilized race. In the center

are the roots. The tree for resources, the arm for work, and the balance for law.” He held the icon up and pointed at it as he spoke. It was too far away for Doug to see, so he got up and walked over toward him.

Kand pointed to one side of the icon. “On one side are the studies: Agriculture, usually an ear of corn, but it has been other symbols in the past; then mechanics, and religion, here.”

His symbol for religion looked like a rounded stick figure standing on rocks. Doug had never seen it before, but he didn’t bother asking what it was.

“On the other side are the forces: money, communication, and finally, government. These provide balance for any culture.”

It was definitely a lot like the grid that Eric had drawn at the seminar, but it had one drastic difference. Doug was now becoming genuinely interested in this icon, and he forgot about his goal of finding out what Kand was up to.

“I saw this before, but the tree and the arm were over here, on the left,” Doug said.

Kand closed his hand over the icon, and Doug thought he was about to get angry.

“I know where you have seen it. Those people are wrong.” He obviously knew the Free Majority folks.

“What do you mean?” Doug asked.

“There are people who have been using the symbol to sell their ideas. They have insulted the tradition and its purpose. You have not been working with these people,” he

said. Doug realized he was asking a question that he had already lied to the interrogator about. He had to be careful with his answer.

“Well, for a short time. Why?”

“I cannot tell you more. They have created a mock version of their ‘Grid’, and they have endangered its usefulness.”

Doug stood silently in front of Kand, who looked up at him with defiance.

“The symbol must be understood completely, or it is dangerous. We are done.”

Doug had no choice but to go back to his cold bench. He sat down and felt his face. He had not rubbed off all of the dirt from the carpet yet. He looked at the sink on the other side of the cell. It was time to give his face a good washing.

He walked to the sink and turned it on. The hot tap brought only cold water, and there were no towels. Doug cupped his hands and ran the water until they were almost numb. Then he splashed the frigid water over his face. A few drops of it ran down his neck and caused him to shudder. Doug shook his hands and walked back to the bench.

“How did you dirty your face?” asked Kand.

“Huh? Oh, when they picked me up they pushed me into the floor. It was a filthy rug.”

“Where were you?”

“I was in an office in Weymouth. We were, um,” Doug looked up at the ceiling where he guessed the camera was, “working on a database.”

“We? Did the others get away?”

“No. There was only one other. A guy named Currier.”

“Currier!”

“You know him?”

“Currier. Yes, he has a beard?” Kand gestured with his hands to indicate a very bushy beard.

“Yeah, that’s the guy. How do you know him?”

“He came into the store a couple days before I was taken. He took a good look around. I was helpful. I thought he was the guy who planted the explosives.”

“What?”

“Right. Explosives,” Kand said. “I never had them, but they were there when the agents came, and I had no idea how they got there.”

“Shit.”

“Why wasn’t he caught with you?” asked Kand.

“He left a few minutes before me, actually, seconds before.”

“A very sneaky guy.”

“Yeah,” Doug said with a sigh. Dr. Currier was responsible for Kand being here, and he had probably set up Doug as well. He figured it wouldn’t be long before Rich, Vanessa, Molin, and Dad all showed up in this facility while the Free Majority folks went about whatever their plan was.

It was very late, and Doug suddenly realized how tired he was. The lights kept blazing in the ceiling, but he could not keep his eyes open. Doug finally collapsed and fell asleep.

Doug had no idea how long he slept for, but he did have a weird dream. He was in Kand's store with Rich and Vanessa, buying drinks and snacks for the office. Rich was getting a bottle of wine, and Kand was showing them the necklace.

Doug always figured that dreams were driven by recent events, or current worries. He had been sitting in a jail cell with Kand, and was very concerned about Rich and Vanessa, so it was natural to dream about them and his store.

They were standing in the store, talking about the Global Grid, and its various symbols. Its symbols had changed throughout the centuries, and they were excited about getting to design the next version of it. Vanessa had been talking about airplanes, and how they were a better symbol for mechanization than the car. Rich asked why rockets wouldn't be even better. Doug thought that a personal rocket would be pretty cool.

He imagined himself flying around Boston wearing a rocket pack. He found it extremely difficult to steer the thing, and almost smashed himself into a building several times. Doug finally got control of it.

He was back in Kand's store, where Rich and Vanessa were still arguing. They started talking about the type of tree for the bottom symbol, and suddenly a man came out of the back room, wearing the suit of armor.

He walked toward the three and opened the visor. It was Doug's dad, Jonathan. He waved and spoke to them in the same Middle English brogue that Doug had heard in countless movies. It reminded him of the Medieval Faire that his parents had taken him to when he was a kid.

Jonathan turned to leave, and they all bowed to each other. Doug realized that Vanessa was suddenly wearing a royal blue princess gown. Then his dad stepped out onto the sidewalk and took off. They ran out to watch him go. He literally took off. He was wearing a rocket pack.

Doug looked up into the sky, and it was filled with flying knights in suits of armor. Many of them swooped and circled and tested their swords against each other. They were obviously heading for a great battle.

In a slightly more wakeful moment, he thought to himself that this was a pretty strange dream.

Doug tried to get back into the dream, but there was no going back. He opened his eyes. It was dark. And loud. And even colder than before.

What the hell? He was not in the cell anymore. Doug was sure he was not sleeping, either. Several guards dressed in black were standing over him. Actually, they were walking. Stomping, really. Doug was on a stretcher and they were the ones carrying it.

He looked around and saw the lights of a runway, or at least it looked like a runway. It looked like an airport. There

was a terminal, and several lit bays where planes would be parked. There were no planes, however.

The loud noise was getting louder and clearer. It was a helicopter. Doug tried to tilt his head far back enough to see it, but it was impossible. One of the guards pushed his head back down. Thankfully, there was a pad underneath.

Doug could hear another sound. It was Kand yelling in a foreign language. He could not see him, but there were several other men carrying another stretcher. Presumably, he was on it.

He looked at his wrists. They were tied to the stretcher. Maybe it was a backboard. He had seen them used in whitewater rescues. They were reserved for the least pretty of situations. He lifted a leg and discovered that his feet were tied down as well.

The guards got to the helicopter, which by now was unbearably loud. They lifted the backboard to some men on the chopper, who strapped it to a platform inside. Kand's backboard was strapped to the other side. He looked at Doug while the guards strapped him in. He looked scared.

Doug started to feel panic as well. What the hell was going on? He looked at the ceiling and saw that the chopper was pretty big. It was one of those cargo helicopters that enthusiasts got all excited over. He could never tell one from another.

It had cables running along the ceiling, and Doug could see cargo stowed against the walls. In the darkness, he could

not see the end of the chopper. The front end was behind him, and he had no idea where they were going. The chopper was vibrating mightily, and he started to wonder if they were already aloft.

Doug heard the guards still talking to someone outside, so he guessed they were still on the ground. Whoever it was, he was busy climbing onto the helicopter. Doug could barely hear another voice on the radio. A whining sound started to get higher and louder. Then there was a lurch.

There was a brisk wind that filled the bay of the chopper. Doug was shivering, and so was Kand. He could hear a lot of radio jargon and buckles clinking together. The whole machine leaned forward and he felt a massive pull downward. A door slammed shut and the wind stopped.

After more than a few minutes, the chopper leaned back to a gentler grade and the vibration settled down. Doug could see shadows moving across the ceiling at a high rate. The blades were still incredibly loud, but he could hear voices much better now.

“Birdy Five-zero-nine. We’re at zero two out of setcon.”

“Mission plus four-thirty.”

“Setting path. Heading one-nine.”

“Cleared for three-zero.”

Doug had no idea what was going on, but he did know they were flying. He could not imagine where these guys might

see fit to take him. The interrogator left him with the impression that all he had to do was talk to Kand.

“Mission plus one-zero, sir.”

“Time to do the talking,” a man said.

The man walked over to Kand and knelt down. It was the interrogator from the night before. He wore the same black outfit, this time with a flight jacket that he had not pulled completely on. His arms were not in the sleeves. With his square glasses and his jacket worn like a cape, Doug thought he looked like a pretentious flyboy. He would bet the pilots did, too.

Doug saw him whispering to Kand. He had no idea what he was saying, but Kand appeared to be very agitated, and probably scared. Doug started to feel even more scared than he already was. He closed his eyes and decided to try to get back to that dream. It was impossible, though he tried for what seemed like an eternity. Instead, he lay there taking in the gentle sideways rocking of the noisy helicopter.

There was a tap on his chest. He opened his eyes and looked at the interrogator, who was kneeling next to him now. Doug could barely see his face in the darkness.

“Why did you lie about the phone message?” he asked calmly.

“What? I didn’t,” Doug answered.

“No, you did,” he said, “They weren’t in a club. It was a museum of some kind. Why did you lie?”

“I said I wasn’t-”

“It doesn’t matter. You have given us the real target anyway,” the man said.

“Huh?”

“Huh?” The man mocked. “Well, you would have no idea. Carrier. We have had our eyes on him for a long time.”

“Carrier?”

“Yeah. once your buddy talked about a guy with a beard, we knew we could connect the dots to him.”

“A beard? That’s what did it?”

“I know,” the interrogator chuckled, “they all have beards, don’t they?”

Doug couldn’t laugh.

“Dr. Reginald Carrier. Princeton, Philosophy, Economics, Chemistry. A genius. Runs for President all the time. Helped found the Army of the Free Majority.”

“Shit,” Doug said almost silently.

“That’s right. You came through.”

“I thought they were trying to help.”

“Irrelevant, really. He’s a rabble-rouser. Our government has been looking for dirt on him for decades. You gave us everything, but now we need solid leads.”

“Solid leads? What do you mean?”

“Well, like I said to your friend, here. You guys are free to go.”

There was a voice at the front of the aircraft. “Cleared for point zero-one.” Then Doug felt the chopper lurch forward again. The questioner grabbed the backboard for a handhold.

“Mission plus three-zero, sir,” said the pilot.

“We are still go,” said the questioner. Then he turned back to Doug. “You have served your country well.”

Doug looked at him with a fearful expression.

“Do not worry,” he said. “Remember not to hold your breath, it just makes it more difficult.”

“What?” Doug asked frantically.

“Breathe normally, and it will end more quickly.”

At that point the helicopter came to a stop, and three guards unbuckled themselves and came over to Doug’s stretcher. He struggled against the straps holding him in. There was no chance of breaking out of them.

Kand started yelling again. This time it was partially in English, and partially in his own language, whatever it was.

The guards unbuckled Doug’s backboard and carried it to the door. The interrogator slid the door open, and Doug could see a sparkling expanse of open ocean in the moonlight. The horizon was barely visible, and he had no idea how high up they were.

As the guards lifted the backboard almost to a vertical position, Doug started screaming. He had no idea what, so it was mostly gibberish. There was a lot of swearing. The chopping of the helicopter blades, Kand’s voice, and Doug’s screaming filled the night, and the guards suddenly let go of the backboard.

There was a splash. And there was cold. The noise of the chopper disappeared. Doug ignored the interrogator’s

words and held his breath. It was impossible not to try, though he thought about it. He could tell that he was sinking.

Everything was black and was only getting blacker. And colder. Doug could not even see the bubbles that he could feel leaking out of his nose.

Doug’s lungs felt like they were on fire and about to explode. He could feel the sudden rush to let go. He had to let go. He had to release his breath and take another.

Doug suddenly realized that he had forgotten to smile. What a failure. It was over.

A hand grabbed the backboard and started dragging it upward. Doug saw the water get brighter, and he could wait no longer. He burst for a breath, just as his head pushed above the surface of the water. The air was frigid. He could see the helicopter’s lights high above the surface, moving away.

A dark face appeared in front of Doug’s. He could tell it was Kand, though barely. He was not strapped to a backboard, and was busily cutting through the straps that held Doug’s hands to the board.

Doug was still gasping for breath. He had never felt such relief. It would be awhile before he could speak. Kand continued to cut and Doug wondered what he was using. Whatever it was, it sliced through the nylon straps pretty damn quickly. He would have to ask as soon as he was done gasping.

Kand cut through the straps on Doug’s wrists and dove to get his feet, one at a time. It took less than a minute. Doug frantically treaded water with his hands while trying to keep

the heavy backboard from dragging him down with it. Finally he felt it fall away, and Kand and Doug kept treading water next to each other for a good minute, just trying to breathe.

The water was frigid, and Doug could see his breath crystallizing in the frozen air. All around him and Kand was pitch black. He had read about people not lasting very long in frigid water. Doug was shivering uncontrollably, and he hoped that whatever biological mechanism caused it, it was the right response. Kand was shivering as well.

“Wh-wh-wh-wh-what d-d-did you c-c-cut w-w,” Doug tried to ask Kand. He gave up because the shivering was now completely out of control.

Kand knew what he asked anyway. “Th-th-this,” he said, as he held up the Global Grid icon. In the dim light Doug could barely see it, but he could make out the serrations around the edge. He had not noticed them before. He also thought he could see the gleam of blood streaming down Kand’s arm. The icon must have been incredibly sharp.

They kept treading water. Doug tried to remember everything he could about keeping above the surface with the least effort. It was impossible to think in the cold. He looked over at Kand, who kept closing his eyes, but stayed upright. Somehow Doug thought he was using less effort.

Doug heard a sound coming from behind them. It wasn’t the helicopter, but he wasn’t even sure if he was really hearing it. He was waiting for some kind of death sound that might occur during a man’s last minutes. It got louder.

It sounded like a motorboat. Doug saw a light flashing across the water around them, and he and Kand used the last bit of their energy to turn around and see what it was. As they did, cold waves splashed over them and the noise got louder and then suddenly cut off. A large boat had pulled to a stop right before them, only a dozen yards away. Doug could see the silhouette of a man standing on board, on the top deck, holding a flashlight.

They were out there for two, maybe three minutes, but it felt like an eternity. Doug had no strength to call out, but he could splash. He started waving his hands up and down and clapping them against the water’s surface. The flashlight beam shot right to him.

“Doug?” called the man.

Doug kept splashing. Kand started as well. The flashlight jerked over to him. They heard a relieved gasp from the boat.

The man walked to the steering wheel and the boat’s throttle kicked up a little. The boat came up alongside the two and the man climbed down the ladder to the rear deck, which was just above the surface.

Doug tried to kick over to the platform, but his strength was gone. The man on the boat held out a pole for him to grab. He took it.

“Grab him,” the man said.

Doug took Kand by the collar and gripped the pole firmly in his other hand. This was it. If this didn't work, he was going to give up.

The man pulled Doug over to the platform and took his hand. He wrapped Doug's hand around the grips on the platform, and then he reached for Kand.

He pulled Kand out of the water first, and dragged him up onto the main part of the boat, leaving a trail of blood on the transom. Doug could feel his grip leaving him. The man hopped back onto the platform and kneeled down.

"Just in time," he said. Doug could barely make out his face, but there was a sudden feeling of relief at hearing the voice. It was his father.

Jonathan pulled Doug up onto the platform and helped him step over the rail. Doug sat down in one of the seats around the perimeter of the deck and Jonathan helped Kand walk down the gangway into the main cabin. Doug saw a little light behind a doorway, and Jonathan opened it to help Kand through. Then he bounded back up the stairs toward Doug.

Doug could not stand on his own. Jonathan helped him stand to walk down the gangway. He opened a door to a room and helped him step through the door. Kand was already there, slowly taking off his frozen clothes. He was dripping blood all over the cabin floor.

"Clothes off, now," said Jonathan as he rummaged through a locker. He pulled out two huge blankets that were thickly folded. The two blankets were stacked up to his chin.

He unfolded them and dropped one of them next to Kand, and the other next to Doug.

Jonathan opened a cabinet and pulled out a roll of toilet paper. He took it to Kand and started frantically wrapping the roll around his right hand. The paper turned red almost instantly, so Jonathan kept rolling the paper until he had used half of it. Kand had a thick red and white ball around his hand, and it slowed down his undressing.

"Hurry," he said. "Four minutes. That's how long it takes to die in this temperature."

Doug had only taken off his shirt. He barely had the strength to keep going, much less go faster.

"If you're still in your clothes, you're still in the water," Jonathan said. Doug was almost done, down to his underwear. He looked up at his father.

"That, too," Jonathan told him.

Kand and Jonathan looked away as Doug pulled off his underwear and wrapped the blanket around himself. He did it rather quickly considering that he was still shivering uncontrollably. He sat back down, and could feel his strength slowly coursing back into his muscles. He could tell it would be awhile before he felt normal.

Jonathan took a towel and started vigorously rubbing Doug's hair, then he gave another one to Kand.

Finally, they were both sitting in the fore cabin wearing only blankets. They had stopped rubbing their hair and started to feel normal. Jonathan sat down in front of them, on one of

the small benches inside the cabin. Doug's mind reeled, trying to figure out what Dad was doing here, and how he knew what had happened.

"How did," Doug started to ask, but he was shocked at his own voice. It sounded more like a croak than a question.

"Don't talk," said Jonathan. "Your throat is in shock. Thank God I was right. Thank God I was listening." He looked at Doug for a long moment, and Doug thought he was about to cry. He was still too frozen to feel much of anything.

"We have to get moving," Jonathan said, and he jumped up off the bench and ran out of the cabin and up the gangway. Kand and Doug felt the boat move, and soon they could tell that the craft was moving at top speed.

The shivering started to fade away, and Doug started to feel hot in the blanket. He opened it a little around his neck and immediately felt a cold breeze. He closed the blanket. His skin was dry, but it still felt damp from the inside. Doug started shivering again because of the brief chill.

Kand had closed his eyes. He was sitting very still, and Doug thought he could hear him humming. Doug was not sure if it was thrum of the boat's engines instead. Kand was holding the blanket tightly closed with his good hand, and the other was underneath. The lights dimmed as the throttle engaged, and a couple of times the cabin went completely dark.

After a long time coasting over the waves, Doug started to feel normal enough to feel sick. He sat upright and tried

desperately not to puke. He tried humming a little bit himself, and he could swear it helped.

Before long, Doug felt the boat slow down and it finally came to a stop. Through the porthole he could see the lights of an island, not too far off. They were in a harbor, and the rhythmic rising and falling of the high-speed trip was replaced by an erratic bouncing and rocking. He heard his dad bounding down the ladder.

Jonathan entered the cabin, rubbing his eyes. Doug could see that he had been crying.

"God, I am glad you guys are alright. I was listening to the scanner tonight while doing some work, and I heard the call for 'Operation Donut', followed by your names. I looked a couple of things up, and I knew I didn't have much time."

Doug looked at him with a quizzical expression. Operation Donut? What the hell was he talking about? He still did not feel ready to talk aloud.

Jonathan seemed to know what he was asking. "Operation Donut. As in Dunkin' Donuts. It's a codephrase."

Doug got the joke and shook his head. His dad nodded.

"Yeah. It means witnesses of no further use are disposed of."

"Who were those people?" Doug asked. His voice was very hoarse.

"That was Homeland Security. They were real. I had no idea they were after you for anything. I should have known. They probably targeted you for the seminar we went to."

“Disposed of? Illegal,” Doug managed to croak out.

“What’s legal? You really think they’ve got 3000 prisoners at Guantanamo? Most of them are already dead.”

Doug looked around the boat and looked back at his dad. He had had a boat once, but nothing like this.

“This?” asked Jonathan, then answered, “borrowed.”

Doug raised his eyebrows.

“I didn’t have time,” he explained. “I had to get out there. I was putting around out there with the markers off for only a few minutes. I barely beat them to the spot.”

“The spot?” Doug’s voice sounded only hoarser.

“They have chosen it, like it’s a superstition. It’s where they eliminate people every so often. God, we’re lucky I was listening. I almost lost you, too.”

Kand was watching their disjointed discussion. He was probably thinking the same thing Doug was. How did Jonathan know all this?

“Dad,” Doug managed to ask. “Who... are you?”

Jonathan looked at him for a long minute. He knew Doug had a point. Something was missing from the conversation, and only Jonathan could fill it in.

He sat down on the bench. “Doug,” he said, “I have been investigating Currier for several years.”

Kand and Doug looked at him, dumbfounded.

“In 1980, I was a witness for a Senate Committee trying to investigate him,” he continued.

“But you... weren’t you part of his group?” Doug asked. Though his voice was damaged, he felt like screaming.

“I was. Originally as a student, and then I opened the first bookstore as a front for the Free Majority. That’s all. Then something interesting happened. The bookstores took off as a business. I had to get legit.”

Jonathan was on a roll. Doug sat silently, and saw that Kand looked very irritated.

“After I had become successful with the bookstores, I was still organizing with the Free Majority, but on a deeper level. During the campaign against President Carter, a small group of us decided to develop a plot.”

“What? What kind?”

“Well, it wasn’t the kind you commonly think of, not with a bomb or anything like that. We thought if we could create an economic event that brought the economy to its knees, we get the Democrats out of power.”

“But that happened anyway, didn’t it?” Doug asked, his voice coming back.

“Did it? Or did Carter’s problems stem from direct tampering of the economy by a subversive organization?”

“Oh my God. Like the Free Majority?”

“The Free Majority were teddy bears. Our movement was so far under the surface that most members did not know.”

Doug looked down at the floor. Kand’s blood was mixing with the puddle of water on the floor.

Kand himself was turning red. “Your group has defaced the meaning of civilization.” he said.

“You must be Kandreshi. Please, hear me out,” said Jonathan. “There is a lot more to it.”

“Dad,” Doug said. “You were one of these extremists?”

“Yes. Actually, I helped organize them. Our goal was to bring about another oil crisis.”

“Isn’t that kind of what happened?” Doug asked.

“Kind of? No. We were successful to the letter. Most of us had gone to ivy league schools with people from Iran and Saudi Arabia, who returned to their country to become influential leaders.”

Doug nodded. He had known a couple of people like that at Stanford. They were impossibly wealthy, and they came to the best schools in the United States just to get some educational credibility. Then they went back to their own countries to oppress their own people. They were some of the nicest guys Doug knew at school.

Kand was still enraged at both of them. “This is why so many hate your people,” he said. “You are always tampering, always engineering.”

“On this score, you are right,” answered Jonathan. “We didn’t have much luck with the Saudis, but Iran succeeded beyond our wildest dreams.”

“You are a danger to yourselves more than anyone!”

“I agree with you!” hollered Jonathan. “What we did was reprehensible. Hear me out.”

“Dad, what did you do?” Doug asked.

Kand seethed, but he seemed ready to listen.

“We were allied with rebellious movements there, and while we sought to shut down our economy, they sought to remove their Shah.”

“Holy shit.”

“So we planted an anti-Khomeini article in the Iranian press, and it incited riots all around the country. The military defected within a few months, and the Shah was forced out. Khomeini took over in January ‘79.”

Kand shook his head.

“So your group was against Khomeini, even though he helped your cause?” Doug’s voice was coming back.

“No. The article was fraudulent. We actually agreed with Khomeini on a lot of levels.”

“Yes,” said Kand, “You were both ready to destroy your own people for more power.”

Now Doug shook his head. He could not believe what he was hearing from his own father. He could hear his own thoughts echoing Kand’s words.

“Maybe, but more than that. His rise to power helped put the free-market on the front burner here in our own country, where it had not been for a long time.”

“But I thought interest rates and unemployment was part of it,” Doug said. He knew he had read that somewhere.

“Most people don’t know this, but Carter actually did very well with the economy up until this happened. In mid-1979 and ’80, interest rates spiked and job growth shut down.”

“Hmmm,” Doug shrugged. He didn’t have enough knowledge of history to counter any of this.

“But the economy matters more in an election year, and 1980 was horrible. Our plan worked better than perfect. Then the FBI started to crack down on foreign correspondence.”

“You were part of a plot to tamper with the economy, and an election,” Doug said. He could not believe it.

“And that’s when I got caught. I was about to become a scapegoat. Because I was the first, I was probably lucky. I got immunity, and turned in everybody I could.”

“So you got away with it,” Doug said.

“You sold out your friends,” said Kand. Doug felt disgusted and proud at the same time. He would probably have done the same thing.

“So that’s how you wound up as a witness?”

“Yes, though they never had enough on Currier to indict him. The investigation ended. He’s still run for president in every election, and I kept digging for something on him.”

“What do you mean. You kept digging?” Doug asked.

“Well, a lot of the old material has been discredited. I have been doing new research. Two years ago, I got close, and another committee was getting ready to convene.”

“What happened?” Doug asked.

“The investigation was canceled before it began.”

Doug looked at his father, just a shadow in the dim light in the cabin. He felt like he barely knew the guy. Doug slumped in the blanket. He was very tired, but very pissed. He did not think he would be able to sleep.

Kand was still fuming at both of them. Doug knew he would be awake for awhile.

“How is that hand?” asked Jonathan.

Kand grudgingly held out his thickly-wrapped right hand. The entire ball of toilet paper had turned pink. Jonathan started to unwrap the ball and replace it with new paper.

“I’m sorry this is all I have,” he said to Kand.

“I thank you for our rescue and your hospitality,” said Kand. His face showed no sign of gratefulness.

“Dad, are we going back to Bangor?” Doug asked.

“No, unfortunately this little episode has put a few things in motion. I know the Homeland guys are gunning for Currier now.”

Doug realized why they were interested in Currier. He had given them the name. “Good. Let them,” Doug said.

“I want to find him first,” Jonathan answered.

“What? Why?”

“Well, he was the one I couldn’t deliver.”

Doug thought about something his dad had said. “Why did they cancel the investigation two years ago?” he asked.

Jonathan was silent for a moment, then said, “Your mother died. I could not testify.”

“Oh my God,” Doug whispered. He was struck with anger. His dad was some kind of private eye, and all this time he had no idea. Now it occurred to him that this may have had something to do with his mother’s death.

“Dad, you... You... Oh, shit!” Doug yelled.

“Doug, stop. I am sorry. I know you’re upset. I am, too, because it escaped me that you were involved in this.”

“Oh my God.”

Jonathan looked at Doug for a long moment. “Look,” he said. “You have to understand, nobody regrets more than I what happened.”

“What the he- What the hell do you mean?” Doug demanded. He was furious.

“Believe me, Doug, I-”

“No! Currier said you are up to something. Trying to crash the economy. Are you?”

“Doug, no-”

“I don’t know who you are. I don’t- I don’t-” Doug’s voice croaked as he yelled. He could not speak any more.

“Doug, stop talking,” Jonathan said. “You’ll lose your voice. We’ll deal with Currier later. Right now, you’ve got to get some rest.” Jonathan turned back to Kand’s bandages.

Soon, Jonathan was done fixing Kand’s bandaging, this time it looked much better. Kand sat back and relaxed a little.

Jonathan rummaged through another cabinet. “I brought some of your clothes. I knew there were two of you,” he said,

pulling out some dry pants and shirts. “It’s lucky you guys are about the same size.” He put the clothes on the benches.

Kand looked at the clothes with a little more enthusiasm than Doug expected. Doug realized he probably hadn’t worn new clothes in a month.

Jonathan picked up the wet clothes on the floor and threw the towels down to sop up the puddle. “Go ahead and change if you’re warmed up. And get some sleep.” Then he left the cabin with the wet clothes.

Still wearing the blanket, Doug set up the bench he was about to sleep on. Kand had the bed against the other bulkhead. Doug lay down facing the bilge and shut his eyes.

It was Kand who reached over to turn off the light. Doug stared out through the dark porthole for a long while before he finally fell asleep.