

Prologue II: ASSI Data Files 2021

The Moon Mission

Australia 2021

‘Yeah copy that Blue Rock Downs. ETA is two four hours thirty minutes. Landers and I will refuel at Birdsville. Mighty thirsty work, over.’ Said James Kelvin with a chuckle, looking over toward John Landers.

‘Confirm that, Birdsville Pub, Marcus. Tracking from Byron Bay, ... ah ... roger that, just over Condamine at four thousand feet on route to the state corner, then tracking north, north west on Alice Springs approach. Copy that, waypoints to Alice and due north into Blue Rock Downs over, Delta Charlie Tango Seven Four Three, out.’

John Landers sat back in the co-pilots seat of Kelvin’s Beechcraft Baron, The Baroness. He looked disappointedly down at the dry outback scene stretching far past their visual horizon. As a young surfer studying marine biology, just the thought of being away from the ocean made him edgy as he spoke into his head set mic. ‘So how long have you known this fella Marcus Ford, James?’

‘Mate, I’ve just done some flying for him is all. I have never met the dude in person. So the phone call last night was a bit of a shock. He asked straight up for help on a private matter and enquired if I knew another capable flyer. I didn’t so you got the job, strange one.’

‘Good on ya there digger. Thanks yeah, what else are mates for ya cock head? And it’s my twenty first birthday today! Did I mention that? Better be a good quid in it? Nothing down here but bloody desert, *shit*.’

‘Yes you did mention your birthday, but only several times today in point of fact. We will see what’s what and what’s not soon enough old man,’ said James still chuckling happily to himself. ‘I wouldn’t mention the surfer thing although your boardshorts, thongs and McTavish Pro-surfer T-shirt might give it away, arse wipe. Thanks for the conscious effort, not. Bushies just don’t get the ocean thing and I need this job dude or the bank might take back this cute little girl.’

Another bloody flood in Queensland and mate, ‘Out of the Blue Scenic Reef and Whale Flights,’ will be out of business altogether. Dude maybe we shoulda stayed in the Navy?’ laughed Kelvin.

'The Baroness' circled low over Blue Rock Downs homestead to announce their arrival and James began lining up on final approach to the small, homestead airstrip of the huge twelve hundred square mile property. At two hundred feet they both noticed, with looks of surprise, two large torpedo-like shapes covered with huge tarps, sitting in the yards behind an enormous shearing shed.

'Rockets?'

'Yeah dunno but his camouflage thing aint working too well.'

Throttling back Kelvin said, 'Flaps at thirty, and gear is down,' as Landers confirmed, 'Gear is down and locked Boss,' as the sleek, shiny, bower-blue Baroness lined up on final approach.

Beechcraft Barons were always great planes to fly, especially if you were a bushie pilot in outback Australia. 'The Baroness' could climb on one engine and land on a pin. Powerful, fast and reliable she approached the short private grass strip, attacking the cross wind with ease. Kelvin lined up using rudder and stick while gently feathering both props and pushing a little extra throttle to hold a slight stall angle. Holding the plane, just a fraction above the barbed wire rabbit-proof fence before lightly easing off and dropping her gently onto the sump-oil painted cross, marking the start of the short runway. He immediately throttled off, applying a little reverse thrust on the props so as not to overly disturb the dust as he pulled her to a halt.

'Yep, nice work James. Down and not too dusted,' confirmed Landers as he flicked off his seatbelt and stretched out as Kelvin reapplied throttle to turn the plane around and coast back up to a huge corrugated iron hanger.

Standing there was this older guy, a late twenties looking Aboriginal fella with a roll-your-own cigarette stuck out the corner of his mouth, slowly motioning with his hat for them to park inside.

The roustabout quickly reversed an old 1989 Land Cruiser utility up to the side of The Baroness and waited for them to finish checks, idle down and switch off the engines before he began uncoupling and refuelling into the right wing fuel tank.

The two slightly uncertain flyboys climbed out, stretched and nearly freaked when they saw the guy was filling the wing tank with a smoke in his mouth. Seeing their shocked faces, he coolly dropped the ciggie onto the concrete. Stubbing it out with his greasy old steel-toed work boot, he smiled.

‘Hi,’ he half yelled. ‘I’m Marcus Ford. I’m glad you could make the time to come on up. Welcome to Blue Rock Downs fellas. I figured I may as well fuel you up now. How was your flight over from the coast?’

Still standing on the wing Kelvin spoke as if totally un-phased. ‘G’day Marcus, nice to finally meet you. Yeah the flight was uneventful ... been dry out here Marcus... needin some of that monsoon stuff ... Pity you’re not over on the coast. Got plenty over there.’

‘Can’t argue with that lot young fella. Cows all pretty poor this year and the sheep are all bein drop fed from the helicopter for the last few months. Yep rain woulda been handy.’

He quickly finished refuelling and came over to shake the hands of the two weary flyers who were wondering what the bloody hell had they gotten into, as Marcus completed a more proper Aussie introduction.

He opened an esky on the back of the ute and produced three ice-cold cans of Victoria Bitter and said, ‘Here tear the foreskins off these boys.’

Marcus’s speech changed from an outback bushie type drawl and he became unusually friendly and becalming. He spoke with an educated, almost English accent and talked of Blue Rock Downs as having been in the family for quite a few generations. Seemed like there were a few hidden facets to this dirty old roustabout.

He charismatically spoke of cattle ranching, of fine horse breeding and beautiful outback sceneries and sunsets in the desert, all of which seemed to wind Kelvin and Landers up in some pleasant spell of outback living. Just as casually, he motioned for them to jump into the cruiser as he had something interesting and exciting to show them.

They headed off up the dusty track to the big shearing shed they had seen on landing and walked in through an immense steel sheet door, which seemed a little excessive for an ancient timber sheep-shearing shed.

Inside was quite the surprise. Instead of the timber shearing pens and strong smell of lanolin, they had walked into a sophisticated laboratory and high tech engineering workshop.

‘My wife and I borrowed a bit from the bank to set this up guys and well things have gone a little, well not quite to plan lately. And we could use your help James and John. But first, come take a look at something special.’

Marcus walked over to an old brass wheel six feet in diameter mounted horizontally in an alloy frame, surrounded by electrical coils and

wiring. It looked like some type of old junked generator partly dismantled.

Using a toy aeroplane remote control unit he switched on the apparatus and the disc like wheel began to hum and wane as it accelerated in revolutions per second. The air became electric, sparkling and crackling around the disc edges as fingers of high voltage began fanning down like a massive iridescent root system. The machine swayed and tilted like some science fiction crinoid plant grotesquely wounded, dragging itself and then lifting off, hovering in quiet defiance.

The two flyboys stood motionless as Marcus smiled at their speechless facial expressions. He manoeuvred the unit slowly down to the back of the engineering shop and back up again to land at his feet as he said, 'This old girl is my original prototype boys. Now watch this.' The mechanical thing hummed louder and glowed with a halo-type mist of light. Suddenly it vanished, only to be glowing and humming at the other end of the building. Marcus twitched the controls and the unit vanished again only to be instantly, hovering back at his feet.

'That distance was covered at four times the speed of light,' he said with a bushie smile and another roll-your-own hanging from the corner of his mouth. He switched off the unit.

'As you just saw, it appears in both places at the same time. Well, what do you think? Fascinating? Do you like my special toy James and John? I call it, Regrav. It is an antigravity drive. It generates an opposite gravitational force to Earth's gravity and that becomes propulsion.'

'Ah yeah OK, bit freaky though Marcus,' said Landers as Kelvin looked him squarely in the eyes and said, 'Marcus what exactly is it you want?'

'Come sit down over here and have another VB we have much to discuss,' he said rolling another fine cut Ruby Red in the palm of one hand, licking the paper and slipping it neatly behind his left ear.

'Boys, my wife, Sigrid, is Norwegian don't you know. We met when she was backpacking her way across from Broome to Cairns. Sigrid fell in love with this place in more ways than one could hope to experience in many lifetimes.' Marcus lit his dog-leg shaped rollie and continued, 'Sigrid has been kidnapped along with our daughter Marree and Sigrid's aging parents.'

Marcus went into a detailed account of how his wife, his daughter and his wife's parents had been kidnapped by ruthless thugs now blackmailing him for the technology he had just demonstrated. He said he

had to act fast and surprise them as the thugs had no idea how far his work had come. Surprise was his only advantage now that he knew where his family were being held.

Marcus produced another round of VBs and motioned for them to follow as he walked across the engineering floor and out to the back of the building.

‘Welcome to my graveyard paddock of trials and failures,’ he said proudly. They worked their way through twisted metal objects, helicopter wrecks and various plane parts, jumping over huge coils of electrical wiring and scrap copper buss-bar wrapped around large burnt out transformer windings and insulator components. Reaching the far side the two young flyboys eyed each other hesitantly, realising there had been some rather large explosions.

‘Shit he wasn’t kidding with that remark about the graveyard dude,’ said Landers.

On the far side of all the twisted metal lay two tarpaulin shrouded rocket shapes and Marcus quickly ushered them in underneath. As their eyes adjusted, they could make out two huge black hulls. Two Collins Class submarines sat side by side, hovering unsupported two metres off the ground.

‘I got these two old clunkers real cheap at auction, don’t you know. They have hardly been to sea. Way too noisy as I understand it. The government thinks I’m a scrap metal dealer,’ he chuckled and continued, ‘better the devil you think you know, hey lads?’

‘Isn’t that supposed to be the penis you think you know?’ said Landers dryly.

Reading their disturbed faces Marcus said with a huge smile. ‘Yep scary stuff fellas. New science is always scary, at first. And trust me the subterfuge is necessary to avoid any modern day witch hunt. It’s a strange human thing that blood must be spilt.

You know, it’s classic sci fi, ‘the man who fell to Earth’ type stuff. One simply cannot interfere with profitable energy and expect to not be found floating upside down in the canal. After that, well ... eventually, we all wonder what the bloody fuss was about.’

‘Exactly what hells blazes do you have in mind?’ said Landers.

‘Come aboard gentlemen and I will explain all,’ said Marcus as he walked in underneath one of the massive floating hulls saying, ‘don’t worry John it won’t fall on you.’

He led the way up through a diving bell hatch in the underbelly of the first sub and up into the galley area and then shuffled them along small access hatchways and corridors lined with empty military work stations. Finally sitting them down again on comfortable leather seats, in the now sparse control room. He flashed on a forward looking flat-screen monitor peering out into stark desert as the tarps fell away.

Most of the sub's control room mechanisms were gone and now the entire walls had flat screen monitors. He explained both subs turned up on huge flatbed trucks only last week and all the farm hands had been busy gutting the old diesel and electric engines and converting the aft sections into accommodation. Marcus needed enough room for about one hundred political prisoners, as well as his own family.

'I'm gonna make a jailbreak,' said Marcus and he was looking up toward the sky.

He sat back on one leather lounge and described how only yesterday, he had received vital information. His family were being held prisoners, by Chinese mining interests, on the Moon. He spoke about how BHP Billiton had combined with a Chinese mining company and now, was not only a successful off-world mining company, but a heavy front for certain radical political interests. 'They hate the idea of a unified peaceful Earth. There is much more profit in destabilisation and war.'

The BHP Billiton Moon operation was extremely expensive being based on old rocket power. And now, their Moon Base has been converted to a secret political prison, to off-set, exploration costs.

'The bastards use old water mining tunnels as political prisoner torture tunnels called '*Mind Camps*', where prisoners are compelled to walk for up to twenty hours per day to receive food and water. Mind Camps systematically grind people into total submission before their oxygen supply is slowly reduced in one final act of supreme cruelty. Very slow suffocation. And the bastards still get well paid for providing this service,' Marcus said with disgust adding, 'There's good money in torture.'

The Mining Corporation's kidnapping deal was simple. They wanted his anti-gravity technology in exchange for the safe return of his family.

But Marcus's plan was simpler. 'We take the two Collins Class subs, fly them to the Moon and blow the fuckers up! We leave one sub hidden and faint a mayday distress alarm on the other. They won't know what to think when I crash that other sub into their compound. The distraction

will give you two boys a chance to quietly slip this beastly in and free the prisoners.'

The two began to find great excuses as to why they were suddenly needed elsewhere when Marcus pressed a button and the view on the flat-screen began to change. Marcus requested the aft vision display and it instantly came to life.

'See how easy they are to fly. You boys will have no trouble,' he said as they both looked back at the aft screen image of the desert retreating and then Australia getting smaller and smaller. James looked back to the forward view and watched as the sky faded from blue to black with sparkling star light flashes.

'All stop,' Marcus said at one hundred kilometers altitude while gauging the expressions on the two stunned faces as acceptable. 'Computer, please close the bell hatch and proceed.'

'Copy that Marcus. Hatch is closed and proceeding to target.'

'James and John it has to be the two subs and it has to be now. I have no time if I am to save my family. Please gentlemen?'

The two remained seated, still stunned by the imagery and a little fucked up by this man and his technology.

'Give us your plan Marcus and we will see,' said Kelvin looking at Landers.

'Fair enough gentlemen! The ship works on either voice command or you can toggle your way around. I suggest you two use voice command. Now, Earth to Moon-orbit trajectory is pre-programmed so it should be relatively simple. Flight Computer One is an excellent pilot herself and has excellent radar, infrared and very high definition pixelated vision.'

'The mining base is on the southern side of the Sea of Serenity. The prison is on the abandoned section of tunnels as shown here on the screen, please computer,' Marcus requested as the side display instantly switched on with Moon map references, covering the Sea of Serenity.

'Above ground is a domed compound which is the guards main prison entrance top side. Underground is a vast complex of bunker strength buildings but there is a weakness. Trust me I was there yesterday.

If I crash Sub II into the dome and create havoc, they will think the attack is coming as a frontal assault. You two can glide this girl over the exhaust vent, here, and make hard dock with the water extraction valve and then blow the inner vent seal. This particular metal valve hatch provides access to all the chamber tunnels via a common breather tunnel and vent seal. Yesterday I got a message down into the tunnels via a

mobile computer module and small Regrav hover unit. Now all the political prisoners should be able to get to the right location as the remote module has unlocked the air vent grates. So all is set for today.

You two have to get inside, get the all the prisoners masked up if need be and back into the sub. Don't worry about the low pressure. Keep everyone moving and they will be fine once inside the sub. The hull has a sort of protective screen to stop loss of atmosphere. You should have about twenty minutes to jam them all in.'

'When do we start?'

'James and John we already have. Sub II will be docking in the next few minutes. I will go across. Any questions boys?'

'Bushwhacked again damn it,' said Landers in a sort of humorous irony. You have a great future in the Navy Marcus.'

'Computer all systems stop,' demanded Kelvin as the ship complied and he stood looking aft at the distant basketball sized blue planet. 'Computer, all screens on,' he commanded as the walls came alive with views at all angles around the ship looking out into space.

'Nice,' he muttered.

An awfully long silence followed as Kelvin pondered the Earth. He had never been in space before and now his boyhood dream lay stretched out before him like some scantily clad princess.

'Nice,' he muttered again. Computer, co-ordinates and ETA for water extraction valve shaft, if you please,' said Kelvin.

The computer responded with a series of values and times and ended with the ETA to target of twenty-five minutes trailing Marcus by thirty seconds.

'Looks like you have a crew. We will discuss being shanghaied and our payment for services later,' said Landers unusually serious.

Marcus just nodded and said aloud, 'Agreed! We can communicate by headset com link, good luck and thank you both, gentlemen.

Now before I go, all forward and rear tubes are loaded just as a precaution you might say. But I do not know how torpedoes go in space fired by compressed air so you will have to be close to any target. And please heed my advice. Ones best offence is to run like fucken hell, good luck,' and with that he disappeared down the hatchway.

'Subs have separated Captain Kelvin.'

'Has a bit of a ring that captain skipper, sir, thing. Let's hope it's not your first and last space command boofhead,' said Landers smiling before

he thumped Kelvin hard in the bicep muscle and headed off down the hatchway.

Kelvin sat pondering while watching the bright Moon grow on the forward screen as the aft blue circle got smaller. Landers voice crackled and came on the headset com link to say, 'All masks and first aid gear ready at the bell hatch, Captain. Oh, as well, there are two Uzi micro assault pistols with vests, shit loads of ammo and a note attached which reads, *Do not hesitate to shoot. They won't, love Marcus.*'

The forward view screen changed suddenly to zoom in on the other sub as it began to spin wildly. The com link blurted to life with Marcus yelling into the mic causing enormous audio distortion from his overdone panicked voice.

'Mayday, Mayday, Mayday. Attention Moon base. This is Alpha Mining Explorer VI. We have loss of thrust and manoeuvring rockets and need urgent assistance. Currently on collision trajectory. Say again on collision trajectory with Moon mining base, South Sea of Serenity. Do you copy, over?'

'Attention Moon base, out of control please be ad ... '

'You are entering a restricted zone Explorer VI. We are advising you to turn away immediately or we will fire. You are warned to turn away. You have thirty seconds to respond.'

'We copy Moon base. Have total loss of guidance ... control and thrust capabilities ... I repeat ... we ... need ... help.'

The domed surface building suddenly opened from the middle like a huge mountain telescope observatory and immediately began firing as the Chinese monitor system displayed the very odd nature of the ship's hull and potential subterfuge.

Marcus had already discussed his plan with the computer and requested it to stay with the ship until it fired its torpedoes. Then download itself to a small Regrav-driven chip module, ejecting and returning to Blue Rock Downs.

He had requested it to fire all forward and then all aft torpedoes at a range of six hundred metres. Flight Computer II and Marcus said their goodbyes and Marcus jumped from Sub II's bell hatch, just as the dome began intense particle fire.

'Computer eject now, they have particle weapons,' Marcus yelled as he quickly checked his suit. '*All seals OK, whew*', thought Marcus as he hadn't yet tried the flying suit in space.

The seals held and the small backpack Regrav unit responded with smooth antigravity flight control. Sub II got off only four torpedoes at the domed target before it exploded in a fiery ball as Marcus again checked his suit. He was lucky to avoid shards of molten steel as the main bulk of the Collins Class submarine exploded just before crashing into the dome. He was still OK as he hung in space looking on regretfully at the computers brave handy work.

‘I’m safe Marcus and heading for home,’ radioed Flight Computer II.

‘Nice work Computer Two! I am really glad to hear your voice, over.’

The dome imploded and then exploded violently as the only torpedoes ever fired in anger from a Collins Class submarine finally ignited and obliterated the above ground complex.

He gathered his thoughts quickly and programmed the suits Regrav unit from his armband control unit. It instantly arrowed away for the vent shaft four kilometers due north, just as Sub I came in and hard-docked over the vent.

Seconds later Marcus was on the hull and opening the decompressed deck hatch to join the other two but they had already blown the inner vent hatch and were moving people back up through the diving bell chamber.

‘Landers you help these people. We have visitors!’ Kelvin yelled as several security guards came rushing down the long connecting tunnel. Some prisoners were caught in the open with no cover as the guards opened fire, dropping two elderly prisoners in a pulping spray of flesh seeking hollow points. Screaming and yelling immediately followed as bodies in full panic jammed the bell hatch.

Landers squeezed around from the inner valve opening and threw Kelvin his Uzi. He immediately swung around returning fire from both pistol barrels while running down the tunnel. Five guards fell and tripped several others in the charge and continuous hail of very accurate lead. He screamed a horrible noise, well above the firing machine pistols, as he charged. Darting left to right while at full pace with a side step to rival Clive Churchill.

Finally diving forward, skidding and still firing non stop. Another six went down as two shots sprayed his left arm. He almost instantly had a shirt-sleeve ripped, tourniquet on and zipped up with blue cable ties whilst still firing off another spattering of armoured lead.

He reached the pile of bodies and again skidded in sliding straight underneath a squirting mass of flesh as return fire riddled what was left of the body from the top.

Kelvin felt the diamond-shaped grenades on the guard's belt, grabbed two and threw both with his left hand while thinking, *'how strange to have death-stun grenades. That's more like crack military to have brain exploders?'*

Again, he quickly slid his arm back in under the protection of the body remains now pouring an almost-black, salty, liver liquid over him as the grenades went off and the tunnel instantly became silent.

Landers heard the complete fire fight and felt the grenades concussion as he shoved the last of the prisoners in through the vent hatch. Marcus threw him down another Uzi assault pistol and Landers took off sprinting down the tunnel as Marcus slid down the access ladder and stood guard, a little panicked at not having seen any of his family. He saw the valve hatch blown off at the hinges and instantly had an idea.

Running down the tunnel Landers yelled into the headset com link. 'You had better not be dead you asshole. It's your fucken shout!'

'Yeah, yeah thanks Landers for the emotional concern,' said Kelvin climbing out from under an object blown away beyond recognition.

'Jesus, gut shot. Awe yuk man. You look like shit,' Landers laughed hardly recognising the thing sliding out from under the muck. Except, he knew who owned the boots. They were bower-bird blue. Kelvin was covered in body parts and dark wet stinking blood, none of which was his. He turned and sprayed the mound with Uzi fire, just to be sure.

Suddenly Marcus crackled over the com link fully panicked saying, 'James, John, my family are not amongst the group. We have ninety-three onboard over. James, do you copy, over?'

Landers whispered, 'Marcus slow down we are OK, and thanks for asking. Don't worry their here somewhere. Request plan view of tunnels for assault, best location options, enemy numbers and time options, over.'

'Yes ... OK. The tunnel branches ahead three hundred metres. The vertical vent shafts are there. About one kilometer further in are the torture and holding cells. Suggest best option is torture cells. Approximate guard numbers should be about forty. And, guys I did know about your military backgrounds, over.'

'Yeah, no shit Shirley. Kinda guessed that yesterday dude. Just be ready to leave when we arrive.'

'Landers, more grenades off that lot and those two silenced pistols, just in case.'

Kelvin yelled down the tunnel, 'Re-fucken load troopers!' But seconds later he spoke softly into his mic set.

‘Johnno, these security guards have heaps of sophisticated weapons but they have no experience in close full on fire fight combat exchanges. That gives us the attack advantage.

Landers looked at Kelvin and simply said, ‘Let’s do it then.’ As both took off running down the tunnel.

‘This is a frigging set up James,’ Landers yelled loudly as they neared an opening and the connecting vent shaft area just as the fire fight started. The untrained guards fell for dummy pass stepping out into full view firing wildly. A hail of bullets flew by, well above their heads as they dived, hit the deck, and skidded forward shouting and firing nonstop machine pistol rounds.

Seven or eight shadowed silhouettes jerked and contorted in permanent submission. Their reverse surprise attack had worked but now they had no cover and were close to grenade launcher range. Suddenly from behind came a constant pinging of bullets hitting metal as a dark mass approached.

They both looked and looked again trying to focus as the main valve inner hatch seal flew toward them like some giant battle shield. Up and over the top of them came the metal valve with its pilot sitting in behind, operating a model plane remote unit which was obviously controlling a small glowing object crudely mounted to the inner side.

‘Here, get on this you two bludgers,’ said Marcus as he stopped momentarily for them to scramble up onto the newly welded support frame.

‘Nice work Mr Ford and nice technology,’ said Landers impressed by the little glowing ball.

‘Yeah well hang on to the rail,’ he said as he flung the make shift shield into full forward while looking out the little Ned Kelly type slot cut into the hatch. The unlikely trio shot forward down the tunnel bowling over all that was left of the retreating jail guards and finishing them off from behind with their less than subtle Uzi pistols.

Platt platt, platt, platt, platt platt, platt spat the now silenced Uzi pistols as armoured, hollow point, slugs hit soft fleshy targets.

Suddenly everything went deadly quiet as they glided easily along the last two hundred metres, stopping at the huge shaft intersection and torture cells.

The cell doors were still closed but Marcus rushed past both Landers and Kelvin and out from the tunnel without a weapon just as two shots

winged him in the leg. He went down as instantly two Uzis fired and continued making a little more fresh sausage mince.

Kelvin reacted quickly with his medical field training and had Marcus bandaged and strapped with two more plastic cable ties stemming the blood flow.

‘That will hold you until we get back to the sub old man. Gutsy stuff but please don’t do that again. Now where is your family?’

Just then Marcus heard his wife’s voice half-crying and half-screaming out in panic from the cell where the guards had been positioned.

‘Sigrid, Sigrid. Come quickly it is Marcus.’

Four shadowed faces emerged and then came racing forward as Marcus played with the remote control and the huge metal valve hatch slowly rotated over ninety degrees. It now resembled a small flying saucer with a big round handle in the middle on the underside and an improvised kangaroo bar at the front.

‘Still love your work Marcus,’ said Landers and then, ‘quickly, all aboard for the submarine express.’ He gathered up a young girl and an older couple just as a petite golden haired woman wrapped her arms around Marcus as he helped her onto the valve hatch. Instinctively they both leaned over clutching their daughter.

‘Hang on real tight Ree’ Marcus whispered to her in a calm and controlled voice and then glanced at everyone. With a gentle hand he toggled the controls and the flying platform instantly began hurtling back down the tunnel slowing slightly to clear the mass of bodies piled up in the first attack. Marcus shivered, catching a wild spooky glimpse of Kelvin covered in black semi congealed blood, which in a bizarre moment of lighting, strangely highlighted the blue of his eyes. He slammed the hatch control forward finishing the remaining distance in only a few seconds.

‘We have little time boys.’ At which the two nodded and assisted the prisoners into the sub while Marcus detached the Regrav unit, climbed aboard and manually wound the outer dive bell hatch shut.

Kelvin disappeared into the showers to clean up and super glue his left arm and Landers got the sub going under computer control.

‘Hatch is closed,’ yelled Marcus.

‘Exit strategy now please Flight Com,’ demanded Landers.

'It is done Commander Landers, two hundred kilometers and climbing. Internal inertia compensators are at one hundred and forty per cent and holding.'

'Commander Landers, they have fired two fast moving rocket engine missiles but they have insufficient acceleration to catch us.'

'OK why would they do that? Computer please project their trajectory.'

'Central Northern Territory Australia. In point of fact Blue Rock Downs in four hours Commander.'

Kelvin returned wet but much cleaner as Landers nodded and said, 'Captain has the com.'

'All stop. Computer please target all aft torpedoes on the location of missile fire. Return fire when ready,' said Kelvin.

'Armed, aimed and firing. Torpedoes tracking well on compressed air thrust Captain, however their two missiles are closing on our position. They will target us if we stay here.'

'Flight Computer, how long before their missiles catch up to us?'

'Seven minutes Captain.'

Marcus joined them and walked over to the toggle control set up on the bridge and sat down, flexed his fingers and said, 'If I may Captain?'

'Roger to that Marcus,' Kelvin said a little relieved.

'Switching to manual control, computer.' Marcus said waving Landers and Kelvin over to watch what he was doing.

'OK guys, my plan is to arch out and come back around behind. As we have nothing accurate enough to shoot the missiles I will have to go back out in the proto-type dynosoar spacesuit and hope I can catch the missiles and give them a little grenade each.'

'Good plan!'

'You think so Landers?'

'Not really.'

'OK let's go. James this sub is easy to manoeuvre. Just swing wide and be gentle on the stick. She is just like flying your Barron but think in three dimensions working within a larger three dimensions.

'Very well, I'll suit up. Now, I may not make it back in time so head for exactly four kilometers due north of Port Nelson in New Zealand. The computer has the co-ordinates so if you get twitchy just go to auto. She is a first in Kinetic Automation (KA) and a bloody cracker pilot.'

'Land on the surface and just let the sub sink to the bottom using the same flight controls. You will need to compensate the inner hull for water

pressure is all. There you will be contacted to unload the refugees. OK I'll see you all soon,' he said and for the first time smiled and held both his wife and daughter as he sniffed his daughters long golden locks.

'If it all turns to crap I'll make it back to Earth in the spacesuit ... '

'OK I'm out side and reducing speed. Suit is good and seals are holding,' he said as he mentally thought about how to work out a safe re-entry trajectory for his prototype space suit. It wasn't really designed for extended space flight and unaided re-entry. *'But first jobs first.'*

The computer relayed co-ordinates on the missiles which were travelling straight and true and only a few metres apart as he accelerated up from behind. He grabbed the first missile on the nose and began sliding himself backward while sitting upright on the outer missile casing.

'Grenade going up the freckle,' he said as he felt around and jammed it in between the fin edge and the housing and pulled the pin.

Immediately he hit the brakes on the portable Regrav and felt a full 12 Gs' smack him brutally as blood started to flow again inside his suit leg. 'Shit, the damn suit could use some inertia compensators,' Marcus groaned as he imagined slowly drowning to death inside his suit before he could re-enter the atmosphere. Time was not on his side.

The explosion was brilliantly silent but it failed to take out the other missile. Marcus again accelerated, painfully subjecting his body to excessive Gs' to catch the second missile before it began re-entry.

'Marcus your trajectory will give you ample time. You are closing into target too fast, ETA twenty-seconds for second missile contact. Please reduce speed now. Rocket re- entry is not for two hours.'

'Copy that. I hear you Flight Computer One. OK ... OK, I won't panic,' he said not mentioning his immediate concerns. Marcus could easily feel the warm liquid inside his suit. Sloshing and oozing down in his boot, like he was standing barefoot in a warm, fresh cow pat during the winter muster. *'That can't be good.'*

Again, Marcus made contact with the missile but simply sat there on its bow in shocked horror. He was sitting on a nuclear weapon targeted at his home. *'Fuck a brown dog! Fair dinkum ...'*

'Guys this prick is nuclear. You will need to pick me up somewhere back along this reverse trajectory. James move off now in another big arch. Be at least one hundred thousand miles away in eight seconds to avoid the EMF pulse. Move now.'

‘Computer plot the course for my extraction after the explosion and please be quick my suit is filling up boys.’

‘What is Pa Pa saying mummy?’ said his young daughter, Marree, still on the control deck watching the action from the forward screen.

Sigrid turned toward Kelvin and said, ‘After all Ree has seen in the last few days we shall both stay and watch a very brave man. At the least she will know Captain.’

‘Course is plotted Marcus. Good luck.’

‘Fair enough,’ Marcus said aloud as he wedged the grenade into the fin control mechanism and pulled the pin.

‘Shit this is going to hurt,’ he mumbled as fifteen Gs’ of force flattened his body against the invisible barrier of inertia and Marcus lost consciousness as blood pressurised his brain. Eight seconds later space lit up in an expanding sphere instantly one hundred times brighter than the Sun.

Flight Computer One immediately checked its own systems and confirmed it was safe from the blast. It instantly took over flight systems and began a search back along the trajectory. He was not there. The submarine began a sweep and still nothing as Kelvin remembered Marcus say ... *‘think in three dimensions within three dimensions.’*

He tried to concentrate on what Marcus had said as a display formed in his mind of a cell within a cell. Instantly he began scanning and discounting all possible forces and interactions within a strange sensation of 3D matrix imagery.

Suddenly his mind imagery cleared like a fading fog as some spooky third eye sense area of his brain opened out in 3D schematics. Kelvin could see space like it had a physical presence and every object had rotational motion within a greater rotational motion. He could see the Earth rotating on its axis and around the Sun but the Solar System also rotated. Every object in the universe had at least three different rotations. He looked down at his hands in a new enlightened way and whispered, ‘All matter is rotation and all distance is trajectory. There are no straight lines in space.’ Immediately he focused in on the aftershock energy forces, extrapolating the exact position as a new part of him marvelled at perpetual motion and the existence of physical form.

‘Computer, change trajectory by minus seven degrees to the solar plane and reset the search pattern,’ he said as those onboard were a little shocked by this defined and confident degree of applied space navigation.

‘Marcus will be further back toward the Moon by about sixty thousand kilometers,’ he commanded.

‘Trajectory reset and retracing with radar scanning, Captain. Confirmed object ahead is Marcus and preparing for docking. Captain Kelvin, Marcus is not moving. I cannot bring him on board.’

‘Any other space suits?’

‘Negative Captain.’

‘Computer, open outer torpedo tube doors and catch him in one please. Can it be done?’

‘Uncertain of outcome Captain.’

‘Make it happen, computer!’

‘Yes Captain.’

‘Marcus is wedged in number four tube, outer doors are closing,’ said Flight Computer One as both Landers and Kelvin listened on their headset com links while racing forward into the forward torpedo room. Quickly they unlatched the locking mechanism and wound open tube four to the instant loud sucking sound of air equalising the pressures.

‘OK. I’m in,’ said Kelvin as he slithered inside with his arms outstretched and Landers pushing him down into the darkness. Jamming him further and further using a long torpedo tube cleaning plunger. Kelvin swished his arms about in the dark dank tube, all the while feeling for a boot or a helmet, anything and suddenly.

‘Got him pull us back Johnno,’ echoed back from ten metres up the tube as Landers began pulling hard on the rope tied securely around Kelvin’s blue combat boots.’

Marcus slid out still unconscious. The pair twisted his helmet off and ripped at the double velcro suit seals. Bright red blood squirted out from his left suit leg as the suit pressure reduced. The two worked quickly, stripping him down to his faded old Warnie Spinners jocks, strapping on a new blue cable tie tourniquet.

‘Computer, Marcus is OK. Nothing broken and no burns but he’s a fair bit bruised. He will live. Send down his family with an attack kit and some clothes. John and I will glue him back together down here, over.’

‘Copy that Captain Kelvin. Thank you James,’ said Flight Computer One with almost relieved tones in its sequenced artificial female voice.

‘If I was a betting man I’d have a pineapple that the computer has a crush on you boof. Best young lady *you’re* ever gonna get softy,’ said Landers sniggering.

‘My name is Coms, thank you Commander Landers,’ came a rather indignant reply.

Marcus had come around, listened to the last part of the conversation, and instantly had a strange thought about the future. He coughed a little congealed blood and leaned up on one elbow looking very pale, spat on the floor and said.

‘You know, Coms makes this old tub a great ship. Maybe we should keep her busy and do some serious flying round the system? And don’t worry, with Coms as the Flight Command, the sub is way too smart for radar and missile attack. And, she does need a home *and* a good crew?’

Seriously, I need some way to safe guard my family. This must never happen again. And you two are men of serious and interesting character. This job may be right up your creek?

Gentlemen, I need time to get this technology to all of Earth citizens. It is the only way. Mining barons must never again control energy. What do you say boys?’

‘Fair enough!’ said Kelvin as he returned a pensive smile and eyed the two beat up looking men. He nodded to Landers and said, ‘Coms, adjust speed for immediate re-entry, underwater insertion and prisoner transfer off Port Nelson, New Zealand as planned and be discrete, if you please.’

‘Copy that, James.’

Data File Logged

Regrav continues in Book II