

PROLOGUE

Thirty miles northeast of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina

January 30, 1921

Through his periscope, *Kapitän* Hans Schultz watched the chaos aboard the schooner *Carroll A. Deering* and smiled. The white hull of the elegant five-masted sailing vessel was easy to see against the gray storm clouds gathering in the distance. The crew of the cargo ship rushed back and forth across the deck in hopeless panic.

Schultz narrated what he was seeing for the sailors in the control room of his U-boat *Bremen*.

“One man is standing there methodically tearing his hair out. Another seems to be screaming uncontrollably as he runs in circles. Two of the men are randomly tossing papers and objects overboard.”

“What kind of objects?” asked scientist Istvan Horváth in a slight accent. Although born Hungarian, he spoke German fluently. He was always intrigued by the results of his brainchild, an ingenious device he had dubbed *Irrewaffe*.

Insanity weapon.

“Trunks. Clothing. Books. Navigational equipment.”

“Fascinating.”

Schultz’s eyes were drawn to a couple of men by the lifeboats. They were sawing at the davit ropes with large knives.

“They’re cutting a lifeboat loose,” Schultz said.

“They’re not getting in it?” Horváth asked.

“No. It looks like...yes, it landed in the water upside down. Now they’re getting ready to jettison the second one.” He looked away from the periscope at Horváth, a small man with horn-rimmed glasses and a receding hairline who was jotting notes in a leather-bound book.

“Even though it took longer for the effects to manifest this time,” Horváth said with both curiosity and pride, “the outcome seems to be the same. I suspect the fact that this ship has a wooden hull may account for the difference.”

“Then we’ll stick to steel-hulled ships from now on,” Schultz said. “I don’t like staying at periscope depth this long near a Coast Guard patrol area.”

They had their pick of targets along the United States east coast, one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world, so they could afford to be choosy. The *Deering* was the fourth ship they’d attacked in the past three weeks. Designed as a merchant submarine to smuggle supplies past the British naval blockade during the Great War, the *Bremen* had been diverted from her original purpose on her maiden voyage. She was declared missing so she could be used as a secret test bed for an experimental technology, one that could have won the war for Germany had it been perfected in time.

But the *Irrewaffe* wasn’t ready before the Central Powers surrendered. So Schultz and Horváth made a pact to steal the *Bremen* and disappear with her willing crew and the radical weapon to undertake a new goal to get rich. For three years, the plan had worked beyond their

wildest dreams, and this expedition was their most lucrative yet. The *Bremen* had the capacity to carry seven hundred tons of cargo, but she'd been so successful already on this mission that her holds would soon be full. They'd have to return to base to offload their hijacked spoils.

Schultz turned back to the periscope. The *Deering's* second lifeboat tumbled into the water unoccupied. Then one of the crew jumped overboard after it. With the ship at full sail, she quickly left him behind.

"There goes the first one," Schultz said.

"Lifejacket?"

"No."

One by one, as though compelled by some unseen voice, the crewmembers leaped into the chilly winter waters. Schultz counted them off as they went. The last to go was a man in his sixties with white hair and a beard. He didn't hesitate as he flung himself over the railing.

"That must be the captain. Willis Wormell, according to our contact in Barbados."

"That's twelve crewmen total overboard," Horváth said. "Going by the manifest, the ship is empty."

"Excellent," Schultz said. He took one final three hundred and sixty degree rotation with the periscope. Several shark fins were already circling the men thrashing in the water. He doubted there would be anything left of their corpses for searchers to find. No ships were on the horizon, perhaps because they were steering clear of the oncoming gale.

Satisfied that they were alone, he lowered the periscope.

"Surface the boat," he said to the executive officer. "You may shut down the *Irrewaffe*, Herr Horváth."

Horváth nodded and flipped switches until the lights on his board went dark.

Once the U-boat was on the surface, Schultz climbed to the top of the conning tower and opened the hatch. He inhaled the clean sea air, a welcome relief from the stench of diesel fuel and body odor that always built up inside during a long cruise.

He lifted his binoculars and scanned the deck of the *Deering* once more. After he was satisfied that no stragglers remained, he ordered the *Bremen* to pull up alongside the cargo ship. Despite the storm on the horizon, the seas were relatively calm, with only a slight breeze pushing the schooner along.

When they were beside the *Deering*, the *Bremen* matched speed. His crew attached lines between the ships in a practiced ritual and climbed aboard using rope ladders.

To save the time it would take to lower the sails, Schultz told his men to drop both anchors. When they did so, the *Deering*'s stately pace abruptly came to a halt, and a gangway was placed between the two stationary vessels.

Accompanied by Horváth, Schultz climbed aboard the abandoned ship. His first stop was the bridge. He found the ship's log book and tucked it into his pea coat. It was his souvenir, just like the captain's log of every other ship he'd commandeered.

They went down past the mess, where they saw uneaten plates of dinner still on the table.

"The critical moment must have arrived during their meal," Horváth noted.

"I'll have some of the men raid their larder for fresh supplies," Schultz said. The *Bremen* had been at sea for over a month, and the canned beans and pickled beets were getting old. His mouth salivated at the thought of a ripe orange.

When they reached the hold, Schultz grinned as he took in their prize.

The *Deering* was smuggling five hundred barrels of illegal rum from Barbados destined for Norfolk, Virginia. The price for liquor had skyrocketed during Prohibition, which meant the

schooner's cargo was worth a million dollars.

5

With ramps set in place over the entire route to the gangway, the crew began rolling the barrels over to the *Bremen*.

The process for moving the massive casks was tedious and backbreaking, but the crew had dollar signs dancing in their eyes. They worked without complaint. They were just rolling the last few barrels over when the first officer, who was stationed on the *Deering*'s bridge, called to Schultz.

“*Herr Kapitän!* A ship is on the horizon and closing on our position.”

Schultz sprinted up to join him. The first officer passed the binoculars to him.

It looked like a Coast Guard cutter. It was on the opposite side of the *Deering* from the *Bremen*. They couldn't have seen the low-riding U-boat yet.

“Prepare to abandon the *Deering*,” Schultz said. “Release the schooner's anchors before you return to the *Bremen*.”

“*Jawohl!*”

With the sails still set, the *Deering* would continue on, so the cutter would have no reason to investigate the unusual sight of a stationary ship in open water.

His men efficiently carried out their tasks, and Schultz was the last to disembark as the *Deering* began to move. He was met on the *Bremen*'s conning tower by Horváth.

“This might be an interesting opportunity to test the *Irrewaffe* on a warship,” the Hungarian said hopefully.

“We've already pushed our luck, *Herr Doktor*,” Schultz replied. “Let's return home and enjoy our rewards.”

Horváth looked disappointed, but nodded.

When the *Bremen* was buttoned up and Schultz was back in the control room, he ordered the U-boat to dive. He raised the periscope and watched the cutter approach until she abruptly turned north.

Schultz turned to see the schooner receding into the distance, the words “Carroll A. Deering, Bath” etched in white on her black fantail. She would likely be ripped apart by the storm, but even if she weren’t, there was no evidence that the U-boat had ever been in contact with her. The *Deering*’s missing crew would forever remain a mystery.

Schultz lowered the periscope and said, “Set a course due south. Back to base.”

That drew a raucous cheer from the crew, but Schultz was already contemplating where they’d go next after they sold off their current load of cargo. With the *Bremen*’s range of twenty thousand miles, it really could be anywhere.

The entire earth was their hunting ground.

ONE

The Atlantic Ocean

Present Day

Jack Perry stared in amazement at the approaching cargo ship. He wondered not only how it had made the voyage thousands of miles from South Africa, but also how it stayed afloat in the first place.

With the afternoon sun behind him, Perry had a good view of the decrepit vessel. The peeling hull was painted in so many different hideous shades of green that it looked like a collage of rotting avocados. Gaps in the deck railing were patched together by rusty chains, and the five cranes were so dilapidated that they seemed capable of collapsing at any moment. The bridge windows on the dingy white superstructure set two-thirds of the way toward the stern were so caked with dust that Perry couldn't see the crew inside.

He shook his head in disgust at the ancient steamer called the *Portland*. Why his employers back in Virginia would trust such an important operation to this rickety ship was far above his pay grade. When he had the freight safely transferred over to his own container carrier, he'd breathe much easier.

The *Mantícora* wasn't a fancy ship by any means, but she had to be fifty years newer than the *Portland*. The bridge where Perry was standing was set near the bow, and she was smaller than the *Portland*. Designed as a containership for smaller ports, the *Mantícora* had two recently overhauled cranes.

Perry turned to the captain and said in Spanish, "Make sure we lift the containers aboard using our cranes, not theirs."

"*Sí, Señor,*" the captain replied as he eyed the *Portland* with contempt. "I wouldn't trust those cranes to carry a feather pillow."

"How long will the transfer take?"

The captain looked at the bridge clock, which read 14:17. "Once you complete the transaction with the *Portland's* captain, it shouldn't take more than an hour to haul four containers over and secure them."

"And when will we arrive in Nicaragua?"

"There's no significant weather expected along the route to slow us down, so less than a week."

"Good. Then let's get this over with."

Perry left the bridge and climbed a rope ladder down to the lifeboat that had been lowered into the water. The *Portland* was now stationary two hundred yards off the starboard bow of the *Mantícora*. Perry couldn't be sure, but he thought the creaky ship was listing slightly. He didn't relish getting on her, but he had to check the cargo to make sure they were getting what they'd ordered.

When the lifeboat reached the *Portland*, he climbed aboard and was greeted by a man in his fifties with thinning gray hair tied back in a ponytail and a gut that threatened to pop the buttons

on his Hawaiian shirt. His khaki pants were stained with grease, oil coated his boots, and he hadn't shaved in days.

The man stuck out a hand and smiled. "Chester Knight is my name. I'm the master of this fine ship." His New England accent made him sound like he was straight off a Gloucester swordfish boat.

Perry nearly recoiled, not wanting to get his clean clothes anywhere near the man, but he shook it anyway. The man's grip was surprisingly strong.

"Earl Perry. Can I see the cargo?"

"You don't waste time on chit chat, do you?" Knight said with a laugh. "Come on, then."

He led Perry to four shipping containers lined up on the *Portland's* deck. Knight nodded to a crewman, who opened the first container. It was full of crates marked "Stellenbosch Precision Flanges."

"It's all here just like you ordered," Knight said, and handed Perry a crowbar. "See for yourself."

"I will," Perry replied. He climbed up and pried the top from one of the crates.

Inside, carefully packed in Styrofoam, were a dozen South African-made Vektor R5 assault rifles. He checked another crate and confirmed that it also held a set of rifles.

He climbed down and had them open the next container. This one held Denel Y3 automatic grenade launchers.

The last two containers contained the other weapons that were promised.

"You got enough in there to start your own little war," Knight said.

In fact, they were destined for Nicaraguan rebels who were going to use them in fighting the corrupt socialist government that was allowing the drug cartels to run wild.

“What they’ll be used for doesn’t concern you,” Perry said.

“Not at all. Not as long as we get paid what we’re owed.”

“Do you have somewhere we can complete the purchase?”

“My office should do nicely,” Knight said. He waved for Perry to follow him into the superstructure.

The interior was even worse than the exterior. Cracked linoleum lined the floor, the walls were covered in grime, and the flickering fluorescent lights gave the corridor a sickly glow.

Knight limped slightly while he walked, and he coughed from exertion as they climbed a set of stairs. Perry wondered who would be the first to go under, Knight or the *Portland*.

They walked into the captain’s office, and Perry was assaulted by a putrid stench that nearly knocked him over.

Knight noticed his expression and closed the door to a bathroom. “Gotta get that toilet fixed.” He gestured to the teetering metal chair in front of his desk. “Have a seat.”

Perry perched on the edge of the chair. He’d have to toss his clothes overboard after he returned to the *Mantícora*.

Knight plopped himself into his seat and heaved his right leg up on the desk. He pulled the pant leg up to reveal a scuffed prosthetic limb grasping his leg just below the knee. He scratched at the edge of it and said with a grin, “I’ll find that white whale one of these days.”

“Captain Knight, can we conclude this transaction?” Perry said. “We have a schedule to keep.”

“Of course. I’m only too happy to get paid.”

Perry took out his phone. “Please tell me the account number and I’ll have the money transferred.”

“We don’t have WiFi on board the *Portland*.”

“I’m connected to the *Mantícora*’s router.”

“Someday we got to get one of those.” Knight picked up a scrap piece of paper and read off a string of numbers.

For a moment Perry wondered if he could get away with simply faking the transfer of ten million dollars, but he thought better of it and keyed in the instructions. When the transfer was complete, he told Knight. The grizzled captain picked up the battered phone sitting on his desk and called the radio room to confirm.

After a lengthy delay, he smiled and nodded before hanging up the phone.

“Looks like we’ve got ourselves a sale,” Knight said. Perry was relieved that he didn’t offer to shake hands again.

“Then I’ll let the captain of the *Mantícora* know that we can start moving the containers.”

“That sounds fine. Why don’t you watch from the bridge with me?”

“All right.”

They walked up to the bridge, where they were met by three crewmen. The bridge was just as revolting as the rest of the ship. Discarded cans and cigarette butts littered the floor. The glass dials on several of the instruments were cracked. One of the windows had been blown out, the empty space covered with plywood and duct tape.

One of the crew said, “The captain of the *Mantícora* has asked for permission to pull alongside so they can start lifting the containers.”

“Permission denied,” Knight said, his accent suddenly gone.

Perry whipped his head around. “What are you talking about?”

“We got what we came for.”

“You’re backing out on the deal?” Perry asked in shock.

“Why not? The money is sitting safely in our account now. We’ve got better things to do with those weapons than let them be used in some private war of yours in Nicaragua.”

Perry’s mouth hung open. “How did you...?”

“We have people everywhere.”

“You’ve made a big mistake. There is a squad of commandos on board our ship, ready to take over the *Portland* just in case you double-crossed us. You can’t possibly think you’ll get away from us in this atrocity of a ship.”

Knight nodded at the *Mantícora*. “You think you can catch us in that thing?”

“Easily,” Perry scoffed.

“In that case,” he said, speaking up as if he were talking into a microphone, “weapons officer, destroy their bridge.”

To Perry’s utter disbelief, plates in the hull and deck slid aside, revealing a six-barreled Gatling gun like those found on Navy warships for shooting down missiles. It spun up and unleashed a torrent of shells at the defenseless *Mantícora*. Perry put his hands over his ears as they were assaulted by the deafening buzzsaw noise of the gun.

The explosive rounds ripped into the cargo ship’s superstructure, chewing through glass, metal, and flesh. The bridge was instantly transformed into a slaughterhouse. No one inside could have survived.

The *Mantícora* began to drift, and the crewmember in the lifeboat that had transported Perry to the *Portland* dashed to safety on the other side of the stricken cargo ship.

Commandos burst onto the *Mantícora*’s deck with their weapons at the ready. They knelt and raised their assault rifles. One had an RPG.

“Now we can’t have that,” Knight said. “Take care of them.”

The Gatling gun swung around and raked the deck. The commandos didn’t stand a chance. The rounds were so powerful that there was little left of the men besides blood slicks.

Perry felt like he was going to be sick. He stared at Knight in shock. “We had an agreement. Do you realize who you’re dealing with?”

Knight shrugged, as unconcerned as if he’d swatted a fly. “Tell your bosses we don’t need them any longer. We have more profitable clients now.”

With incredible power for a man missing one leg, Knight took Perry by the shoulders and shoved him onto the bridge’s wing. When they reached the railing, Knight threw him over the side with no more effort than if he were a doll. Perry fell five stories to the water below.

When he surfaced, gasping for air, Perry saw the *Portland*’s Gatling gun disappear behind the hull plates. Her engines hummed to life, and the ship pivoted neatly until her prow was facing the *Mantícora*. A hull plate in her bow slid to the side, revealing a cannon the size of the main gun on a destroyer. The cannon took aim at the cargo ship and fired five shots in quick succession. The armor-piercing rounds blew massive holes in the hull at the water line.

The *Mantícora* began to tilt sideways as water poured into the holds. The remaining crew on board emerged on deck with life jackets and jumped overboard.

Knight stood on the bridge wing of the *Portland* enjoying the spectacle. He looked down at Perry and gave him a jaunty wave before going inside.

The plate covering the cannon slid closed again. The *Portland* turned and shot away as if launched by a catapult. Her speed was as impossible as her hidden guns, but Perry couldn’t deny what he was seeing.

Seconds later, the *Mantícora* turned turtle, water cascading off her keel. It was only a matter

of time before she went to the bottom. The lifeboat was busy picking up the waterlogged survivors.

As he treaded water waiting to be picked up, Perry wondered how he was going to spin this disaster to his supervisor at the CIA.

TWO

Off the coast of Brazil

Michael Bradley sat on a bench seat in the *Kansas City* mess hall while the boat's corpsman Jeremy Noland looked at his ears. The smell of bacon from the crew's breakfast still hung in the air. Like many Los Angeles-class submarines, the *KC* had no on-board physician nor a dedicated infirmary, but Noland could handle anything short of major surgery. Bradley drummed his fingers on the table's blue padding as he waited for a diagnosis.

The Navy SEAL had endured pain and loss of hearing in both his ears for a few days, but had avoided seeing Noland because he knew that might take him out of the upcoming naval maneuvers with Brazil. But when he'd woken up this morning, he couldn't understand anything his CO was saying, and he was sent to get checked out despite his protests.

"What's the bad news?" Bradley asked. His own voice sounded like he was speaking into a pillow.

Noland, a thin guy with wispy blond hair, stepped back and frowned. His mouth moved, but all Bradley heard were muffled vowels, like those spoken by the unintelligible teacher on *Peanuts*.

“I didn’t get any of that.”

Noland took a pad and pen from his pocket and jotted something down. When he was finished, he held it toward Bradley.

I think you have acute bilateral otitis media. Massive ear infection. Filling your middle ears with fluid. Should have come to me earlier.

“Yeah, yeah,” Bradley said, annoyed with himself even more than with Noland. “What do we do about it now?”

More writing.

Antibiotic shot, then oral antibiotics. Lots of fluids. Bunk rest.

Bradley’s heart sank.

“How long?”

Three days. Depends on how long it takes for your hearing to normalize.

“Three days! Maneuvers start tomorrow. I’ve got to prep for an op!”

Sorry, bud. Your eardrums are under massive pressure and could rupture. Then you might be out for weeks.

Bradley slammed his fist on the table. He was supposed to be piloting the SEAL Delivery Vehicle for the first time. He was even going to get to fire one of its two torpedoes. The SDV was stowed in the dry deck shelter mounted on top of the *Kansas City*’s hull.

He was there the day that the bus-sized shelter had been delivered by a C-17 cargo plane to be installed on top of the *KC*. The middle section was attached to a hatch aft of the conning tower. That hatch gave access to the shelter’s airlock, also called a transfer trunk. On the bow side of the airlock was a decompression chamber for treating special forces operators returning from missions in deep water. On the stern side of the airlock was a protective water-filled hangar

holding the sixteen-foot-long SDV, really a miniature submarine that wasn't pressurized. The Mark 9 was the newest version, and Bradley had been training for a month how to use it in an operational setting. Now his mission was down the drain because of an illness for six-year-olds.

"Fine," he growled. "Give me the antibiotics."

Noland handed him a second pad and pen.

You'll need guys to write on that if you want to understand anything. Then Noland pointed to the door and mimed like he was injecting a syringe.

Bradley nodded, and Noland left him to stew about having to tell his CO he'd be out of commission for the op.

A minute later, Bradley saw two men race by in the corridor outside the mess. He couldn't tell if they were just goofing off or if there was an emergency. If the crew had been sent to action stations, he would at least have heard an alarm even if he couldn't understand what was being said over the loudspeaker.

He decided it was nothing to worry about until a third man dashed past. For the instant that Bradley could see him, it looked like the sailor had blood on his clothes.

Bradley was about to go out to see what was happening when Noland came back into the mess.

"What's going on with the boat?" Bradley asked. "I just saw three guys run by. I'd swear one of them was bleeding."

Noland just stood there with glazed eyes. He seemed to look right through Bradley. The hypodermic was dangling loosely from his hand.

"Noland? What's the matter with you?"

Noland's eyes came into focus as if he'd realized someone was speaking to him. His lips

trembled and he looked terrified. He started yelling something, but Bradley couldn't understand a word of it.

“Hold on! I can't understand you, remember? Just cool it.”

Bradley put up his hands in what he thought was a calming gesture, but that only startled Noland.

He raised the syringe like a dagger and tried to stab Bradley. Bradley was six two and built like a linebacker, so he didn't have any trouble brushing the skinny Noland aside.

The corpsman flew over a table, but he jumped back to his feet still brandishing the syringe like a weapon.

Bradley was mystified by Noland's sudden transformation from mild-mannered medical officer to a crazed psycho.

“What's wrong with you, man?”

Noland shouted something again, waving his arms wildly like he was trying to make some kind of point. Bradley shook his head.

“Calm down, Noland! Geez! I—”

Noland didn't wait for Bradley to finish and lunged forward again, slashing at him with the needle as if he were desperately trying to ward off a rabid dog.

Bradley grabbed Noland's wrist and twisted him around until he had his arm around the corpsman's neck. He clenched the wrist with the syringe, but Noland wouldn't let go. Bradley would have to snap it to get him to drop it.

Instead, he squeezed Noland's neck until the sailor went limp. Bradley gently laid him on the floor and went to find someone to help him get Noland under control before he woke up.

When he got out into the corridor, instead of finding assistance, he found a madhouse.

A few of the sailors in both directions were going at each other in free-for-alls that wouldn't be out of place in the Ultimate Fighting Championship.

But many of them simply looked scared out of their wits. Two were curled up on the floor openly weeping. One was wandering the hall in a daze. And another sailor was bashing his own head against a hatch so forcefully that he tore a gash in his brow.

Even with all of his intensive training, Bradley froze for a moment, unsure of what to do. He'd never simulated anything close to this. He wondered if some kind of nerve gas or radiation leak had caused the deranged behavior, but then he dismissed that possibility because he was unaffected. Surely he wasn't the only one immune to whatever was causing this pandemonium.

He had to get to the control room and find the captain. Maybe the condition was limited to the lower part of the boat.

Bradley ran down the corridor, warding off attacks by his crazed crewmates. He climbed the stairs and finally made it to the control room. Some of the command crew had fled, leaving many of the controls unmanned. Two men were lying on the deck with severe injuries. One of them was the executive officer, who had a mortal wound on the back of his head.

The captain was sitting in his chair with his face cradled in his hands.

Bradley rushed over and shook him by the shoulders.

“Captain! We need to surface! Something is infecting the crew!”

Bradley had never seen the normally stoic captain get flustered, but now tears were streaming down his cheeks. He bore the same stare into infinity that Noland had.

Bradley slapped him across the face, but it didn't snap the captain out of his trance. Instead, he collapsed to the floor and started screaming.

The entire control room was bedlam. One man seemed intent on his task. It was the sailor at

one of the two yokes steering the sub. He had a demented look on his face and was pushing the wheel all the way forward.

Bradley looked at the depth gauge. It was at twelve hundred feet and dropping fast. Soon they'd be at crush depth, and the sub's hull would implode.

Bradley yanked the sailor from his seat and slammed his head against the panel to knock him out. He took a seat in the chair and pulled back on both yokes. He'd never driven a Los Angeles-class sub before, but the principle had to be the same as for the SEAL Delivery Vehicle he'd been training on.

The sub leveled off at fourteen hundred feet and started rising again. Bradley would have blown the ballast if he knew how, but choosing the wrong switch could just as easily flood the entire boat as surface it. They were at maximum speed. He'd have to worry later about how to slow them down.

He breathed easier when they were back above nine hundred fifty feet, the *Kansas City's* normal maximum operating depth. They were cruising off the coast of Brazil near the Amazon river delta, but they must have been out past the edge of the shallower continental shelf because they hadn't slammed into the bottom of the ocean yet.

Bradley planned to radio for help from the Brazilian Navy as soon as he could. The SEAL mission for this war game had been to penetrate Brazil's defenses and infiltrate a base located at the mouth of the Amazon.

When they were at five hundred feet, a sailor wearing headphones came into control room ranting hysterically. He grabbed Bradley by the arm and tried to drag him out of the seat. Bradley resisted, shoving the sailor away. His highest priority was putting the *KC* on the surface.

The sailor was now sobbing. He staggered over to a panel and pulled a switch.

Bradley jumped out of the chair and lunged toward him, thinking he might be doing something to endanger the boat, like attempting to launch a torpedo while its tube door was closed.

But he realized what the sailor was doing when he heard the faint noise of a siren rising and falling. The switch was the collision alarm. Now Bradley understood why the sailor had headphones on. He was a sonar operator.

Bradley couldn't hear what the sailor was yelling now, but it didn't matter. He could read the man's lips.

Brace for impact!

The sonar man continued shrieking and stumbled out of the control room toward the bow while Bradley raced into the sonar room. The first monitor showed what was coming.

There was a huge cliff in their path. They were heading right for the edge of the continental shelf.

He ran back to the diving control and yanked the wheel around. The submarine began to turn, but too slowly.

The *Kansas City* jerked violently to port as they slammed into the edge of the continental shelf. Bradley hit his right arm as he was flung against the bulkhead. Searing pain shot up to his shoulder. He didn't have to hear the snap to know it was broken.

Warning lights flashed throughout the control room. Bradley could feel the sub grinding to a halt as it scraped across the cliff. He couldn't tell if the engine room was flooding, but it felt like the propeller was no longer turning.

Bradley pushed himself to his feet with his good left arm. By the time he was standing, the *Kansas City* was at a full stop. The depth gauge, which was at two hundred feet, started to fall.

The sub listed to port as it scraped down the cliff side.

Bradley readied himself for the end, assuming the hull would implode from the rising pressure, but there was a sudden jolt and the sub stopped, bow tilted forward. The depth gauge read 325 feet. They must have come to rest on a ledge.

Bradley made his way to the communications station. If he could activate the extremely-long-frequency radio, he'd be able to communicate the *Kansas City's* situation and position to the Navy and request a rescue.

Then he smelled something that chilled him. It was the salty tang of seawater.

He placed his hand on the instrument panel and felt a rumble pulsating through the hull. They were taking on water. Fast.

Bradley turned toward the bow and saw churning water carrying men and debris with it. It would only be a minute before the entire sub was flooded.

His crewmates were as good as dead. There was nothing he could do for them any more. His only chance for survival now was the SEAL Delivery Vehicle. If he could get to the dry deck shelter, he could use the mini-sub to propel himself to the surface and avoid drowning.

He raced aft to the midship hatch where the shelter was attached. Before he could reach it, he was blindsided by one of his SEAL teammates, Carlos Jimenez. Jimenez pushed Bradley into the bulkhead and tried to stab him in the eye with a Ka-bar knife. Bradley moved his head aside at the last second and the knife hit metal instead of his brain.

As much as he hated to do it, Bradley didn't hold back and pounded his forehead into Jimenez's face, breaking the Marine's nose.

Jimenez teetered backward and slipped in the rising water.

Bradley kept running until he reached the hatch connecting the *Kansas City* to the dry deck

shelter. It was a struggle to hoist himself up with only one arm, but the terrifying thought of being trapped in the doomed sub kept him going.

He spun the hatch open and pushed it up. The transfer trunk, which served as the airlock between the sub and the compartment where the SEAL Delivery Vehicle was stowed, was already lit because it was attached to the sub's electrical system.

Bradley climbed up and closed the transfer trunk's hatch behind him. He used a strap to lock it closed in case Jimenez tried to follow him. He felt like he was murdering his friend, but he had no choice.

Before he could cycle the airlock to fill it with water and equalize the pressure with the storage bay holding the SDV, Bradley had to get one of the air tanks out in the decompression chamber. It would then take a few minutes to move the SDV out of the shelter. At this depth he wouldn't be able to hold his breath long enough to do it, especially with one bad arm.

Despite the closed hatch, water began flooding into the transfer trunk. But it wasn't a leak. Someone in the sub, maybe Jimenez, had remotely activated the dry deck shelter's airlock to flood it.

In a panic, Bradley rushed into the decompression chamber and pulled the hatch shut behind him. He quickly started to connect the tank, hose, and regulator, then stopped when he realized what a grave mistake he'd made.

He looked through the window in the door and saw that the water level was almost to the top of the airlock.

There was no way to reopen the hatch. The water was pushing against the door with thousands of pounds of pressure.

He was trapped.

Bradley dropped the scuba gear to the floor and slumped onto the bench. He didn't know how much air he had, even with all the oxygen tanks, he doubted it would last until someone arrived to save him.

He sat there totally defeated until he remembered the notepad and pen Noland had stuffed in his pocket. Bradley took them out and used his left hand to begin awkwardly writing. Before he suffocated, it was his duty to record what happened to the crew on the final cruise of the *Kansas City*.