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Diamond Cufflinks, Part Two

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Diamond Cufflinks

Part Two

Alan Foreman

It took only moments before the crew of the ship realized what was happening: total, utter pandemonium. It was Judgment Day! It was the end of the world! The wrath of God was upon us! If not, then something else was happening and we were all in the dark. I entered the radar room. Calls were going out, people were running, others were screaming, and still others were barking orders. A general announcement was made over the intercom system — all pilots were to meet in the map room.

The General stood in front of the room. I took my seat in the second row. I couldn't hear myself think; even more, I couldn't make out a single word of any of the conversations going on. Everyone in the room was speaking gibberish to each other. Only the General made sense as he barked at us to take our seats and listen up. Then he began, "I suppose you all know what the commotion is about. To tell you all the truth, nobody knows what's happening here, not even the President, whom I spoke with before this meeting." He stopped speaking for a moment. He removed his cap from his gray, balding head, rested his elbow on the podium, scratched his forehead, and sighed. He began again. "This isn't easy for me, but these are my orders. However, I'm going to have to ask for a volunteer."

A man in the back of the room piped up, "Excuse me, a volunteer for what?"

“A volunteer to fly a probe into that thing,” replied the General. Needless to say, nobody raised his hand. And nobody spoke up. The General continued, “We’re going to rig a probe to a missile on an F-16. I need a pilot to fly that thing up and fire it off. The probe will contain video and other sensitive analytical equipment. The warhead will be removed from the missile to ensure that the equipment does not destruct before we can learn anything.” His words still did not motivate anyone to step forward. The General continued, “There is high risk involved in this mission. We know nothing of this...funnel. So we have no way of knowing what will happen to the plane, the pilot, or the probe.”

The room still roared with silence. The General slammed his hand flat against the podium. “God damnit! Look, I’m just as scared as the rest of you are! I’d sooner turn around and high-tail it out of here, but I have my orders!”

It was hot and stuffy in that room. I don’t know about the others, but I was perspiring. My stomach was in a knot, and I was more nervous than I had ever been before in my life. Suddenly, I found myself standing up and offering to fly the mission.

TO BE CONTINUED...