

Honeymoon

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*This is a sequel to my story **Circle of Nightmares***

Kate Straker leaned back in the co-pilot's seat and sighed. Morale boosters were very much her preserve but flying halfway around the world to the South Seas in order to inspect a piece of concrete was, in her opinion, overkill to say the least. SkyDiver's new base was... not very interesting. She had done the obligatory glad handing but she was pleased to be on her way home.

There were two good points about this trip. One was that flying over the coral atolls and desert islands was giving her some interesting ideas for new films. She was, after all, supposed to be scouting locations. The second was the pilot. This could be the longest time she had spent alone with her husband since they got married. She sighed again. Marrying SHADO had not been an easy ride but it was - usually - worth it.

He put down the radio and turned to her. "Should be plain sailing now. No alerts and nothing on the weather forecast. A good, clear run."

She smiled and there was silence between them for a while. Sometimes it was hard to know what to talk about except SHADO and the studio. "Have you ever been to this part of the world before?"

He shook his head. "Not really. Flown over it." He looked down at the deep, blue sea. "You feel like landing and taking a look around?"

Her smile grew a notch broader. "Don't joke, I might take you up on it."

He returned her smile. "Why don't you set up a film here? I could come out and check on the dock's progress. Reach under the seat."

She did, puzzled. She felt a small, hard box. She pulled out a tape cassette. The cover showed a hula-skirted maiden waving her hands towards a clump of palm trees silhouetted against a lurid sunset.

"You bought this?" she asked, incredulous.

He shook his head. "Alec slipped it to me just before we left. I guess it could give you some ideas. I think Alec had some ideas."

"I can imagine." She chuckled and looked around for something to play it on.

There was a loud bang from the back of the plane.

"That's not good, is it?"

Ed did not answer. He was studying the instruments intently. Then the plane started to drop and he was fighting the controls.

Kate grabbed the radio. "Mayday, Mayday. This is Blackback one. We have..."

She looked across at Ed. He had levelled the plane but he had that frozen expression that

indicated trouble.

Someone was on the line, Keith Ford she thought. "Blackback, this is SHADO control. What is your position? What is your problem?"

In the background, the level of noise suddenly rose. She was reassured to think the whole organisation was swinging in behind them - but it was a long way to England.

Then, in several voices, she heard the same word - incoming. There were UFOs headed for Earth.

She looked around. She had seen none and this did not bear the hallmarks of a UFO attack.

Alec came on. "Kate, are you okay?"

"Been better." The plane was out of control again. Ed was trying to bring them down safely, there was clearly no hope of flying on. "You have incoming?"

"Fraid so." People were reeling off facts and figures behind him. "There's a lot."

Ed spoke. "Let me talk to him." She held the handset in front of his mouth. "Alec? You have a fix on us?"

"Yeah, we got you."

"Then ignore us till you've dealt with the incursion."

"Ed -"

"We'll put down. There are islands. We'll be OK. Straker out."

He gestured to her and she hung up.

She was scared. Ed was straining to slow the plane and keep it level. There was nothing she could do, she had no idea what the problem was. She resolved to take a course in aircraft mechanics when - if - she got home. There was nothing she could do about the UFOs. She looked out of the window, wondering if they were coming for her and Ed.

They hit the water hard but flat. Her harness knocked the wind out her but saved her from any further injury. She could not tell if they were sinking.

"Kate? Are you alright?" He sounded a little breathless himself.

She nodded, releasing the harness. They went through to the back, a little gingerly in her case. It was hard to tell if Ed was injured but she did not think so. She grabbed the survival kit. Ed got the life raft and opened the hatch. Water lapped over their feet and the plane began to sink in earnest. Ed inflated the raft, through the kit in and helped her after it.

The water was up to their waists. She had to help him in. The wash as the plane sank threaten to suck them down. They grabbed the oars and pulled away as fast as they could. After a moment, they could sit back and watch it go. Ed put his arm around her.

"Could be worse. Now, where do you want to aim for?"

There were three islands in sight. They had got lucky. She said so. "I wish we could tell Alec. He'll be worried sick."

Ed hugged her a little closer. She was sure he felt it worse than she did.

"So, which one do we pick?"

She looked around. "I think that one's closest."

"That one it is."

They paddled slowly, there was no need to wear themselves out. Indeed, in other circumstances it could have been very pleasant: the sun was shining, combining with a light breeze to dry their clothes and they were headed towards a verdant tropical island.

They reached land after perhaps an hour. There was the scent of flowers in the air as they dragged the life raft across the fine sand. She could hear bird song among the trees. It was a

tropical paradise.

Ed was checking the survival kit. "We're OK for food for at least four days. We've got water but if there are so many plants growing I suspect there's a spring on the island. We'll need shelter - I don't know how cold it gets at night and the sun could be overpowering. We'll also need to put a marker on the beach - What?"

She was standing in front of him, hands on hips. "Ed..."

"What?"

"You've just said this is about the best place we could hope to crash land."

"We got lucky."

"We did. And for once up there's nothing you can do about SHADO."

He scowled. "Unfortunately not."

"Which means there is absolutely no point in you worrying about SHADO."

"I don't -"

"Yes you do." she continued. "And it's going to be at least twenty four, probably forty eight hours before anyone comes to get us."

"Which is annoying but -"

She sighed with frustration. "Which is longer than we have ever had alone together."

"I don't get your point."

She stamped her foot, wanting to strangle the stupid man. Her voice was virtually a screech. "I-want-a-honeymoon!"

He looked abashed. "Oh."

Then a slow smile slipped over his face. "*Oh*. Then I suggest we concentrate on building the shelter. We wouldn't want to get interrupted."

* * *

The sea plane circled the tiny island.

"Is that the one?" Theberge, the medic, asked her in her lilting French Canadian accent as she leaned over the co-pilot's seat.

Turner, the pilot, indicated the orange life raft and the large X carved into the beach. "That's the one."

He put the plane down gently on the waves. Theberge grabbed her medical kit and opened the hatch. Despite the fact that someone had made it to the island, there was no guarantee that they were uninjured.

They had landed in the shallows, perhaps a hundred yards from the beach. She was about to jump out when she looked up and saw two figures emerging from the undergrowth. Commander Straker had his arm around his wife, his jacket hanging over his shoulder. Mrs Straker was wearing a crown and necklace of red, bell shaped flowers.

As he saw them, Straker straightened up. She ran a professional eye over him. He looked fine, just fine. She smiled, keeping her thoughts to herself as she turned to look over Mrs Straker. The two of them splashed through the water towards the plane.

She took Kate's hand as her husband gave her a boost through the door. Kate was smiling broadly.

"Morning, Anny."

"Morning, Kate. Good morning, Commander."

He nodded curtly as she gave him her hand. "Theberge."

Well, the touch of his hand was better than nothing.

He walked through to the cabin. "Is Colonel Freeman on the radio?"

She heard Turner reply: "Yes, sir." and Alec almost shouting over the air: "Ed? Are you two alright? We got the saboteur. He was on leave just before he went back to SkyDiver base..."

She turned away, having other things to do. Mrs Straker might need her attention.

But Kate had settled back into one of the seats and looked perfectly relaxed. The two women's eyes met.

"I know what you're thinking, Anny." she said. "And you'd be absolutely right."

She smiled blissfully to herself, removed her floral crown and settled down to sleep.

* * *

"All I know -" said Anny the next day to the crowd clustered around her table in the canteen "- is that when they came out of the jungle they were looking *very* relaxed."

Someone at the back cleared their throat loudly. The crowd parted to reveal Colonel Freeman. People discreetly but speedily scattered.

Theberge was on her feet, for once nervous of the big man. "Colonel, I meant no disrespect."

"Lieutenant, if they didn't want that story getting around you would have heard about it by now, believe me." He smiled. "It doesn't hurt to remind people occasionally that the Commander is human - and happily married."

She pulled a comically miserable face. "I know. If Kate wasn't everyone's friend, I'd be thinking some seriously mutinous thoughts. And I would not be the only one tempted to remove her."

Freeman chuckled. "Seeing that that's how things stand, how about making do with dinner with me? You can give me an *informal* report."

She raised an eyebrow. "Is that all you want from me? The rest of the story?"

"Not all."

He took her arm.

"I haven't said yes yet." There was a two second pause. "Yes."