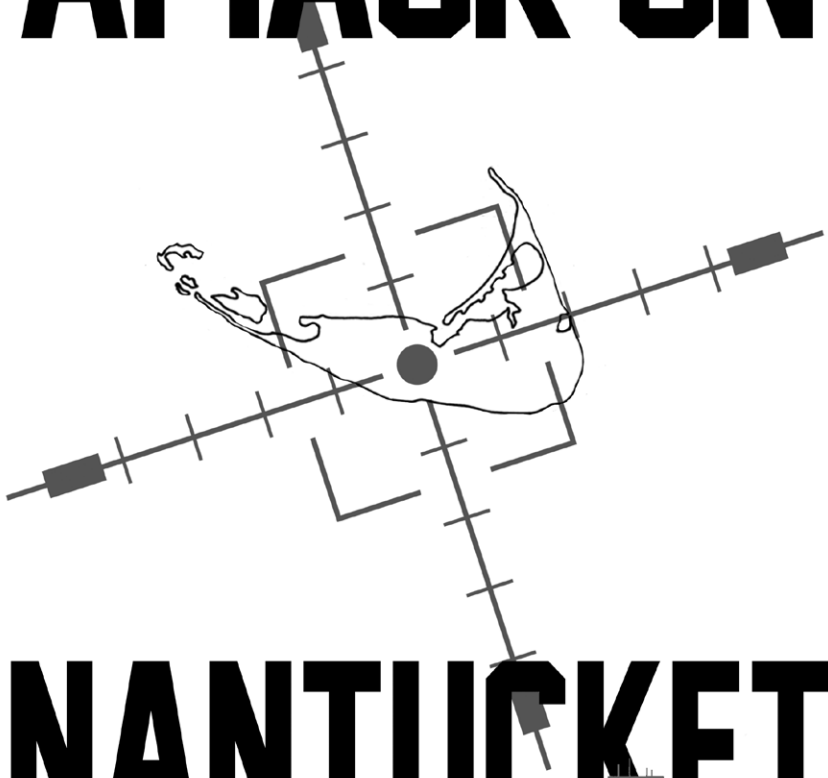


ATTACK ON



NANTUCKET

THAD DUPPER

Kilshaw Press
Castle Rock, Colorado

Attack on Nantucket
by Thad Dupper

Published by
Kilshaw Press LLC
717 Golf Club Drive
Castle Rock, CO 80108
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ISBN: 978-09983476-0-8

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016920001

Publisher's Cataloging-In-Publication Data
(Prepared by The Donohue Group, Inc.)

Names: Dupper, Thad.

Title: Attack on Nantucket / Thad Dupper.

Description: Castle Rock, CO : Kilshaw Press LLC, [2017]

Identifiers: LCCN 2016920001 | ISBN 978-0-9983476-0-8 | ISBN
978-0-9983476-1-5 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Presidents--Assassination attempts--Massachusetts--
Nantucket--Fiction. | Qaida (Organization)--Fiction. | Terrorism--
Massachusetts--Nantucket--Fiction. | United States--Armed Forces--
Fiction. | Nantucket (Mass.)--Fiction. | LCGFT: Thrillers (Fiction)

Classification: LCC PS3604.U66 A88 2017 (print) | LCC PS3604.U66
(ebook) | DDC 813/.6--dc23

Content editor: Jennifer Fisher

Copyedited by Eileen G. Chetti

Cover design: Austin Hollywood

Interior book design: Deborah Perdue,
www.illuminationgraphics.com

Book production coordinated by Gail M. Kearns,
www.topressandbeyond.com

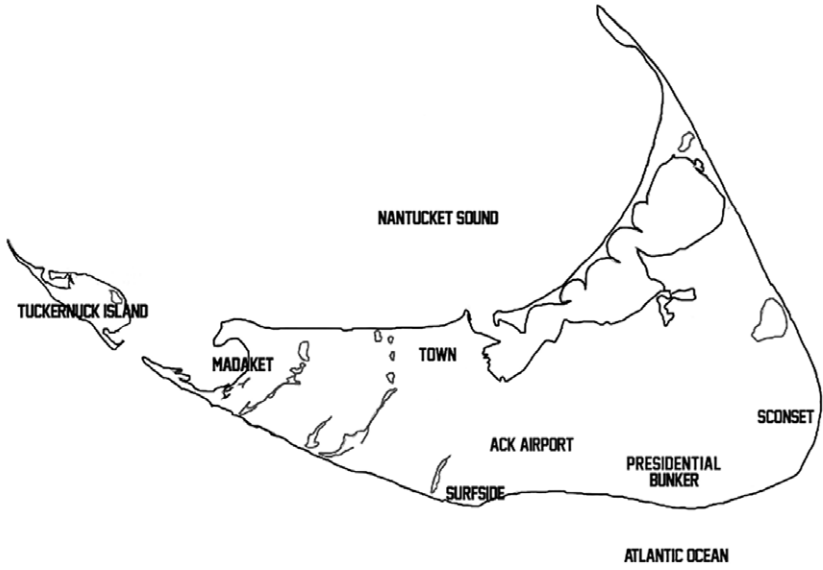
Printed in the United States of America

*To my devoted aunt
Sister Maryeugene Gotimer, SC,
professor of English,
College of Mount Saint Vincent,
who taught and encouraged me to write
when I was truly incorrigible*

Yip Harburg wrote:

“Words make you think thoughts.
Music makes you feel a feeling.
But a song makes you feel a thought.”

To me, Nantucket makes you feel a thought.



MAP OF NANTUCKET

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

Andrew Russell: President of the United States (POTUS); call sign Monsignor

Kennedy Russell: First Lady of the United States (FLOTUS); call sign Mendham

Andrew Russell Jr.: twelve-year-old son of POTUS; call sign Minecraft

Katie Russell: ten-year-old daughter of POTUS; call sign Missy

Stu Jackson: Commanding Officer (CO), USS *Jimmy Carter* (SSN-23)

Mike “Jeb” Bartlett: Lieutenant Commander, VX-23, *Salty Dogs* and US Navy Test Pilot

Kristin McMahon: Deputy Director, National Security Agency (NSA)

Sterling Spencer: POTUS Chief of Staff

Brian Jacobsen: Admiral, Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command (COMFLTFORCOM)

Dale Carmichael: CIA agent stationed in China

Amy Lu: Chinese Ministry of State Security (MSS) agent

Knute “Rockne” Burdick: Lieutenant Commander, SEAL Team 2

Dan Nicols: Chief of the presidential Secret Service detail

Lauren La Rue: Managing Director of Oasis LLC, Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Abdul Er Rahman: Sheik, leader of the Islamic Front, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (KSA)

Jack McMasters: Vice President of the United States

Chris Tate: Chief of Detectives, New York Police Department

Prologue

Lauren La Rue was thirty minutes into her morning spin class when her iPhone started to vibrate, interrupting her playlist. A quick glance at the screen and she knew this was a call she had to take. With perspiration rolling down her face, she slowed her cadence and pressed the microphone button on her earbuds.

“Yes,” answered Lauren.

Dispensing with any sort of greeting, the voice on the other end of the line asked, “Is everything in order?”

Lauren La Rue, the managing director of Oasis LLC, based in Dubai, responded, “Everything is in order, but the payments have not been made yet.”

Dismounting from the exercise bike, she made her way to the patio that overlooked the modern skyline of Dubai’s business district, where La Rue’s offices were located.

The voice on the other end of the line was that of La Rue’s boss, a Saudi billionaire, Sheik Abdul Er Rahman. In addition, and unbeknownst to La Rue, although she did have her suspicions, the sheik was also the anonymous leader of the Islamic Front, the largest benefactor of Al Qaeda. The sheik, who was based in Riyadh, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, ran much of his empire via companies based in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE). His style was notoriously abrupt and demanding of the people who “served him,” which was the term the sheik

used, rather than “worked for him.” His calls were to be returned within minutes, if not seconds. He didn’t care if it was the middle of the night. This was especially the case where women were concerned.

The sheik would often say, “Women’s role is to serve men. It is their highest calling.” That was a commonly held belief in the male-dominated world of the Middle East. But La Rue, his banker and the person in charge of his business affairs, was a smart professional, and as a result he treated her with a modicum of respect. Respect La Rue had worked hard to earn.

“Make sure everything is ready and there are no slipups,” the sheik barked.

La Rue had cooled down enough to be able to speak more clearly.

“The teams have arrived and our friends are also in place. The only thing left is to make the payments—and I want to talk to you about that.”

The sheik replied, “We will discuss that later” and abruptly hung up.

La Rue returned to her workout, but her heart wasn’t in it. Instead of her legs going a mile a minute, now it was her mind. She was going over in her head the steps that had gotten her to this point. She was exceedingly bright and extremely competent, for which she was splendidly compensated, but she knew for the first time that she was crossing a line that would change her life forever. Why she was willing to go this far, she wasn’t exactly sure.



Kristin McMahan slowly awakened in her Potomac, Maryland, home. As she stirred she felt the arm of her “boyfriend” reach out and pull her back to him. The word “boyfriend,” a term he used, seemed so adolescent. In fact she was a thirty-three-year-old professional woman and he was her thirty-four-year-old partner.

“Don’t go,” came the plea from the well-toned man that lay next to her.

“I have to,” Kristin replied as she wiggled out of his grasp.

“What could possibly be more important than staying here with me,” he chided.

“How about keeping the country safe from terrorists,” she replied as she made her way to the bathroom.

“Huh,” he let out, “I thought that was my job.”

Kristin smiled. She couldn’t help herself where Mike Bartlett was concerned—Lieutenant Commander Mike “Jeb” Bartlett, US Navy test and evaluation pilot. She was in love with him and she knew it.

Bartlett was on his second tour as a test pilot having just come from a fleet department head tour. Bartlett was assigned to the Test and Evaluation squadron VX-23, the Salty Dogs. His duty would be to work on the carrier suitability program, where Navy test pilots test all the ship systems to ensure they are ready to be deployed in the fleet.

It was at the beginning of that assignment when he met the deputy director of the NSA, Kristin McMahon, at a friend’s wedding in Annapolis. That first meeting had led to many more.

Bartlett walked naked across the bedroom on his way to the bathroom, where McMahon was already in the shower. Bartlett looked at her figure through the steamy shower door and said, loud enough so she could hear him, “Target acquired, I have tone, Fox Two.” And with that he swung open the shower door. They were going to get a late start for work this morning.

Thirty minutes later, as McMahon was putting on her makeup, Bartlett asked, “Anything happening today?”

McMahon replied, “No, not really. It’s pretty quiet with the president on vacation up on Nantucket. Are you flying today?” she asked Bartlett.

“Babe, I’m a naval aviator. Of course I’m flying,” he said with that sparkle in his eye, almost the same sparkle he’d had when he opened the shower door earlier that morning.

“Babe”? Really? I earned a masters in international studies from Georgetown just so some fighter jock could call me ‘babe’?”

That was one of things Bartlett loved about McMahan—her sass.

“I beg your pardon, sir,” Bartlett replied, saluting her. “I mean Madam Deputy Director, sir.”

She laughed and thought, *God, this guy gets to me.*

Kristin McMahan was attracted to men who were self-confident and successful—those traits tended to go hand in hand. She’d dated a couple of Wall Street, corporate executive types. The problem was they often lacked that certain magnetism that kept her interested in the relationship.

There had also been a couple of professional athletes she’d “known.” They were fun and held a certain appeal—but eventually she had to converse with them, and that usually ended it.

It was no surprise, then, that she was naturally drawn to naval aviators. And being in Maryland, she was close to the Naval Academy and the Pentagon, where pilots tended to rotate through, as well as the Naval Air Station at Pax River.

Lieutenant Commander Bartlett was just the sort of man who attracted Kristin McMahan—bright, self-confident, and physically fit, and on top of all that a US Navy fighter pilot. The icing on the cake was Bartlett’s Hollywood good looks.

“Well, keep the world safe. I’ll see you tonight,” Bartlett said as they left the house and kissed goodbye.

“You be safe,” she admonished as she got into her Audi sports coupe.

“Copy,” intoned Bartlett as he slipped into his pristine 1985 Porsche 911. Fighter pilots cared for their cars almost as much as they did their jets—almost.



“Officer of the Deck, make your depth 150 feet, ahead two-thirds. Comms, let the flagship know we are taking up station off Sconset,” ordered Stu Jackson, captain of the USS *Jimmy Carter* (SSN-23), a Seawolf-class attack submarine.

The officer of the deck repeated Jackson’s command, with the pilot, who replaced the diving officer on Virginia and Seawolf class subs, responding, “I have the dive.”

Stu Jackson was the real deal. A Naval Academy grad, Jackson had joined the submarine force directly out of the academy and had quickly risen to his present command.

Jackson’s success wasn’t because he was the smartest CO or possessed the best fitness reports. He was simply revered by his crew for his leadership.

His leadership style was a combination of keen intellect and an almost uncanny ability to read his crew, along with a healthy dose of swagger, which enabled him to get the best out of the officers and sailors who sailed with him.

When his crew was asked who they would like to put to sea with or who they would like to have with them on a risky mission, the answer was almost always Jackson.

And that’s why Commander, Submarine Forces (COMSUBFOR), the sub boss for the US Navy, a three-star vice admiral, had personally selected Jackson to command the Navy’s most expensive and mission-capable fast attack sub.

The Seawolf-class submarines were intended to replace the beloved and feared, yet aging, Los Angeles fast attack subs. But at more than \$3.5 billion a copy, they were exorbitantly expensive, which explained why there were only three in the Fleet.

The *Carter* was unique, as it was roughly one hundred feet longer than the other subs of her class, USS *Seawolf* (SSN-21) and USS *Connecticut* (SSN-22). This was because of the insertion of a top secret additional section just aft of the sail known as the Multi-Mission Platform (MMP), which

allowed for the launch and recovery of a Navy SEAL team for shallow-water incursions.

Being the commanding officer of the USS *Jimmy Carter* in the post-9/11 world meant his sub was almost always in demand.

Post 9/11, the skipper of an exceedingly quiet killing machine needed to be capable of more than stalking Soviet subs or tracking the impossibly quiet Chinese diesel-electric subs.

Now the skipper of the *Carter* needed to complete missions with the added difficulty of fighting an enemy like Al Qaeda or ISIS.

Due to the addition of the MMP, the *Carter* frequently had one of the Navy's eight SEAL teams on board, ready to provide a rapid insertion into a crisis situation. All too often, those missions meant providing protection for US cities. And that explained the *Carter's* current assignment—stationed off the shores of Nantucket. In the event anything should happen to the president, they were ready to go.

Book I

Chapter One

Presidents Bush 41, Clinton, and Obama made presidential vacations to New England de rigueur. Presidents Clinton and Obama's favorite spot was Martha's Vineyard, while 41 preferred his family's estate on the Maine coast at Kennebunkport.

And, of course, long before that, JFK made the Kennedy Compound in Hyannis the center of power and glamour for US society.

While other presidents and first ladies had visited Nantucket, it was President Andrew Russell who made the tiny island located thirty miles off the coast of Massachusetts his vacation destination.

Even though many on the island feigned nonchalance or even disdain at the arrival of the first family, there was always an air of excitement when President Russell arrived in Siasconset, or Sconset as the locals called it. After all, he was the president of the United States.

POTUS and his family were just beginning their four-week vacation on Nantucket, which typically commenced in early August and ended after Labor Day.

The home on Low Beach Road in Sconset where the Russell family was staying was the property of a social media CEO. Rather than Baxter Road, which represented old money, the newer money preferred the south side of the village, along Low Beach Road, which afforded

sweeping views of the dunes and scrub oak bordering the Atlantic Ocean.

The White House Communications Agency or WHCA, with the homeowner's approval, had upgraded the systems in the house at an unspecified cost to taxpayers. In addition to the communication upgrades and state-of-the-art security, the Secret Service also added radiation detection and bioprotection systems.

The Secret Service liked the Low Beach Road location because just a few hundred yards down the road was a recently idled Coast Guard station.

LORAN Station Nantucket was once known as "the Power Behind the Pulse." Built at the height of World War II, the LORAN station had been a critical navigation tool for mariners and aviators. Yet the advent of Global Positioning System (GPS) satellite technology eventually rendered LORAN obsolete.

Remaining at the Coast Guard station was a collection of buildings including a single-story structure used as a dormitory as well as a few Cape Cod-style houses for the officers and their families. In addition, the Coast Guard station had a helipad. The US Secret Service took over the entire facility during the presidential hiatus.

Medical facilities on the island of Nantucket were provided by the Cottage Hospital, which, in spite of advances in recent years, lacked a state-of-the-art operating room and as such was not able to meet the needs of a presidential visit.

To remedy that situation, the US Army 9th Mobile Medical Command detached the 254th medical field unit to Nantucket whenever the president visited. The Army field hospital was also situated at the Sconset Coast Guard station.

Another attractive security feature of Nantucket was the bunker built at the height of the Cold War by the Kennedy administration. Decommissioned for many years, the bunker was in the neighborhood known as Tom Nevers, which was located conveniently between Sconset and the Nantucket Air-

port. The bunker had only recently been recommissioned and brought up to today's standards in order to support President Russell's annual visits to Nantucket.

If necessary, the US Secret Service could deliver POTUS and his family to the bunker in less than seven minutes. It was the presence of the bunker and the nearby Coast Guard station and the fact that it was an island that ultimately made Nantucket an acceptable choice in the eyes of the Secret Service for protecting POTUS.

The call sign the Secret Service assigned to the president was Monsignor, a nod to his Catholic faith and his beloved uncle, who was a monsignor in the Brooklyn Diocese. Keeping with tradition, the call signs for the first lady as well their children would all begin with the letter *M*, modeled on the president's.

Kennedy Russell's call sign was Mendham, after the town where she grew up in New Jersey. The children's were Missy for Katie and Minecraft for Andrew, given his devotion to the video game.

Change was something not embraced on ACK, as the island was known, referring to its airport code. Nantucket had some of the strictest zoning laws in the country, and its Historic District Commission, the HDC, wielded veto power over all exterior design on the island. It was well-known that the HDC infuriated builders and masters of the universe alike with their unrelenting enforcement of design appropriateness.

However, while Nantucketers reveled in resisting change, even Nantucket couldn't resist the gravitational pull of the iPhone. So it wasn't surprising when Nantucket, after epic battles and endless debates, eventually erected three microwave towers.

The first tower went up at Eel Point—an area that had become the hot location for new development on the island. The second cell tower was located in town, disguised in the

steeple of the Unitarian Universalist Church on Orange Street. And the third cell tower was located in the center of the island, near the ACK airport. Three towers notwithstanding, cellular service on the island was spotty, especially outside of town.



President Russell was the fourth US president to graduate from a military academy.

Ulysses S. Grant and Dwight D. Eisenhower graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point, whereas Jimmy Carter and Andrew Russell graduated from the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland.

Furthermore, President Russell was only the second naval aviator to become president. The first, of course, was George H. W. Bush, who famously flew TBF Avengers in World War II.

Being a naval aviator often defines a person, and to a large extent it defined Andrew Russell. His competitiveness, his self-confidence, the way he carried himself—these traits were all by-products of his fighter pilot core.

During his Navy career President Russell flew off three carriers – the USS *George Washington* (CVN-73), USS *John C. Stennis* (CVN-74) and the USS *Harry S. Truman* (CVN-75). When Russell “*fleeted up*” he flew with fighter squadrons VF-143, VFA-41, and VFA-32. He began flying the F-14B Tomcat with VF-143, *the Pukin Dogs*, off the *Washington*. He later transitioned to the F/A-18 Hornet with the *Black Aces* (VFA-41). After serving in VFA-41, he was selected for fighter command and then served as XO and CO of VFA-32, the *Swordsmen*.

When he first met his future wife, Kennedy was a marketing director at a New York City Internet company. He was a Navy F/A-18 fighter pilot—and the embodiment of a *Swordsmen*.

It was 2003 when newly promoted Commander Andrew “Rudy” Russell and his fellow pilots were in New York City for Fleet Week and found their way to Tortilla Flats, the legendary bar on West Twelfth Street in the West Village.

The Navy encouraged its personnel to wear their uniforms during Fleet Week. So it wasn’t really fair to the other male patrons when Russell and his squadron mates entered the bar. Kennedy’s friend Harper took one look at them, then turned and said, “Ken, look what just walked in.”

Andrew Russell and his fellow naval aviators surveyed the bar like they did everywhere they entered. It wasn’t long before Russell and his fellow fliers had Kennedy and her friends on their radar.

Kennedy sauntered over to the bar. It didn’t take long.

“Excuse me, ma’am,” said Andrew Russell. She cringed when she heard the “ma’am.”

“Ma’am’? Are you talking to me?” she asked.

“Well, I guess I have to call you ma’am because I don’t know your name,” said Commander Russell.

Noting the gold wings on his uniform, she replied, “Fly-boy, you’re going to need a better line than that in this city.”

“See, that’s just it,” complained Russell. “My squadron mates and I don’t know a lot about Manhattan,” he said, flashing his smile.

Of course, that was totally ridiculous because he clearly had a New York accent, but she was willing to play along.

“Isn’t that what the USO is for?” replied Kennedy.

“Sure, the USO is fine for getting Broadway tickets and MetroCards, but my friends and I would like to meet some real New Yorkers,” he said, adding quickly, “You know, the Navy encourages us to do that. It’s good for morale.”

“Whose, yours?” shot back Kennedy.

In addition to her looks, Andrew Russell was attracted to her quick wit.

“Well, sailor, good luck on your mission.” She smiled and turned to rejoin her friends.

Andrew Russell looked over at his fellow fliers, who were laughing at Kennedy’s brush-off.

Just then one of the bartenders yelled, “Do we have any birthdays?” A roar went up around the bar.

At Kennedy’s table it was, in fact, Harper’s birthday.

As is the custom at Tortilla Flats, all the birthday celebrants line up as a waiter brings each a sixteen-ounce can of beer.

Not wanting to miss out on the fun, Russell’s wingman joined the birthday line, even though his birthday wasn’t for months.

The crowd clapped and hollered as each participant chugged their beer.

The Navy pilot easily downed his can and then turned to watch Harper begin her turn.

Halfway through, Harper had slowed considerably. Russell’s squadron mate noticed her dilemma and offered to finish it for her.

As the aviator drained Harper’s remaining beer, one of the Flats bartenders, who are well known for playing music that fits the moment, put Berlin’s “Take My Breath Away” on the bar’s sound system.

As the music played, Russell’s and Kennedy’s eyes met. Not breaking eye contact, the Navy pilot re-approached, this time simply saying, “I’m Andrew Russell.”

“Nice to meet you, Andrew, I’m Kennedy Preston.”

Their romance was a peripatetic affair—a year later they were married in a small ceremony on Coronado Island in San Diego with his squadron mates in attendance. Russell’s uncle officiated at the wedding.

Soon after getting married, Russell finished his command tour and retired at fifteen years of service. After leaving the Navy he became the congressman for New York’s Eleventh

Congressional District in Brooklyn. Andrew Russell had grown up the third of four children in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, a well-to-do enclave of tree-lined streets with a view of Manhattan and New York Harbor.

He was mentored and encouraged to run for office by Anthony Faris, the powerful senator from Wyoming. Russell had met Faris, the ranking member on the Senate Armed Services Committee, during an assignment at the Pentagon.

Russell's persona was shaped not only by his career as a Navy pilot and his upbringing in Brooklyn, but also by his twelve years of Catholic school preceding his appointment to the Naval Academy.

It was these three factors that had the biggest impact on defining the person Russell had become: Brooklyn born, which meant he had the typical New Yorker scrappiness; trained as a Navy pilot, meaning he was ultracompetitive; and Catholic, which gave him his humanity and spirituality.

His path through Congress was like his naval career—focused and fast. He was decisively elected the forty-sixth president of the United States after twelve years in Congress by a country yearning to be led by someone who embodied Russell's qualities.

He was perhaps best epitomized by his campaign slogan, which usurped the famous Robert Bolt line: "Andrew Russell—A Man for All Seasons." Some on his staff vehemently argued that the use of "A Man" would alienate female voters. But Andrew Russell rarely, if ever, failed to appeal to the female portion of the population. Russell carried 68% of the female vote when he was elected president.

To the White House he brought his young family: a son, Andrew, twelve, and a daughter, Katie, ten.

His wife and young children, along with his Navy career, gave the White House a flavor like that of the Kennedy era's Camelot—albeit now with a slight New York accent.

Chapter Two

Friday in Sconset

One entered Sconset under a canopy of trees, on the main road, which terminated at a small circle at the center of the village. There stood a small collection of businesses—the historic post office, Claudette’s Sandwich Shop, and a bistro named Sconset Café, which was well-known for three things: its exceptional cuisine, its BYOB policy (the Sconset liquor store was next door), and its policy of frowning on children in the restaurant. Also located in the village was Sconset Real Estate.

Ensnconced in the real estate office, catching up on paperwork, Cassandra Wilson called to her assistant, in this case a summer college intern, “Becca, make sure all the packets are complete, please.”

“They’re done and I’m getting ready to drop off today’s changeovers.” Becca Stevens was an attractive coed from Boston College who lived with her parents at their vacation place on Shell Street. Cassandra referred to her as ‘Becca from BC.’

“Good.” Cassandra exhaled. “Today won’t be too bad, but tomorrow’s going to be a nightmare, with twenty places turning over. Saturday is always a killer.”

Cassandra liked working for Sconset Real Estate. Her passion was selling multimillion-dollar homes to the wealthy, but her day-to-day job involved the less glamorous, yet lucrative, task of renting homes to families who wished to spend their summer vacation on Nantucket. She was well-known on the island for being the go-to real estate agent for Sconset.

Becca, with her youthful energy and enthusiasm, was immune to the stresses that Cassandra felt. She called out as she grabbed her tote with the four welcome packets, “I’ve got the packets for Broadway, Shell Street, Codfish, and Baxter.”

Cassandra nodded as her iPhone buzzed with a text indicating that one of her rental’s washing machines was broken.

As Becca put her bag over her shoulder and mounted her Vespa, she heard Cassandra on her phone pleading with her handyman, “Harry, I need it fixed now, not tomorrow.”

Becca made her way to her first rental, a cute cottage with dark green shutters on Broadway. She knocked on the door and called, “Anyone home?”

No one answered. She carefully opened the front door and saw that there were several bags in the living room. She guessed the renters had arrived early, dropped off their bags, and then went for a walk around the village.

As she placed the welcome packet on the table, she noticed that one of the pieces of luggage had an Emirates tag, which she noticed having just watched a recent vlog of Casey Neistat’s, the famous YouTube vlogger.

As she turned to leave, she ran into a group of four young men who were approaching the front of the cottage.

As she stepped outside she pulled her Ray-Bans down and smiled. “Oh, hello. I’m Becca with Sconset Real Estate. I just dropped off your welcome packet.”

The four men, who appeared to be of Middle Eastern descent, looked alarmed to see her coming out of the house. The leader of the group tersely said, “Why were you in the house?”

Becca, not used to such an unfriendly demeanor—after all, they were in Sconset on a beautiful Friday in August—replied, “I’m sorry. I just dropped off your welcome packet with all the information you need about the island and the house. If you need anything, just let me know,” she said with a flash of her smile, which had always worked for her in the past.

“We don’t need anything,” said the leader abruptly as he brushed by her.

With the awkward welcome over, Becca headed for her next stop, at a house two blocks over on Shell Street. As she scooted away she had the thought that these guys were not the typical friendly Sconset renters. She didn’t know it, but Becca had just met the four members of the Hijra Al Qaeda terrorist team.



On this Friday, the president had a 10 a.m. tee time at the Sankaty Head Golf Club, located on the edge of Sconset. As was often the case, the president used his round of golf to mix work with leisure. Keeping with that practice, his first nine holes would be with his chief of staff, Sterling Spencer. Then, at the turn, their foursome would be filled out by the CEO of GE and Ben Stiller, a frequent summertime resident of the island, who was a terrible golfer but whose company the president enjoyed.

On the fairway of the par-five fourth hole, the president got to the topic of China. “Sterl, you know we have the UN vote on the Spratly Islands issue coming at us in November.”

“Yes, Mr. President, it is our highest-profile issue for the upcoming G8 meeting as well.”

“Sterl, China is basically constructing man-made islands in the South China Sea, to the concern of all our Asian allies, not to mention the Europeans. Not only that; these islands are lit-

tle more than military bases. It could tip the balance of power in the area.”

“Mr. President, China’s making a power play with the Spratlys, no doubt. But their real goal is larger. China is desperate to be seen the equal of the US as a superpower. Zhang is driven to attain that status.” Spencer was referring to the Chinese president, Wei Zhang.

“Yes, it comes through with every interaction I have with him. He suffers from superpower envy. There are easier ways for Wei to achieve his goals than forcing this Spratly issue, though,” stated the president as he selected his rescue club from his bag to get him out of the short rough two hundred sixty yards from the fourth green.

As the two men prepared for their second shot, Spencer added, “At this point, if China backed away from the Spratlys, they would see it as losing face. And you know how important that is to them.”

The president then concentrated on his second shot which landed sixty yards from the cup. “Yes,” exclaimed the president. “Sterl, in my Navy days that shot would have elicited hoots and hollers from my squadron mates.”

“Mr. President, I am sure the Secret Service would prefer *not* to hear any hoots or hollers coming from me.”

“Even Ben Stiller would have appreciated that shot,” the president said, laughing.

But the president knew Sterling Spencer didn’t have that sort of personality. They had met while they were both congressmen, Spencer being the four-term representative from Colorado.

Though Spencer wasn’t an aviator, the president had chosen him as his chief of staff because his style and skills complemented Russell’s. As a result, they worked well together.

The president continued, “Anyway, the Chinese aren’t the real enemy. Like the Russians, they are too tied to us via trade,

banking, the Internet. The bigger threats are North Korea, Iran, ISIS and Al Qaeda.”

Spencer, who at this point had lost focus on his golf game, replied, “Without a doubt, sir, our biggest threat is from someone with nothing to lose, like the Islamic Front, or that man-child in North Korea, or Iran.”

The president nodded. “And I don’t trust the Saudis either. Never have.”

Over the next couple of holes they discussed domestic issues and the upcoming G8 meetings in Rome.



If a business could be loved, the Sconset Market was. Located in the center of Sconset, the Sconset Market was in many ways not only the center of activity for the village but its heart and soul.

It was Friday, August 11, around noon, when young Andrew Russell entered the Sconset Market with his sister, Katie.

“Katie, what flavor do you want?” he asked.

Katie, who was not one to be rushed, replied, “I have to look first.”

They walked over the well-worn wooden floors to the ice cream cabinet. In spite of \$8 ice cream cones and cereal that cost three times the price on the mainland, everyone, from vacationing CEOs to ten-year-olds, loved the Sconset Market.

The children’s Secret Service detail hovered near the doorway, keeping an eye on the other patrons in the store as well as the staff.

“Mint chocolate chip,” decided Katie. “In a cone,” she added.

“Mom says we should get a cup, not a cone,” retorted Andrew.

After getting their order, they walked outside to sit in the small brick-paved park adjacent to the store. They looked at the old elm they had climbed when they were younger.

Andrew said, "Let's take the footbridge back."

Katie nodded. The footbridge, another Sconset landmark, was a small wooden pedestrian bridge that spanned Gully Road.

As the children got up from their bench, a black van with "Cape Finished Flooring" written on its side pulled into the parking area.

The Secret Service agent accompanying the children noticed that both the driver and the passenger looked Middle Eastern. Profiling is morally questionable, but in this day and age it was a reality and a very effective tool. The agent nodded to her partner as the driver and passenger, both men, got out and entered the Sconset Market.

As the president's children made their way to the footbridge, two agents went with them while the other two agents of the detail lingered at the store.

One of the agents went over to the van and looked in the passenger window while the other agent followed the van's occupants into the store.

As the new arrivals walked down one of the two aisles grabbing some food, the Secret Service agent purposely bumped into one of them.

"Oh, sorry," the agent said.

In his mid-twenties and of slight build, the man didn't say anything; he just nodded.

The agent, wanting to engage, went further, saying, "Are you guys from around here?"

The man just shrugged and said in a low tone, "Just working."

The Secret Service agent stared directly into the man's eyes. His earpiece, his physique, and the bulge under his shirt gave away the fact that he was police, military, or a government agent.

For a few seconds there was a standoff as the two men looked hard at each other. It wasn't a friendly moment.

A few seconds later the Secret Service agent disengaged and left the Sconset Market.

Once outside, he nodded to his partner and they left to catch up with the Russell children.

The other agent said, "I got the plate number."

The lead agent nodded, his sixth sense still tingling, warning him that something about the men in the van was wrong. He was tempted to go back and engage the two again, but without anything concrete to work with, he instead moved on.

Life is all about opportunities—some realized, some missed. As it turns out, the Secret Service agent would have been well served to have put a bullet in each of the men.



During the first family's Nantucket vacation, it was not unusual for Admiral Jacobsen to be accompanied by his wife, Ann, who would often join Andrew and Kennedy Russell in Sconset. Kennedy liked Ann and looked forward to the couples' informal dinners.

In fact, Ann had rented a house in Sconset on King Street for a couple of weeks, which allowed the two families to share their vacation time.

The Jacobsens had three children, ages eight, eleven, and thirteen, who got along well with the Russells' ten- and twelve-year-olds.

Ann and Kennedy would sit either poolside at the Low Beach Road house or on the beach at Sconset or Surfside.

That Friday afternoon, while the president was playing golf, Kennedy and Ann planned a trip with the children to Surfside Beach. While at the beach, Kennedy confided to Ann, "There's a lot to like about being first lady, but I worry more and more about security. Do you know that this year the Secret Service inserted a tracking chip in Andy, me, and the kids?"

Ann looked startled. "A tracking device?"

“Yes, they call it a SPID, and it has some sort of transmitter that they can use to track us.”

“Did it hurt? Is it large?” asked Ann.

“No, it’s tiny. It was like getting a shot, basically. Anyway, I am glad we have them, but I find myself rubbing my shoulder where they inserted it. It’s a constant reminder to me about the threats to my family’s safety. Between you and me, I can’t wait until Andy is out of office so we can resume some sort of normalcy to our lives.”

As Kennedy said that, she looked over and saw her detail of Secret Service agents scanning the beach around them.

“That said,” added Kennedy, “Andrew is doing important work, and I know he is counting on me for my support. And he has it.”

Ann Jacobsen just nodded sympathetically.

Kennedy then changed the subject. “Ann, wouldn’t it be great if Brian got assigned to the Pentagon? Then we could see each other more than just while we’re on Nantucket.”

Ann replied, “Well, Brian has mentioned that to me. His assignment in Norfolk is just about up, so a Pentagon assignment would be the natural next step. If it happens I would appreciate your input on area schools if you have the time.”

Kennedy smiled and came back with, “That would be a pleasure. Everyone in Washington has an agenda, and it would be nice to just have a friend close by.”

They then both got up to cheer the kids riding the waves on Surfside Beach.

Soon after, they started to pack up to return home and prepare for Friday night dinner.



Every night at 6 p.m. when President Russell was in residence—weather permitting—two F/A-18 Super Hornets (call sign Rhinos) would conduct a 2-ship flyby down Sconset Beach as a salute to POTUS.

They would start their run at an altitude rarely much higher than three hundred feet and fly a north-to-south run from the Sankaty Head Lighthouse to Tom Nevers at 350-400 knots.

It never failed to put a smile on the president's face or his children's, not to mention the faces of any guests in attendance.

So low and fast did the F/A-18 Super Hornets fly, they routinely set off car alarms along Codfish Park, located below the bluff in Sconset.

The flyby became a Sconset summer tradition; people would go to the beach or stand with cocktails in hand along Front Street and watch the F/A-18 Super Hornets. This year the mission fell to the pilots of VFA-11 *Red Rippers*, VFA-136 *Knighthawks*, or VFA-211 *Checkmates*, with a big AB painted on their vertical tails, designating them as part of Carrier Air Wing 1 (CVW-1), to conduct these crowd pleasing daily airshows.

While locals were aware of the Hornets, there was additional military assets in the area as well. The US Air Force, which rightfully prided itself on the protection it provided for Air Force One, had also contributed a squadron of F-15C Eagles, sixteen jets in all, to support the president's vacation. They were stationed at the Otis Air National Guard Base on Cape Cod with standing orders to provide a Halo Ready Alert CAP (HRAC) within minutes over the island.

The Army was not to be left out. They had two Apache gunships loaded with Vulcan miniguns and Hellfire missiles sitting on the tarmac at the Nantucket Airport (ACK). Also at the airport were two CH-53E Super Stallion Marine helicopters.

From a military perspective, one could say the tiny island of Nantucket was ready for almost anything. And that was a good thing—because no one could have predicted what was about to happen.

Chapter Three

More on Friday

Kristin McMahon was at her Langley, Virginia, office with her team finishing up their daily update. “Kevin, what’s on the board?” she asked, referring to the global threat board.

Kevin Mannix was her team leader.

“There is some violence in Syria, mounting political pressure on the president of Brazil to resign, unrest in Nigeria over low oil prices, and the president is on Nantucket—where I wish we were.”

“Thank you, everyone. Keep me apprised if anything breaks,” said McMahon as she closed the meeting.

Mannix stayed behind. He was scheduled to give McMahon a debrief on a project he was working on.

“Okay, Kevin, this is about Oasis, correct?” questioned McMahon.

“Correct. As you know, I have been putting together a book on Oasis LLC.” A “book” was NSA parlance for an in-depth analysis.

Up came the first slide in his presentation. “Lauren La Rue is the managing director of Oasis LLC. She has an undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and an MBA from the Stern School of Business at NYU.”

“What made her go to Dubai?” asked McMahon. “She should be working for Goldman Sachs or one of the hedgies.”

“We believe her boss is Sheik Abdul Er Rahman of KSA,” Mannix continued, using the shorthand for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

“Ah, so the plot thickens,” McMahon said. The sheik was high up on their watch list. They didn’t have anything firm on him, but he was under suspicion. It also spoke to Saudi Arabia’s increasing importance for the US.

“The Israelis tell us that Oasis LLC is a cover for the Islamic Front. We don’t have anything definite on that, but you know how accurate the Mossad is on topics like this.”

McMahon just nodded.

After a few more slides and additional explanation, McMahon asked Mannix for his recommendation.

“In a perfect world I would like to make Oasis LLC a class A intelligence priority. For now, I recommend we put them on the CIA Priority List and contact the CIA KSA country head to alert them that we are increasing the profile on Oasis.”

McMahon responded, “Kevin, put the paperwork together for the director’s signature. I’ll be meeting with him on Monday.”



Stu Jackson stood in the control room of the *Carter* studying the navigation charts of Nantucket Sound. As long as the president was in residence on ACK, the *Carter* would be patrolling off the eastern tip of Nantucket in the waters off Sconset, Great Point, and Surfside Beach.

On board the *Carter*, in addition to its standard crew complement of 130 officers and sailors, was a SEAL Delivery Vehicle (SDV) and its team of commandos, referred to as SDVT-2 and based out of Virginia when not on board the *Carter*.

SDVT-2, better known as SEAL Team 2, was led by Lieutenant Commander Knute “Rockne” Burduck.

Standard SEAL teams are typically led by a command structure of a lieutenant with two ensigns and a chief petty officer. In this case, because of the anticipated interaction with the US Secret Service and CIA in conjunction with the president's vacation, the Naval Special Warfare Command in Coronado made the decision to assign Rockne an O-4 lieutenant commander to lead SEAL Team 2 for this op.

That meant Lieutenant Mahoney would be in charge of the tactical aspects of the team, with Lieutenant Commander Burduck focusing on interservice coordination. That was unless any shooting started. There would be no keeping Burduck from participating in a mission if the proverbial shit hit the fan.

Since the president had started vacationing on Nantucket, the Commander, United States Fleet Forces Command, or COMFLTFORCOM, always deployed a carrier battle group to the waters around Nantucket for a round of workups and training at the same time. The admiral's rationale was, "They need to train anyway—so why not have them train off Nantucket?"

As a result, on the Atlantic Ocean side of the island, in addition to the USS *Jimmy Carter* was the aircraft carrier USS *Theodore Roosevelt* and its escort ships, together known officially as Carrier Strike Group 12 (CSG-12).

The USS *Theodore Roosevelt*, CVN-71, was named after Teddy Roosevelt, whose foreign policy was summed up as, "Speak softly, but carry a big stick." Fittingly, the nickname for CVN-71 was "The Big Stick."

Carrier groups rarely, if ever, go to sea with a full four-star admiral on board. Typically they embark with a rear one- or two-star admiral.

However, Admiral Brian "Chain" Jacobsen, an academy classmate of the president's, made it his practice that while President Russell was on Nantucket, he would embark on the *Roosevelt*.

Having COMFLTFORCOM on board the USS *Theodore Roosevelt* was no one's idea of fun, least of all that of the commander of Carrier Strike Group 12, or COMCARGRU-12, Rear Admiral Mark Singer, but it wasn't open to debate.

Chapter Four

Still Friday in Sconset

Of the four homes rented and one home owned in Sconset by Oasis LLC, three were staging homes—meaning these were homes where the Hijra, Amina, and Kiswa team members, eleven trained commandos in all, would stay.

The leader of the three teams was Karim Hamady, a twenty-eight-year-old Saudi. He was intelligent and well trained, with a worldview based in radical Islam.

Karim, the man the Secret Service had run into at the Sconset Market, spoke to his team from the living room of the rented house on Broadway.

Karim instructed them, “Go to the two big houses and make sure all the weapons are ready.” He was referring to the two locations the teams referred to as armory houses. The year before, other teams who had traveled to the island had hidden weapons there.

The team split into two groups of five each and drove to the Baxter Road house and the Hedge Row Road house.

Twenty minutes later, in the Sconset Landscape pickup truck they had purchased for the mission, Karim followed the team to the Baxter Road house to check up on them.

He began with a prayer. “We praise Allah for giving us the strength and means to attack the American infidels.”

At the Baxter house, his team removed vinyl bags hidden in the house the year before, when it was rented by Oasis LLC. The weeks of that year's rental purposely did not coincide with those of the president's holiday.

The Baxter Road house was a good choice because of its quantity of custom woodwork. The panels around the staircase and the built-ins were perfect locations to hide an arsenal of weapons. By installing false bottoms in the window seats and built-ins they were able to hide an assortment of AK-47s, RPGs, smoke grenades, and extra magazines.

The Baxter Road home was located high on the Sconset Bluff. The houses along Baxter Road were owned by powerful blueblood families of generational wealth. Possessing spectacular ocean views, these homes had an Achilles' heel. During the last fifteen years the surf and undertow had waged a war of erosion on the Baxter Road bluff, which was cleaving at an accelerated pace and, as a result, was threatening the stability of many of the homes.

Design and location-wise, the Baxter Road house was a very appealing property to Oasis LLC. It had what amounted to a clerestory on the top of its second floor. Surrounded by windows on all sides, it would function perfectly as a lookout, providing a 360-degree sweep.

The house was owned by John Munson, a Marine and Vietnam vet, and his wife, Carol, a New York City banker, as an investment property.

John was well-known in Sconset and rented a small house on Park Lane. Munson wore many hats, as did many of the people who resided on the island year-round. He tutored children and wrote books, and on the side he bought and sold houses.

Over the years he had settled into the comfortable rhythms of Sconset. But the old joke still applied—there is no such thing as an ex-Marine.

Once Karim was satisfied with the progress of the Baxter house team, he left for the other armory house on Hedge Row.

The Hedge Row house, located on the other side of the village near Low Beach Road, had been purchased by Oasis LLC via a Bermuda shell company eighteen months ago. At Hedge Row, Karim conducted the same ritual, including the prayer to Allah.



At the NSA, Kevin Mannix had just returned from his noon-time workout. He settled in front of his five screens, which were arranged in a two-over-three configuration. Mannix still had Oasis LLC on his mind from his earlier discussion with McMahan. Using sophisticated and proprietary software, he was now mining transactions that Oasis had completed via the international SWIFT wire transfer system.

Those transactions were then linked to various accounts and scanned for any relationship to known terrorist organizations or individuals.

A family tree would then be created that showed entities that were doing business with Oasis LLC. This family tree could be manipulated to show relationships by company, geography, and time frame.

The analysis wasn't yielding anything new or actionable, but Mannix continued to stare at his screens, tapping his mouse and moving from one view to the next. On the wall were three fifty-inch flat-screens showing CNN, Fox News, and the BBC. (The people at MSNBC would be livid to know they had been replaced by the BBC on the screens at the NSA, but the NSA liked the international perspective the BBC provided.)

The CNN broadcast, with closed captioning enabled, was showing a clip of the Russell family vacationing on Nantucket. Mannix was looking at the CNN broadcast—had he expanded the view on his computer screen, it would have shown that

Oasis LLC had rented several homes on Nantucket over the last three years and had also purchased one via a shell company. The Oasis rentals had never been during the same weeks as the president's visit—never, that is, until this year.



It was now early afternoon and Lauren La Rue had just finished making the fifteen SWIFT transfers for US\$1 million each through the sheik's Deutsche Bank account. The payments went to a list of international banks, including Emirates Bank NBD, HSBC, BNP Paribas, Sumitomo, Société Générale, and Royal Bank of Scotland. As she logged off the banking system, she received a WhatsApp text message.

The text read, "Everything appears to be in place for your friend's holiday. Please consider visiting us soon though."

The message, she believed, was referring to the impending operation on Nantucket. She replied, "I would love to but work won't allow it."

A second later came the response: "You are working too much and need to take a break—soon."

On the other side of the world, the members of the Hira, Amina, and Kiswa teams were also receiving texts, informing them that their money had been deposited to their individual accounts. That money would be moved to two more accounts in the coming days, making the electronic footprints harder to trace.

Acts of terrorism were always said to be done in the name of Allah. Back in 2001, that might have been the case, but today, despite the cover of religious zealotry, most terror work was done for one reason—cold cash. No one wanted to admit it, but money was the motivating factor in many of the terror attacks that had occurred in recent times. That was why cyber sleuthing was one of the areas of greatest investment at the

NSA. Tracking the money was one of the best ways to track down potential terrorists.

As the Oasis money transfers were completed, a red icon started to blink on Kevin Mannix's bank-monitor screen, indicating an alert. Oasis LLC had just transferred fifteen "sticks," or fifteen individual \$1 million payments, to private accounts.

The sum was not the tell—Oasis LLC regularly moved hundreds of millions of dollars in transactions. What generated the flag was the short succession of time during which Oasis had made the fifteen equal payments.

Kevin's eyes fixed on the blinking icon. He clicked on it, and opened a list of the fifteen transfers. He spent the next thirty minutes trying to identify and map the owners of the fifteen accounts—he could confirm only nine. He ran their names with a click of the mouse against every known terrorist database. Knowing this would take a couple of minutes, he walked off some nervous energy and went to the restroom.

Upon his return, his eyes widened—three of the account holders got positive hits in the terrorist database. With that intel in hand, he lifted the handset, pressed a button, and said, "Kristin, I need to see you at once."

A minute later he was in McMahon's office. "What's up?" she asked.

"We just picked up three sticks transferred to three known individuals on the Priority One terrorist list," said Mannix.

"Do we know the location of the terrorists who received the funds?"

"Not yet, but the transfers originated with Oasis," replied Mannix.

McMahon called out to her assistant, "I need to speak with the director, priority."

Before Mannix left McMahon's office, he told her he wanted to elevate the surveillance on Oasis and La Rue to a Priority One status, something he had held off recommending earlier in the day.

McMahon thought about it for a second, then nodded, saying, “Call Wayne Macklem at CIA. He will get you some in-country eyes.”

When Mannix got back to his desk, he called the NSA’s liaison at the CIA. Mannix and Macklem knew each other, which made the call easy and to the point.

“Wayne, Kevin Mannix. How’s it going?” opened Mannix.

“Hey, Kevin, what’s up?”

“Listen, we’re calling to get some eyes on someone in-country.”

“Sure, what’s the rundown?”

“We have a high-value target in Dubai, an American woman—Lauren La Rue. She runs a front called Oasis LLC. We picked up some money transfers that got hits in the terrorist database.”

“How much money are we talking about?”

“She moved \$1 million to fifteen different accounts—three of them got hits on the P-One list.”

“Sounds like Al Qaeda is getting ready to commence an operation. Do we know the location of the three?”

“Not yet. I’ve been following Oasis LLC for a long time and I’m pretty sure it’s a cover for the Islamic Front.”

“Kevin, what do you need from the CIA?”

“We are requesting the CIA make La Rue and Oasis LLC in Dubai a Priority One intercept. We want the CIA to start a tail on her. We may want to pick her up in a hurry if this thing develops.”

“A snatch and grab on La Rue in Dubai, copy.” Wayne Macklem then hung up.

Macklem sent an encrypted priority message to the CIA’s UAE country chief requesting they put one of their best in-country assets on the job—trusted undercover agent Aziz Mahmood. The request went further, specifying that Mahmood should locate and follow La Rue but not pick her up.

Chapter Five

Friday Evening

Dale Carmichael was stationed in Beijing, China, where he worked for the CIA. A career agent with expertise in Asia and China in particular, he was a graduate of Manhattan College.

Carmichael was viewed as a senior operative for the US in China, having been stationed there for more than seven years. Dale was fluent in Mandarin, which was a sine qua non for being successful in China.

Over his years in the country he had met many of the ministers of the various government departments. Dale had also met many of his Chinese counterparts, who represented the Ministry of State Security, or MSS, China's equivalent to the CIA.

The MSS's primary mission was purported to be the collection and analysis of foreign intelligence—simply put, they were spies.

One such MSS agent was Amy Lu, an attractive, smart, and dangerous Chinese national.

Carmichael, like most agents, was an adrenaline junkie and liked to live on the edge, and that meant taking risks. It was not beyond Carmichael, who was a thirty-eight-year-old bachelor, to sleep with an MSS agent if he found her attractive. This, of course, was a clear violation of CIA policies, but agents like Carmichael

were hard to come by. As a result, his superiors tended to look the other way at his venial indiscretions.

And that is how Dale Carmichael found himself in bed with MSS agent Amy Lu this Friday evening in his Beijing apartment. Chinese women of a certain education and sophistication enjoyed being romanced by US men because of their physicality and their superior lovemaking.

Both Amy and Dale knew they were using each other for their individual pleasure and professional advantage, but that didn't mean they didn't enjoy each other's company—they did. After a rather rigorous session, Amy asked, "Dale, how much longer do you expect to be stationed in China?"

"There hasn't been any talk of a transfer. You know I like it here, and I certainly am not an office type. Like you, I want to be in the field."

Amy listened and said something that took Carmichael by surprise. "I was just wondering if there is a future for us."

Carmichael was taken aback at seeing a side of Amy that she had never shared before.

Unsure how to respond, he said, "Well, we enjoy each other's company. Why don't we just see how our relationship develops?"

Amy didn't look thrilled with that response. But she snuggled closer to Dale and drifted off for a short post-workout nap.

A few hours later, Amy awoke and nudged Carmichael out of his sleep.

"Wake up, sleepyhead. How about something to eat?"

A short time later, as they sat at his kitchen table eating a light breakfast, she brought up work.

"By the way, we have been picking up some chatter between Al Qaeda cells indicating that Nantucket might be an upcoming target for an attack."

Like everyone, Carmichael knew President Russell spent August on Nantucket. Putting down his chopsticks, he asked,

“Just how good is your intel, Amy?”

“How good is it usually?” she replied flatly.

Dale knew it was almost always one hundred percent right and that she wouldn't be sharing this with him unless it was cleared at very high levels within the Chinese government.

“Details. Come on, Amy, I need some details.”

“We have an unusual amount of traffic coming from suspected Al Qaeda cells. In addition, we have noticed a recent increase in fund transfers from known businesses that are fronts for Al Qaeda. I would say that there is *a clear and present danger* mounting, and all indications point to Nantucket as the target.”

Amy then stood up and, taking her dishes to the sink, said she needed to take a quick shower and get back to her apartment before flying the following morning to Sanya.

Carmichael sat at the kitchen table processing the data he had just received. Sanya was the location of the Chinese Yulin submarine base. It was China's equivalent of Groton, Connecticut—the center of the US Navy's submarine force. In addition, the Nantucket data was red-hot.

Why is Amy going to the sub base? he wondered. Admiring her lithe body as she moved past him, he grabbed her and pulled her back down onto his lap.

“Easy, Romeo, I've got to get home to get ready for my flight,” lilted Lu.

Carmichael thought about protesting but knew Amy had to leave, plus he wanted to report the Nantucket intel to Langley ASAP and see if anything unusual was happening at Sanya. He let her go with a smile and a slap on her rear, which earned him a lusty smile in return.



Admiral Jacobsen called the captain of the USS *Theodore Roosevelt*. “CO, ready a Seahawk, I'm going to Sconset.”

The captain got the wheels in motion to ferry COMFLTFORCOM on the short trip to the Sconset Coast Guard station's helipad.

This evening the admiral had been invited to join the president along with his Chief of Staff for dinner at the Summer House, the classic Sconset restaurant, just three-quarters of a mile from POTUS's Low Beach Road digs.

On occasion Jacobsen would bring along the CO of the Roosevelt, Captain Tom Fraser, since Fraser had flown with the president back when he was the CO of VFA-32 on the USS *Harry S. Truman*.

Then commander Russell took a liking to Lieutenant (junior grade) Fraser, who was on his first deployment. However, the fact that Fraser was a personal friend of POTUS's had no bearing on Fraser's career. Fraser was now high on the promotion list to get his first star and eventually command a carrier group of his own, based on his merits, not his circle of friends.

Tonight's diners were just POTUS, Sterling Spencer, and Admiral Brian "Chain" Jacobsen. Over dinner at the Summer House, the president asked Admiral Jacobsen, "Brian, what do you think about this Spratly Islands situation?" The issue was a high priority for him, given the current tensions between the United States and China.

The president was referring to a group of islands, more aptly a collection of reefs, that China had staked a claim over the objections of many of the countries in the region.

"Mr. President, it's a clear act of aggression. As you know, we have a carrier based out of Japan, but given this Spratly business we are going to have to deploy another forward-based carrier either out of the Japan or somewhere nearby. It's going to stretch us thin, sir."

Sterling Spencer said, "Admiral, under strict confidence, we are in discussions with the Philippines about re-opening and expanding our naval facility in Subic Bay. In addition, we

are considering creating a new major base in Vietnam. Having both Subic and a new base in Vietnam would provide us the necessary presence in the region to respond to the Spratly Islands issue.”

“You know, Chain,” said the president using the Admiral’s callsign as aviators often did even after they retired, “naval aviation has no better supporter than me, but at \$14 billion per deck, these carriers are getting expensive. What do you think if we were to station a couple Zumwalt destroyers permanently out of Subic?”

Jacobson wasn’t sure if the president was baiting him with the question or if he really thought the new Zumwalt destroyers might be the best solution to the Spratly situation. This was one of those subtle—but crucial—dialogues with the leader of the free world that could leave an indelible imprint on one’s career. Everyone thought these dinners with the president were strictly social—but they weren’t.

“Mr. President, a pair of Zumwalts is certainly a viable solution, but given the Spratly situation, the carriers give us a more flexible deterrent.”

Spencer added, “Many on the Senate Armed Services Committee are impressed with the capabilities of the Zumwalts.”

Jacobson finished strong. “Fight power with power. In my opinion, sir, we will need another carrier in the South China Sea.”

The president thought about Jacobsen’s answer and then said, “Chain, what do you think of this wine?” indicating that the policy discussion was over for now.

The president, always the gracious host, would entertain his guests, often quoting Yogi Berra. Russell would adapt Yogi’s line about how he wanted his pizza cut to ordering cake for dessert, quipping, “You’d better cut it in fours. I don’t think I can eat six pieces.”

Once dessert was finished Russell would then work the main dining room at the Summer House, stopping at every

table, which in the age of the iPhone inevitably meant taking a lot of selfies.

More than once, though, the president's staff heard him say, "You know, Derek Jeter doesn't allow any camera phones at his place in New York City."

He would go on to describe the basket Jeter purportedly had at the door of his Manhattan penthouse, where everyone had to place their cell phones before entering.

On occasion the president would say to his Secret Service detail chief, Dan Nicols, "Dan, let's put out one of Jeter's baskets tonight," which meant the Secret Service would ban all photos and smartphones. But tonight wasn't one of those nights.



Later that Friday night Cassandra Wilson's assistant, Becca, was at Cru, the new "it" place in town.

Becca's friend Lexi noticed three good-looking guys at the bar.

A few minutes later Becca and Lexi were talking to Josh Wagner and his fellow members of the US Secret Service detail assigned to the POTUS children.

As they talked, Becca told Josh she worked at Sconset Real Estate. Of course the topic of the president came up.

Josh said to Becca, "Well, you know, I can't say anything about that."

"Even a little?" flirted Becca.

"Well, can you keep a secret?" asked Wagner as he leaned close to Becca's ear. "You know, the children . . . they like—ice cream."

Becca, realizing she had just been had, said, "Just for that, you can buy the next round."

It was over her sea breeze that Becca told Josh about the four foreign-looking men at the Broadway house. Because he

was a Secret Service agent, she also mentioned the Emirates luggage tag.

That piqued Wagner's interest as he recalled the run-in he'd had earlier in the day at the Sconset Market.



It was about 11 p.m. and Karim was getting ready to turn in. But before he did he wrote a message to his parents using an encrypted and disappearing-message app called Cyber Dust.

Dearest Father and Mother,
Tomorrow I will make a stand for Allah against our enemies. I am in the United States surrounded by the decadent Americans. I may not speak to you again but I want you to know everything I do, I do in the name of Allah.
A package will arrive at your house soon with instructions. Please follow them and see to it that Amok is taken care of.
Wa-Alaikum-Salaam,
Karim

As midnight approached, armory houses one and two had been prepped with their arsenals of firepower.

The other three homes in Sconset were where the terrorist teams were staying. Eleven men stayed at rented houses on Broadway, Shell Street, and Gully Road in Codfish Park.

The next day, the Hijra and Amina teams would load their weapons into beach and umbrella bags and pile into their recently purchased Land Rover and Ford Explorer. Both vehicles had been bought on the island a month earlier, using cash, by a guest staying at the Wauwinet—the island's world-renowned hotel.

The Hijra and Amina teams would drive down Low Beach Road until they reached the turnoff that led to the beach.

This beach access path was well-known to locals. It was a tricky drive because the sand was so soft. Drivers needed to let the air out of their tires and maintain momentum or they would soon be calling the island's only tow-truck guy, George, for a pullout.

Once on the beach, the Amina and Hijra teams would open the tailgates, put out blankets, set up some fishing poles, stage their bags, and then wait until the appointed time.

Two members of the Hijra team made their way to the Hedge Row house in the Sconset Landscape pickup to wait until the specified time.

The Kiswa team's assignment was to man the Baxter Road house.