

CHAPTER 84

The jet taxied toward a massive hanger at one side of the airport. Two of the F-16s had landed in tandem with them and were now escorting them to the hanger. The other two fighters were flying watch above them.

“Looks like they’re expecting trouble,” commented Cloe.

“Unfortunately, they are trained to expect trouble,” replied the Monsignor. “Now, it’s just more so. We can’t know what information Icar has gotten out of Michael. As we speak, he and his forces may be after us.”

“True,” said Cloe. “Icar certainly identified Robby as some sort of threat. But for Michael, he would have had us thrown off the top of his building.”

“We have to assume he will try to stop us at all costs,” said J.E. “He may view us as one of the last obstacles to his dominion of the planet.”

Fear clasped Cloe’s heart and cold sweat began to trickle down her back as she considered the possibility that the beast had marked them as his final hurdle to his goals.

“My God,” she said. “I don’t think I’ve ever been so scared.”

“Dr. Cloe, God never gives us a problem that we don’t have the answer to,” said Robby. “We just have to see it.”

The massive doors to the hanger began to slide back on motorized tracks. The two fighter jets slowed and stopped on either side of the pathway into the hanger. Cloe could see two military helicopters in the dark chasm of the huge

building. Technicians surrounded them apparently making them ready for the next leg of the trip. The rotors were beginning to twirl. Sky pulled up within twenty yards of the 'copters and braked the executive jet. The engines begin to spool down as he threw open the hatch and lowered the steps.

"Whoosh", came a sound from the mouth of the hanger.

"RPG!" cried J.E. "Everyone off the plane."

People and weapons piled out of the jet as a massive explosion erupted just outside the hanger. Cloe could see one of the Israeli jets burst into pieces and fire. Her face was hot with the force of the flames from the F-16 and shrapnel rained down all around them. Immediately, the other pilot firewalled his throttles and roared across the tarmac searching for flight.

"What's happening?" cried Cloe.

"We're under attack," yelled J.E. "Run for the helicopters."

Several rockets were fired from assailants out of sight at the fleeing F-16. The two overhead jets blasted the entrance to the hanger with cannon fire trying to cover their comrade. Powder, dust and grit filled Cloe's mouth and nose as she watched the Israeli jet try to get airborne.

"BLAM", the jet exploded as it lifted just off the runway. The RPGs had found their target. The jet, approaching it take off speed of one hundred sixty knots, continued on into the air even though it had been ruined by the missile.

Cloe screamed for the fate of the pilots who had saved them and she heard her comrades yell in their anguish. The rotors on the copters spun faster and dust was blown everywhere.

“To the helicopters,” yelled J.E.

Small arms fire came from the mouth of the hanger. The Swiss set up a covering formation and returned the fire. Several attackers fell under the accurate, disciplined fire of the Swiss. One of the Swiss fell. Two of his fellow soldiers grabbed him and ran for a helicopter.

Cloe picked up Robby and ran for the nearest bird. Bully galloped along beside them looking over his shoulder.

“It’s the bad man, Dr. Cloe,” said Robby.

Cloe, Robby, Bully and the remainder of the seven piled on to the first helicopter. The old Curator, surprisingly spry for his age, dove for the deck of the ‘copter. The Monsignor was right behind him but turned, knelt and continued to squeeze off shots from a large bore handgun. Cloe had no idea where he might have kept that weapon.

The Monsignor exhausted his rounds and leaped aboard the ‘copter even as he swapped magazines. The pilot lifted the helicopter off the concrete but did not immediately try to fly the gauntlet staging at the mouth of the hanger. Instead, he hovered the bird about ten feet off the ground and moved to the side of the hanger where the door would provide some shelter from the fusillade of gunfire now inbound.

The pilot turned the ‘copter sideways to the door in the lee of the enclosure as the Monsignor grabbed the handles of the

fifty caliber machine gun mounted in the doorway. He cocked the weapon and sprayed the doorway with a deadly, withering fire. Cloe could see light streaming in through the bullet holes in the metal walls made by the huge bullets. God help anyone who might have thought the metal walls would provide shelter.

Under shield of the onslaught from the Monsignor's covering fire, J.E. and the Swiss sprinted to the other helicopter and piled in. In a second, Cloe cried with pride as she saw J.E. man the fifty in that 'copter and begin to rake the entrance and near walls with the large caliber bullets. *God, what men,* she thought.

"Will we be able to get out?" yelled Zack. "The jet couldn't get away from the missiles. How can we?"

Cloe could hear the pilots talking calmly on their radios. Whatever their fate was to be it would happen shortly.

As the pilots began to spool up the power on their birds, they curiously began to fly on a large circle in the huge hanger. Faster and faster they went.

Cloe heard a deafening roar from outside as the remaining F-16s screamed toward them like eagles diving for their prey. Missiles and bombs rained down from the jets obliterating everything outside the hanger. But such was the skill of the pilots that the hanger itself was not touched.

Cloe heard the launched of numerous RPGs seeking the jets at the same time she heard the jets go to afterburners. As if on a signal the lead helicopter, roared out of the hanger

propelled by the centrifugal force built up inside the hanger. Cloe's helicopter rocketed out not fifteen yards behind the lead bird. As she shot by what remained of the attackers who were frantically trying to reload their missiles, she saw a huge red-headed man behind a military personnel carrier who bore the mantle of leadership. The man was badly scared and looked directly at her with hate in his heart.

The lead helicopter stayed about ten feet off the ground but quickly peeled to the left while Cloe's ride went right. Soon their exit was blocked by other hangers and buildings and they were, for the moment, safe.

The image of the red-headed man burned into Cloe's mind. He had a long red beard and a black head scarf. She had no doubt he was the leader of the men Icar had sent for them.

"My God," she prayed.