

Chapter 9

The Man From Atlantis

In Marineville's currently subterranean control tower, Commander Shore and his daughter watched their monitor screens intently as a dozen hydromic missiles thundered into the clear blue Marineville sky and headed upwards and westwards over the Pacific Ocean.

The Commander spoke softly, "Let's hope this one massive salvo will start, and end, the war in one strike. I guess war with Titan was always on the cards."

"Commander Shore!" Lieutenant Fisher called urgently over the video link, "Commander Shore!"

Shore swung his hover chair around to face the communications panel, "What is it man?" he demanded impatiently.

"The missiles sir - they're off course!"

"Well, correct course Lieutenant. Snap to it!"

"But we can't sir. They just don't respond... Impact zone now south south west six thousand. Area reference four, four, two."

Atlanta looked at her father in horror, "But that's Pacifica! Aphony's city... Marina's people..."

Far out in space a World Space Patrol security officer suddenly awoke to find himself lying on a bunk in Fireball XL1's jail cell. Strong hands grabbed his collar and pulled him up into a sitting position. "Uh... Zodiac... What did you do?"

Steve Zodiac glared angrily, “More to the point Sergeant, what did you do? I want to know everything. Who are these ‘friends’ of yours and when will they get here?”

Mahoney shrugged, “And why would I be wanting to be spoiling the surprise?”

Steve hauled the sergeant to his feet and shoved him roughly back against the wall. “I’ve no patience for your games Mahoney. What have you been setting up?”

Mahoney looked at his watch, “They’ll be here in an hour, maybe less. They said they were taking you to their base for interrogation.”

“Who are ‘they’?”

Mahoney forced a smile, “Oh, you’ve met them before Colonel, so you have; on planet Zofeit.”

Steve knew what that meant. A race of Aquaphibians had ruthlessly slaughtered everyone on the planet, save for two he and his crew had rescued. “So where’s their base?”

“How should I know? I’ve never been there. It’s some planet somewhere that’s all ocean. Listen Zodiac, I can help you. Earth’s had it. You can’t fight these creatures. They are going to wipe out life on Earth, and then pick off other worlds one by one. They have some kind of super weapon that can’t be beat. Be smart Colonel - we can make a deal - you can help us. Be on the winning side.”

Steve’s grip tightened on Mahoney’s collar, “What super weapon?”

Mahoney gasped, “I’m no scientist. It’s some kind of way of fooling around with the way a star puts out energy, something they got from the Zofeits. Side with us Colonel and you’ll be well rewarded.”

“Mahoney, what happened to Doctor Venus? Do you know?”

“Of course I know. They came for her... In the big ships. Took her back to their base for experiments.”

“Experiments?” Steve was horrified, “What experiments?”

Mahoney shrugged, “That I don’t know. That’s all they told me... Experiments. Forget her Colonel. Help me, and you can have your pick of the women left on the colony worlds. I’ll see to it you get your fair share of the spoils...”

Steve had heard enough, He drew his ray gun...

Commander Shore sat in the missile control centre at Marineville. He was studying the readouts on Lieutenant Fisher’s control panel, “You’ve done it Lieutenant! We’ve got some control now.”

“I don’t think we can get any more than this sir. Just basic instruction codes for one missile. Access to everything else is still blocked. We can’t adjust the on-board guidance software at all.”

Shore tapped the screen, “Can we send commands to cause one of those primary hydromic fuses to blow? Would that start a cascade reaction?”

Lieutenant Fisher frowned as he made calculations and double checked the results. “That would work sir. I can rig something to cause a self-destruct.” As he spoke Fisher’s fingers hurriedly keyed in data for transmission. “If we get one missile to explode, it’ll take the rest of them with it.”

“How soon?”

Fisher wiped his brow, “I’ve got it set up sir.” He pointed to a button on the console, “I just have to throw this switch.”

“Good man.” Shore stared at the rapidly changing readouts monitoring the missiles progress towards their target, “We’ll have to detonate those

missiles in the upper atmosphere where the hydromic warheads won't do any harm."

Fisher nodded, "We've got about seven minutes sir."

Atlanta's voice called over the communications link, "Father, the World President is on the videophone."

Commander Shore cursed silently to himself. "Stand by to detonate on my order Fisher." Shore moved his hover chair over to the videophone and activated the screen. "Mr President... Commander Shore here."

"Shore! What the devil is going on? I am speaking from my command HQ. We are tracking your missiles. They are not on course for Titanica!"

"Sir, the guidance systems have been tampered with and their target is now the underwater city of Pacifica. We cannot regain control. I'll have to detonate them in flight."

"No..." The World President fell silent for a moment before continuing, "Do not abort the missile attack. You have launched all of your hydromic missiles for a decisive strike. Those warheads must not be wasted. I don't know how they have been re-directed; but Pacifica is a legitimate secondary target. This will be a crushing blow to the aliens, and likely bring them all to their knees."

"But sir..."

"Commander Shore, you have your orders. I want to see the lair of those treacherous Pacificans wiped off the map!"

The video call terminated. For almost a full minute Commander Shore stared at the blank video screen, deep in thought. Then he steered his chair over to Fisher's control panel. "Lieutenant, call security, have them send a man here on the double."

"Yes sir," Fisher acknowledged, hurrying to the videophone.

Shore reached out and pushed down a control button. There was a soft click. A thousand miles away over the Pacific, there was a deafening explosion.

“Tracking Station to Commander Shore. All twelve hydromic warheads just detonated.”

“Lieutenant Fisher...” Commander Shore said quietly, “I hereby place myself under arrest - for mutiny.”

Colonel Steve Zodiac gazed critically at his reflection in the large mirror in XL1’s lounge. “Not a perfect fit, but I guess it’ll do.” He turned to the Professor, “Do you think I’ll pass as a security officer Matt?”

Matt shrugged as he handed over Mahoney’s peaked cap, “If the cap fits...”

Steve grinned as he pulled the cap down as far as he could.

“I guess you won’t be winning any best dressed officer contests Steve.”

“Okay Matt, when those Aquaphibians get here, I’m Sergeant Mahoney and you and Ninety will be locked up in the space jail.”

“Yeah,” Matt said ruefully, “Like rats in a trap...”

“Trust me Matt. We have to find the Aquaphibians base and put a stop to whatever it is they are up to.”

“I trust you Steve.” Matt smiled, “Always have and always will.”

Some thirty minutes later, Steve was tracking an incoming object on the central monitor. It registered as about two hundred and fifty feet long, a little shorter than Fireball. “That must be our guests...” Steve thought to himself. He activated the ship’s intercom to ensure that Matt and Ninety would hear everything that happened in the control cabin. “I t’ink that’ll be them now,” he remarked casually, as if to himself. No telling what the aliens might be able to detect at this range.

In the space jail Matt chuckled. "Won't be long now Ninety."

"No Professor," Ninety nodded. "Mahoney will be out for at least five hours... I hope that's long enough."

Matt looked down at the sleeping figure dressed in an ill-fitting colonel's uniform. "Just remember now lieutenant, that's Colonel Zodiac... Mahoney is up front and we don't like him much..."

It wasn't long before Steve saw a sleek grey and white spaceship approaching. It looked very fish-like, with large dorsal and ventral fins. He watched as the ship drew nearer. Fireball XL5 still lay a hundred or so yards away suspended in space on free float.

Steve found himself worrying about what had become of Venus. If all went well, these aliens would reveal their base, and if Mahoney was right, Venus would be there... If they were in time... "If... If... Too many ifs." Steve pushed the thoughts aside. He'd made his guesses, made his plans. Now he had to be Sergeant Mahoney. He had to convince these alien creatures that he was their accomplice.

The alien ship drew closer, coming to a halt between the two Fireball ships. Three figures emerged from a point near the nose of the vessel. They began moving towards Fireball XL1 using thruster packs. They carried large rifles in their arms and they appeared to be swimming through space, their legs moving slowly and rhythmically. There was no sign that they wore any kind of space-suit or breathing gear.

"Guess I'd best be going to welcome my three guests..." Steve announced, to no one in particular, as he headed for the ejection room.

Three large ugly Aquaphibians were soon stepping from the ejection chamber, their rifles held in a way that indicated that they meant business.

Steve recognized these aliens and their weapons. He suppressed a shudder. Creatures like these had massacred the civilized world of Zofeit just over a year ago. He forced himself to smile warmly at his 'guests'.

"Top of the morning to you," he greeted enthusiastically, "'Tis Sergeant Mahoney at your service, to be sure."

One of the green-skinned Aquaphibians gestured with a huge clawed hand.

"Will you be wanting to see the prisoners?" Steve asked brightly.

The alien nodded. He wasn't much of a talker, but he obviously understood English.

Steve nodded in return. "Follow me, er, gentlemen."

Steve led the way down the corridors to the space jail, the aliens pausing suspiciously at every twist and turn.

When they reached the cell, Steve stood back as the three fish-men peered inside. His hand rested casually on his belt, very close to his ray gun. "The fat one there is Professor Matic and the kid is Lieutenant Ninety, Space Commander Zero's assistant. I'm sure they'll both be able to tell you a great deal."

One of the Aquaphibians pointed at the prone figure lying on one of the bunks.

"Ah, he's the star prize, so he is. That ugly one on the bunk is Colonel Steve Zodiac. I guess you've heard of him. I'm afraid he put up a bit of a fight, so he did; but I took care of him..." Steve tapped the ray gun on his belt meaningfully, "He's just knocked out. He'll sleep for hours and hours." Steve smirked when Matt and Ninety began hurling abuse. "Shout all you like," he laughed, "you'll soon be singing a different tune."

Apparently satisfied, the aliens turned and walked back the way they had come. Two of the aliens went back to the ejection room, but the third

continued on with Steve following until they arrived in Fireball's control cabin. The alien pointed to the co-pilot's seat.

Steve obediently sat down. "Will you be requiring tea or coffee for this flight?"

Ignoring the remark, the alien sat down at XL1's controls. Steve was astounded to see how expertly it began powering up the ship's propulsion systems.

"Of course," he told himself, "Mahoney must have been spying on the WSP for years..."

Within minutes, all three spaceships were moving off. The alien ship taking the lead, with XL1 and XL5 close behind, now piloted by Aquaphibians.

Steve kept a close eye on the instruments, as the ships rapidly accelerated to space velocity 7. There was no way of figuring out their destination. They were already far into uncharted space. No telling how many habitable worlds there might be out here.

On the western seaboard of the United States, Marineville had resumed its normal above-ground mode of operations. But now the WASP had a new commander, Captain Jacques Jordan of the World Navy, generally referred to in the popular press as 'The Man from Atlantis'.

The Navy captain was finding that his temporary appointment had not been universally welcomed. "Atlanta... Believe me I am sorry about your father." Jordan spread his hands in a gesture of helplessness, "After this is over I will do all I can to help him... but..."

"Thank you Captain Jordan. I know... We have a job to do." Atlanta stifled a sob, "That was what he said just before he... He..."

"Committed mutiny?"

“Oh I hate that word. Father is no traitor! He’s a good man!”

“Easy Atlanta. I don’t write the rules, but your father broke them and...”

“Captain Jordan!” Atlanta interrupted, “I respect you as my new commanding officer. But I don’t wish to discuss my father unless you make it an order.”

“As you wish, Lieutenant.” Jordan replied somewhat stiffly. “To business. I want the four new Stingray class submarines crewed and fully operational within three days. Can we do it?”

Atlanta realised that Jordan was still going out of his way to make the best of a difficult situation for them both. Only six months ago she had seriously considered Jacques Jordan as romantic ‘competition’ for poor Troy. Now Troy was missing in action and her father was in prison...

Jordan frowned as he watched Atlanta checking the records, “I have the feeling that if we do not mobilize these subs swiftly... we will not have the opportunity to do so later.”

“The submarines are all tested and ready for action sir. But some of the crew members have several weeks of training still to complete.”

Jordan nodded, “How many men are fully qualified?”

Five officers have fully qualified sir... but only in simulations.”

“Five is enough. They are to be assigned to Stingray class submarines effective immediately for final shakedown. The remaining crew members will have to learn the hard way — in action.”

“Yes Captain. I’ll have Lieutenant Aston take over my duties here in the control tower.”

“Pardon?”

“I was the fifth officer to qualify, sir.”

Atlanta decided to go straight back to her apartment after her shift ended. She wanted to get a good night's sleep before commencing sea trials in one of the new Stingray class submarines the following day.

She began to prepare a meal for two before realizing that her father was not coming home tonight and she did not know when she would see him again — if ever. She found it hard to accept the events that had led up to this moment.

Atlanta had tried to speak to him on the evening of his arrest but had been denied all access. All she knew was that he had been taken from Marineville by World Security Guards to be imprisoned in an unknown location pending trial by military tribunal.

The day after Sam Shore's arrest World News had announced that World Navy hero Captain Jacques Jordan had been seconded to the WASP as interim Commander in Chief. No reason was given and there had been no mention of Sam Shore's pending trial.

She had called her father's best friend Admiral Jack Denver hoping he could help. He'd promised to try and speak to the WP on Sam's behalf and that was almost a week ago with no further news

The phone rang and jolted Atlanta out of her morbid reverie. She picked up the receiver and heard a familiar voice on the other end of the line.

"Hi Atlanta. How are you holding up my dear?"

"Hi Uncle Jack" said Atlanta "Were you able to speak to the WP about Father?"

"Yes I was." said Denver. "He told me that Sam has been found guilty of treason and that he has been sentenced to life imprisonment on Conva."

“Oh no” gasped Atlanta, trying hard to choke back the tears she felt welling up behind her eyes

“I suppose that’s better than a firing squad” responded Denver bluntly. “I’ve had a lot of meetings with Bandranaik over the years since I was appointed President of the Undersea Research Programme and I’ve always found him a fair and capable leader — but he’s changed. He just would not listen to me when I reminded him that Pacifica’s people have given the URP the utmost co-operation since they were discovered and have constantly proved they are a peace loving race.”

“What can we do to help Father?”

“Leave it with me my dear” said Denver. “I’m going to speak to some of my contacts. I’ll be damned if I’ll let Sam rot away in the Space Pen for the rest of his life”

The next morning, in the Marineville Control Tower Captain Jordan was studying a security report. Intelligence had discovered a coded document apparently cunningly concealed in Marina’s quarters. Although most of the hand written pages had yet to be decoded, they clearly referred to dates and times and some key WASP personnel were named in plain English; Captain Tempest, Commander Shore and Atlanta Shore. Jordan put the report aside thoughtfully. There was a good chance that once deciphered the document would reveal a great deal about what Marina had been up to during her year with the WASP. They sorely needed that information.

Atlanta suddenly burst into the control room, her anger clearly showing on her face, “Why has Marina’s apartment been sealed off by security?”

“Standard security procedures Lieutenant,” Jordan responded icily. “I’m sure you are aware of them.”

“What? I don’t understand.”

“Atlanta, the undersea creature known as Marina is almost certainly a spy.”

“How dare you call Marina a ‘creature!’” Atlanta blazed, “And she’s no spy - how can you say such things?”

“Lieutenant, I am your commanding officer and you will accord me the proper respect!”

“Sir,” Atlanta responded hotly, “Marina is a loyal member of the WASP and she’s demonstrated that loyalty on many occasions...”

“It is commendable that you are so loyal to your WASP colleagues Lieutenant. However, World Intelligence sees things differently, very differently. It would seem that Marina has been accessing the WASP data bases on all aspects of operations.”

“But... Marina has been studying... She wants to be an officer...”

“She is absent without leave — sources indicate she’s gone to Titanica. Has it never occurred to you that Titan assigned his most trusted concubine to spy on us? I had my suspicions from the first time I met the treacherous creature.”

Atlanta suddenly slapped Jordan’s face.

Jordan stiffened, “You are on a charge Lieutenant. You are confined to quarters — as of now!”

In the co-pilot's seat of Fireball XL1, Steve Zodiac was growing restless. It had been over five hours since the aliens had boarded the two patrol ships and they'd headed off into uncharted space. He'd made occasional comments to the Aquaphibian pilot during the journey, more to reassure his friends listening in the jail than anything else. There had been no course changes over the last hour and Steve now had a good idea where they were heading. It was time to make his move.

Reaching over to the side console, the Colonel quickly opened ship to ship communications, "Mahoney to XL5. Top of the morning to you."

Over in Fireball XL5, the Aquaphibian pilot glanced quizzically at the radio, then turned in surprise as behind him the doors slid open and Robert entered the control cabin, ray gun in hand.

Back in XL1, the Aquaphibian sitting next to Steve jerked its head around to face him, its mouth opening wide to expose rows of pointed shark-like teeth.

"Hold it!" Steve ordered, quickly drawing his ray gun, "Don't move!"

Without warning, the creature suddenly sprang at Steve, a massive clawed hand knocking the gun from his hand as it fired, the other reaching for his throat.

Steve flung himself back in his chair and pressed a control button as he lashed out with a booted foot. The Aquaphibian was sent flying across the cabin and it crashed into a support girder.

"How do you like zero-G?"

Steve clung to the control console as he armed and fired an interceptor. The missile sped from the nose of Fireball XL1 and blasted the alien escort ship into a thousand fragments.

The Aquaphibian was carefully moving back towards its rifle which still lay beside the pilot's seat.

Bracing his feet against the back of the co-pilot's seat, Steve pushed hard, sending himself soaring across the control cabin towards the closed doors.

He hoped he'd timed this right. If not the doors wouldn't be open by the time he reached them.

The Aquaphibian grabbed its rifle and fired a cloud of poisonous gas just as Steve was disappearing through the opened doors.

Lieutenant Atlanta Shore was still angry as she walked back to her Marineville apartment, but she was already cooling down fast. She'd struck her commanding officer. He deserved it certainly, but she doubted a court martial would see things the same way. Still, she told herself very firmly, he definitely did deserve it.

As she walked along the road Atlanta became aware of a familiar, vaguely fishy odour. Was it Marina?

Atlanta looked about her. Her orders were to go to her quarters but... had Marina returned? There was a small wooded area beside the road. "Marina?" she called hesitantly as she pushed through the branches and undergrowth. Suddenly, Atlanta stumbled and almost fell. Lying at her feet was the body of a WASP security guard. She quickly knelt to examine the man — he was unconscious.

A sudden movement caught her eye, and as she looked up she saw someone running across the road towards a small blockhouse. "Stop!" Atlanta shouted, but the fleeing figure quickly disappeared inside the building. Atlanta wanted to summon help but there was no sign of the guard's radio. She quickly tugged the gun from his holster and, scrambling back to the road, she ran to the blockhouse.

The blockhouse doors had been broken open. Atlanta stepped inside warily. The telephone had been ripped from the wall and the passenger lift was heading down to the submarine pens. She dashed into the large service elevator and slammed her palm down on the button for emergency descent. The elevator plummeted downwards, Atlanta clinging tightly to one of the grab handles on the wall. Moments later the elevator began to slow and jolted to a stop. The large doors hissed open.

As she emerged from the elevator Atlanta was horrified to see a green-skinned Aquaphibian clubbing a technician with a rifle. She raised her gun to fire at the attacker, but quickly changed her mind. There were dozens of

fuel tanks around. If she could only get to a radio, alert security. But there was no time, her quarry was pulling open the door to Pen 5.

“He’s after Swordfish!” she realized.

Atlanta made a dash for the open pen door.

“Hold it! I have you covered,” she yelled as the Aquaphibian began to open Swordfish’s upper hatch. The creature turned its head to look down at her, as a vicious blow struck her on the back of the head. She fell to the ground, out cold.

“Nice work!” called the fish-man as it hurried back to join its accomplice, a man dressed in WASP overalls.

“Shall I finish her off?” the man asked.

The fish-man shook his ugly head, “No need for that; she only saw me. I guess one more witness won’t hurt.” the creature casually turned Atlanta over with a large webbed foot. “Wait a minute. This is Atlanta Shore, the Commander’s daughter. I’ve got an idea. Help me get her aboard and let’s get out of here.”

A few minutes later Swordfish was speeding down the long tunnel leading to the sea. A sting missile made short work of the Ocean Door and the submarine was sea-borne.

Zodiac thudded heavily to the deck of XLI's jetmobile bay as Junior's gravity was suddenly restored. He needed a ray gun and fast. Getting hastily to his feet Steve hurried over to where two jetmobiles were parked.

Behind him, the airlock doors slid open and black smoke began pouring into the bay.

Steve reached the jetmobiles but to his dismay he realised that they were not armed. The smoke was filling the room now and Steve could barely see.

He managed to take an oxygen pill from a pocket and quickly swallowed it. It was no use. The gas was still making him choke. He covered his mouth and nose with his hands as his senses reeled. He knew he was going to pass out, probably for good.

The Aquaphibian stepped into the doorway, its head darting from side to side as it searched for its prey.

Behind a jetmobile Steve was weakly reaching up to the handlebars. He desperately pressed a control stud. For a long moment nothing seemed to happen. Then he felt the air around him begin to move. Grabbing the jetmobile with both hands he held on as tightly as he could.

There was a sudden loud shrieking of air as the jetmobile bay roof hatch opened. The choking smoke, together with the Aquaphibian, made a very rapid exit into outer space.

In the now eerily quiet jetmobile bay Steve slumped groggily to the deck and almost immediately passed out.

Titan, mighty ruler of the undersea city of Titanica, stood gazing through an oval window, looking out into his deep watery realm. He was disturbed by the events of the past few days. He was uncertain of his next move. He needed counsel; wise counsel. But where was Teufel, the fish god? Why would he abandon Titan at a time of such great need? Had Teufel turned his face from him? Someone would pay dearly for causing Titan to fall from favour, very dearly indeed.

Titan turned and glowered as two Aquaphibian guards entered and flung Surface Agent X2-Zero unceremoniously to the palace floor. He sprawled at the undersea ruler's feet, not daring to meet Titan's eyes, "You... You summoned me O Mighty Titan?"

At a sign from Titan the guards stepped back a few paces, levelling their rifles at the hapless agent. "You have one marine minute to explain your failure," Titan snapped.

"Your... Your Majesty. The Terraineans were able to detonate the missiles by remote control."

"Fool! Why did you allow this to happen?"

"I... I... That is..."

"Enough!" Titan bellowed. He gestured to his guards, "Take him to the shark pens!"

But O Wise One... I have urgent news."

Titan raised a hand, the two Aquaphibians halted. "News?"

Yes, O Mighty One. I have been monitoring Terrainean communications. Causing the destruction of the missiles was your master stroke."

"My master stroke? Explain!"

"Your Majesty, Commander Shore has been arrested for treason because of his failure to destroy Pacifica."

"Indeed?" Titan frowned thoughtfully, "Continue."

"The Terrainean ruler believes that Aphony is in league with mighty Titanica. He has dissolved all diplomatic links with Pacifica. The failed missile attack has been quietened down in secrecy to prevent embarrassment and humiliation for the surface ruler."

"Wait..." Titan commanded as he stepped up to his elevated throne. He sat there, deep in thought, his chin resting on his clasped hands. After a few moments he smiled with grim satisfaction.

"Get up off the floor, idiot!" Titan commanded. "So, I have saved the peaceful city of Pacifica from certain destruction at the hands of the evil

Terraineans.” Titan stood, gesturing with his right hand, “I have reached out and saved my allies in their darkest hour! Shore is clearly but a scapegoat for the Terrainean failure. I, mighty Titan, destroyed the hydromic missiles!”

Titan sat back down on his throne, leaning forward to gaze down at his minion. “X2-Zero, your life is spared... For the time being. You will summon Aphony to Titanica immediately, in order that he pay homage to his powerful ally. Then Aphony will gather together his friends in other cities and we will unite all of the undersea peoples to a mutual goal — to crush the accursed surface dwellers!”

Atlanta gradually became aware of a noxious fishy smell, and a throbbing pain in her head. She opened her eyes and suddenly jerked back her head as she saw a hideous green face, only inches from her own. She tried to move, but soon realized that ropes had been used to tie her tightly to Swordfish’s pilot’s seat. Something had also been tied around her mouth.

The creature stepped back. Its green skin and bulbous eyes — together with the smell — left no doubt in her mind that this was one of Titan’s allies. It continued to stare at her intently for a moment, and then spoke in perfect English, “She just woke up; too bad.”

Atlanta felt hands resting heavily on the back of her chair. She tried to turn around but the ropes held her fast.

“Well Lieutenant Shore, I bet you are wondering what’s happening, right?” The speaker standing behind her apparently elected to take Atlanta’s stifled utterances as an affirmative, and he continued, “For your information, we’re on the seabed, about five hundred miles or so from the coast. We’re leaving now. You can just relax here while you wait for the hydromic depth charges”.

The fish-man nodded, “Regrettable but necessary I’m afraid,” He tore off the green wig and mask, “Come on Al, time to get picked up.”

“Yeah,” Al laughed and patted Atlanta on the head, “So long little girl. I do hope you like fireworks.”

“Knock it off Al. Sometimes I think you enjoy your work a little too much. Beats me why World Intelligence employs people like you.”

“Who says I shouldn’t enjoy my work? Besides, if you don’t want the dame to suffer you could just blow her head off with your fish-man rifle.”

“Don’t be so dumb, that’d spoil my plan. The WASP will look for bodies in the wreckage. It looks like she’s got a nice body — and it’s better they don’t find holes blasted through it by an Aquaphibian rifle. After all, Atlanta Shore is a traitor, just like her father, another of Titan’s friends.”

Al moved forward to get a better look at Atlanta. Grabbing her hair, he pulled her head around to face him, “Yeah, she’s a real good looker ain’t she?”

Atlanta lashed out with a booted foot, but didn’t manage to connect with her target.

Al laughed and glanced at his watch, “We’ve still got time to get better acquainted...”

Al was roughly pulled away by his colleague, “You should have thought of that earlier, instead of spending the time whining about how she’d got in our way. Come on! Move it! That navy sub out there won’t wait forever.”

A few minutes later, Atlanta watched through Swordfish’s window as two wet-suited figures emerged from the forward hatch. One of them began flashing a light. As she watched, another light flashed from somewhere in the distance. One of the swimmers turned briefly to wave in her direction