

Chapter 1

Wellington Looks Back

The history books describe the terrorists' attacks that affected this whole country on that fateful date of September 11, 2001. That was only the beginning of a reign of fear because this event spawned attacks around the globe. A few years later an attack was made on our basic economic structure by greedy, "White Collar," terrorists whose manipulation of the stock market devastated the country financially which led to a depression that was compared to the "Great Depression" of the nineteen-thirties. Since that time, various factions and organizations have tried to carry off a diverse assortment of schemes to terrorize and conquer the nation. The latest attempt was by an organization known as the NNO, and even though their threat did not use armed weapons or crashing airplanes, their success would have destroyed every concept, idea and value upon which this country was established.

I found myself in the middle of one of the most devious and frightening plots that one might conceive. The NNO almost got away with their plan to destroy our society. That is why I have had nightmares almost every night for the past several months...the kind where something is closing you in... and you make desperate efforts... each one more futile than the last...to break free. Then when I awaken, I realize that my nightmares are only dreams of what almost happened. However, I also realize, we must all be watchful if some of our nightmares are to remain in the realm of sleep. The nightmare that plagues my nightly sleep revolves around the NNO's sinister plot and the events that really happened. It is unthinkable that if they had been successful, nightmare would have become a reality.

My name is Wellington, Francis James Wellington, and I am a small man of little importance in the world of politics or international relations. Because I was an expert in my field, and not well known, I was appointed as a member of the Data Protection Committee at the National Database Center. This committee was established as the result of a Supreme Court Case when certain government agencies wanted complete access and control of all aspects of the NPC, which included the invasion of the public's personal lives. The NPC had become the central hub for all information storage in the country, and the control base served all the needs for society. The public's lives revolved around this center. They depended on it for their very existence, and that made the potential dangers immense.

As I said earlier, my appointment to this committee was only because I was an obscure professor of computer science. They chose me because I had led such a sheltered life. My hands were so clean there was nothing anyone could hold over my head. In other words, I made the perfect watchdog. My job was to make sure databases stayed secure, to investigate any reports of tampering, or violations of security.

A short time after my second anniversary as chairperson of this committee, a sequence of events brought about my introduction to Elizabeth Jewell. The reason for this encounter was ironic since she had been responsible for the very birth of the committee on which I now serve.

Many tales exalting this woman traveled the grapevine. I thought they were merely exaggerations until I became involved with her in a series of events that revolved around a breach of the NDC databases. It did not take long for me to discover that this lady had more spunk than any man I had ever known. I have yet to figure out if the degree in which she and I were involved by accident, or by design. Whichever it was, it threw me into the most fantastic adventure of my life.

Not long after meeting her, I would discover why she was legendary, that she was a very gutsy lady, and just by getting to know her, my life has been enriched. However, I soon learned that she was definitely persistent and one might say, walked on the fringe of being downright stubborn.

That was when I decided that the story she wanted me to help her write was more her message to the world than it could ever be mine. She had insight that had enabled her to recognize the greatest danger before any of us. I, also, realized that this story was hers, and she had to be the one to begin telling the events that first occurred and launched her into the realm of terrorist and espionage. She agreed to begin telling her story as the events unfolded, and she began by describing what happened on that snowy afternoon and evening.

Elizabeth's Story at the Beginning

It was Christmas Eve; I was sitting in front of my plasma screen watching the snowfall on a lovely countryside. The scene carried me back in time to the days of my childhood when I could look out of a real window and watch real snow falling in huge fluffy flakes that turned the wooded countryside into a fairyland. Those were good days, and it was hard to believe they

were gone. It was sad to think that I had to settle for watching such things on a plasma screen. As I watched the snow falling, I realized just how much I missed those days; life had been so wonderful. I had spent most of my life very involved in the act and, like most people; I had taken far too much for granted.

Watching the scene on the monitor brought back bitter-sweet memories of another time long past. I began to daydream, and I could visualize my sons and I out in the snow building that huge six-foot rabbit. The boys insisted that we spend the day playing in the snow because the family plans had changed. That had been the year we got a blizzard for Thanksgiving, and none of the guests could make it for dinner because of the snow. The snow-covered valley was like a fairyland frosted in white, and the small bubbling brook that ran in front of the house only added to a sense of being in a fantasyland. The snow was too enticing for two young boys and a young mother to resist. Breaking the tradition of building a snowman, we decided to build a huge snow-rabbit. The rabbit we built that day was a marvelous creation six-foot creation, and building it had saved the day from being one filled with disappointment, even if the task almost cost us a good taste of frostbite by the time we finished it.

We had such great plans for that Thanksgiving. We had just moved into a new home, and had invited friends and family to come share a big Thanksgiving dinner with us to celebrate the holiday and our new home. Unfortunately, the biggest storm recorded in years dumped about eighteen inches of snow during the night. I had been cooking for days, because I had looked forward to the feast and sharing it with the family. The snowstorm took care of all our celebration plans, and left me with mountains of food. As least, we were going to eat well while we were snowbound. The boys and I...

Suddenly, my daydreaming was interrupted by the chimes of my view-phone. Reluctantly I left the daydream to return to reality, and I forced myself to answer the phone. I was a bit irritated because my reminiscing of a time that was so dear to my heart had been so abruptly disturbed, but I was also puzzled. I could not for the life of me figure out who would call at this time in the afternoon. The children had called earlier to say that they would be arriving late that evening. It most certainly would not be them unless something had happened to delay their arrival. That thought produced a fair bit of anxiety as I walked toward the phone.

When I pushed the answer button, and switched on the screen of the phone, I saw the face of a strange man looking back at me. It was the face of a young man, but there was something about his appearance that reminded me of a detective in a series of movies that I used to watch in the “old” days.

It was the way he wore his clothes that gave him that stereotype look of a plain-clothes cop. He looked to be in his mid-thirties, and for some reason he looked very familiar as if he should be someone she should know but did not. The face had a look about it that let you know immediately that he had already seen, and experienced more than most people experience in a lifetime. In addition, the expression on his face did not give Elizabeth the feeling that he was making a social call, or to merely wish her a Merry Christmas. It looked like trouble. The first thing that crossed my mind was that the Science Center had decided to begin again with the longevity experiments.

That thought caused me to pause before I spoke, or before I flipped the image return switch. Memories of my experiences with the longevity project raced through my mind, and I wondered if that was what this call was about. If it were them, I wondered what they could possibly want now. I had decided a-long-time-ago that if the scientific community had the

slightest notion that I would once again submit to becoming a human guinea pig, then they had another thought coming. I felt I was getting too old for such nonsense, and I had no intention of going along with anymore of their games.

With that thought in mind, Elizabeth flipped on the return image switch and as she did, the silence was broken as the face on the screen spoke: “Elizabeth Jewell, my name is Dustin Scott. I am a special agent with the CIA. We have received an alert from the NDC that concerns your access to the center and your writing activities. It has been reported that you have made an attempt to infiltrate the central database when you recently uploaded a file. I am calling to inform you that you are confined to your living quarters until this matter is cleared up. You are under surveillance, so, do not try to leave.”