

## CHAPTER ONE

Present day, 40,000 feet above the Pacific Ocean:

Ben sat beside Helen with his arm around her shoulder. "Here we are, flying into the unknown. How do you feel about that, my dear?"

"Excited . . . scared . . . puzzled. How about you, Ben?"

"Same as you. I also find it difficult to believe that our home, our friends and Maui are so far behind us. It's really an odd feeling for an ex-pilot who constantly left home and never felt this way. Disconnected, that's how I feel right now."

Nacho reached across the aisle and poked Ben's arm. "Okay, it's time you fill me in on what the heck we're doing. You phoned Justin and me and spit out only the bare facts. He and I are here on faith alone, my man. What's with the fancy jet? What's going on?"

"Right, Nacho, you certainly deserve an explanation," said Ben. "I'll do my best. Here goes."

Helen interrupted. "Sorry to interrupt Ben, but isn't this the most amazing plane?"

"I have to agree with that! Lear Jets are remarkable, and this one is top of the line. The black helicopter that flew us to Hickam field on Oahu was no slouch, either!"

"Ben, my man, you just got way off topic."

Justin returned to his seat after exploring every inch of the superbly appointed aircraft. He was smiling from ear to ear and sipping from a mug of fresh brewed coffee. "What are you guys so deep in conversation about?"

Nacho sighed, grabbed Justin's mug of coffee out of his hand and took a gulp. "Nothing, my man, we were *not* deep in conversation. Ben got way off point about an hour ago when I asked him: what the heck are we doing here?"

Before Ben could reply, Helen asked the steward for a cup of that delicious smelling coffee. Addressing Nacho, she said: "Really Nacho it hasn't been anywhere near an hour."

Quickly Ben began explaining: "It all started when the president phoned and asked us to go on a secret mission - all four of us. How could I refuse him? I knew you guys