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# ROGUE WAVE

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED AS *THE PALMYRA IMPACT*

A NOVEL

BOYD  
MORRISON

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MORRISON

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New York, NY 10020

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First Pocket Books paperback edition December 2010

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Cover design and illustration by Tony Mauro

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

ISBN 978-1-4391-8958-0

ISBN 978-1-4391-8960-3 (ebook)

Previously published in different form as *The Palmyra Impact*.

**BOYD MORRISON** has a Ph.D. in industrial engineering and was formerly employed at NASA, Microsoft's Xbox Games Group, and Thomson-RCA. In 2003, he fulfilled a lifelong dream and became a *Jeopardy!* champion. He is also a professional actor who has appeared in commercials, stage plays, and films. Boyd and his wife live in Seattle.

ISBN 978-1-4391-8958-0



\$5.99 U.S./\$6.99 Can.

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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHORS  
UNIVERSALLY HAIL BOYD MORRISON'S  
NEW THRILLER

THE ARK

*Chosen by the American Booksellers  
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for May 2010*

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coming from Touchstone!

Previously published online as the bestselling eBook *The Palmyra Impact*, Boyd Morrison's heart-pounding realistic and suspense-packed portrayal of a deadly tsunami roars to vivid life in

## ROGUE WAVE

"Opens with a bang—literally—and then takes the reader on a watery thrill ride of terror. This is top-notch suspense, with crisp plotting, believable characters, and well-researched science. A classic disaster novel, up there with the very best. A piece of advice to the reader: don't take this one to the beach. . . ."

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*The Lost Throne*

*Rogue Wave is also available as an eBook*

Other books by Boyd Morrison

*The Ark*



*To Frank and Arden. I'm so glad it's you.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I'd like to thank Dr. Chip McCreery and Dr. Stuart Weinstein at the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center for listening to my wild stories and showing me around the facility. Thanks also to Delores Clark of NOAA for assisting in setting up the tour.

Much appreciation to Dr. David Kriebel, professor of ocean engineering at the Naval Academy, for information about the effects of tsunamis on structures.

Thanks to Ray Lovell at Hawaii State Civil Defense for talking to me about HSCD response procedures in emergencies.

Thanks to pilot Doug Skeem for his advice on helicopters.

Thanks to my good friend Dr. Erik Van Eaton for his medical expertise.

It's great to have a brother who was an Air Force pilot, and I'd like to thank him—retired Lt. Col. Martin Westerfield—for his help with all things military and airborne.

Susan Tunis and Frank Moretti provided invaluable input on this book at an early stage, and Machel Allman and TJ Zecca were readers who gave the book an early boost when I needed it.

This book wouldn't be in your hands if it weren't for the tireless efforts of my agent, Irene Goodman, and my editor, Abby Zidle. I'm grateful for everything they've done.

Finally, thanks to my wife, Randi, for going on this journey with me.

Any errors in science, organizations, or geography, whether intentional or not, are mine alone. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Civilization exists by geologic consent,  
subject to change without notice.

—Will Durant

*Carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero.*  
Seize the day, put no trust in tomorrow.

—Horace

# CHAPTER 1

MEMORIAL DAY

8:41 A.M.

CAPTAIN MICHAEL ROBB OPENED his eyes and found himself lying on the cockpit floor. Heat washed over him as if the airliner had been plunged into a blast furnace, and multiple warning horns blared. Blood trickled from his brow, stinging his eye. For a second he lay there, dazed, wondering what had happened. Then he remembered. The impact.

He had just returned to the cockpit, swearing off coffee for the rest of the trip. It had been his third trip to the lavatory, and the flight from Los Angeles to Sydney wasn't even halfway over. His copilot, Wendy Jacobs, a good twenty years younger than he, had smirked at him but said nothing. He had been about to climb back into his seat when a streak of light flashed by the airliner's starboard wing.

Robb thought it was a lightning strike from the storm they were flying above, but then the plane was thrown sideways, as if batted away by a giant hand. A sonic boom blasted the plane, and he smacked into the bulkhead, his head and shoulder taking most of the blow.

He must have been out for only a few seconds. Though his mind was still fuzzy, his vision quickly came back into focus. Robb sat up and wiped the blood from

## 2 *Boyd Morrison*

his eye. The instrument panel was intact. Jacobs had disengaged the autopilot and grabbed the yoke, which she now fought for control. Robb pulled himself to his feet. He had no idea how badly he was injured, but he was moving. That was enough.

As Robb clambered into his seat, he glanced at the cabin differential pressure gauge. Its needle was pegged at zero. Explosive decompression.

Reflexively, he reached for the mask hanging to his left, years of training taking over. His shoulder protested the motion, and he winced in pain.

"Oxygen masks on, one hundred percent!" he shouted.

Robb pulled the mask over his head, and Jacobs did the same. The masks in the passenger compartment had already dropped automatically. He mentally raced through the possibilities for the blast. A terrorist bomb? Missile attack? Fuel tank explosion? To depressurize that fast, some of the passenger windows must have blown out, maybe an entire door. The aircraft was still flying though, so that meant the fuselage was intact.

With his attention focused on getting the airliner under control, there was no time for Robb to talk to the passengers. The flight attendants would have to deal with them. The best thing he could do for the passengers was to get the plane down to ten thousand feet, where there was breathable air.

He pushed the yoke forward and silenced the decompression horn, but another one continued to wail. The lights for the starboard engines flashed red, meaning both were on fire.

"Pull number three engine T-handle!" Robb barked out. He suppressed the panic edging into his voice.

Jacobs pulled the handle and pressed the button

beneath it, extinguishing the fire. She glanced out the starboard window to make a visual check.

"Fire's out on number three engine! Number four engine is completely gone!"

"Gone?"

"Sheared off from the pylon."

Robb cursed under his breath. His 747-400 was certified to fly with only three engines, but with just the two port engines they'd be lucky to stay in the air.

He turned to Jacobs. Her face was ashen but otherwise professional.

"Issue the distress call," Robb said.

Jacobs nodded, understanding the implications. Even if someone heard the radio call, it would make little difference. The best they could hope for was to report their position in case they had to ditch. She keyed the radio.

"Mayday! Mayday! Mayday! This is TransPac 823. We are going down. We are going down. We've lost both number three and number four engines. Our position is seventy-five miles bearing two four five from Palmyra VOR."

No answer, just static.

"Activate the emergency transponder," Robb said. He knew activating it was a useless procedure. They were beyond the range of any radar units.

"Setting transponder to 7700 in squawk emergency," Jacobs replied.

As their rapid descent took the plane through thirty thousand feet, an unearthly glow bloomed within the cloud cover ten miles to their right. At first the clouds softened it, but then the light pierced them, shooting toward the stratosphere, for a moment brighter than the sun.



"What the hell?" Jacobs said.

A fireball rolled upward in the distinctive mushroom shape Robb had seen in countless photos. He gaped, mesmerized by the sight. Atomic weapons testing in the Pacific had been outlawed for years, and there were no volcanoes in this region of the ocean. What else could have caused such a massive explosion?

Whatever it was, the explanation didn't matter.

"Roll left!" he yelled. Stabilizing the plane should have been his highest priority, but they had to get away from the blast zone.

"Rolling left," came Jacobs's response after only a second's hesitation.

Robb just had to hope that he could ride out the shock wave and find someplace to land. They had passed over the Palmyra Atoll only ten minutes before, but the runway built during World War II had been abandoned decades earlier. Christmas Island, five hundred miles away, had the closest operational runway. Despite all the damage the plane had sustained, it was still flying. They might make it.

"Come on, you bastard!" Robb grunted as he strained at the controls.

The nose of the enormous plane came around slowly. Too slowly.

The blast wave from the explosion caught up with them and slapped at the plane from behind, heaving its tail up. A colossal crack of thunder hammered the aircraft. The windows shattered and wind howled through the cockpit. The number one engine was wrenched from its mounts, shearing half the port wing from the plane and setting the fuel tanks aflame. The plane plummeted like an elevator cut from its cable.

With two engines gone and another shut down, the airliner was mortally wounded. Thinking of the 373 men, women, and children in the plane—people who were his responsibility—Robb didn't give up, but he had no more hope of flying it than one of the passengers. He battled the controls trying to level the plane, but it was a dead stick. Despite his efforts, the plane spun downward in a death spiral. By the time the airliner plunged through the lowest cloud layer, the altimeter read one thousand feet. For the first time in an hour, Robb could see the blue water of the Pacific.

Realizing that their fate was inevitable, Robb let go of the yoke and sat back. He held out his hand to Jacobs, who grasped it tightly with her own. Never much for religion, Robb nonetheless closed his eyes and found himself reciting the Lord's Prayer. He was up to the words "Thy kingdom come" when the plane slammed into the ocean at over five hundred miles per hour.

## CHAPTER 2

8:51 A.M.

THE BROCHURE WAS SLICK and professional, but Kai Tanaka still hated the idea of sending his thirteen-year-old daughter away to a scuba diving camp. He sipped his coffee at the kitchen counter as he scanned the pamphlet and thought about how to let Lani down gently.

She and her best friend, Mia, sat close together at the dinette table, talking over a magazine in low, conspiratorial tones. Then they erupted into shrill screams that dissolved into giggles while they pointed at a glossy photo.

Kai walked over to the table and made as if to get a better look at the magazine. "And what are you guys reading this morning? Is it *Newsweek* or *Car and Driver*?"

Lani quickly flipped the magazine closed. It was *Seventeen*. Mia must have brought it with her. Like most fathers, Kai couldn't help wonder at how fast they were growing up. They were barely teenagers. To him, seventeen was far in the future.

Lani giggled at Mia, and then adopted a mock-serious tone. "We're just doing some research for our trip this morning." Mia nodded in agreement.

"Uh-huh," Kai said dubiously. "*Seventeen* has an article about boogie boarding, does it?"

"Not exactly," Mia said. "But there are some tips about