

REMOTE VIEWER: SHADOW RESCUE

RHONDA ARMBRUST

Static buzzed from the intercom by the door, then a deep, gravelly voice barked, “Begin.” Jazz reclined the cushioned chair while gazing at the bare white walls surrounding her and the darkening shade draped over the lone window. She gathered her waist-length auburn hair, draping it over her chest like a cloak, uncrossed her slender legs at the ankles, and closed her eyes.

The breaths Jazz took became slow and rhythmic as she moved into an alpha brain wave state and her conscious mind stepped aside. She observed without judgment the images drifting across her inner vision. When her skin tingled and a consistent low vibration hummed through her body, the setting she was searching for began to crystalize. Her senses became magnified and colors enhanced as in a rainbow on a sunny day.

Heat rose in waves off the tarmac where gray fighter jets with pointed black noses sat parked in a precise line next to a hangar. A 757 idled on a distant runway. Rows of trees bordering the airbase expanded and contracted with a normally intangible aura. Searching for something distinctive, Jazz spotted letters near the peak of the hangar. She focused on them until the word became clear: *Guardians*.

Jazz brought her awareness back to the drab room, immediately grabbing the pad and pencil from the end table. She felt split between two realities as if waking from a dream, but she wanted to sketch the scene while the information was fresh. After finishing the drawing, she laid back and waited for the ethereal sensations to mellow.

Harvey Boone, from the counterterrorism center of the National Clandestine Service, had discovered Jazz Elliot in a remote-viewing group in Spokane, Washington. She used Extended Remote Viewing and showed a remarkable talent for mentally perceiving undisclosed locations.

Sam Worthington, the Deputy Director of the NCS, refused to believe her accuracy rate was nearly 100 percent, so he continued to grill her. Worthington expressed his reservations, pointing out that she was only 22, and had Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The Deputy Director sent Harvey off with instructions for yet another test.

For three days, Harvey had been going to random computer-generated locations. No one knew where he went. Harvey didn't even know until he arrived. Later, he'd return to the military base, and they'd see if his photos matched Jazz's drawing.

When Jazz felt steady, she walked to the intercom, pressed the button, and announced, “I'm finished.” She slid the paper under the door. What she really meant was: I'm done sketching silly pictures to prove myself.

Harvey had asked her to interview for his team, and she agreed because she wanted to do something rewarding. It wasn't about the money. With her inheritance, she was set for life. They'd have to treat her right, or find someone else for the job.

Jazz peered out the window at the barren grounds, paced the floor, ruminated her shopping list, and meditated. Finally, Harvey returned. He rested his lanky frame against the wall behind her. As

REMOTE VIEWER: SHADOW RESCUE

RHONDA ARMBRUST

he leaned forward, his moist, hot breath wafted flagrantly across her neck. She abruptly brought the back of the chair up, forcing Harvey away while shooting him a scowl that said: if you make another ignorant move, I'll unleash a carnage you'll regret.

Harvey coughed, standing up straight. He handed her the photos he took, including a picture of the hangar with *Guardians* painted above the door. "The NCS conceded," he stated, in his drippy Texas drawl, and gave her a contract to sign.

Jazz couldn't discuss her job with anyone outside the division. According to declassified information, the remote-viewing program ended in 1995, its results discredited. The government never revealed how much they could uncover using remote viewing. China and Russia had programs. The CIA's division remained top-secret, buried within the NCS.

A stoic agent escorted Jazz out of the one-story building in an abandoned military base. A half dozen unkempt barracks sat among huge cottonwoods, their twisted branches reaching as if for company. The misty fog drifting through the trees conjured images of soldiers lost. Jazz shivered, pulling the edges of her sweater tightly around her.

The agent held open the back door of a shiny sedan. She climbed in, and he shut the door, then tapped the roof. The driver took off, snaking through the desolate base. They drove north toward Washington, D.C. and Jazz's hotel. Tomorrow she'd go to Harvey's home in Georgetown and begin a mission as an asset in a clandestine operation.

Jazz leaned forward on the couch in Harvey's home office, running her fingers through a stack of photos on the dark mahogany coffee table. She spread pictures of suspected Chinese assassins next to photos of some of the most influential people in the U.S., a colorful assortment of the rich and famous.

The sizzle of a match broke the silence when Harvey ignited the ball of tobacco in his pipe. Puffs of smoke encircled his balding head, infiltrating his all too obvious comb-over and leaving a chestnut aroma hanging heavily in the air. He was tall, skinny, and awkward, resembling a pubescent boy unaccustomed to his lengthening appendages and his budding libido.

Sam sat on the other side of the room in a cushioned armchair, sweating as usual. He repositioned his frame and removed his eyeglasses, cleaned them with the tail of his shirt, and placed them low on the bridge of his nose.

Jazz picked up a photo of a husky Asian man. He had a tattoo with symbols inside four adjoining squares etched on his rippled arm. His eyes glowered as if he were peering out from hell. If Jazz located the assassins, the CIA could stop them. "I'll focus on this assassin. Will you please put out the pipe? I can't have any sensory distractions," Jazz requested, her voice low.

Harvey dumped the remaining tobacco into an ashtray and put it out with the butt of his pipe. Sam unobtrusively tried to still his bouncing leg.

REMOTE VIEWER: SHADOW RESCUE

RHONDA ARMBRUST

Jazz lay back on the thick leather couch, her head resting on the pillowed arm. She prompted her muscles to relax and visualized the large man. At once, she was transported through time and space, then let go somewhere else.

As if crouched in the shadows, Jazz saw a rusted metal lamp dangling over a table in a shabby, dimly lit structure. The scene unfolded revealing a dozen rough-looking Asian men gathered round the table, their attention centered on a skeletal elderly man with stark black hair.

The old man stood in front of a hazy window held in place by thin wood walls; he was shouting and waving his hands. The hefty Asian with the tattoo sat with his bulky forearms wrapped tightly across his chest, a severe frown creasing his chin. Jazz watched the men, but couldn't understand the old man's angry words.

She turned her attention to the window and abruptly found herself outside the shack. Jazz forced her awareness above the trees. Thick forest stretched endlessly in every direction.

Jazz lay still on the couch, her skin still tingling. She brought the information to her conscious mind, and relayed what she saw. "Several Asian men were listening to an older man who spoke in a foreign language. I couldn't determine their location. They were deep in woods." Harvey's brow furrowed.

"I could view the future, to find out if the targets are alive," Jazz offered, feeling responsible for those faces on the table.

Sam sat sprawled in the chair, his eyes closed. He never said much and when he spoke, he sounded condescending. Jazz suspected he believed remote viewing a misguided fantasy. The "giggle factor," insiders called it.

"Does that work?" Harvey asked.

"In a viewing you tune into the matrix of the universe where time is an illusion."

Jazz first experienced spontaneous remote viewing while falling asleep, in that mysterious place between waking and sleeping. She would observe random settings as if hovering above the action. Common everyday things, like fishermen teasing a youngster who fell into a river, or women gossiping over coffee. This was fun for her and as a carefree child, she didn't over-think it. Until she was 12, and envisioned a car tumbling, headlights circling, bodies flying like rag dolls. A warning she couldn't ignore.

"Something bad might happen tonight!" she cried out.

"Hush, little one," her mother smiled, pulling Jazz to her.

"Please, don't go," she pleaded in tears. "You can't drive tonight."

"We're having dinner with James; it's important. He might become our new business partner."

"Meet him in the morning, just don't leave tonight, please!" Jazz followed her parents out the door, begging them to put off the meeting.

REMOTE VIEWER: SHADOW RESCUE

RHONDA ARMBRUST

Her father bent over to her eye level. “We have to do this, Jasmine. Try not to worry. We’ll be extra careful, okay?”

Jazz stood alone on the driveway as their Subaru disappeared around the corner at the bottom of the hill. She walked dolefully to her bedroom, tautly awaiting her parents’ return as the vision cycled in her mind. When her grandparents entered her room around midnight, she knew it had happened.

She learned her parents had signed a contract with her father’s best friend, creating a partnership. After celebrating, they left the restaurant perched on a cliff above the Spokane River. They drove along the familiar winding road to their home on Mount Spokane. As they rounded a sharp s-curve, a motorcyclist raced toward them in their lane. Her father swerved to avoid hitting him, which caused their car to tip, then tumble 50 feet down an embankment. He died on impact.

Her mother lay in a hospital for a week in severe pain from multiple broken bones and internal injuries. In her final moments, she took Jazz’s hand. With a strained whisper she murmured, “Be strong little one. I’ll watch over you from heaven.” She let out a guttural breath and was gone.

In that moment, Jazz fell to her doom, and had been stuck in a free-fall ever since. Jazz moved in with her grandparents. Her grandfather was old-fashioned and gruff, unable to show any emotion. Her grandmother, so wounded from the loss of her daughter, spent her time playing bridge with friends and ignored Jazz.

The pain was so intense that Jazz shut down, floating in a numb fog for more than a year, drifting with no destination. Then she became wild, experimenting with drugs, distancing herself even further from her grandparents. She didn’t care what happened to her. Severe depression, anxiety, and panic attacks held her captive, and a heavy guilt possessed her like a silent demon. Jazz felt enslaved by anger and betrayed by life, wondering why she’d received a warning she followed in faith, but that changed nothing. She stopped believing in a guiding force, seeing no sign of help on its way.

At 15, she ran away. She hid in a ramshackle house full of drug-induced comrades. Jazz never touched heroin, but enough weed and downers squelched the nightmares. She sought freedom only to be entrapped by a different kind of prison. Jazz learned how to stay under the radar, so her grandparents never found her. She wondered if they even tried. Jazz became skilled at being invisible. Sweet 16 was not so sweet, but it was then she decided. An older friend took her in. She stopped using drugs and went back to school.

Recently, she had begun to emerge from the darkness. Diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, she learned skills to manage her anxiety and depression. The vivid nightmares of the crash diminished, as did the panic attacks. On good days she was hopeful, even reasonably happy, waking up to life again, less afraid of potential pain. Jazz worked hard to achieve a little peace, taking part in therapy, practicing meditation, refusing to take the barrage of drugs her doctor prescribed. She figured out what worked to keep her sanity precariously balanced.

REMOTE VIEWER: SHADOW RESCUE

RHONDA ARMBRUST

Jazz shuffled through the photos and picked out an alleged target. After lying back on the couch, she visualized how the white-haired, pock-faced man might look in five years. Slowly, a blurred image of a cozy living room grew clear. A warm fire crackled above the tiled hearth. Through the window she saw snow falling. The man sat in a recliner, watching young children open Christmas gifts they gathered from under the tree. He appeared older, his hair thinning, and he'd put on weight. Jazz returned her focus to Harvey's office and professed, "He's probably not a target."

"Are you sure?"

"The future's not written in stone, but I don't think his death is imminent." She didn't voice her question, the one that haunted her. Precognition was tricky, an added ripple in time that might affect events just by observing them. Maybe viewing people in the future would keep them alive, or witnessing a death, make it happen.

"I want to work on this from home." She had made it clear from the beginning that she'd only work for the NCS on her terms. To do her best, she needed to be in a more comfortable setting. Maybe Harvey assumed his position gave him the right to blatantly gape at her, stopping at her breasts, nearly salivating. Jazz couldn't wait to get away from him.

Harvey glanced at Sam, who nodded his approval. Sam grasped the arms of his chair, hefted his bulk, and stood. "We're done here. Keep in touch," Worthington remarked in his impersonal, authoritarian way as he left the office.

Harvey picked up the phone. "She's ready to go."

Jazz was driven to her hotel to gather her things, then dropped off at Ronald Reagan National Airport. *Good riddance.* She shuddered as she boarded the plane.