

## A Treasure Found, A Promise Kept

Motionless hands, laying on jagged rocks instinctively returned their tight grip as muscles and tendons returned their efforts to pull a seemingly lifeless body onto the shoreline of cold, murky waters. The tug forced a burst of fluid from the mouth of the mountain's lake invader, followed by his desperate gasp for air. It was as if Jeffrey Lee was being born again as the environment he was now seeing with blurred vision was new to him.

A briefcase bouncing against rocks of the shoreline caught his attention. As he approached it, he saw a large white fin moving up and down in the water, nearly a hundred yards away. Chills ran up his spine when he realized the fin was actually the wing of a plane he recognized was his.

Lunging forth in terror he yelled out, "O my God! Was Lottie with me? Lottie! Lottie!" There was no answer.

Jerking open the suitcase, he found its contents dry with a folder and the name Jeffrey Lee printed on it.

"That's me! That's who I am! I remember now. She wasn't with me. Praise God!" Moments before, he was flying home to Lottie in Sacramento from a business trip to Anchorage.

The case held a few closure papers, snacks for his trip, and a bottle of wine to celebrate the sale of his business and their planned retirement.

Married in their early twenties on the same day they graduated from California State University. They would celebrate fifty years of marriage this year. They tried, but sadly never had any children. Both, totally devoted to each other, had made preparations to be buried beside each other when their book of life wrote their final chapter. Jeff feared this was to be his.

He had assessed his environment and the prospects of survival were not good. He had filed a flight plan that follows the "Great Circle Route" over the North Pacific and curved down the West Coast to home. The route was within "The Circle of Fire" wherein erratic volcanic and seismic activity was unpredictable, affecting even the weather.

Half way home, a fierce storm front raced toward him in the distance. His two engine plane held up in the turbulence until a lightning bolt struck. The next thing he remembered was awakening in the water.

The Circle of Fire was known to erupt the ocean floor beyond the Pacific's surface, forming a small islands, most, of which eventually decayed away. This was apparently one of those phenomenon's. Although standing, nearly cone shaped, the cliffs were beginning to crumble. It's life was short and it was considered too insignificant to be listed.

Upon it's formation, the island formed a crater lake at the top where Jeff's plane had fortunately crashed.

Jeff knew there would be a search for his plane. All else was speculation. There was little, if any, resource for food, but the lake water was drinkable. He knew his time was short. The vegetation was inedible.

As the days passed he heard planes flying overhead he knew was probably searching for him but he had no means of attracting their attention.

In his pocket, he carried an ancient, solid gold, jeweled ring. It was an invaluable ring, passed down in his family for centuries. He removed paper and pen from the case and wrote contact information for Lottie, and this note: "Lottie, my plane crashed on a very small island. I am well, but the prospects are not good. Ironically, there is an ancient chest that arose with this island and it is filled with gold and emeralds. I have enclosed a ring from it. I pray whoever finds this bottle will get it to you and return my remains for burial next to you when your time has come. I yield the rest to be shared with the finders. You are my eternal love. Signed, Jeff."

Jeff drank the wine, enclosed the note and ring, then tossed the bottle into the sea.

Word spread when the bottle washed ashore in California a month later.

The search parties had ended for Jeffrey, but not for the treasure chest. Boat and plane searchers by the hundreds combed Jeffrey's flight plan until a low flying plane found the island and Jeffrey's remains.

When Lottie was given bottle and contents, tears streamed down her face as she said: "The ring was his family heirloom. We promised each other we would be together always. I knew he would keep that pledge somehow."

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