

# I

*On the shadows of the Moon  
Climbing thro' Night's highest noon;  
In Time's Ocean falling drown'd.*

—William Blake

*For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise*

AUCKLAND

28 April, 1972

Finally, thought McTaggart. It's happening. We're going, at last.

The thirty-eight foot ketch *Vega*, renamed *Greenpeace III*, eased out toward Matiamatia Bay as dusk fell and the temperature dropped. Winter was creeping into the South Pacific and the wind that filled the sails was beginning to bite. McTaggart did not notice, though. He'd been waiting too long for this moment, wanting it too badly for the weather to interfere with his exhilaration.

The shore disappeared.

"Course east northeast," called Nigel.

McTaggart turned and smiled at him. "A month of this, eh?"

"There are worse ways to spend one's time."

"Don't I know it." Squinting at him through weathered lids, McTaggart added, "Is there anything you'd rather be doing?"

"Not a thing." Nigel paused, savoring the moment. "Not a damn thing."

Radio Hauraki was soft in the background, muffled by the ancient music of ship and sea, suffused by the gray, wintry sky.

McTaggart turned back toward the sea and the night and the horizon.

Flooding his mind were images and memories, both recent and old. He couldn't yet shake the anger and outrage of being harassed by the Kiwis over the trumped-up smuggling charges, of being purposely detained by Customs, courts, and the Marine Department. It had all been new, even astounding, to this Canadian, who, until recently, had eschewed politics in favor of what he thought of as conservative common sense.

But that was all gone now. Gone like his three daughters whom he had lost in his divorce. At the thought of them, a pang of anguish and love shot through him, siphoning up primal longings that often made his own life seem small. And in the tangle of images that hovered in his brain, he knew that there was indeed some ethereal link between his daughters, his precipitous advance toward the age of forty, and his persistent decision to challenge both the sea and the French government.

And the bomb.

It was all ahead.

McTaggart knew that he was operating from the heart, and that a more realistic man would have assessed the enemy in its various guises more carefully. He shrugged. It was not his nature. He was ignorant of the vast political forces that were against him, blind to the monies changing hands between the Conservative government in Wellington and Paris, unaware of the uranium deals between Ottawa and France, and thus naive to the extent to which people might go to try and stop him. Somehow, much of it didn't matter. For, in an abstract way, he knew that the true object of his challenge was himself, as it always must be, and that the externals were manifestations of this, no matter how awesome.

Even Peru had been bought, he knew, by the promise of \$60 million US for loan. The Lima government had exposed itself as only another prostitute, willing to sell its integrity and the possible genetic future of its citizenry for cash on demand.

And General de Gaulle would have his nuclear *force de frappe* at all costs.

Out there in the gathering darkness lay the Mururoa Atoll, *le Centre d'Experimentations Nucléaires du Pacifique*, thirty-five hundred miles away. I wonder, thought McTaggart, if I'll be lucky enough to actually see forty?

Like a thoroughbred stretching its reins, in a sensuous display of life and vigor, *Vega*, the new *Greenpeace III*, replete with its crew of two Canadians, two Englishmen, and an Australian, yawed toward the Kermadec Trench and the International Date Line, its modest length and twelve-and-a-half-foot beam representing the inanimate half of the vast synergy between vessel and human spirit that had launched her.

Out there, unseen and lying in wait, was a nuclear bomb. Ten megatons. Two hundred and fifty times the size of the one that had vaporized Hiroshima.