

# **Jagged Arrow**

Book III of The Kalelah Series

By  
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**20**

## **Surface.**

It started so quickly and innocently he almost didn't notice.

At the center of the perimeter that defined the expanse of water ringed by the carriers and circled overhead by their planes, the blue of the ocean began to fade. He thought perhaps it was just a figment of his imagination, a trick of the eye. But just seconds later, he was sure it was real. There was something below the surface. Something large and getting larger. Something that caught the light of the sun and bounced so much of it back it could have been a new dawn itself. But Henderson knew the thing approaching the surface would only bring darkness.

He pulled his binoculars to his face to get a better look.

The ship broke the surface perfectly level without the slightest interference from the water, like it was being pushed upward on a hydraulic lift. In his mind, days ago, when he had imagined how the ship might emerge, he pictured it arriving nose first, like a giant submarine. Seeing the spectacle before him now, shedding water like the cliff of Niagara as it rose, he felt

stupid and small. His imagination had simply been too limited to envision the scale and power of the ship.

Atlantis was the thing that came to mind. He was watching the ocean drain away to reveal the contours of a lost city. Only the giant aircraft carriers, ridiculously dwarfed to Lilliputian stature, gave any indication of the truth. The water was not receding, and this was not the glorious Atlantis of myth. This was a different Atlantis.

The scene looked to him as if filmed in slow motion. It was the same illusion he got from the window seat of a jet airliner. He'd look out at the vast land- or cloudscape. And he'd have no real sense of the speed he was traveling until the chance sight of another plane, perhaps at a lower altitude, streaking across his view in the opposite direction. Only then would he realize just how fast he was moving. Now, in those split seconds of the ship's rising from the water's surface, slowed by his terrified awe, he understood he was experiencing something like those moments speeding in a jet. Velocity and distance were conspiring to trick his mind. In that tiny sliver of time, he was aware that his perception was skewed. Things all around him, in fact, were skewed. Just two letters from screwed. Funny, he thought, how a person's brain works when faced with the impossible.

But the movie camera through which he was watching the insane transformation of his world would soon be done toying with Mike Henderson.

Cut to twenty-four frames per second.

At the point where the water still broke against the walls of the rising city-ship, a swell began to form. It grew taller and taller, an angry, aqueous blast-ring, rising up against the backdrop of the glowering, titanium Atlantis. From his skinny catwalk perched above the flight deck of the *Nimitz*, he watched the tsunami crest, fold over on itself, and then advance away from the ship in every direction he could see.

And this time there was no skewing of his perceptions. It was moving fast, and he could see it plain as day.

“Aw, hell.”