

Time Stitch

On May 29, 1917, in Brookline, Massachusetts, a boy was born to Irish Americans Joseph and Rose, both of Irish descent. They named their second child John Fitzgerald Kennedy. 'Jack', as the child was to be known, had one older brother, Joseph Jr., who was destined for greatness. Father Joseph and mother Rose would produce siblings for Jack named Rose, Kathleen, Eunice, Patricia, Robert, Jean, and Edward, who would be called Ted. The Kennedy family was brought up in the Catholic faith, and they had pride in their Irish roots.

When Jack was young, he spent all his spare time learning to sail the cool waters of Hyannis Port, just off the Boston coast. He loved sailing more than anything, and made up his mind to become a great sailor. He studied hard and was able, with a little help (from his wealthy father), to attend Princeton, and then Harvard University, where he joined the varsity swimming team. In 1936, he won a sailing contest, and the next year he sailed across the Atlantic, to France. In 1940, Jack was turned away from the Army, due to his chronic back problems. The next year, after exercising for months, he was allowed to enter the U.S. Naval Reserve, as an ensign. Later, he volunteered for service in the Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron.

In 1943, he took command of PT-109, in the Solomon Islands. Within a few months, a Japanese destroyer rammed his boat and cut it in half, killing two crewmembers. Floating in the Pacific Ocean, a thousand miles from nowhere, he let the surviving 10 crewmembers vote on whether to fight or surrender. They decided to swim to a nearby island, which turned out to be 3 miles away. His back was damaged, but he towed a badly burned crewman through the water by clenching a life jacket strap between his teeth. He personally rescued two other crewmembers. He was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for heroism and the Purple Heart Medal for injuries. After receiving treatment for his back, he took command of another PT boat and took part in the successful rescue of 87 marines, from islands held by the Japanese.

Lew Vistama watched the whole program cycle a hundred times or more, and then the *Time Stitch* simulation paused, patiently waiting for the operator's input. Lew looked at the final holo-image, frozen on the *Vidview* and he hated the outcome of the *People's Election* last year. But the citizens of the world had spoken, and he had to press the blinking green "Execute" button that was floating in front of his face – it was his job. He looked at the thin blue folder sitting on his console – the people of the United States of Northern and Central America liked Jack Kennedy and they didn't want him assassinated. So they voted, as they had voted about Abraham Lincoln and many other historical leaders – they voted for a different outcome. Lew didn't think that it was right to change history, but he was only the 3rd-shift operator of the *Time Stitch* device, so he didn't have any influence on the process. Sure, he didn't want Kennedy to be assassinated either, but now that he knew the results of alternate timeline, he didn't like that very much, either.

"And so: the life and death of an American hero," he said quietly. "Doctor Singh, the *Mod-point* is set. I used a random shark attack to save Jack's life. This is the only solution where he dies properly and honorably, as called for in the U.N. Order, and the entire planet isn't utterly destroyed by the whiplash of the *Time Stitch* device."

As he looked over his shoulder at Doctor Singh, Lew thought about the last *Blue Folder* project they'd executed: he'd programmed *Time Stitch* to pick an alternate solution to the untimely demise of the astronauts of Space Shuttle Columbia, or STS-107. The people of India had voted that astronaut Kalpana Chawla's life should not have been cut short when Columbia disintegrated over Texas during re-entry

into Earth's atmosphere, whereupon all seven crew members were killed. It seemed that *Blue Folders* were usually for changing sudden, seemingly random deaths to what the U.N. called "*Proper and Honorable deaths.*" Indian mystics claimed that Chawla's spirit was not able to rest until she died "*properly and honorably.*" Lew didn't like the outcome of the new time line one little bit, because it resulted in the death of thousands of innocent Indians, as the time whiplash drove the new alternate universe to a frenzy of mayhem before settling back down. He remembered Kalpana's funeral pyre, and that same peaceful look on her face that was on the *Vidview* right in front of him now. "*So Kalpana got to die an honorable death, but 70,000 unnamed people died in the subsequent nuclear attack from Pakistan,*" he quietly said. "I wish people would realize that every change to a timeline causes unintended consequences, and usually massive death and destruction, doctor Singh"

Doctor Subrahamin Singh, Lew's boss, nodded his head in agreement and said, "Jack Kennedy was more than just an American hero, Lew. And Kalpana Chawla's life is no less important to my people than Mr. Kennedy's was to the people of the United States. But we work for the U.N., which is in charge of administering the world; and when they give us a Folder, whether it is Red, Blue or Green, we can only implement the parameters they supply."

"But doctor Singh, maybe we should have never made such a device – *Time Stitch* is responsible for massive world-wide deaths, chaos, upending governments and changing the face of our planet. I'm just an operator, but where does this whole time-changing thing stop, and where will it end?"

"Lew, press the button, and let's get on with it. *Time Stitch* exists, and the U.N. allows the people of the world to vote on which timelines to change – that's all there is, as far as we're concerned."

"Yes, sir, but it's all because of the *TelHolo* show called "*Make Change Happen.*" When did we allow global reality shows to have that much influence on everyone and everything?"

"Lew, I know that you're frustrated, but we have to move on. Our next project is a *Red Folder Project*, and it will take all our attention to detail and a lot of cooperation. It's about the historical figure called Jesus Christ, and the parameters are unusually complex."

Lew shuddered, exhaled, and pressed *Execute*. *Time Stitch* displayed **Time Stitch Mod-point inserted**

From a small laboratory in a Top Secret facility just west of Huntsville, Alabama, a light like the first instant of time began and expanded isotropically at a truly exponential rate. Lew's goggles didn't do much good, since he was at the epicenter of the displacement force. The sub-femto-second blast of power was equivalent to all the energy that the Universe had expended since that first instant. The cold fury of time whipped its tail across space-time and a strong refractive index fluctuation propagated the new rules throughout space-time. When it was done – JFK was never assassinated. U.N. Mandate 2102-14001 was fulfilled: Jack Kennedy died properly and honorably.

Doctor Singh closed the *Blue Folder* and said "Okay Lew, let's break for lunch," as he watched tears flowed down Lew's cheeks. "This afternoon is going to be tough, my friend." He knew the young *Time Stitch* operator was experiencing symptoms similar to PTSD, but he hoped Lew would suck it up and move on – not like the last operator who committed suicide after the previous *Red Folder Project*.

Chapter 2.

While Jack was dragging the badly wounded crewman to the island, he felt a sudden bump on his right foot, and he felt utter panic – these waters were infested with sharks, after all. There was a sudden pull on the sailor who Jack was towing, and he had to let go. A large shark took a couple of good bites out of the sailor and then came back for a bite of Jack's left leg. He could hardly breathe. The pain was so

intense that he wanted to pass out in the warm Pacific water, but he could see an island, just ahead, and his crewmembers were shouting and waving, trying to distract the shark from another attack.

He woke up in the Chelsea Naval hospital, where he underwent spinal surgery and double amputation of his legs – he'd never walk again, that was for sure. He received an Honorable discharge and returned to his home in Massachusetts. His father was unable to control himself when he saw his son in such a horrible state. "*What the hell good are a couple of ribbons,*" he screamed. "*Couldn't you, just for once, not be a hero? I had such plans for you!*"

His father got Jack a job with the Hearst Newspapers as a correspondent, but the patriarch of the Kennedy clan died before Jack covered the Potsdam Conference in a wheel chair. Jack got to meet Stalin, Churchill and President Truman, all of whom praised Jack's service record. But Jack could see the look in their eyes as they gazed at his wheelchair.

Before his father died, he encouraged his son Ted, Jack's older brother, to run for the U.S. House of Representatives. Afterwards, his father was cold to Jack, almost blaming him for his own demise.

During the next election cycle, Jack's brother Ted was elected as a Congressman.

Jack spent all his free time on the water, where he could find peace and temporarily forget the images of floating bodies and attacking sharks. He exercised and regained enough strength in his back so that the constant pain was finally under control. Twice a day, his nurse changed the bandages on his legs.

In 1952, Jack met a beautiful woman named Jacqueline Bouvier, but he immediately saw the same look in her wide eyes as he saw in everyone else's eyes – it was harder for other people to deal with the loss of his legs than his own feelings about it. She considered and quickly rejected the idea of taking care of a cripple for the rest of her life. When she left, she never turned back.

Ted encouraged Jack to "get in to politics," but Jack didn't have the desire – he just wanted to sail his small boat and relax. Ted got elected to the Senate in 1953 and pulled some strings with the Democrat party, who interviewed Jack and promised that they'd get back to him. Ted got rich and powerful with secret business dealings with Russia, Asia and the Middle East. He took over managing his father's wealthy estate.

One day, the Democrat party approached Ted. "Run for President. With your brother's service record, you have a real chance. You could make a real change! What do you think?"

Ted gave a tentative okay and approached Jack about being an adviser during the campaign. Jack just wanted to sail, but he said he'd think about it. Ted encouraged and cajoled Jack. He finally got Jack to appear on a local TV program to talk about the heroic rescue that he'd performed. The national media picked up on the story, and Jack's face was pleasant, and it was easy to draw parallels between FDR and Jack, because they were both wheelchair-bound, even though they were both crippled for different reasons.

Ted debated Richard Nixon. Nixon clearly lost to the young Senator from Massachusetts, whose brother was in a wheelchair for heroic action during the War. Ted won the election, just barely, but he won. He asked Jack to be Presidential Adviser, and Jack agreed – but he'd rather be sailing.

President Ted Kennedy was indecisive about Russia. They constantly threaten war, and Ted realized how that will affect his financial holdings. He also didn't like the 'Red' Chinese at all – he thought they're boorish. Jack advised confrontation with Russia, but Ted wouldn't do it – too much of a political risk.

In Cuba, Fidel Castro came to power after a quick *Coup d'état*. Ted worried about lost business opportunities – his friend, former Cuban President Fulgencio Batista used to contribute lots of money to

the Democrat party. Jack schooled Ted about the results of Russian influence in Cuba, and he gave him a copy of his Harvard thesis entitled "*Appeasement in Munich*," but Ted dismissed it. President Batista will be back in power soon, and our holdings in Cuba won't be disturbed much."

Jack pushed Ted for a nuclear test ban treaty, but Ted just couldn't get it done. In Congress, his luster had worn off, and the hawks didn't want the U.S. to give up the right to make more and more nuclear weapons.

Russia built a wall across Berlin. Ted didn't know how to respond. His father made most of the family fortune in Germany, before and during the War. Ted didn't want to jeopardize it.

Russia's space program advanced and Ted worried. Jack advised Ted to start our own space program, and he said, quite forcefully, that we need to plant our flag on the moon by the end of the decade, but Ted didn't want to ask Congress for that much money. "NASA tried 3 times, and each time the rocket blew up. I don't want to waste any more taxpayer money on projects like that. We have people right here in the U.S. who need assistance – let's concentrate on that. You need to spend some time with Lyndon."

Lyndon Johnson, a power-broker from Texas, and the current Vice President was a tall blowhard whom Jack disliked intensely. But he quickly learned that Lyndon was no dummy. He had a strong Civil Rights agenda, which Jack liked. Jack told Ted that he needed to adopt Lyndon's Civil Rights agenda, but Ted rejected it off-hand –he just wanted some peace and quiet – the Russians and Chinese were getting more and more aggressive every day and Ted just couldn't stand it.

The French were talking about pulling out of Indochina, and Ted sent 5,000 military advisors and troops to a small country name Viet Nam. Jack objected and explained to Ted that the U.S. has no place in a war 10,000 miles away, when Southern Negroes were being beaten and treated in an uncivilized manner. Almost immediately, China demanded that the U.S. must pull out of North Korea and Viet Nam. Ted pushed for negotiations at the U.N., but China wanted no part of a negotiated settlement – nuclear war loomed with China, with Russia's backing. Missiles that Russia parked in Cuba were readied for an attack.

Jack pushed Ted to invade Cuba at a beach called the Bay of Pigs. "Fidel Castro must be deposed. He is a threat to the U.S." Ted couldn't and wouldn't invade Cuba. "We've got too many financial entanglements there. Let's not go broke on purpose."

Jack proposed to use Cubans to depose Castro, but Ted wouldn't hear of that. "Jack, we can't be taking out international leaders just because they don't agree with our philosophy." Jack warned Ted what the Russian missiles will do to the U.S. "World War III will kill us all, Ted." By then, Ted just wanted to win re-election.

Ted won re-election because the U.S. was about to go to war. Jack warned Ted not to back down from Russia. In December, due to poor missile quality, multiple satellite launch failures and the terror of imminent war, Congress voted to defund NASA. "Flying around in outer space is too hard, Jack," Ted said.

China made a final demand for the U.S. to leave the East. Russia announced an alliance with China. Japan was threatened by China.

WAR! Florida was bombed from Cuba. A missile launch from Cuba failed and the off-course missile exploded right over the Georgia-Florida border. It was destined for Washington, D.C. Thousands died and commercial fishing had to stop due to radiation pollution.

Ted talked about surrender – Jack argued with him. Congress demanded action against China, Russia and Cuba.

SURPRISE! Russians invaded Southern California and claimed all the land from Los Angeles to Mexico City.

China invaded Japan. They threatened to drop a 50 megaton bomb on Tokyo. Japan surrendered.

An alliance that included the U.S.A., Germany and England declared war on China and Russia. The German Prime Minister called Ted and discussed the strong ties between the U.S. and Germany. "Your father prevented the U.S. from bombing Germany for several years after the outbreak of the last war, and for that, we're grateful." The next day, Russia bombed Berlin. Germany's old missiles were no match for Russian missiles, and of course the U.S. had no nuclear missiles in Europe because American rockets were just too unreliable. Germany surrendered.

England was blockaded by Russian war ships. Jack was sent to negotiate with Russia. Premier Krushchev hates the crippled bourgeois pig. "You are an ass---- and we will melt your country to the ground!"

Russian submarines blockaded the Pacific Ocean. Hawaii was invaded. Alaska was invaded. Canada was invaded. South America was invaded. The Russians thank Mexico for their help during the last war.

Congress impeached President Ted Kennedy. President Lyndon B. Johnson assumes command. He is a rough corn-cob when it comes to international dealings and he aggravates China and Russia.

Oregon and Washington were invaded by China. North Carolina and South Carolina were invaded by Russia. Norway and Sweden are threatened and they surrendered. Italy surrendered without being confronted at all. France surrendered without a shot being fired. Denmark stood up to Russia in a strongly-worded speech to the U.N. General Assembly – their capital was bombed – they surrendered.

A missile launched from Cuba goes wild and explodes over the Atlantic, but radiation killed thousands of Southern Florida residents and Cubans.

U.S. citizens called for the immediate resignation of Lyndon Johnson. Congress debated. Jack was very ill from sepsis – his war wounds were getting worse.

Canada was threatened by both China and Russia and the Canadian government surrendered. England was threatened by a hydrogen bomb attack and they surrendered.

Russians invaded Virginia and Maryland. The White House prepared for a siege.

China took over Nevada and Arizona. China and Russia met and agreed on how to split the U.S.A, Mexico and Canada.

AMERICA SURRENDERED!

Mexico surrendered.

Russian and Chinese tanks rolled through U.S. streets.

U.S. citizens are rounded up, disarmed, finger printed, photographed and categorized for work camp duties. Many were shot. The rest agreed to the New Communist Order.

Europe was conquered.

China invaded the Middle East and India – they brushed aside the resistance in 2 days.

Russia invaded Africa.

Jack was dying of old age. He looked back on his life and asked his nurse: "*Is there something that could have been done that would have changed all this? The world is such a mess.*" She just shook her head as a tear flowed down her face. The great hero was just a legend to her. She put her Catholic beads in his hands and prayed for him. Was he in some great war from long ago? Wasn't he the brother of a president? "*I'm too young for dementia,*" she chuckled, but she felt like she momentarily lost a connection that she previously had with him. She brushed her cheek dry and fluffed his pillow. In her nicest Bostonian voice she whispered "All right, there, sir. Just time for a nice nap now, eh?" She didn't like the red Hammer and Sickle flag outside, but she knew that the problems of the world were far beyond her ability to understand or control – to her, Boston was just Boston.

China and Russia were having territorial disputes so they agree to a summit. Krushchev and Mao had a New Year's dinner in Denver, Colorado and they toast the triumph of Communism. After dinner, Mao showed Krushchev a huge tulip field that Mao particularly enjoyed. "Look at all the Red, my friend – Red always wins." After a quick gesture from Mao, Krushchev and his aides were assassinated in the middle of the red tulip field. Mao looked around, lit a Marlboro cigarette and waved his arm in a broad gesture. "It's ours, all ours." His generals saluted him.

A year later, on Christmas Eve, as the orange ball of the setting sun flowed through the hospital window into Jack's eyes, his thoughts were of sailing with his dad and older brother, when they were innocent children. And then Jack died. His last thoughts were about sea gulls, a bobbing yacht and his father catching a sailfish. His nurse wept. A few others around the world had a passing memory of the old sailor, but mostly Jack was an old, long-forgotten hero of a long-forgotten war; but, by popular vote, and a U.N. Mandate, his life had terminated in a proper and honorable manner.

And in that instant, the final tip of the tail of the *Time Stitch* finally came to rest – the new Universe was all worked out and stabilized in less than a billionth of a billionth of a second.

Chapter 3.

It took a while for the after-green in Lew's flash-blinded eyes to get back to normal. He removed his useless safety goggles and his tears flowed freely. Finally, he and Doctor Singh went to the small cafeteria for a quiet lunch.

As predicted, for Lew Vistama and doctor Singh it would be a very tough afternoon.