EXCLUSIVE:
NUKE VICTIM
TELLS ALL

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Prologue

“I am a sixth-grader at St. Ladislaus School in New Brunswick. Since I do not like violence, I would like to help stop the nuclear arms race. I don’t know why people want to fight with nuclear weapons. I mean, it doesn’t matter who wins... everybody dies anyway. Once you think about it, it’s a little crazy. I think it’s crazy. That’s why I’m writing this letter because I don’t want to lose my family.”

(Letter written by sixth-grader to the new Bishop of Metuchen, New Jersey)

“I was magistrate on Rongelap in 1954. Before that time while I was in Majuro, a fellow who worked with the Atomic Energy Commission stuck out the tip of his finger—about a half-inch or so—and said, ‘John, your life is just about that long.’ When I asked him what he meant, he explained that they were setting off a bomb on Bikini soon. I asked him why they did not move the people of Rongelap first, and he told me that they had not gotten word from Washington to evacuate the people beforehand.

“On the morning of ‘the bomb,’ I was awake and drinking coffee. I thought I saw what appeared to be the sunrise, but it was in the west. It was truly beautiful with many colors—red, green and yellow—and I was surprised. A little while later the sun rose in the east. Then sometime later something like smoke filled the entire sky and shortly after that a strong and warm wind—as in a typhoon—swept across Rongelap. Then all of the people heard the great sound of the explosion. Some people began to cry with fright. Several hours later the powder began to fall on Rongelap. We saw four planes fly overhead, and we thought perhaps the planes had dropped this powder which covered our island and stuck to our bodies. The visibility was less than one-half mile at that time due to the haze in the sky.

“The next day, early in the morning, I looked at all of the cement water catchments and noticed that the water had turned to yellow. I then warned the people not to drink from these water catchments, and told them to only drink coconuts. Then people began to get sick with vomiting, aches all over the body, eye irritations, and general weakness and fatigue. After the second day, most of the people were unable to move around as usual due to their fatigue. Just a few strong young men were up and about at that time, and I asked them to fetch some coconuts for the rest of us to drink. On the evening of the second day, a seaplane arrived from Enewetak with two men who brought some strange machines. They stayed only about twenty minutes and they took some readings of water catchments and soil, and then they took off again. They really did not tell us very much.
“On the morning of the third day, a Navy destroyer came and the officer in charge told me, ‘John Anjain, you have to leave this island at once or you and your people will die.’ We were allowed to bring only what we were wearing—nothing else. At this time most of the people were feeling quite dizzy—as if drunk—and they were very weak. Then we went to Kwajalein, a Navy base 200 miles south of Rongelap.

“In Kwajalein we were very sick and in much pain, with body burns and bleeding on our necks and feet. After one week the doctors came from the United States. They made us bathe three times a day because they said our illnesses were of a new type and there was no medicine for us.

“Then in 1957 they returned us to Rongelap. At the time of our return the High Commissioner and some representatives from the United Nations Trusteeship Council came to our island. We asked them if it was safe to return to our island and they all agreed that there was still a little bit of radiation left on Rongelap, and that it might injure our health, but not very much. With that slight reassurance, we returned, but we had much fear then.

“After our return, many women began to have problems with childbearing. On several occasions, women gave birth to creatures which did not resemble human beings: some of these creatures looked like monkeys, some like octopi, and some like bunches of grapes. One baby was born, and though it was very large, it did not have a complete head, and after three days it died. The people complained repeatedly about these deformities—we were really scared—but the Atomic Energy Commission doctors told us ‘not to worry because there was just a little bit of radiation left on Rongelap.’

“In 1963, the thyroid problems started to occur. In 1969 the Atomic Energy Commission took my son Lekoj and two other children to New York for their thyroid problems. In 1972 they noticed that the white blood cell count of my son was very low. They took him to Honolulu for blood transfusions and the doctors told me that he would be alright. Then they notified me to go to Washington where they had taken my son. I arrived at the hospital and saw that my son’s condition was very serious and that he was very weak. I will never forget being in Washington with my son—I have never felt such sadness in all of my life. He died a day later from leukemia.

“From the beginning of the testing program of nuclear weapons in our islands, the United States has treated us like animals in a scientific experiment for their studies. They come and study us like animals and think of us as ‘guinea pigs.’ We are the ‘guinea pigs.’”

(Interview with John Anjain in the Marshall Islands, 1981)

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The Marshall Islands, part of the larger area known as Micronesia, became a trust territory of the United States under a United Nations mandate in 1947. As a “strategic trust,” the Marshalls were chosen as the site for the Pacific Proving Grounds after the Manhattan Project
and the atomic bombings in Japan. After removing the indigenous inhabitants of Bikini Atoll in 1946, the Atomic Energy Commission and the Defense Department began nuclear tests in the Pacific with "Operation Crossroads" at Bikini in 1946. In 1947, the Eniwetak islanders were similarly forced to relocate in preparation for a new hybrid of thermo-nuclear weapon tests. In 1952, "Mike," the world's first hydrogen bomb was exploded at Eniwetak. In 1954, "Bravo," the second hydrogen bomb was detonated at Bikini. With a destructive force of fifteen megatons, "Bravo" was more than 1,000 times the size of the Hiroshima atomic bomb. Within several hours of the blast, several inhabited atolls downwind of Bikini were caught in the dangerous radioactive fallout from "Bravo." A Japanese fishing trawler—the not-so-"Lucky Dragon"—with 23 fishermen aboard was caught in the fallout. Also, 28 United States Air Force weather personnel who were monitoring a weather station reported heavy fallout at Rongerik Atoll, 135 miles downwind of Bikini.

A total of 244 Marshallese (239 and 5 who were in utero) were affected by the fallout. The islanders were evacuated several days after the "Bravo" blast, when they experienced the primary effects of acute radiation sickness, including nausea, diarrhea, itching and burning of the skin from beta particles, and loss of appetite. Within weeks, the Marshallese suffered the secondary effects of radiation sickness, which included beta burns, loss of body hair, decreased blood cell counts, and many cases of miscarriage and stillbirth. After returning to their home islands, the Marshallese were monitored by scientists from Brookhaven National Laboratory. After a few years, the health of the Marshallese appeared to have returned to a "normal" state, despite some lingering problems associated with childbearing.

Then in 1963, nine years after the "Bravo" fallout, a thyroid tumor was diagnosed in an exposed Marshallese from Rongelap. A few more tumors were discovered the next year in 1964, and a few more the following year. Additionally, chromosome studies in the early 1960s revealed that a rare form of chromosome breakage had been diagnosed in half of the exposed Marshallese, which explained the alarming frequency of children born with birth defects. By the late 1960s, it was obvious that thyroid tumors were appearing in epidemic proportions among the irradiated Marshallese, and more than 140 islanders have had thyroid surgery and must take a daily thyroid replacement drug for the rest of their lives. Also, by 1977, it became certain that thyroid cancer—as opposed to benign thyroid tumors—was more prevalent in the group which received a relatively low-level of radiation. This means that cancer induction is much more serious at lower dose levels of radiation than was previously believed. After 27
years, the diseases from the "Bravo" fallout are increasing with the passage of time.

There are now over 50,000 nuclear weapons like the "Bravo" hydrogen bomb poised at the hostage-inhabitants of the world. *Hostage-inhabitants of the world, unite!"*