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on steroids!”



**THE
END**

THE BOOK

PART FOUR

The Disappearance

J.L. ROBB

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**T H E
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J.I. ROBB

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FOREWORD

“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.”

Matthew 24:7 KJV

J.L. Robb brings us face to face with many of the questions we have asked ourselves. Are we seeing “The Signs of the End Times?” This question is asked by believers of The Holy Bible and non-believers alike. Asking that question is what J.L. caused me to do back in December 2013. Being raised during a time when going to church was not an option, having served 20 years of military service, being no stranger to multiple deployments, living out what is now called the “New Normal” in our U.S. airports, and observing erratic weather patterns resulting in mass destruction has caused me, along with many others, to wonder about what we have both read and heard throughout our lifetime.

I came to know J.L. Robb when he accepted an invitation to appear on The Kevin Zimmerman Show on The Artist First Radio Network. Preparing for his interview introduced me both to him and to his work, The End, The Book series. I have read numerous books like his while preparing for interviews, and I have spoken to many authors, but none have compelled me to not casually disregard the consistent reports being aired on practically every news channel worldwide that affects all of mankind, like his. I even had a brief encounter with the challenges his main character faces in developing a relationship when one person is a total believer of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the other is not, or, at least, not totally. Reading this book will help you realize why J.L. Robb is a highly respected literary figure. J.L. definitely paid his dues to ensure he conveyed the accuracy of God’s Word in an action-packed, entertaining, and thought-provoking series. Having had a book published myself, I

know firsthand the commitment, time, effort, and sacrifice he had to invest in order to do so.

The year 2014 started with a multitude of unexplainable weather phenomena. Blatant disregard for humanity and the increased manifestations of mankind becoming more and more lovers of themselves, rather than becoming lovers of God, has become a regular occurrence. Terrorism, whether from afar or on home soil, has become commonplace. J.L. Robb's book will heighten your awareness of your surroundings and of world affairs. It will cause you to question if you really believe what you have always said "Yes" to.

When J.L. asked me to write the foreword for this book, time stood still for a moment. Although I have been blessed with some significant U.S. military accomplishments, to have my own book published and placed in the U.S. Military Museum and the Smithsonian Institution, and to have my own talk show, his invitation ranks amongst the most humbling and honorable moments of my life.

I pray that the Lord allows each of us to continue to enjoy the gift He has given to J. L. Robb. To be frank, as long as he continues to be J.L., we are all pretty fortunate.

Kevin Zimmerman

A Time For Everything; The Kevin Zimmerman Story

Smithsonian Institution and US Army Medical Department (AMEDD) Museum inductee

The Kevin Zimmerman Show, Host, The Artist First Radio Network

www.thekevinzimmermanshow.com

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

THE END The Book: Part Four *The Disappearance*

THE END The Book Series is a fictional account of the predicted apocalypse as outlined in the Bible. Several readers have asked me, “Is this book true?”

It is true that the Biblical end will happen, but I have written this series as a counter-weight to the apocalyptic fiction coming out of Hollywood, like *Armageddon* and *2012*, that fail to mention God and His role.

Any similarities between things that are occurring now and things written in this series are purely coincidental. It would be impossible to write a “true” account of the Biblically described End Times.

What would you do if you woke up one morning, turned on the news and found out the often-predicted end-of-the-world really *was* near? This time the story was true, and there was no escape. What would you do? Where would you hide? Could you somehow survive; and if so, what then?

While those who already believe will find this a great thriller, the series is meant to appeal to those who don’t believe or may be right on the edge. This is not for the faint-of-heart but is thought provoking.

I hope you enjoy reading *The Disappearance* as much as I enjoyed writing it for you and for the glory of God, the father of Abraham.

J.L. Robb is an author and writer with a degree in Zoology from North Carolina State University. A U.S. Navy veteran and cancer survivor, he lives in the Bible-Belt with his two Great Danes and a kitty named “Glock.” Robb is a member of Civitan International and The American Legion.

DEDICATION

I dedicate *The End The Book The Series* to Almighty God and to my oldest daughter, Erica who motivated me to write several years ago. She has worked diligently ensuring that the series would be a success, designing all book covers, web pages and numerous video presentations. www.yoniartanddesign.com

“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

LIST OF MAIN CHARACTERS: ALPHABETICAL BY
FIRST NAME

Abe the Bartender: Key character. General Manager and bartender at *The Divide Disco & Café*.

Aboud Rehza: a.k.a Vinny, a.k.a. Ricky, a.k.a. Jean Philippe. In charge of U.S. Operations for Jihad's Warriors and various other Islamic Jihadist groups. Twin brother of Mohammed Rehza, who is in charge of European operations.

Aludra: Sister of Muhammed Khalid. She and her brother live in the Korengal Valley, Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

Amber Michelle: Reporter with al-Jazeera USA News.

Betty Davis: Also known as Betty Davis Eyes. Bartender at American Legion Post 251 in Duluth, GA.

Bill "Wild Willy" Briggs: Master of Nanotechnology, Georgia Tech Nanotechnology Research. Ex-Navy, CIA and Homeland Security. Works closely with Israel's Mossad. His cover is high-dollar repo man.

Chad "Chadbo" Myers: Assistant Director, Near Earth Object and Heliospheric Laboratory, Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, MD. Works with The Admiral.

Chuck Hutz: a.k.a. Hutz the Putz. After accident, speaks fluent Hebrew and witnesses to others while in a trance.

CJ: Bartender at American Legion Post 251 in Duluth. Helped capture terrorist wannabe that attacked the Post.

Condi Zimmerman: Independent news anchor/reporter and host of The Condi Zimmerman Show.

Dan Brunson: Nuclear physicist and public speaker.

Dr. Dennis Duncan: Professor of Geophysics and public speaker. Developed the Theory of Vacuous Spaces.

Dmitry Ustinov: Chechnyan-Russian international arms dealer.

Dr. Joseph Rosenberg, PhD: Professor of Apocalyptic Religions, Candler School of Theology, Emory University.

Edgar Allan Poe: Homeless veteran who discovers terrorist plot.

Erica P. Robbins: Reporter and U.S. War Correspondent.

Farmer J. Kinsella: Owns large cotton farm in Clemson, S.C. After an assassination attempt, terrorists stole the farm's crop duster for a planned chemical attack on Atlanta.

Gray and Andi Dorey: Close friends of Jeff and Melissa Ross, philanthropists and owners of *Dine for Dollars*, a restaurant for the homeless or just the hungry.

Jack Russell: United States Senator from Cumming, Georgia and ranking member on the Military Finance Committee. Married to Samarra Russell.

Jeffrey Ross: Ex-husband of Melissa Ross and father of three daughters; Jami and Jenni (twins) and Audry, his youngest. U.S. Navy SEAL until discharged with injury after the Vietnam conflict.

Jill Haskins: Wife of Leon "Bubba" Haskins and Melissa Ross' closest friend.

Judi Ellis: Director of Paleobiology, Emory Primate Research Center, Atlanta.

Judy Blanton: Previous owner of J. Blanton Concrete Company, Lukeville.

Kara Mulherin: Missionary to Haiti.

Kari K. Vermi: News anchor with OLNN, Omega Letter Network News. Columnist with www.omegaletter.com

Kipper T and Missy T: Angels who appear to Jeff in dreams.

Kyoto Kushito: Founder and Director of The Foundation, a shadowy terror think tank, based in Hiroshima, Japan. The Foundation consists of disgruntled grandchildren of Japanese kinsmen killed by the U.S. nuclear attacks of World War II and funded the hijacking of the Nerpa nuclear submarine.

Leon "Bubba" Haskins: Married to Jill Haskins. Owns the largest minority contracting firm in Georgia and a tourist submarine business at Lake Lanier Islands, Georgia.

Melissa Ross: Also Melissa Ross-Jeremias. Divorced from Jeff Ross, mother of twins, Jami and Jenni, and adopted daughter, Audry.

Mohammed Rehza: Ruthless Islamist in charge of European operations for Jihad's Warriors.

Muhammed Khalid: Islamic Jihadist and founder of Jihad's Warriors. Lives in Korengal Valley, Pakistan with his sister, Aludra.

Naomi: Old Jewish woman who carries a cross necklace. Helps Aludra escape Korengal Valley through Tajikistan.

Pam MacLott: Owner of *The Divide Disco & Café*, the South's only News Bar. The café becomes a meeting and planning place for those interested in combatting the Islamic takeover of America.

Richard "Rich" Badey: Investigative reporter.

Robert Jeremias: Missionary, philanthropist. Killed in a plane crash during a missionary trip.

Russ Ivies: Chief of Security, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta. Actor and producer.

Samarra Russell: Past Director, Communicable Diseases Research Center, CDC Atlanta. Responsible for theft of Spanish Flu virus.

Scott Johnson: Assistant manager of *The Divide*.

Sheryl Lasseter: Director of the United States Public Relations Liaison. Works directly for the U.S. President.

Terry and Toni Fahey: Next door neighbors of Jeffrey Ross.

The Admiral: Justin P. McLemore. A graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and retired four-star Admiral. Director of Near-Earth Object and Heliospheric Laboratory, Goddard Space Flight Center, Maryland.

Three Wild Women: Wanda, BJ and Beverly manage American Legion Post 251. The three women are seen together often. Skilled in self-defense and sharp-shooting, they seem to attract encounters with street thugs and drunks.

Vinny: A truly evil man, his real name is Aboud Rehza, a product of wealthy Saudi parents. He and his twin brother, Mohammed, had been child prodigies; and both spoke several languages fluently. A man of many aliases. Vinny resides in the United States after infiltrating across the Mexican border. Aliases include Vinny, Ricky, Jean Philippe, and others.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR:

Part One

Jeffrey Ross is Duluth, Georgia's most eligible bachelor, but not by choice. Retired Navy SEAL and successful entrepreneur, he had been married to Melissa almost 25 years; and he thought everything was hunky-dory. They had beautiful twin daughters and adopted daughter, Audry and a nice home in a country club community, nice cars and toys, what could be wrong.

Melissa asked for the divorce, begrudgingly. She loved Jeff, but he didn't believe in God, never had; but what was worse was his ridiculing of believers. Over the years, her faith grew stronger and she enjoyed her church community; but she and the daughters enjoyed it alone. No way was Jeff going to step foot in a church.

The divorce and Melissa's subsequent remarriage had taken its toll; and while Jeff wasn't a broken man, he remained in the dumps for the next four years. The most eligible bachelor wasn't available. He was hoping his wife would come back.

Jeff made new friends and maintained most of their old friendships too, as did Melissa, including The Admiral, Sheryl, Chadbo, Wild Willy and Abe the Bartender.

Nine thousand miles away, along the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Korengal Valley of Death festered with various jihadist groups, Muslims with a common cause: Kill the infidels. That would be everyone except them.

Jihad's Warriors, virtually unknown, unlike al Qaeda, had infiltrated the borders of Europe and the United States for years, decades. The U.S. border with Mexico was as porous as Swiss cheese; and jihadists had taken advantage with bribery and murder.

The Chechen jihadists from Eastern Europe looked, talked and acted as American as mom's apple pie. The Arab jihadists passed easily for Latino immigrant laborers, but these were not laborers.

The Divine Plan was to run America and Europe out of money. The warriors knew the West couldn't protect every single nursery school, church, synagogue, campground, shopping center, hospital and highway. It would be easy. Once economically destitute, the Islamic takeover of the world would finalize.

While Manhattan and Chicago remained the desired targets, security was tight. The Islamists would concentrate on the Bible Belt, more Christians that turn the other cheek rather than fight.

Jihad's Warriors were financed, not by Muslims so much as by a group of wealthy Japanese businessmen bent on revenge for the nuclear bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima during World War II. They were the grandsons and granddaughters of those burnt alive in December, 1945, the Baby Bombers. Money was no problem.

Jeffrey continues his pursuit of Melissa, now widowed, and can't help but notice all the people carrying *The End Is Near* signs. They seemed to be everywhere. Then there were the disappearing people, and Jeff remembered his mom's lectures.

"In the last days, sonny boy, people gonna be disappearin', yes they are. You start seeing folks vanishin' in thin air, you better find God. That's all I can say."

A creature of habit, Jeff had a routine that included the Dunwoody Starbucks every morning for coffee and the Atlanta newspaper. He was a news junkie. The Mayan Apocalypse was just around the corner, and people worldwide were preparing for The End. Ridiculous.

One warmer than usual spring morning, record heat the words of the day, Jeff enjoys his latte and paper when suddenly his world changes... again.

The brown cargo van circling the small shopping center explodes with vigor as America's first suicide bomber begins a wave of terror like the nation has never seen. Two minutes later another explosion

several blocks away blows up a Dunwoody day care center. Forty-seven dead in a split second.

Jeff's Navy buddies, Chad Myers and The Admiral, work with the Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland. Astronomy buffs, their primary concern was space objects on a collision course with planet Earth. Near-Earth objects, mostly small asteroids, had become more commonplace.

Unfortunately, news of the object most recently discovered would now have to be shared with the world as it made its way past Jupiter on a course that would hit Earth in less than a year. The object, still invisible to most telescopes, was dark, massive and unavoidable.

Sixty-five million years earlier, the dinosaurs and most living creatures had been wiped out by an asteroid only six miles in diameter. The Dark Comet was more than a hundred.

As the world reacts to the coming devastation, many begin to believe that the end really is near this time; and there was nothing anyone could do about it. There was little panic.

When Jeff's friend, Samarra receives a strange call, she returns home as instructed. She would follow the instructions as directed, or she would receive her son's head in a box instead of the finger she stared at in desperation. And she did.

Samarra's access to Atlanta's CDC biological disease labs made her job simple and soon the Spanish Flu, one of the great killers of all time, is loosed into an unsuspecting world. It was inevitable, millions would die.

In the Indian Ocean, a hijacked nuclear attack sub vanishes. The only remnants were an oil slick, clothing and assorted debris but not enough to indicate the submarine was at the bottom of the Marianas Trench.

As New Year's Eve approaches, Jeff and Melissa visit Grand Cayman Island to celebrate memories and await the coming comet. To most it seemed the Earth would end months before the predicted Mayan prophecy.

A few hundred miles east of Grand Cayman, on the island of Montserrat, the Soufrière Hills volcano erupts and is blown into the Caribbean Sea. The massive tsunami that is generated speeds across the ocean toward Puerto Rico, Jamaica and... Grand Cayman.

Part Two

Jeff returns from Grand Cayman Island alone. He and Melissa tried to escape the giant wave but were washed off the 4-story roof of their beachfront hotel. Melissa's body was never found, and Jeff mourns his loss. He had prayed they would reconcile, his first prayer since a child; and it looked like it might happen.

The New Year started off with a bang, literally, when the U.S. suffered its first nuclear strikes, one at the Diego Garcia island chain in the Indian Ocean that destroyed most of America's B-52 bomber force. The second destroyed the Buford Dam, Atlanta's fresh water supply.

The Dark Comet continued its journey toward Earth, two weeks until impact. Attempts to destroy the comet with the world's nuclear weapons supply failed to deter the coming tragedy.

The world became unified for the first time in history in their effort to stop the comet, and joyous applause erupted globally when the comet slammed into the moon instead of Earth. Unfortunately, the resulting debris from the lunar collision meant waves of meteor showers for Earth, many of which made it through the atmosphere, destroying numerous communities, including the Three Gorges Dam in China.

Thankful that the world was still intact, Jeff flies to California to buy his million dollar dream car, a one of a kind 1954 Cadillac Pininfarina Cabriolet. Maybe that, he hoped, would occupy his mind a while. Shopping was great for depression.

Upon arrival at the La Jolla Jetport, Jeff's tragic misfortune continues as he is struck with the deadly and pervasive Spanish Flu. During his hospitalization, he begins to have a series of strange dreams, dreams of small white churches in fields of blooming daffodils. Dreams of a tiny Arizona town named Lukeville.

The European riots had become infectious, and America's cities did the same as gasoline reached \$8.00 a gallon. The police forces, hampered by budget cuts and not enough employees, became brutal; and rioters were killed mercilessly.

The jihadists coordinated closely with a well-organized Christian militia under the philosophy of, *The enemy of my enemy is my friend*. Their common enemy was the U.S. government.

The Admiral's romance with Sheryl blossoms cautiously, at least until the kidnapping. That's when he discovered his real feelings, the ones he had sheltered for sixty years.

Recalling their private conversation, he wasn't really surprised that the President had sold out Israel; only, it wasn't Israel's God that was trying to kill everyone in America, it was Islam's God.

What was surprising, and shocking, was the rumor that there were thousands of infiltrators living and working in the nation's infrastructure: nuclear power plants, water treatment facilities, food distribution warehouses.

Vinny, a.k.a. Aboud, hasn't gotten any nicer as he continues to meet with his deputies at the concrete plant in Lukeville. The meetings, though brief, usually occurred on the Mexican side of the deep, underground tunnel connecting the concrete facility in Lukeville with the beer distributor on the other side of the border. Plans were made, plans of terror, death and destruction; and the stored weapons and nerve agents were the vehicles Allah would use.

Wild Willy continues his work with Mossad and Senator Jack Russell, Samarra's husband. The nanotech spybots were no longer experimental and looked like assorted bugs, but Will was especially fond of the dragonfly style. Looked just like the real thing.

Samarra's case goes to the U.S. Federal Court in Atlanta. The charges are numerous, including international homicide charges for the tens of millions killed because of the Spanish Flu. During the trial, Samarra's senator husband is arrested in a San Francisco shower house with a young boy and charged with possession of child porn and sex with a minor. Senator Russell stated that he thought the boy was 12, the new legal age of consent in the United States.

After Jeff's recovery from the Spanish Flu, he continues to have the strange dreams about a couple named Missy T and Kipper T, reggae music and disco lights; and the room, the one with the dark door. *You don't want to go through that door.* Missy T made the comment numerous times.

Jeff's life, a life that's never dull, continues to change suddenly and often. He finds himself having second thoughts about the whole religion thing, at least sometimes. He really couldn't explain how the Gideons Bible kept showing up.

One day Jeff gets a call from Samarra. Her trial was over quickly, temporary insanity; and her penalty was light. She asked if she could visit, they had been friends for many years.

During her visit to Jeff's Sugarloaf estate, yet another megacryometeorite storm hits North Atlanta. Jeff's home is spared, but a young girl in a Porsche is killed in his neighbor's driveway. The large ice bomb that hit the new Porsche Spyder was estimated to weigh 120 to 150 pounds, larger than a beachball.

Samarra informs Jeff that she and Senator Russell are now divorced; and over the next few months, a new romance blossoms. There had always been something there.

The months passed swiftly, and soon Jeff plans a visit to his dive shop in Negril. Before going to Jamaica to check on the business, Jeff and Samarra become engaged, though a date is not set.

Jeff's journey to Jamaica is plagued with thoughts and confusion, not about his profound love for Samarra but about all the natural disasters going on. It was downright scary.

The Admiral told him about the large rock that appeared to be leaving the Moon's orbit, and he finds himself hoping to God that it wouldn't. He fell asleep and dreamed, dreams of earthquakes and volcanos, roaring seas and asteroids, drought and poisoned waters... and Melissa. He prayed in his dream, a prayer that Melissa hadn't suffered in the tsunami, that she had been killed instantly in the fall.

Part Three

Hailstorms are the talk of every news station it seems, as Jeff cruises the highways with his new Cadillac, listening to Al-Jazeera News. Millions of acres have been destroyed in Europe, and Northern California's crops are not spared. *Homeless and Starving in the U.S.A.* has become the chant of protesters as the hail batters crops and wildlife into the ground.

Two years after Melissa's death, Jeff finds love with a friend from the past; and his kids are receptive to the romance, amazingly. Amazing because Samara has been acquitted of stealing the Spanish Flu virus from CDC due to temporary insanity. That theft, now in the hands of the blackmailing Jihadist Warriors is doing its job well with estimated global fatalities now in excess of fifty million.

Vinny's (a.k.a Aboud) jihadist terror group continues to wreak havoc in the United States as his twin, Mohammed, known in the small French town as *The Preacher*, wreaks the same in Europe. The penetration of France's largest nuclear power plant's automated facility management system was simple, and access to the plant infrastructure now rested in the hands of Mohammed.

Mohammed has a following of gullible Christians who bought his fakery; but then, he is a good actor. The basement of the small, stone church tells another story as he collects more and more propane tanks, one at a time from different locations. The church is a sitting bomb, but Mohammed loved explosions. It ran in his family. Soon enough he would meet with Dmitry to secure the procurement, now paid for in full by the secretive Japanese group,

the *Select*. They hate Americans even more than the Muslims hate the Jews. Two billion U.S. dollars for five high-yield, thermonuclear weapons.

Jihad's Warriors have penetrated the Mexican border for several years, usually with the help of the drug cartels. Now that had all changed, and the border was more porous than Swiss cheese. The U.S. administration continues to be oblivious to the religion of Islam and seems to think all Muslims are Arabs. That's good for Vinny.

As the earliest hurricane in Atlantic history bears down on Florida, news from Goddard Space Flight Center and NASA is no better. The dark comet's collision with the moon at first seems like a silver lining, since it would have ended all life on Earth had it not been for the moon. The moon was now pink instead of white, and the surrounding rings of debris has a divine beauty of sorts.

The beauty quickly becomes a beast as Earth begins to be bombarded by debris, and meteorites hitting Earth become common news as flights throughout the world are in disarray with many airports closing intermittently. Some reports from China suggest the possibility that the lunar debris may be poisoning fresh water supplies.

Just north of Clemson, South Carolina, a cotton farmer's crop duster is stolen with plans to dust Atlanta's new football stadium during the Super Bowl. The dual-winged crop duster is one of a kind. Powered by Daimler-Benz, the Italian Fiat CR42B engine powers the plane to the horse farm north of Marietta in less than thirty minutes. There the banner will be attached advertising free beer at *Jamaica Joe's*.

Jeff's romance with Samarra blossoms quickly. The chemistry had always been there, even during her marriage to Senator Russell. When the good Senator is caught in compromising positions with young boys in bathhouses, Samarra's divorce follows. Jeff feels it is meant to be.

Excited about his wedding plans, for the first time in a long while Jeff finds himself deliriously happy. He leaves for Jamaica to check

on his declining SCUBA business with plans to return during Christmas when he and Samarra will marry on the beach. The flight to Negril is non-eventful, other than a few meteors in the distant sky; and he checks into the Ross Suite at the Charela Inn. A message from Rosalie, the maid he had grown to know well, is disturbing.

Jeff's flight back to Atlanta does not ease his emotional conflict. How will he tell the kids? How will he explain to Samarra that Melissa is alive and well, rescued after the Cayman tsunami by Jamaican fishermen? How will he let them know that Melissa has no memory of them, or him and is preaching Jesus to a bunch of Voodoos or whatever you call them, in the rainforests of Jamaica?

It seems to Jeff that just as things finally start going good, God throws in a monkey wrench just to keep you on your toes. Only he still cannot get his arms around the concept of a god who is invisible but created everything. That story was unbelievable, but then a lot of his life is becoming unbelievable. If he could only see a sign.

Chadbo and The Admiral continue to carefully monitor all the things flying around Earth, dismayed that it was only a matter of time before a big one hit the planet. There have been numerous close encounters with asteroids a couple of football fields long, but they are small compared to many they have discovered. Plus there is the unprecedented solar activity and stars that seem to be disappearing. The two men recognized that all stars eventually burn out, only stellar theory suggests that takes billions of years. Why would so many be disappearing at the same time?

The Mother's Day Massacre, as it is now called has caught everyone off guard. Random sniper attacks and bombings on Mother's Day claims hundreds of lives, mostly women and their children. A bombing by a Christian Militia group completely destroys Atlanta's Five Points Marta station and most of the travelers and MARTA staff inside.

As Jeff and Samarra continue to plan their New Year's Eve wedding in Jamaica, at the suggestion of Melissa, Dmitry Ustinov waits in a small Monaco café for The Preacher. The French military

guarded the streets of Paris and other affected cities because of the failure of the Civaux Nuclear power plants. Israel is blamed for the intrusion into the plants' security systems, and anti-Semitism is out of control in all of Europe.

Dmitry warns Mohammed, explaining that the five thermonuclear weapons are extremely dangerous and much more destructive than the bombs of Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

“When these babies go off, Mohammed,” Dmitry whispered, “you need to be at least thirty miles away.”

Of course, as Russia's number one illicit arms supplier, Dmitry planned to be far, far away when St. Petersburg was reduced to cinders and ash. He loved the motherland, but he loved dinars more.

Though Dmitry knows little of Jihad's Warriors' plans, he does know that New Year's Eve in Times Square will be one to remember.

New Year's Eve on a beach in Jamaica turns out to be as surprising as the soon to be *Manhattan Event*, at least in Jeff's mind. The marriage is perfect, the guests are perfect, even the Voodoo priest who accompanied Melissa is perfect, her latest conversion conquest.

Melissa's memories have returned for the most part, and she stands on the beach by the quiet surf, talking with her three daughters and pointing upward to a bright star in the clear, Jamaica night sky. Jeff glances upward at the star and was certain he saw slight movement. Maybe it was a plane.

In Manhattan, eight large, black Mylar balloons are attached to two, 2-kiloton briefcase nuclear bombs, a play being acted out in three other high-rise buildings surrounding Times Square. The suicide bombers high-five each other as the balloons are released from the Penthouse and into the dark night sky above New York City. When the eight bombs go off, they will be in the warm bosoms of seventy-two virgins.

Melissa gives the kids a big hug, turns and walks over to Samarra and Jeff. It is nearly midnight, and her head suddenly feels light. Her

skin tingles and tiny goose bumps appear. She truly is happy for the newlyweds. She glances skyward, searching for the star and is startled to see how much closer it is. Maybe it's an airplane, she thought quietly.

As midnight approaches, less than five seconds away, Melissa kisses Jeffrey Ross on the cheek and squeezes his hand gently. The white light in the sky grows in intensity and moves high above the beaches of Jamaica's south shore; and the crowd stared, mesmerized or too frightened to move. Melissa's parting words will forever stay in Jeff's mind.

"Here's a sign, Jeffrey," and with that she rises into the air, quickly toward the white light, now more like the midday sun, and disappeared. The star quickly dimmed and then it too disappeared, and silence lingered with the small crowd. The Voodoo priest who spent the evening talking with anyone who would listen, about "de Lady of de Sea" and how she saved him for Jesus, was nowhere to be seen.

PREFACE

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John 20:30-31

Antonius and Romulus dreaded the coming day as they reported for duty, but at least it was better than working the angry Jewish crowds in Jerusalem. Being a Roman Guard was stressful, and dealing with angry Jews was even more stressful.

The morning was already warm, and dawn had not yet risen over the eastern hills of Capernaum.

“Another hot one, right Romulus?”

Another hot one? That was an understatement, Romulus knew. The heat was posted outside the Regional Garrison Post, thanks to Pliny, the Jew from Byzantium. His thermo scope would change the world, at least that’s what most thought.

“How do you think Pliny the Jew discovered how to measure heat?” Romulus asked, wiping his brow with the palm of his hand.

“It is a strange thing, these Judahites,” Antonius said. “They are very smart people. The gods smile on them in some ways but curse them in others.”

“Well, my friend,” Romulus said, slapping Antonius on the back, “at least we can take a dip in the Sea of Galilee. And we will keep an eye on the Teacher.”

Antonius and Romulus, fellow guards and friends, remembered well their last duty in Capernaum, the time the Teacher cured the paralyzed man who fell through the roof. They had seen the man

many times before, sometimes trying to beg along the side of the dusty road.

“Do you think the Teacher will be there this time?”

“He is in Capernaum often, my friend. I have a feeling he will be around today.”

“The Jews hate him, some of them do.”

“Antonius, they hate him because they fear him; and the rabbis have everyone stirred. Why would they be so jealous of the Teacher? He does only good from what my own eyes have seen.”

By mid-morning, the heat was oppressive in the guard’s leather garments, and a slight breeze twirled desert dust in the air. The arid, brown fields around the city were deserted, other than a few wild sheep foraging in the brush. Everything was calm, thankfully, as the men gathered in the synagogue; and the women and children shopped the markets.

A crowd in the distance flocked toward the stone gates of Capernaum; and the two guards were joined by others from the garrison, prepared for yet another riot. But there was none.

The group of men and women made their way into town, and the Capernaums gathered by the roadside in anticipation. The large crowd was rejoicing and throwing pedals of flowers into the road, awaiting the entourage. Romulus quickly recognized three of the men in front but could not recall their names.

“The three Jews from the café,” Antonius said. “The ones I talked to a few weeks ago.”

Romulus remembered that day, the day of the fire in Jerusalem. The three were sitting in the back of Pomegranate’s Café, whispering about something; and Antonius had questioned them. One of the three stopped and spoke loudly to the crowd.

“Please,” John said to the group standing along the road, “Don’t push each other. Jesus is here to heal your sick, *all* of your sick. Please be patient.”

The crowd stirred in anticipation as Jesus made his way. The sick and lame, the demon possessed and lepers lay by the side of the road as dust swirled, some crying out in pain and some, seemingly dead. Suddenly a large, wild goat ran from a field and into the road, charging toward John and the apostles. The crowd by the road scurried backward as best they could as a dozen more wild goats joined the one. Romulus and Antonius watched in amazement. Neither had ever seen wild goats attack a crowd.

As disciples John, Peter and James pondered whether to run for their lives, Jesus made his way to the front calming his followers. The thirteen wild beasts continued their unabated charge. John tried to remain calm, but his heart told the tale and beat rapidly. Jesus lifted his hands, palms up and spoke to the wild beasts, not in a shout but almost a whisper.

“Come out of these beasts you demons of perdition. Be gone!”

The wild goats, to the disbelief of the crowd now trembling in fear, stopped in their tracks and drifted back to the fields from which they came and fell over, deceased.

Jesus was saddened by the size of the group awaiting him, saddened by the number of sick. Saddened that his apostles didn't know who he was. Saddened that even God's great miracles could not sway the Pharisees and Sadducees because of their jealousy and greed. Saddened that the people of Capernaum, a town he now called his own, did not believe him no matter what they saw.

“Did you see that?” Antonius asked.

“I saw it,” Romulus said after a pause. “The rabbis say the Teacher receives his power from the devil,” and the two men laughed at such nonsense. An invisible god *and* an invisible devil.

As the apostles tried to keep order among the crowd, pushing some of the sick out of the way, Jesus scolded them.

“They are sick and thirsty. Give them water.”

“We are almost out of water, Master. What shall we do?”

Romulus and Antonius, joined by three other Roman soldiers made their way slowly toward the followers of the Teacher, mostly out of curiosity.

“Go,” Jesus said. “Gather those three kraters,” and he pointed to the three large Greek containers at the side of a small shelter.

The guards watched the disciples struggle with the three large, clay kraters. Used primarily for the mixing of wine and water, the guards knew well how heavy these Greek vessels were. Romulus walked toward the one called Peter, struggling mightily to drag the krater to the side of the road. Jesus, only a few yards away, continued healing, sometimes touching the sick, sometimes merely speaking. He smiled at the struggling Peter, knowing if only he had enough faith the container could float to the side of the road.

Peter stopped as the Roman Guard approached, expecting the worst and was surprised when the soldier leaned over to assist. With the guard’s great strength, they had the vessel to the roadside by the time Jesus made his way.

“Thank you,” Jesus said to the guard, and Romulus was completely spellbound as their eyes met. He was sure he felt something, a tingling of sorts traverse his body but said nothing.

Now joined by Antonius, Romulus was stunned at how pale Antonius was, his tanned face, tanned from hours and hours in the hot desert sun, now as white as alabaster.

“What is wrong, Antonius? You look ill.”

Antonius said nothing and pointed to the vessels, now all at the edge of the dusty road. Romulus looked down, astonished to see the kraters were no longer empty but filled to the brim with a crystal clear liquid. Peter handed the guard called Romulus a cup.

“Drink,” Peter said, a broad smile crossing his leathery face. “The water will be cool to your lips.”

Romulus dipped the cup into the vessel and sipped cautiously. Smiling at the taste of the cold water, he passed the cup to Antonius. The apostles poured cool water, as cool as the water high on the

mountain tops, into the cupped hands of the Capernaums, and all were amazed.

During the hot day, the two Roman Guards saw the man from the desert, the Teacher as he was called by so many, heal every sick or lame person along the side of the road. They saw the huge crowd quench their thirst with the water from only three vessels. The guards glanced often into the Greek kraters; and the vessels were always full to the brim, no matter how many times the cups were dipped.

“How did he do that, Antonius?” Romulus later asked. “I have never had such cold water.”

That day, in a small town in the deserts of Judea, Romulus and Antonius witnessed miracle after miracle. They witnessed water appear out of thin air, an endless supply in a desert with little water; and they witnessed the paralyzed get up and walk away. They witnessed the dreaded lepers as their lesions were brushed away with mere words spoken by the Teacher, and their skin appeared blemish free. That day they witnessed a charging herd of angry, wild animals stopped in their tracks by a man raising his arms.

That day, Romulus, Antonius and a group of three other Roman Guards became believers in this amazing Jew named Jesus.

PROLOGUE

“California’s gonna fall in the ocean, Daddy.”

Precocious Audry, her red hair glinting in the sunlight, fiddled with her new eReader; but her mind was elsewhere. She was happy that school was closed because of the water shortage but did hate missing science class. She loaded her favorite astronomy app.

“That’s what Mr. Hutz said, so I know it will happen. Everything he says will happen always happens. Are you listening, Daddy?”

Jeff was listening, but his mind was elsewhere too. A meteor flashed overhead, high above but clearly visible in the early morning sky. He glanced at the outdoor thermometer, thankful for a cool morning finally, a comfortable eighty-nine degrees. A small but pungent breeze blew across the patio, and the two large air conditioners pumped cool air onto the covered part of the pool area. The waterfall trickled soothingly at the back of the pool, but Jeff was anything but soothed.

“What, honey? I’m sorry. I was listening but not listening,” Jeff said apologetically, his mind faraway. “What did you say?”

“Faraway, Dad. Your mind was just faraway,” Audry said, blowing Jeff’s mind once again. How did she know his thoughts?

“Mr. Hutz told a television lady that California was going to wash into the ocean. He said it was unavoidable and would only affect the coast. He said the mountain people believed in God and would be spared.”

“It could happen, Audry; been speculated for years,” Jeff answered.

It had been speculated for years, a major earthquake like in 1908 or worse. The fault would erupt and western California would drop in the ocean. The threat hadn’t hurt real estate as new spas and

resorts opened every week it seemed, from Rosarita Beach, Mexico, northward to Carmel and beyond.

“He’s not talking about the earthquake, Daddy. He said that will be later. This time he said a great big wave was going to wipe everything out, all the way to Canada and Alaska.”

Audry paused, swatting a small, greenish-brown and strange looking grasshopper.

“When did he say that?” Jeff asked.

After Chuck Hutz’s incredible track record, his predictions were not to be ignored. Jeff had followed his forecasts carefully since Audry became such a fan, and now it seemed he was part of the family. When he wasn’t on TV, he was often visiting the kids. He was an odd one for sure but seemed nice enough, and gifted.

“Last night on *The Apocalypse Network*. They were talking all about the poison water in China caused by the asteroids maybe.”

Audry paused and scratched the small bite on her forearm while Jeff mulled her comments.

“Did you know Spain had a hailstorm yesterday that killed a hundred and something people, and a whole bunch of animals? He said the hail will get worse too. It’s sad.”

“What’s sad?” Jeff asked.

“All these people want to kill him, Daddy. I worry about Mr. Hutz, he’s such a nice man. He really loves God.”

That certainly seemed to be true, Jeff reasoned. There had been an assassination attempt in Raleigh when Audry was interpreting for him. None of the rounds found their marks, as though they hit an invisible wall of some sort. Audry had explained that Mr. Hutz had *Divine Protection*.

“So what’s this about the wave?”

Audry pulled off her tennis shoe and rubbed her toes, suddenly itching. Seemed they had been itching a lot lately.

“He told Kari, the lady doing the interview, that a humongous, gigantic wave was coming and would wash the cadence away. He said all the warships and yachts and stuff would sink.”

“What? What do you mean it will wash the cadence away? Did he say that?”

“Yep,” she replied as she put her shoe back on, toes now relieved. “He said the wave was gonna wash away the sin and the cadence.”

“Decadence,” he corrected with a smile.

“Yeah, Daddy. That’s what I said. Then he said we would have storms like never before and everyone was gonna starve. It was really scary.”

“Don’t worry, honey. I’m sure everything is going to be just fine,” Jeff said, unconvincingly.

“It’s gonna be fine for the people who believe in Jesus, that’s what he said. He said some Christians would escape the tribal election and some would stay behind to help the mean people.”

Tribal election? Now what could that mean, he wondered.

“He said the people that stay behind and have to go through the tribal election will have a very hard time. And he said the tribal election will last seven years.”

As the words sank in, Jeff nearly lost it. He didn’t know much about God but laughed out loud at Audry’s take on the tribulation.

“What are you laughing at, Daddy?” Audry asked with a determined look and raised eyebrows.

“Oh nothing, Miss Audry. I love you,” he chuckled. “We’ll check out who’s running in the tribal election.”

A loud rumble of thunder echoed in the distance, and the warm breeze gusted. A *pungent* warm breeze, a smell of death.

CHAPTER ONE

“The unusual February weather continues, another hot one for Atlanta. High temperature, 114-degrees. Skies will be partly cloudy with a chance of meteor showers.”

The Weather Channel
Atlanta, Georgia

“Run!” Samarra screamed, nearly shoving Audry out the door of Jeff’s newest boy toy, a cherry-red *Rimac Concept One*, mouthing a silent curse at the sports car. Surely he could’ve found something a little more difficult to get out of; the seats seemed to encompass the soul. Seemed to her a one million dollar automobile ought to have some sort of seat-ejection system to help get out of the car.

“Come on Thomas, gotta go, hut... hut... hut. Run!!” she repeated with a shout to her son, wondering if he would ever make it to teenagehood; and they jogged hand in hand across the steamy-hot asphalt parking lot toward safety, hopefully. The dark pavement seemed to sink around their shoes, and the heat reflecting off the parking lot surely felt like a pizza oven.

An explosion in the distance sobered reality, and they ran faster toward the old Suwanee High School, out of breath and drinking water in the hot morning sun. At 105, the temperature wasn’t a record for the late February morning, even in Atlanta. That had been set the year before at 108. But it was early.

“Let’s go. Hurry.”

“I’m coming, Mom for Pete’s sake,” and Samarra smiled at how quickly her son had picked up Jeffrey’s sayings.

Audry held Thomas’ hand tightly, and fear was evident on her new brother’s face. Her heart beat a million beats a minute, at least.

Another tiny but potent meteorite slammed into the ground, followed by an earth-shaking boom; and a blue Chevy Volt evaporated from the corner parking spot, replaced by a house sized crater. A sixteen-foot section of Buford Highway disappeared in an instant, along with two motorcyclists and the silver SUV, all hoping to find safety with no success.

“I’m glad you bought that app, Samarra!!” Audry screamed, trying to be heard over the constant booming and keep balance on the shaking ground at the same time. She *was* glad.

Me too, Samarra thought. The IM-App had surely saved their lives more than once, she reckoned. Being warned of Incoming Meteorites had to be the app of all apps, considering how often they were happening.

“Incoming, Incoming!” her phone had announced just a few minutes earlier at her Sugarloaf home. *“Twelve minutes until impact. Gwinnett County imminent target.”*

While the IM-App had already proven to be a life saver, the app designers’ sense of humor shown in the background, a song by Skeeter Davis, *Don’t They Know it’s the End of the World?* It was an oldie, and she found it unnerving.

“Proceed to old Suwanee High School Shelter.”

Samarra’s heart pounded; and she stepped between Audry and Thomas, pulling both behind her. Thomas’ tiny, four-fingered hand was slippery with sweat; and Samarra hoped she had his asthma inhaler with her, just in case.

As parts of the Chevy Volt and chunks of black asphalt sped their way, Samarra threw the children to the ground, thankful that they had made it to the shade and crawled on top in the only protection she could think of, the only safety barrier she could provide. She held her breath, knowing something was bound to hit them.

Three workers having an early lunch in their white utility truck, escaped the truck and ran but fell to the ground. Samarra covered Audry’s eyes and was glad she couldn’t see what *she* was seeing as

paving debris, a motorcycle tire and a Gideon Bible flew barely overhead.

The explosion's after-effects passed quickly. Samarra and the children were up and running again. The back doors of the building would be heavy, but hopefully the shelter would save them. Samarra's ankle began to burn, and she glanced on the run. Blood.

They continued their jaunt toward the old Suwanee High School, along with dozens of others. The building seemed to be getting further away.

"Ouch!" Samarra said, slapping the side of her neck.

With the heat and lack of rain, mosquitos were more aggressive than ever, she thought; but that sure didn't feel like a mosquito bite.

"What?" Audry asked, still running as fast as possible, out of breath.

"Nothing, honey. Something bit me, that's all."

The shelter was a product of post-World War II and was the area's nuclear bomb shelter during the cold war. Though never used for that purpose, the building remained intact and was now a research facility built of thick concrete and steel with a six-foot thick reinforced roof.

"Will the roof be thick enough, Samarra?" Audry asked on the run, dragging the dazed and confused Thomas along.

Meteor showers had become common, and Samarra always listened to the Weather Channel to stay abreast of the deadly showers. Between the daily meteorites and those huge chunks of ice falling from the sky, she thought she might open a helmet business. Their friend Chadbo had recommended helmets while outside, and she had listened. He called them Satan's Hailstones, and Samarra thought maybe they were. She adjusted Thomas' helmet, and the shelter was finally within reach.

In the far distance, toward Lawrenceville, she was sure she heard thunder; but the sky was blue. They ran faster.

Samarra and Audry stopped in their tracks and turned at the scream, looking back across the parking lot, now with three craters that resembled perfectly round sinkholes. The utility truck was no more, and the three men were now one.

He was limping badly, running the best he could; and in an instant Audry broke free of Samarra's sweaty grip and ran toward the ailing man. Blood seeped from wounds on the small man's face.

Samarra picked up Thomas and ran after Audry with a renewed adrenalin rush. She caught up with her just as the workman collapsed, only it was a work lady instead of a man. She would be easy to carry.

Samarra and Audry supported the bleeding woman, and Audry was in awe of their combined and sudden strength. It was as though the injured woman was made of straw. Audry wiped the blood from the lady's face as she hung limp, but the blood reappeared quickly.

Was she dead?

The thought was scary, but then Audry heard the woman moan.

"We need to hurry, Audry."

They turned the corner, heading toward the open security doors that would lead to the underground shelter. A gust of wind blew blue plastic trash cans across the parking lot.

Running and out of breath, Samarra didn't notice the disappearance of the front lobby of the old Suwanee High School. It had been a maintenance repair shop; but rumors had it that it was a top secret research facility, or at least had been at one time.

"I hope Daddy makes it back today!" Audry shouted, a small piece of foam insulation now lodged in her long red hair. And she did; she missed him. Audry had known her mom would disappear that night in Jamaica. Mr. Hutz had told her, and he was always right. *He can't tell a lie.*

"He will honey, if it's at all possible. Hurry."

Out of breath, Samarra, the injured woman and the two kids entered the shelter, only to be knocked out of the way by three

teenagers with the latest earbuds pumping noise into their heads. Samarra stumbled, dropping the injured woman to the ground.

One of the locals, Samarra guessed, saw the three kids shove the women out of the way. He appeared in his sixties, maybe seventies but did not hesitate. The man intercepted the kids and slapped one squarely on the back of the head, dislodging the small speakers from the teen's ears and knocking his backwards baseball cap off his heavily tattooed head. The three kids froze in fear.

"You didn't see those people?" the man shouted, spittle coming from his mouth. "Get your sorry butts over there and carry that injured woman... or somebody's gonna have to carry you!!"

Another explosion, this time smaller or further away, rattled the morning air and then silence as they all secured places in the shelter. Five minutes passed.

"Is that it?" someone asked out of the darkness.

"Stay put," an authoritative voice called out. "App said it would last twenty to thirty minutes. It's been six."

Even with the heavy security door shoved completely shut, there came a faint sound from outside, more like the whine of an electric motor or kitchen blender. The hushed crowd looked around; but no one could tell from other's expressions, because the facility was nearly dark except for a few red emergency lights here and there. The electric-blender whine quickly evolved into more of a mild rumble, and the decibels increased painfully.

Forty miles above the Suwanee shelter, one of the last meteors of the storm approached at less than ten thousand miles an hour, turtle-slow in the world of falling stars. The slow approach speed gave the small, thirty foot meteor ample time to heat up and let any liquids contained within convert to their gaseous states, building pressure. The surface of the giant rock slowly expanded like a huge pressure cooker; and like a pressure cooker out of control, all hell broke loose.

"What *is* that noise?" someone in the crowd shouted, not really expecting an answer. The rumble increased, and Samarra held the

children and the unconscious woman tightly, protecting all three beneath her body.

The bus sized meteor, now glowing brighter than the morning sun, plotted its course directly at the old Suwanee High School shelter, as though the facility was painted in laser, a target waiting for the end. The gases continued to expand; and the pressure release outlets on the meteor could not release fast enough, at least fast enough for those below. Like a pressure-release valve in the home water heater, if the pressure can't be released fast enough, it go *boom!*

One mile above the old Suwanee High School the meteor did go boom. While there would be no crater to speak of, the heat and blast wave would destroy most standing structures, whether they be plants, animals or buildings within a half-mile radius; and damage would extend as far as three miles.

The thirty-seven people in the shelter had no idea that a meteor was headed directly at them and were confused at the noise and high-pitched whine that increased with each microsecond. It seemed like a lifetime.

“What the hell *is* that?”

The voice was familiar. There was no flash of blinding light in the underground shelter; but the sound could not be hidden, followed quickly by the twenty-five hundred degree heat and then the blast wave.

The heavy, six-foot reinforced concrete roof shook violently and the victims below screamed out in terror. Samarra squeezed her eyes shut and prayed, and she wondered if this was what Luke meant when he wrote that verse 2,000 years earlier.

“People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”

Then she fainted in terror.

CHAPTER TWO

Two months earlier

St. Petersburg

New Russian Federation

Dmitry stood three feet from the double-window in his high rise luxury apartment, and the January 1st sky was gray and dreary. There was no global warming happening in Russia this day.

A light snow fell from the grayness to the ground below, and he could barely see the historic *Church of the Savior on Spilled Blood* in the distance, arguably the most magnificent building in St. Petersburg. That would soon change.

Dmitry Ustinov wasn't a church-going man but an international exotic arms dealer. Still, he had always admired the ornate building as well as St. Petersburg's other historic churches. He held little respect for his motherland, but the architecture was phenomenal.

However, though the beautiful churches and historic buildings were nice, denarii were nicer; and the Chechen Rebels were great customers, a cash business, on time every time. Their plan to draw Russia into the coming war appeared flawless, and Dmitry found himself wondering if Allah *might* be involved. Planting the bomb had been way too simple.

I need to get out of here, he said quietly as he glanced at his expensive but gaudy Swiss timepiece. The black, leather briefcase lay on the desk in the far corner of the room, and Dmitry glanced there as well. No one else shared his luxury apartment, and he walked nearer to the window wearing only his bright red boxer shorts. His more than ample belly flowed easily past the elastic waistband.

The clear window seventy feet above ground, was now coated lightly with fresh snow. Three busloads of pilgrims or missionaries

lined Nevsky Prospect, the main street far below; and the buses were some of the few vehicles out on the Russian holiday. Most businesses were closed but not the churches. They would be full in another hour.

Dmitry took the Zeiss Victory digital binoculars from the small desk by the window and focused on St. Petersburg's newest high-rise office tower, blurred in the distance by the lightly falling flakes of white.

Scanning to the left of the tower through the gray, flaky sky, the powerful binoculars homed in on a white utility van parked on the upper level of the building's parking deck. He was amazed at the viewing quality as the electronics quickly adjusted the binoculars, almost eliminating the snow. The bomb-laden van looked a foot away rather than nearly a mile.

Dmitry the arms broker laughed out loud, proud of his late night accomplishment. The white van with multiple ladders mounted on top looked like any other painter's van, but this was not a painter's van at all. Three hours earlier, Dmitry had personally changed the back license plate of the van under the snowy darkness, exchanging it with an Israeli plate. The falling snow would quickly hide his espionage.

He laughed again, knowing the exchange was futile. The Israeli license plate and the Israeli manufactured driveshaft in the van would surely point fingers toward the Jewish troublemaker; only Dmitry knew the evidence wouldn't survive the coming firestorm. The 5-megaton thermonuclear weapon would go off precisely at 8:00 AM, the same time the nuclear weapons in Times Square, Paris and Miami detonated. Midnight New Year's Eve in New York City would be memorable.

"Dmitry, my friend," and the man had slapped Dmitry on the back, far too hard. He recalled the conversation a year earlier as his mind briefly wandered from the task at hand; getting as far away from St. Petersburg as possible.

“They’re big ones,” Dmitry commented that day, stressing to The Preacher that these were no ordinary bombs.

“These are much larger than the ones used on the Japs. Be sure and show them respect. One of these bad boys, from the right altitude, can flatten a city. Every man, woman and child within 5 miles will be vapor, along with a shipload of other animals.”

Returning to the present, Dmitry figured he would be vapor too if he didn’t get the hell out of there.

He moved quickly toward the black briefcase, probably now the most expensive briefcase in the world. Imbedded inside, behind the fabric liner, were the codes. With those and a trip to Grand Cayman Island, he would become one of the world’s richest men, thanks to *The Select*, his young Japanese funders. These Japs hated Americans more than the Muslims, which was good for his offshore account.

Dmitry thought about that, his funders. He still didn’t know exactly who the discreet group of rich Japanese was; but he did know they had the big dinars, financed the hijacked nuclear sub and the five multi-megaton nukes. He also knew they were descendants of the victims killed in Japan by the world’s first nuclear attack in 1945, and their obsession was great: Destroy the United States of America, no matter the cost. Dmitry slipped on a pair of USSR white loeod sweat pants and a red and blue striped golf shirt.

Grabbing the briefcase and keys to the Dartz Prombron SUV, Dmitry’s plan was simple. Head southwest from St. Petersburg to the private aerodrome and fly by private jet to Tallinn Airport in Estonia. From Estonia he would take a circuitous route to Cuba and then to Grand Cayman. A life of luxury on a warm beach with beautiful women awaited him somewhere in the Caribbean. After the Cayman tsunami, good land deals were easy to come by.

With briefcase and keys in hand, Dmitry took one more look out his apartment window toward the magnificent *Church of the Savior* in the distance. He was a smart man and knew the history of the marvelously styled church, built on the exact spot where Alexander II was assassinated in 1881.

He again glanced to the street below, blurred by the falling snowflakes; and the churches were filling with delusionary pilgrims. Lines of people filled the sidewalks to the various church doors; and Dmitry thought it such a waste that so many lived for a myth, an invisible god. *The world would be a better place without those idiots making rules for everyone else*, he thought.

Dmitry preferred Russia the old atheist way, not the new Russia and the rebirth of religious zealotry. It wouldn't matter soon though, and he checked the time. He needed to hurry. In an hour St. Petersburg would be a wasteland.

Dmitry squeezed his keys subconsciously when a flash of intense but brief pain struck the top left quadrant of his chest, and he recognized the symptoms: another heart attack.

Breathless, Dmitry fell to the floor; and his heart beat erratically. His face and head broke out in a thick sweat that felt like glue; and he released his grip on the world's most expensive briefcase, dropping the keys down the heating vent recessed in the deep red carpeted floor. The blood now flowing freely from Dmitry's nose blended well with the carpet.

As his vision slowly returned, Dmitry regained his senses and wondered how long he had been unconscious; then he remembered the nuke. Less than an hour.

Still weak, he pulled himself up to the window sill, looking around the floor for his keys. He wiped the blood from his nose, now dried, on his sleeve. He would have to hurry, but his legs just wouldn't function.

He again looked out the window; and only a few were now lining the sidewalk, waiting to enter the churches. The tower clock on one of the historic buildings said it all; eight minutes 'til eight.

Then he noticed something oddly different. The few remaining pilgrims on the sidewalks simply disappeared. They were there, and then they weren't. There were still a couple of policemen and the bus drivers standing around scratching their heads, but the people waiting to get in the churches had simply vanished.

Out of breath and sweating profusely, he tried to focus on his timepiece; and time seemed to be crawling slowly by.

7:53 A.M.

In less than seven minutes he would be deceased; and he consigned himself to his final plight, at least in this world. He didn't believe in a future world.

Now supporting his portly frame on the wide mahogany window sill of his luxury apartment, he struggled to stand and contemplated a leap out the window. Suicide would surely be better than what was to come, but then he reconsidered.

At least his death would be quick and painless. He would simply be converted back to the basic building blocks of nature, variants of disassembled amino acids propelling through space and time, ingredients from which he began fifty-seven years earlier one night in the back seat of his soon-to-be uncle's 1955 Russian Moskvitch.

Dmitry was startled by the sudden roar. The sound seemed to be coming from high above, and he looked upward into the gray, snowy sky. Visibility had to be less than a quarter mile.

A Russian Antonov 225 cargo jet appeared out of the clouds, only a few hundred feet above the commercial landscape. With three large jet engines under each wing, the world's largest aircraft seemed out of control, the giant silver wings rocking side to side.

The engines screamed as the pilots applied fuel; and the nose of the craft turned sharply upward, reached stall speed and the plane crashed to the ground a thousand feet below. Dmitry's heart pounded, and he tried to digest all that was happening so quickly. The fireball rose, a bright orange against the gray weathered sky; and he thought he could feel the heat. He felt something.

Dmitry rubbed his eyes with both hands and tried again to focus, still not believing what he had seen. On the street below, a taxi slammed into a building, a driverless taxi. Even through the closed, snow-laced windows Dmitry began to hear screams from the people who remained below.

“It’s the Rapture! It’s the Rapture!” one of the policemen began shouting, but the others standing around had no idea what the Rapture was. Neither did Dmitry.

Less than a mile distant as Dmitry’s timepiece struck 7:55 in the morning, the 5-megaton Ukrainian nuclear weapon in the back of the service van atop the parking deck unleashed its fiery fury, equivalent to five million tons of TNT, five minutes early.

He cried out in pain, holding his hands over his eyes and began to claw at his burned retinas in vain as his luxury apartment became nothing, along with what had been the world’s most prolific arms purveyor. Dmitry vanished in a flash, but he wasn’t raptured.

On that New Year’s Day in St. Petersburg, Dmitry finally saw the light as he journeyed toward a future world, a world in which he did not believe.

CHAPTER THREE

Miami Beach

“Pretty big crowd!”
The Miami night air was stifling as the New Year’s Eve crowd quickly grew.

“Bigger than I thought it would be,” the elderly man in blue seersucker shorts and Jimmy Buffet T-shirt answered. His white hair was long but thin and flowed in the 96-degree night breeze. The moon glowed pink in the dark sky, surrounded by rings that remained almost white, an amazing sight, a sign in the sky for sure.

“Isn’t it beautiful, Grandpa?”

“Isn’t what beautiful?” the old man answered with a question.

As midnight approached from the east, a large crowd of New Year’s Eve celebrants lingered in anticipation in downtown Miami. It was a different Miami than years past. After the hurricane, most of the remaining who survived moved inland to the mountainous regions of Georgia and north Alabama or to Central and South America. Rebuilding was in progress but would be slow.

“The moon!” the young boy said, pointing skyward. “It’s beautiful.”

The annual celebration wasn’t nearly as large as in the past, primarily due to all the disasters that had befallen the southeast coast, especially the unprecedented hurricane Abigail from the year before. Most structures less than four stories high had been destroyed, and beach cleanup would continue for years. Piles of debris lined some of the streets for miles.

The two new high-rises by the park entrance were unoccupied, a one hundred million dollar waste; and what window glass remained after the hurricane, had been removed for safety. The buildings were now referred to as the *Two Beach Zombies*. Like dark gray skeletons

of steel, the two 60-story buildings stood alone in tribute to the economic collapse of the past few years.

“Well, it’s not Times Square,” the boy’s mother said, squeezing her six year old son’s hand, “but there are a lot more than I thought there would be! That’s good for the Bayfront Park neighborhood.”

The Florida community along the coast of the Atlantic hadn’t been much since the Cayman Tsunami and Hurricane Abby invaded their land and ravaged the real estate, beaches and the people. Some had given up and moved, many to Panama, Costa Rica and Belize. Warm climate, rain forests and few hurricanes. The general feeling among most was that *America was goin’ to hell in a hand basket*. Sometimes she thought that was surely true.

“Yes,” the young-at-heart grandfather replied, “but Panama is lookin’ better all the time. Plus, since the crazies blew up the Panama Canal, real estate’s a deal. Saw a three bedroom beach house, two thousand square feet, for less than sixty thousand dollars.”

He paused, scanning the crowd; and his smile became more scowl than smile. His young grandson’s blond hair dripped in perspiration, and he found himself wondering again how high will the temperatures go? He figured the heat was another reason people stayed home to celebrate. A few feet away, two men in black suits, tall and well built, were holding signs; and Grandpa wondered why they weren’t sweating and why they were so pale.

“Look at all these confounded cops,” Grandpa continued, as a sudden gust blew a large, potted hibiscus over, blocking the pathway with broken clay, potting soil and beautiful bright pink blooms. “Remember when we didn’t need all this dadgum security? Yeah, I’m thinkin’ Belize.”

The din of the beach crowd grew, not just from conversation and excitement but applause. The sound of people applauding, even before the giant orange began its ascent, was puzzling to the old man and did not go unnoticed by J.J., the 6-year old grandson, his mother’s hand tightening around his out of reflex.

“Hmmm... Wonder what that’s all about?” Grandpa asked, and walked toward the cheering crowd. He checked his Timex as the digital display moved closer to the New Year, and 11:58 rolled into 11:59. He turned to the left out of curiosity, hoping to see what message adorned the black-suited men’s signs.

The Towers of Babel Have Fallen Again

They topped the landscaped hill, pink bougainvillea in full bloom; and the hot night breeze picked up as the sweet smell of Jasmine blessed the warm air. The boisterous crowd continued applauding, when suddenly the top floor of one of the steel skeletons jutting skyward lit up as though new tenants occupied the top floor with no windows, six-hundred feet above the park.

The top floor’s bright white glow made the tall building look like a large candle; and the harsh light clearly showed six people standing in what once was a floor-to-ceiling window but was now a large hole in the skeletal steel structure, six silhouettes outlined in bright blue as though they were wearing a large glow necklace around their bodies.

“Cool!” J.J. shouted.

The now dancing silhouettes waved jubilantly to the crowd below, throwing out glow-in-the-dark confetti; and the night glittered like floating diamonds with wings as the confetti fell toward the ground, blowing toward the crowds a quarter-mile away.

With the New Year’s Eve party in full bloom, the celebrants roared in jubilation, waving back to the dancers high above. Finally there was some happiness in the air was Grandpa’s thought, and that was nice to see for a change.

Now a hundred feet above the building and out of sight in the darkness, six large Mylar balloons slowly rose into the dark night. At an altitude of eight hundred feet, each balloon lit the night sky,

glowing in a thin outline of blue-white light. A large numeral in the center of one balloon, displayed 46... then 45.

“Grandpa, that’s awesome!! The balloons are doing a countdown to the New Year! Wow!”

“That’s pretty impressive,” the young mother agreed, staring skyward, mouth agape. The large balloons were beautiful, and she’d never seen anything like it. These were no ordinary balloons.

“What’s that strapped below the balloons?” Grandpa asked.

“It looks like a basket!” J.J. shouted and laughed in glee.

Christmas had been good to J.J.; and his first bike, shiny and blue, waited on the patio at home. The countdown continued, 9... 8... and the crowd chimed in, 7...

The large balloons, when combined, had a lift capacity of sixty-eight pounds; and the briefcase nuke only weighed forty-six. With a weight well below the lift capacity, the balloon sextet easily lifted the package into the night sky.

“Not sure J.J.,” Grandpa replied, puzzled. “Prob’ly part of the show.” That was his hope.

The night, breezy earlier, had become calm and the nuke rose higher. The package’s altimetrically controlled switch was programmed for 1,500 feet, and the ignition sequence would not occur until the programmed altitude was attained.

A gust from nowhere caught the balloon sextet, and the heavy package seemed to lose altitude rather than gain. The crowd below groaned loudly in disappointment, and the balloons drifted further over the Atlantic. As the wind diminished, the balloons slowly rose again, gaining height with each second.

At six seconds ‘til midnight, the 59th floor directly below the dancers lit the night sky; and the crowd’s attention temporarily turned away from the rising Great Orange.

The large, vacant window space no longer framed the six waving dancers but was replaced with a large banner that now covered the 59th floor’s windowless frames. The bright white backlight made the

letters on the unfurled banner easy to read, only the loudly applauding crowd didn't really have to read the banner. The six suddenly appeared in a vacant window frame, each with an electronically enhanced bullhorn.

5... 4... 3...

The six shouted in unison, and the bullhorns made their words loud and clear as the crowd stopped applauding:

“Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar!”

The balloons slowly rose towards 1,500 feet, only a second or two away from Allah's glory. In the distance, a shooting star-storm brushed cosmic streaks across the darkened sky, God's personal fireworks show.

2...

In an instant, the area and crowds below the six large balloons began to glow in a light as bright as midday in a desert. The blinding light washed the crowds; but not before they all read the message on the unfurled banner hanging from Beach Zombie One's 60th floor.

God is Great

1...

