



# **APOCALYPSE**

# **OJAI**

This book is dedicated, first and foremost, to the confused tribe of Man. Secondly, I offer this humble effort to my wife and son, who have shared with me the joyous yet turbulent discovery of many hidden truths. Lastly, I wish light and love to those friends and family who have chosen other paths.

May we all know ourselves as *One* in the end.

- Patrick Westfall  
May, 2015

## THE UNIVERSAL LAWS / HERMETIC PRINCIPLES

- I. The Principle of MENTALISM
- II. The Principle of CORRESPONDENCE
- III. The Principle of VIBRATION
- IV. The Principle of POLARITY
- V. The Principle of RHYTHM
- VI. The Principle of CAUSE AND EFFECT
- VII. The Principle of GENDER

- *Hermes Trismegistus*

January, 2022 - Los Padres National Forest, California

A crimson sun rose in the eastern sky casting its brilliant radiation upon the skin of Gaia, the earth. The debris in the atmosphere had grown so thick that the appearance of a yellow sun had become only a memory, or as some were beginning to believe, only a myth.

There were now very few birds circling the skies above Ojai, California. Although most of the trees still remained, they were largely sterile and the animals had been forced to migrate elsewhere in search of sustenance.

The sacred land of the Chumash was now eerily silent, save for the distant rumble of Humvees and military transport trucks on the road or the biting chop of the military helicopters aloft in the red sky.

Merlyn waited for one to pass overhead, noting at a glance that it was a U.N. Surveillance chopper. It was the seventh year since the Event and he was now 17 years old. He had been watching a small group of refugees wind their way up the mountain trail and was certain that they would be spotted. He was relieved when the helicopter veered west toward what used to be Santa Barbara. He plotted a course to intercept the group.

His thoughts raced, *Who are they, and what are they doing wandering around the Topa Topa mountains in broad daylight!* He had observed them long enough to ascertain that they were not the Citizens' Patrol or Department of Homeland Security forces. *Then who were they?* They carried no visible firearms or provisions and they were moving painfully slow due to one of them who walked with a severe limp.

Merlyn descended the peak and concealed himself among the rocks in the dry creekbed on Pratt Trail, north of Signal Street in

Ojai. He invoked patience as he waited for them under the rising sun that had grown much warmer than it used to be.

Even before the Event he remembered his father saying that it was getting hotter every year. 2014 had been the hottest on record around the world and they had personally recorded Ojai's new record at 118 degrees Fahrenheit. Now it was 120 by ten o'clock every morning, year round, and often climbed up to 144 in the summer.

The group eventually made themselves known by their loud bickering and soon Merlyn observed four young men round the bend in the trail. The one with the limp was the oldest and had nasty bruising on his face. Merlyn supposed the FEMA camps were responsible for his ill-treatment, although he had never heard of anyone escaping from one before.

Merlyn stepped from the cover of the trees, revealing himself to the bedraggled group. He raised his hand to wave and the three younger boys returned his gesture. The countenance of the fourth in the group ran through a gamut of fearful expressions before the man raised both of his arms and screamed, "Run! It's a trap!"

A small piece of lead from a sniper's barrel ended his consciousness and the man fell silently to the ground. Merlyn fell too and searched downrange through his rifle's scope. Seconds later he saw the shooter three hundred yards down the trail taking aim at *him!*

Merlyn targeted four inches to the right of the sniper's weapon, held his breath, and squeezed the trigger. He saw blood spew from the man's shoulder just as the sniper's own bullet blasted the dirt a foot in front of Merlyn. He wiped sweat from his brow as he realized that he had fired only a microsecond before his opponent had. He also understood that the group of children had been used as bait to draw rebels out of hiding. Merlyn could hardly believe they could find soldiers willing to do what they did.

Merlyn ran up to the three boys and asked, "Do you want to go back to the FEMA camp or come with me?" The boys were huddling together under some low branches, their eyes wide with fear. They were clearly in shock and too terrified to make a decision on their own.

Merlyn wanted to go easy on them but knew there was little time. The sniper was sure to have had a backup team nearby and they would come looking for them soon.

"My name is Merlyn. I'm a refugee. If you don't want to go back with them, then you have to come with me!" He picked the oldest boy up under the arms and steadied him on his feet. After a moment, the other two boys stood up on their own.

There was so much that Merlyn wanted to say but he just turned around and began walking. He hadn't noticed any wounds on them so he suspected they could walk, and they did. They shuffled their feet in an unsteady gait like dazed automatons but they followed Merlyn up the mountain and far down its northern side.

They walked for many long hours under the hot, red sun through low, dry chaparral. Merlyn had distributed the last of his canteen and was grateful that he had water back at his camp. The boys didn't complain and once Merlyn even thought he heard the youngest one humming quietly. He smiled inside at the resilience of youth. An astute observer might have marveled at Merlyn's own.

The red sun had turned the western skies many shades darker before the pitiable group reached the wild side of the Piedras Blancas, the sacred white rocks. They sat in a hollowed out niche underneath half a billion pounds of rock.

"This is one of my best cave-camps!" Merlyn said cheerfully. He offered clean, cool water to the boys who drank it greedily. "I have others but this was the closest. What are your names?"

The boys shied reflexively from the question. Merlyn understood their reticence and intuited correctly that he should first talk about himself if he wanted them to open up. Merlyn's parents had taught him the importance of empathy and perspective, and he knew the poor kids had been traumatized.

"Well, I'm Merlyn. I've been out here with my family ever since the Event. We were pretty well prepared for it when it happened." He paused uncertainly, "Sort of. Anyway, now it's just me and you three."

Merlyn looked at the young, gaunt faces and joked, "And if you don't tell me your names, then I'll make 'em up for myself. I'll call you Small, Medium and Large!"

Medium laughed out loud and it was a good, honest sound.

Merlyn continued, "No, I'll name you after animals!" He pointed to Small and said, "Since you're so big, I'll name you T-Rex." This elicited more than a giggle from T-Rex.

Merlyn was about to dub the next in line when Large pointed at T-Rex and said, "Her name is Emily!" After a moment of pregnant silence, everyone burst into laughter.

To elucidate the point, Medium added, "She's a *girl!*"

After the laughter died down again, Merlyn turned to her, shook her hand and said, "Hi Emily, I'm Merlyn." They shook hands and she gave Large a curt nod of vindication.

"Hi." she replied, then read Merlyn's mind by adding, "I'm twelve. Momma cut my hair like this to make me look like a boy. She said it was safer that way."

"I'm Lucas," Medium said. "I'm almost thirteen!" he said enthusiastically.

"I'm Charlie," the oldest boy offered, "I'm sixteen." The young men awkwardly shook hands with Merlyn. They weren't used to acting like grown-ups, or to being treated like one.

"Are you all brothers and sisters?" Merlyn asked innocently, causing another uproar from the children who had, for the moment, fully forgotten their past trauma and present peril.

Charlie composed himself more or less adequately and responded, "We knew each other from school. We all went to school together."

Lucas added sadly, "And the one with the limp was Elijah. He was trying to warn you."

"And we were all put in camp FEMA/Nordhoff together." Emily said, her voice seemed small and fragile but was sufficient to return their thoughts to the gravity of their present situation. Merlyn remembered that summer camp used to be a great part of childhood in California and realized that it had now become their literal reality. Life was all one big camping trip now, whether outdoors and free as a fugitive or legally, which meant within the confines of a government yard. There was no third option for existence after the Event.

Sensing the need for action, Merlyn delegated the task of collecting firewood to Charlie and Lucas. He asked Emily to stay behind and learn how to cook. She beamed a grateful smile back at him, but then challenged, "How did you know I like to cook? Just because I'm a girl?"

Merlyn, who had stereotyped her grievously, gave the faux-pas a moment's thought before replying, "I didn't. I just knew that *they* weren't!" He motioned toward the boys and they laughed together.

An hour later, the group gathered around the dying embers of a small fire. They had eaten their fill of the beans that Merlyn's

parents had stored in preparation of the Event. He had inherited them from his parents nearly two years earlier.

Emily asked Merlyn, "What was it like before? In the old days."

"Oh, it was pretty great. Blue skies in the daytime with a bright yellow sun. At night, the moon would rise like a shining silver disk."

"Yeah right!" she responded sarcastically. "Don't lie, the sun wasn't really yellow, was it?"

"Yeah, I heard it was only a myth!" Lucas added.

"It's true!" Merlyn said cheerfully. "I used to see it all the time in the old days, especially when we used to go camping up here."

Charlie said, "I was eleven when it happened. I can kind of remember the yellow sun, but I can't remember seeing the moon at all. I guess I was too young to remember."

Emily asked, "What was the Event all about anyway?"

Lucas said, "Yeah, my parents didn't understand anything! One minute everything seemed fine and then the next," he paused for breath and strength, "they took Dad away and locked me and Mom up in the camp. I haven't seen her since."

"That's what happened to my mom, too! I don't know where my dad is. I hardly even know him." Emily said sadly. *Her feelings about her dad, Merlyn thought, were wounds even older than the Event.*

Charlie said, "Not my family. My parents were activists. They were shot right at the front door!" Charlie burst into tears that nothing could assuage, but the children were quick to place their supportive arms around him.



Merlyn's mind flashed back to the many times his father had told him, *Someday you are going to have to teach others what you've learned, because you didn't grow up like everyone else. I didn't teach you the lies the system wanted you to believe, I taught you the truth about the system itself, the real history behind the veils of darkness.* He laughed a little as he recalled his father's candor.

"I'll tell you a little bit every day," Merlyn said to the group, "I'll tell you about the good ol' days before, and I'll tell you what the Event really was all about."

All eyes had turned expectantly upon Merlyn when he suddenly remembered one of the tricks his dad had used when he had needed to buy himself time.

"Right after our work's done tomorrow night. You've had enough for one day and it's probably time to get some sleep." The children groaned with disappointment but Merlyn hoped that their anticipation would make them astute listeners the following night when he had figured out what he should tell them.

\* 2 \*

July, 2015 - Hall of the Sleepers

A lone figure moved purposefully through the dark tunnel. He was a big man in all respects, from his size fourteen shoe to his six-foot five frame. His girth made itself known through his thick black robe. He carried a small wooden box and wore a sharp golden sickle on his belt. He wore the insignia of a 33rd degree freemason around his neck with a matching ring on his wedding finger.

Sir Pike was a dark sorcerer who had been raised by the Others for a special purpose. They had taught him the ancient secrets of Egypt, Iraq, India and China; had groomed him for the dark

priesthood with frequent, privileged visits to the Vatican, the White House and to Buckingham Palace.

His persona exuded a phenomenal power among men, but soon he would be weaker and more pitiable than a kitten. He shivered involuntarily as he stopped before a thick wooden door, built in a sturdy medieval style. He then performed the secret of unlocking it.

He then disengaged the booby traps that lined the interior corridor and opened the door. A light flashed in his eyes and he heard the expected *whoosh* of the blades which passed merely inches in front of him; a failsafe trap that was not defeatable like the others.

He moved quickly through the darkness and arrived at another door. It opened into a natural cavern, deep within the earth of Antarctica. This was the lair of the great beast Cthulu and its mad creators, known among the Cabal as the Three Sleepers. In truth, these enigmatic beings did not truly sleep but only had the reputation of doing so. Sir Pike and very few others knew that they were really concentrating their thought-forms.

The ancient Sleepers, who had arrived on earth long before the rise of Man, understood the Laws of the Universe and knew well that their plan for depopulation and a New World Order stood in direct opposition to those laws in many ways. Therefore, all of their efforts had to be sustained artificially by the monumental psychic and spiritual energy of the concentrating Sleepers.

Pike knew that if human intention ever turned selflessly pure, then even these great Sleepers could not hold the cabal's plans in focus and they would crumble in a matter of hours. Yet Pike, who knew humans intentions well, was not worried. *That would never happen*, he thought confidently, *the masses will never choose the service of others over the service of self.*

Pike held a very special position within the dark cabal, and he claimed inclusion to many of its diverse covens such as the

Freemasons, Illuminati and the Bildeberger Group. Yet he had little patience for their petty minutiae of control, for Pike was now to about to commune directly with the Sleepers themselves.

Ages ago, the Sleepers had learned to employ a Priest as a human intermediary between themselves and the Elder Gods in much the same way the Elder Gods had used human kings to enact their own law upon Beings who they considered *lower* than themselves. The Elder Gods had been extremely jealous of the priest as intermediary but they had long ago acquiesced to the structure of power as dictated by the Sleepers. *Who could stand before them?*

Pike heard the hideous confusion of their voices before he spied their bizarre forms climbing the slick walls of the cavern. They clung to the walls and scurried about in wanton, erratic paths that greatly unnerved him. They jerked and dragged their strange bodies with the lightning rapidity of their insectoid nature.

In myriad languages, they murmured and hissed an incessant barrage of partial mind-thoughts into the greater human consciousness, as if they were engaged in eternal arguments with every member of humanity at once.

Indeed, so they were, for they knew that anything less than total concentration of negative energy would cause the Plan to fall from its own weight. The cabal's subversive enslavement of the human species and the destruction of countless other species of life on earth, ran directly contrary to the *order* and *harmony* which fuels the universe. Their behavior was so unnatural that Universal Laws were always in the active process of eroding them from within, yet the Sleepers' tri-focused magick was strong and grew with every selfish human deed enacted through their occult willpower.

As Pike prostrated his body upon the coarse, dank soil, he braced himself for the unpleasant sensation of possession. Their nonsensical, manic arguments slowed as he became conscious of

contact, as if their myriad, fragmented arguments had become his own. He wished desperately for death as his body was driven into intense convulsions as a result of the torment he was experiencing within his spirit and psyche.

During a possession, the Sleepers did not speak in a aural language of words, but rather through symbols they implanted deep within the medium's subconscious mind. These symbols, half-remembered from past incarnations, blazed in orange light upon the cavernous walls of Pike's innermost mind.

An observer would have seen the angelic letters etched into napalmic characters on the cavern walls in the literal sense as well, emanating light of the appropriate color from each chakra center of Pike's body.

A doctor would have pronounced him dead, a nurse would have watched the heart monitor flatline, yet the Sleepers knew secrets the medicos knew not. The secret of all true power lay in the comprehension and use of the universal laws, expressed imperfectly to mankind in the Tetragrammaton, the unspeakable name of God. The Sleepers knew the mystical secrets of all the world's peoples in all ages, for it was they who had taught them.

The possessed body of Sir Pike writhed on the ground in grotesque serpentine movements while his voice murmured unintelligible fragments of the instructions he was receiving. His lower jaw snapped involuntarily and would have severed his tongue had not the Sleepers willed it to shrink back into the mortal's throat.

Impossible contortions were forced upon the large, overly sated body of Sir Pike and he did not then look like the fourth or fifth most powerful human being alive. An empathetic observer could only have wept at the tortuous abuse of a fellow human being regardless of his chaotic-evil alignment.

Sir Pike dreamed that he was engaged in heinous acts of wanton cruelty when he awoke on the cavern floor. Disappointment

stained his mood as he remembered where he was and what had just happened. His brain had received an incredible amount of data that he must relate to Archangel Samael immediately. The Event was to begin on the fourth Blood Moon of 2015.

\* 3 \*

July, 2015 - Ventura, California

Retirement came as a welcome shock to Daisy Lou. After nearly fifty years of cleaning toilets at the Veterans' hospital, she had finally found freedom in retirement. Born the eldest of eight in Louisiana, she had been called upon early for the heavy chores. Daddy's clothes always needed mending and her siblings were usually hungry, dirty or in need of something.

Yet, her innate spirituality had carried her through the lean times. She was honest in her dealings with the world, although somewhat underactive in areas of personal growth. Pragmatism had been forced upon her as well as a sizable portion of good ol' fashioned Christian guilt. She wallowed in it as penance for the perceived sins of those she loved, truly endeavoring to martyr herself upon the cross of mercy. Yet, she was indeed a noble-hearted soul who blended true innate goodness with the realm of repetitive religious dogma.

*Strawberry and rhubarb*, she thought as she withdrew the bubbling pie from the oven, *who would have thought a fruit and vegetable could complement each other so well!* The pies were for her son's family. She considered them good people but too many books had clouded their beliefs. *I only need one book*, she thought smugly, or faithfully, depending upon the perspective. She referred, of course, to the New International Version of the Holy Bible, copyright 1973.

Doubts, planted by her youngest son, attempted to crowd her mind but God fought them off like rain from a roof. Her son had tried to tell her that the bible had been rewritten by unethical priests and scholars. He had even once inferred that Jesus might be the son of an alien. *Ha!* she said out loud to the empty kitchen. *All those Sunday school lessons and the boy doesn't know anything about Jesus!*

She set the pie in the window and its sweet but savory scent wafted throughout the kitchen while she spoke a sincere prayer for her lost little boy.

\* 4 \*

July, 2015 - Ventura, California

Joe Average, pronounced with a long A, finished installing a new transmission into a burnt-orange, cherried-out 1986 Ford Mustang 5.0 convertible at the garage. He drove straight from the shop to the check-cashing joint down the road. He couldn't get a bank account since his ex-wife had written a slew of bad checks around the state, so he was reduced to paying fifteen-percent to convert his paycheck into hard currency. This money would be used to pay alimony and child-support to the love of his life who had cheated on him and took primary custody of his daughter.

*Ain't life grand?* he thought as the bartender on the second stop after work, popped the top off Joe's first Budweiser as *Jesus Take the Wheel* played on the jukebox. If he had been a more introspective soul, he might have noticed that he was subconsciously wishing that he could Take the Wheel from Jesus and drive the damned car himself.

Although raised protestant, he had been pigeon-holed as a trouble-maker early in life. He drank, smoke, chased girls, belched during dinner and farted during sermons. This was, he believed, largely

due to his natural fiery nature and the lack of positive influences in his life growing up.

Yet Joe Average *had* stood up to injustice in his life, both on the schoolyards and in the Union. He saw himself as an immovable rock standing against the current, while everyone else seemed to be made of loose mud.

He complained to the bartender about the lazy government, who automatically reciprocated his customer's opinion in the interest of expediency. There were many others awaiting the same impulsive release of words which only a bartender seemed to provide to men of Joe's ilk. He excused himself politely but Joe failed to notice.

"The problem is, y'know, there's too many immigrants takin' our jobs!" His empty words reached empty ears but a drunkard toasted his wild, emphatic gesticulations. He raised his glass in heady response as a McDonald's commercial played between innings on all seven big-screen televisions.

The hours passed, his baseball team lost and Joe's bar tab was nearly three times what he had expected it to be. The part of him that remained coherent knew that he would eat ramen noodles for every meal until his next payday because his minimum-wage paycheck left him only \$27 after the night's debauchery.

On the blurry, felonious drive home, Bruce Springsteen's *Ghost of Tom Joad* played on his Alpine stereo through booming 15" speakers but, having never read Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, he didn't quite understand what the words meant.

The emptiness had crept into his soul and was overtaking him literally and figuratively. He thought maybe someone should install higher railings on the bridge as he drove high over a dry riverbed. *Or perhaps they shouldn't have 'em there at all!* he thought as he considered turning the car off the bridge.

At home, his answering machine contained three messages of his nagging ex-wife and a rare one from his daughter who had called to wish him a good night's sleep. He deleted the others but played his daughter's message on a loop. Joe Average drifted away as happily as if he had read her a bedtime story.

\* 5 \*

July, 2015 - Ojai, California

Andy smiled proudly at his wife, Anna, who had just concluded her presentation flawlessly, with verve and poignancy. Then he looked at the City Council members to whom she had been addressing. The mayor checked his watch for the umpteenth time while the other members sent and received text messages on their telephones. It was clear that they had heard little and understood even less.

The mayor stood, walked swiftly to the podium and asked, "May we please get a round of applause for, uh, what is your name again, Ma'am?"

"Anna, Sir." she replied without a trace of the coolness Andy knew must have been lurking near the surface. *This is why she delivers these speeches*, he counseled himself, *'cause I would cuss 'em all out and our message would never be heard.*

"Yes, of course, for Ann, ladies and gentlemen." This was met with a smattering of apathetic applause, which the mayor euthanized quickly by adding, "I am certain that our stalwart council members will give this important issue their most immediate attention."

"Sir, I was hoping you would issue our operating permit today. Here and now." Anna replied.



"Now? Oh, I'm afraid that's not how we do things here, young lady. But, you'll be hearing from us soon." The mayor adjourned the meeting by walking out the door with his retinue in tow. Anna sat down dejectedly as if the wind beneath her wings had failed.

"You did very well, honey." Andy said to her. "There's nothing more you could've done. They don't want to know the truth."

She smiled at him gratefully, "Thanks, love."

"We can still hold our weekly meeting at the coffee shop," Andy continued, "I think it's worth it to keep trying."

"Keep trying to do what, exactly?" They looked up to see a man standing in the doorway. "Throw pearls before swine?"

Andy liked him right away but Anna rebuked the phrase boldly, "They're not swine. They're people who have been lied to for so long that they have lost-"

"Yes, quite right you are, but there is little time left for philanthropy. The Event is nearly upon us."

The blood cooled uncomfortably in the couple's veins. Andy said, "Who are you?"

"I am Israel Crowley, please take my card before the young lad interrupts us." Andy crossed the room and took the black business card from him and placed it in his pocket just as Craig entered the room.

Craig was one of two reporters for the Ojai Times and it was obvious that he had some questions for the activists. He walked past the two men without glancing at them and extended his hand to Anna. Andy watched as they exchanged pleasantries and found himself hoping that Craig would print a detailed article on the Event. His mind returned to the enigmatic Crowley who, Andy discovered, had silently left the room upon Craig's arrival.

"So, you're trying to get a message out there. What is it?" The reporter asked blatantly.

Anna considered asking him why he couldn't have attended the sixty-minute presentation that she had just concluded instead of arriving late and asking for a sentence or two that he could run with.

Instead, she took a deep breath and carefully modulated her voice. "Have you heard of the Sumerians and their history of human civilization?"

"Nope."

"Are you aware that the world's great religious books and histories were rewritten with a secret agenda?"

"Uh-uh."

"Are you aware that there is a small group of powerful people who run the world from behind the scenes?"

"You mean the Illuminati?" Craig asked.

"Yes!" Anna answered, grateful to find one common thread to cling to. "The Illuminati are really only one of the covens, we refer to their entire organization as the Dark Cabal. The Freemasons are another. The Vatican is another."

"Wait, are you saying that the pope is part of a coven?"

"He is the public head of that coven, yes, but it goes even higher than him."

"This is sounding a bit crazy. Do you have any evidence?" he asked.

"There is an enormous body of evidence from every age of mankind, just waiting to be understood and publicized."

*Publicized*, Craig thought, *I love the sound of that word*. He began to experience an adrenaline rush, the thrill of the hunt. "We'll get into the hard evidence later, what else?"

"The Cabal has a sinister plan for mankind; they want to depopulate the planet and enslave its people, who are the rightful owners of earth."

"You say earth as if there's somewhere else."

"Well, yes, that's right. There are many types of beings in the universe living on innumerable planets."

"You're talkin' about *aliens*?" Craig snapped his notebook closed.

"Wait, don't close your mind, there is so much to learn. The evidence builds up from the oldest histories of Sumeria and Egypt. It's all very scientific really."

"Well, thank you for your time. I'll be in touch." Craig executed an about-face and left the room without further pretext of respect.

Andy couldn't stand it so he yelled after him, "The Pattern can be felt even through the veil. You should know in your heart that *something* is wrong with the world!" Craig's footsteps reverberated on the cold tile floor until the air grew silent once more.

They both knew that, when confronted with the facts and evidence in their presentation, everyone had their limits. Some attendees had no difficulty accepting life on other planets, but couldn't imagine the Holy Bible being corrupted by human hands. Others had no problem with either of those but couldn't get past the race issue, or the nationalism. It seemed to them both that the divisions, though false, were endless.

Anna looked at Andy and they embraced passionately. Salty tears crept onto their lips as they kissed. It would have been so much easier for them to have turned away from their mission, to return to

their *old lives*, the ones they had lived before their own awakening had occurred.

Yet, they now felt that it was their duty to awaken others. They had lost many friends and family in their attempt to unravel the truth for, as they ruefully discovered, not many truly wish to awaken from sleep or question their long-held beliefs.

\* 6 \*

July, 2015 - Ojai, California

Ray the Stray began playing the guitar before he could spell his name. He could make it sing, cry, moan and laugh, yet he couldn't coax even a smile out of it today. He threw it on the unmade bed and went onto the back porch for a smoke. The sky held no clouds but was criss-crossed with white, puffy jet contrails. He watched them quickly spread and knew that they were distributing metals and chemicals into the air.

He took a deep breath as if daring the tainted air to enter his body. *Shoot*, he thought as he looked down at his ever-present cigarette, *if these don't get me then I don't think a little aluminum or fluoride in the air will*. He had smoked two packs a day for thirty years, almost half a million coffin nails since he was sixteen.

He poured himself another cup of coffee and winced at the scent. The chlorine in the tap water seemed to be getting worse. *In fact*, he considered, *everything seems to be getting worse!* He was thinking specifically about the recent slew of data exposing the corrupt police fraternities. He remembered watching movies about buddy cops who would cover each other no matter what happened. His dad and he used to admire that kind of loyalty but sadly, now only his father saw life that way; the old way. Ray had been thugged by cops too many times to see it their way any longer.

Ray had earned his nickname for playing guitar in parks at night, like a stray cat howling under the moon. He now had a regular gig at a local venue that held the dubious name, The World Famous Dog Log.

He had been married once, came close another couple of times, but had recently given up. Not just on love but on people altogether. Perhaps he had spent too much time sitting still playing guitar, watching everyone in town treat each other like enemies.

*People have changed*, he thought at first then admonished himself, *but then old folks have always said that, haven't they?* He thought that he had dismissed the subject but his subconscious kept working on it.

*People are programmed into their lives and they no longer care what's going on around them. They resent anything out of the ordinary; anything that will make them miss Judge Judy or Divorce Court on TV. They kill each other in avoidable traffic collisions every day, each car tail-gating the one in front of it by one-eighth of a second. It was getting crazy out there!*

These thoughts began to accelerate and swirl around his mind until they reached a climax that left his tetanus-ear ringing. Ray became aware of the negative energy he was drawing toward him by dwelling on sadness, so he picked his guitar up and strummed a few chords. *Maybe I won't write a new song today but I can still play an old one!*

\* 7 \*

July, 2015 - Ventura, California

Thanks to his father's interest in Dashielle Hammett detective novels, Sam Spade was born with a nickname but had earned himself another one before he turned twenty. Spade the Blade

was what his friends called him on account of the ridiculously large knife he carried with him. He could ferret out an opportunity to use it at the unlikeliest occasions, such as his five year old daughter's birthday presents.

The girls all screamed when they saw the knife and ran to the back of the room, except the birthday girl, Tiffany, who told them, "Don't be so chicken! He's only cutting the tape off Zombie Barbie for me!"

To his credit, Spade handled the blade well and no one was hurt. He handed his daughter the Barbie, which had green skin and hair with blood all over her mouth. Zombies and the undead were all the rage in her class.

Spade was a successful building contractor and was enjoying his life immensely. Since the day that his wife had abandoned them, he and his daughter had been inseparably close. She would accompany him to the jobsite sometimes and once even told a worker where he could put the two-by-fours.

Tiffany was a beautiful girl with the sharp mind and intuitive wit of her father. She didn't get along with too many of the other kids in school but that was only because she didn't like them. She wasn't bad-natured or anything, quite the contrary, but she just thought they behaved like little aliens.

She discovered her Self at a young age and knew that she was a little bit different from the other girls in class. *That's ok*, she thought, *I'm me and me am I!*

A shy girlfriend approached and offered Tiffany her next gift. The blade flashed and the girl ran screaming into the backyard. Father and daughter high-fived each other and opened the next toy.

July, 2015 - Washington D.C.

Lillith Bushmaster had become the 45th President of the United States on her fortieth birthday, making her not only the first female Commander-in-Chief but also the youngest. Colleagues and critics alike had enjoyed the endless spins on her name. The Bushmaster military industrial complex had been likened to the snake of the same name for its stealth, cunning and for its deadly bite.

The religious community couldn't get enough of her first name, for in many cultures, Lillith was the name of Adam's first wife, the woman who lured Adam into tasting the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden long before he married Eve.

Lillith had enjoyed terrestrial power, in one form or another, for several millennia now and was feeling long overdue for a change. The Event, which had been incredibly fast-tracked in the twentieth century, was now in place.

*These modern humans are so much more foolish and complacent with their faith than their ancestors ever were,* she thought. The last four or five generations had taken the bait so completely that her coven now stood upon the threshold of a new era; a New World Order. She eagerly awaited the order to initiate the Event and expected it from her superior daily.

Lillith glanced at the clock, which read four in the afternoon. The general would arrive shortly and she would have to disappoint him too, for she had received no word from her superiors. *Poor old misled General,* she thought coldly, *he doesn't even know that he's just a gun in my hand!*

The Event, as far-reaching and complicated as it seemed to those few who were even attempting to unravel it, was really quite simple. Most human beings could not be brought to oppress,

enslave and execute their fellow man unless each was led to believe that their opponent was different from him, preferably evil.

This division, of course, could be accomplished in a great many ways. For General Arthur MacDouglas and most military men in general, all she had to do was convince him that he was fighting the bad guys; that he was one of the very few shepherds chosen to make difficult decisions for the vast multitude of sheep in a bleak and turbulent world. Make him seem like a very special hero and a military man was putty in your hands.

She met his arrival warmly but inwardly relished harvesting his *loesche*, or negative soul energy, when he realized what he had really done to his fellow human beings, to his planet and to his everlasting soul. She doubted whether he even knew that he possessed one, or if he had ever known. Yet, whether they knew it or not, she would soon consume his *loesche* and millions more.

\* 9 \*

July, 2015 - Ojai, California

The school bell rang and Merlyn stepped out of his fifth grade class. He was laughing with his friends when an optical illusion tricked his eye. He thought for a moment that he had seen something happen to one of the adults.

"Hey guys, see that guy over there in the black and white suit? I think he's MIB!"

"What's the matter with you?" Beck said emphatically, "Are you really going to call this hellish rain on yourself again?" The day before, Beck had broken the news that Merlyn was in danger of being labeled a *ufo weirdo* at school and didn't want to see his buddy go down that way.

"I'm serious. The guy *blinked!*" Merlyn persisted vehemently.



"So he blinked, I can do it too!" Beck said and started to blink his eyes theatrically.

"No dork, I mean like a blink dog from Dungeons and Dragons! He blinked out of existence for a hundredth of a second."

"How'd you see it happen then?" Abigail, the fourth grade know-it-all inquired snidely. "The human eye can't even detect movement that fast. Did you know-"

She was interrupted as a firm voice spoken from only inches behind her. "I think I know what happened." A tall, lanky and angular man stepped from behind a post. "I'll bet you saw him walk behind a post, like this one, right? Your retina was focused upon the man behind the post, so when he walked behind it, you thought he went invisible for a moment."

Beck agreed with the man in the black and white suit right away. Beck was about as good with computers as a ten year old could be and had been allowed to watch R-rated movies and games since he was three, and knew there was something special about this man.

"You're some kind of agent, aren't you? Can I see your gun?"

Although the tall man had successfully diverted attention from Merlyn's accusation, he had underestimated the randomness of modern youth. The children surrounded him and assaulted him with questions, but Merlyn slipped away and was soon coasting past Sarzotti Park on his bicycle, his mind a thousand miles from the unnerving scene at school.

When the children talked about the Man in Black the following day, they couldn't agree on any of the facts. Someone argued that he was short, others tall; some said that he looked Hispanic, others said he was Arabic or Caucasian.

Merlyn remembered the man clearly and realized right away that he didn't want to. He would love to forget him but his memory

stubbornly recalled the man's face as a blurry chimera of subtle, fluid alterations in shape, color and size. He knew instinctively that it had been camouflage of some kind, and it had worked, too. What he didn't know was what the Man in Black had been doing at his school or why any of the grownups didn't see him.

\* 10 \*

July, 2015 - Temple of Isis, Egypt

The Twins were restless and bored. The impish duo of Isis and Shamash had spilled oceans of human blood through the millennia for the same reasons, but this moment was different. The experience that they anticipated was so monumental, that it was one to be fully savored by even those with eternal life, but until it had begun, they were dangerously restless.

The Gemini had not always exerted so much power over the earthly realms of mankind. In the early days of Sumeria they were known as Anunnaki and it had been her grandfather Enlil and Uncle Enki who had held the power over Earth.

It had been Enki who genetically modified the Cro-Magnon DNA which bestowed upon humans the *knowing*. Disputes arose between the Enlilites and Enkiites especially between Isis and her cousin Marduk, which escalated terribly over the long centuries. Eventually, Marduk, who was known and respected world-wide as the sun god Ra, raised the first armies from the Igigi and human tribes, which he then rallied against the Enlilites and Shamgazi, their human king of Assyria.

The war was long and legendary, written about in all human religious texts, although none told the true tale. Finally the Enlilites, losing the battle against Marduk/Ra, resorted to the use of horrendous weaponry that had been long ago been banned from use, on earth or elsewhere.

The weapons had leveled many cities in Canaan, Sodom and Gomorrah among them, but the nuclear chemicals created a cloud of death that traveled eastward on the winds toward the cities of the Edin. Nothing in the land of the Enlilites was spared but Marduk's crown city of Babylon to the north was untouched. The *gods* in the Edin barely escaped the carnage of their own weapon themselves.

In the days of Sumeria, Isis (known by the name of her race *Inanna* in those days) was known world-wide as the bare-breasted goddess of love and fertility but also of cunning and war. She had been given the Indus Valley in what is modern day Iran and India.

Her twin brother, Utu, had been commander of the rocket-base in Nippur, until it, too, had been destroyed. Marduk/Ra soon grew tired of governing the Babylonians and the divided family eventually made amends with one another and when the Elder Gods left planet earth, Marduk/Ra was among them.

The Gemini, however, smelled opportunity and chose to remain on earth until the end of the Great Cycle, by which time they planned to be the sole rulers of the humans. For millennia, Marduk/Ra had toured the globe and had spread great wisdom and charity among the people, who knew him as the benevolent sun god, Ra or Amen-Ra. It was Isis' idea for her brother to usurp that foundation and, practically overnight, Utu became Shamash the sun-god, synonymous worldwide with Ra.

Their idea had worked flawlessly and they maintained control over most of the world under multitudinous names for many centuries. Until the arrival of Archangel Samael whose shrewdness and power gave rise to the Luciferians, who quickly wrested worldwide religious, financial and military control from Isis and Shamash.

The Gemini now reported directly to Samael and did as they were told, which at that moment, was nothing. For the moment, the impish twins were forced to amuse themselves with the same

boring worldwide chaos-games that they had played with humans for the past three-thousand years. They took solace in the knowledge that the order would soon come to depopulate the earth. Archangel Samael, or Lucifer to some, was truly a gifted strategist, and they would wait for his order.

\* 11 \*

### Gaia's Underworld - July, 2015

The world had been in torment for years, with wars on all continents except North America and Western Europe. The global cabal had maintained a currency crisis in one form or another for more than fifty years and had broken the backs of the people with misinformation and false division. Their habit of assimilating cultures and religions into watered-down versions by force and by disguising the truth had created nearly eight billion watered-down slaves.

Families had grown divided over some meaningless aspect of a falsified religious book or practice and the people's love, for their family and themselves, had been greatly diminished. Politics were another source of division that was capable of polarizing the people to one of two candidates or policies, without them realizing that each side was being controlled by the cabal. The rest of the masses were simply kept busy with work or entertainment.

Although the Event had been the focus of his existence for thousands of years, his plan had accelerated so much in the 20th century that Archangel Samael found himself hesitating to enact it. He wasn't yet ready to consume the world but he knew that if he failed to act now, the balance of energies were likely to tip against him.

He knew the Universal Laws sought the continual evolvement of all that is, which he had been engaged in denying to nearly all

creatures living above the earth's crust for over three thousand years.

Yet, he was not operating in overt contrast to the Laws, for he was a master of their manipulation. Elemental physics were a plaything in his hands, as was all human knowledge as well as much that is only known on other planets. His subversive use of the Law of Intention, while denying the awareness of it to the masses, provided him with near-infinite access to the fluid realm of *potentiality*, where all manifestation is born through intent and will. In this way he helped the masses subconsciously create the chaotic world around them.

He also knew that the eyes of the Galactic Confederation were upon him, waiting for him to make his move, although he knew they wouldn't lift a finger to stop him. Their understanding of the Law of Allowance caused them to refrain from helping the humans directly until the humans awoke and took responsibility for the earth themselves.

He had been surprised when the Galactic Federation had finally bent the rules slightly by sending volunteer emissaries to earth to help make a difference from within. These were fourth-density beings who understood the difficulties associated with the third-density, which is driven by the dragon; anima and ego.

In the West, these noble emissaries were called Flower Children, Light Workers, Indigo Children, and many other titles. They were severely handicapped at birth by the sacrifice of all their knowledge and wisdom, which occurred naturally as each soul was reborn into a physical body. This prevented most of them from knowing who they really were or what their task was, and as a result, they had been largely ineffective at effecting change in the world.

A psychic knock interrupted his reverie but caused him to smile. The High Priest was requesting an audience. Archangel Samael

shape-shifted effortlessly into a form created by the priest's own subconscious. He then willed himself to appear before the priest and it was done.

The Priest prostrated himself upon the stone floor of the cave's antechamber, for the Sleepers would not allow the Archangel to pass the final door. Samael retrieved the scroll that the priest had left for him on the black altar and returned to his chamber. He had nothing but contempt for the man and considered his role as liaison between himself and the Sleepers unnecessary. He would enjoy reaping the dark energy from the priest in his final moment of understanding.

Very few beings can perform the Great Work of their soul by embodying negative energy, but it can be done. Among the Cabal, this was known to only to very few. The dark path is one of infinite miseries, caused rather than experienced. For a child of darkness to ascend to a higher density, as Universal Law eventually required, he must serve only himself. Of love for one's own family, species or planet, there could exist less than one percent in their heart, or they would be doomed to retrace their steps back toward the light.

In the end, the dark path excludes far more who seek it than the path of light, which is less demanding because it adheres to the Universal Laws. If a dark energy being comes to realize this and fails to commit treacherous acts upon those whom their hearts want to love, then they will fail to ascend and be damned until the beginning of the next Great Cycle.

Once this occurs throughout enough lifetimes, the higher soul realizes that it must begin the long journey back towards the light, with many acquired karmic hindrances. It truly was a path of infinite miseries.

Archangel Samael was an old master of the dark path and he was ready to ascend. He had walked a perfect path of wickedness

since he had been negatively polarized by the fight against YHWH so long ago. Yet, for all of his wisdom, he did not know precisely what to expect when this finally occurred.

\* 12 \*

2022 - Los Padres National Forest, California

Merlyn awoke Emily and the boys at dawn and tried to teach them how to light a campfire. Merlyn could tell that the kids were too groggy to learn anything but he knew it would begin to sink in with repetition.

He had made the decision to raise the kids like he had been raised. Merlyn's parents had not lingered long in the world of material things. Their strong, educated beliefs had led to his being taught truths, both great and terrible, at a very young age and there were many times he resented them for it.

At the time, he didn't think it was appropriate for his Dad to compare his Call of Duty video game to the real war it depicted; the war and murder. Kids his age didn't want to think about the underlying reality behind their war games or their own desensitization to its violence.

Yet, in light of the Event, he had found a great many instances where their wisdom had saved his life and others' too. He had learned the basics of many varied skills, from carpentry and construction to history, ethics and philosophy. He hadn't returned home with the highest test scores in school but he had been awarded public honors for his good character.

Though he had much yet to learn and still yearned to be a kid again himself, he knew that he could teach these kids to stay alive and even give them a fairly decent education. Before the Event, his parents had downloaded thousands of books onto their small

electronic book reader, which he could still power up via a solar charger. He was now very grateful to them for pushing him along the path when he was young. He had seen what happened to the people who had lived in ignorance of it all and the shock, when it came all at once, sometimes broke them.

"What is the single most important resource that you need to stay alive?" he asked the kids.

"Food!" Emily said.

"Shelter?" Charlie offered.

"Doughnuts?" Lucas joked and the welcome sound of laughter imparted a sense of normalcy to the moment.

"Water. You can live a long time without food but only a few days without water. So, what should we do first today?"

"I wanna take a bath!" Emily chimed in.

"Where do we get water?" Charlie asked.

Merlyn replied, "C'mon, I'll show you."

He led them down a steep path that could only really qualify as a deer trail. Some of the kids had little experience exploring the world around them and needed to be taught how to descend the trail.

"Keep your center of gravity low and, if you fall, do it backwards onto your butt, not face-forward down the hill. Got it?" Merlyn instructed.

At that moment, Charlie fell face-forward down the hill. He tumbled ten feet down the slope and landed in a dry creekbed, his head only three inches from a large rock. He wasn't seriously hurt, having received only small cuts from the rocks and gravel,



yet Merlyn knew that *any* wound was an opportunity for infection and he warned the kids appropriately.

"At least you found our water-hole!" Merlyn chided.

"Where's the water?" Lucas asked. The red sun had already grown hot.

"The creeks are all dry so we have to dig for it." Merlyn said and pointed to the many holes in the lowland area where he had sought for a pocket of water.

"But don't you have rainwater back at camp?" Emily asked.

"We do, but we can't rely on that or we'll run out. It doesn't rain enough so we have to look for it every day."

"Oh, no I'm not!" Charlie erupted. "I'm not gonna dig a thousand holes for some muddy water."

Merlyn just looked at him for a moment, then began to dig.

"Breaking ground is the hardest part, after that, it gets easier."

The kids watched him dig for thirty minutes and he told them to observe how he held and swung the pick in a rhythm, trying like Tom Sawyer to make it seem like fun. Eventually, they all took a turn but, as Merlyn had suspected, their soft skin was soon rubbed raw and they didn't make much progress, so he happily did the rest of the digging.

The morning search without success when Merlyn decided to give it up for the day. He surprised everyone when said, "Guys, I think I'm lost, can anyone guide us back to camp?"

The kids looked at one another blankly but then Charlie said, "I think I can, just let me know if I'm wrong, ok? I don't want to get lost for real."

"Good deal. I'll follow you." Merlyn replied with a smile.

Everyone was proud of Charlie for his willingness to try and it taught them all to embrace a new level of awareness and initiative, in case they ever had to lead the group some time. The kids were already beginning to awaken to their new paradigm of existence, one that depended heavily upon their own active daily involvement. It would be a far cry from their old lives of TV and video games.

They spent the balance of the day collecting firewood and checking Merlyn's empty squirrel traps. He still had nearly fifty pounds of beans left from the rations his parents had acquired but he tried to supplement them with fresh animal proteins whenever possible, though he had been a vegetarian before the Event.

They prepared a small portion of old, stale beans on the fire and ate them greedily. Merlyn had explained that they must all go a little hungry each day. One meal a day while they were healthy would shrink their stomachs and slow their metabolism down. Merlyn knew, however, that he needed to find a source of food and water soon, for now there were four in his camp and rain was almost nonexistent.

"Would you tell us more about what caused the Event?" Emily asked after a long period of quiet, sleepy introspection.

"Are you sure that you want to hear it? It's hard to put things in a G-rated version." Merlyn answered solemnly.

"I'm almost thirteen and I already watch R-rated movies with my dad!" No one corrected her use of the present-tense.

"Well, okay then, just prepare yourselves for some very strong emotions. It's okay to cry, just try to do it quietly. Please don't tease anyone else about it either."

The kids readily agreed and Merlyn began to think about where to begin. "The way my parents explained it to me is like this. Since the days of the Old Testament, the people of the world have been

tricked into dividing and fighting ourselves. That's something like four or five thousand years. The people who are responsible for the lies now control everything and have decided to depopulate the planet as part of what they called the New World Order."

"It can't be that simple, can it? I mean, why would they want to kill everybody?" Emily asked incredulously.

Merlyn, aware of her moist eyes, replied softly, "I think they used us to build everything they wanted but now there's too many of us. My parents said they only want half a million people on the planet to serve them when their done."

"How many were there before the Event?" Lucas asked.

"Nine billion." Merlyn replied sadly and let the import of the numbers sink in, if indeed, the kids could comprehend such numbers.

"What I don't understand is why we are being put in camps by our own military?" Charlie growled his question angrily. "How could they do this to us? How could they be so evil?"

Merlyn looked away from the pain in Charlie's eyes. "My dad says that they are tricked into thinking they're special and we're not. That's another one of their false divisions and we're on the wrong side of it. I think the people in the military probably believe they're doing the right thing but they should know better even though they were lied to since they were born."

Merlyn's voice acquired a bitter tone and he recognized it. He took a deep breath to calm himself. He didn't like to lose his cool but he couldn't identify with anyone doing what the DHS and UN soldiers had done. *How could anyone think killing or imprisoning the mass population was doing the right thing?* He knew in his heart that he wasn't capable of such blind faith in man-made excuses such as 'only following orders' or 'they didn't know better'. *Everyone knows better.*

"So what happened exactly?" Charlie asked.

"Well, I think a terrorist group attacked a whole bunch of US cities at once. The financial markets and banks closed down and nobody could get any money. There were riots all over the country so the president ordered the US to be placed under martial law. We had hoped to scrape by at home but rumors started up that people were disappearing. There were no phones or internet or anything so it was hard to know what was happening. Then the soldiers came. They did a house to house *safety check*, then they started taking people away to the FEMA camps."

The children were all crying softly but once again it was Charlie who collected his thoughts enough to ask, "What about you and your parents? What happened to them?"

Merlyn's eyes teared up and he said quickly, "Some other time. I'm going to sleep."

\* 13 \*

August, 2015 - Ojai, California

Andy got off the telephone with his mother, Daisy Lou, and handed the phone to his wife. "She hung up on me!"

"Well, in all fairness," Anna replied gently, "you did tell her that the bible was corrupted. You know she doesn't want to talk about that." Anna understood her husband well. His heart was larger than most and he was both studious and a man of action. Yet, this same passion tended to push people away and now, at forty-one years of age, he didn't have a lot of friends left.

"You're right," he said, "but so am I. I just want her to take an honest look at its history. She won't even admit that it has been rewritten! It's the perfect example of the willful ignorance that we're fighting against."

"Yes, but all you can do is plant a seed and give it time. Let the Law of Allowance take its course." Anna's wise counsel was a staple in her husband's life. Andy took his wife by the hand and twirled her once, receiving her in a close embrace, then they kissed.

Anna said, "I'm going to go check on Merlyn, the last time I saw him he was playing catch with the dogs. He's going to be late for school."

"I don't know why we still send him to that school when we know how biased and narrow their curriculum is. I really think that we should home school him. You could quit your job and-"

Anna interrupted him, "Don't get started on all that. Merlyn wants to see his friends and have a semi-normal life. You and I both only work part-time and we spend the rest of it together. There's nothing more we can do."

Andy struggled with the frustrating inaction of his present position in life. He couldn't understand why people chose to continue with the madness of everyday life *in the matrix* once they had realized what it really was. In Andy's strong opinion, the system was about to implode and no one seemed to want to talk about it.

The newspaper held nothing more than an innocent announcement that California had less than a year of water left, right next to an announcement that real estate prices were up twenty-one percent. *We should all be picketing in the streets!* he thought, *Don't people understand what's going on?*

He that one to two hundred new fracking wells were being added monthly, each one using thousands of gallons every hour. In northern and southern California, Illuminati-owned companies were bottling eighty-billion precious gallons a year and had been selling it back to the public in grocery stores around the country. *Why allow the export of water during a drought?*

His wife Anna, on the other hand, was quite happy with her life. Over the years their relationship had become a healthy balance of push and pull, of Yin and Yang. He had chosen the life of a hermit on the night shift for several years now and yet struggled with it daily. She knew that he missed feeling connected to the people in his life but also guessed that he might never gain the acceptance he had been seeking from them, he was just too different.

There are many ways to be different, of course, and Andy appeared to be relatively laid-back and semi-normal, but extreme people don't always look the part. Andy had sought experience everywhere, all the time, and it showed in his eyes, on his face and in his words. He struggled to constrain his fiery passions, to keep them bridled and balanced with the mundane routines of *normal life*.

Yet, despite the struggle, this is precisely what Andy had been doing since he was a teenager; balancing passion and responsibility. He had earned extremely varied job skills from the myriad careers that he had abandoned. Anna knew that her husband was only truly happy when he was creating.

*And even then, she mused fondly, he wants everyone he loves to be right there with him. He's so much like Merlyn! Still, it's way too early in the day for him to get started on all home-schooling talk.*

"What are you going to do today?" Anna asked Andy as she was getting dressed for work.

"I'm going to work on my new book. I'm about thirty pages into it already."

"Oh, I'm so glad. I'm ready for my blessing, Love."

Andy rose and crossed the room, gazed lovingly into her green eyes and kissed her on the pauses, "Drive safely, (smooch) return swiftly, (smack) with kisses for me. (kiss)"

Andy walked Merlyn to the bus stop and they played one silly game after another for twenty minutes until the bus came. Father and son were both highly creative so they never had trouble finding something fun to do together.

Andy waved goodbye, using the three-fingered hand sign for love, to his son who returned it through the tinted glass of the school bus. Andy sighed deeply and turned around to walk home alone.

*I just wish there was something more I could do, he thought with frustration, instead I'll just work on another book nobody will read.* He cast a mental nemeton and envisioned a life where his family worked together every day within a communal village where the Universal Laws and true history were taught. Where people lived in harmony with nature, themselves and with one another. Inspiration hit and he began to write.

\* 14 \*

August, 2015 - Ojai, California

Ray sensed the full moon rising even though the night was too foggy to see her. It was only August but the party was to be a mock-up of Samhain, All Hallow's Eve, All Soul's Day or All Saint's Day. He knew that most *holy days* were common to many cultures and had been gradually assimilated under various religious banners, but it was all the same; the festival of summer's end, Halloween. On this day, the old texts read, the veils between this and the Otherworld were at their thinnest.

Ray had accompanied a friend to a medieval costume party and bonfire ritual. The vast grounds of a rich man's home in Rancho Matilija had been decorated in expensive, and impressive arrays of bloody corpses and ghostly forms. There were also test tube shots of Bacardi 101 with neon food coloring being passed out by volunteers.

Ray found himself wishing that he had a special girl to spend the time with, somewhere quiet and private. "Hey Bud, wanna shot?" a thin servant-ghoul offered.

"Sure, thanks." He tried to give her a five dollar bill but she only laughed at him derisively and roller-skated away. He heard the deep, baritone laugh of the big man who was dressed as Thor. Ray drank the strong liquor and lit a cigarette chaser.

*How'd I ever land up here?* he thought sadly. Everyone else was having the time of their lives but Ray knew the scene wasn't for him. He didn't like being a contrarian, but he rarely felt like he was where he should be, or doing what he was meant to do. *Whatever the hell that means*, he chided himself contemptuously. He knew that it was his job to give meaning to his life and was not proud of himself for his failure to do so.

His friend slid up behind him and covered his eyes. Ray fought the instinct to react violently; he had always hated that kind of joke. In another moment, he realized who it was and relaxed. Meg was a nice girl, they had been intimate long ago but were now truly just friends. That is, when her boyfriend of the month would allow it.

Meg was a good girl with a bad girl body. Men had flocked to her at an early age and she had learned to use her charms to get what she thought she wanted from them. She was now old enough to question what she had thought she wanted, and it wasn't always pretty. Still, Ray understood her and offered his patience.

"Guess who?"

"The Grim Reaper?"

"No," she said, "the Trim Peeper!" Meg was a part-time Brazilian wax technician, so he at least understood, if not approved of, the vulgar joke.



She kissed him on the lips and whispered in his ear, "We have to hurry, the ritual is about to begin." Then she looked around and added, "but don't tell anyone." Ray looked around and saw cocaine being snorted by hairy hobbits near the bonfire, cat-women sprawling upon the ground in orgiastic agony and some knights with foam swords challenging each other to drinking contests.

"I won't tell a soul," he replied honestly. She led him away from the party and down a narrow stone pathway. They passed the formal gardens and crossed a broad expanse of land. The obscuring fog was heavy in Ray's vision but he trusted Meg's eyes if not her judgment.

They began to hear muffled murmuring as they drew nearer to the gathering, which Ray was surprised to discover contained life-size reproductions of the blue stones of Stonehenge. Cloaks were offered, and required, by the volunteer assigned to guard the entrance. Once the dark robes had been donned, Meg guided Ray toward the middle pillar and she knelt before him.

Several thoughts ran through his mind but what she said next was not one of them. "Tonight we're performing an ancient ceremony that is supposed to grant me eternal life!"

He thought about her strange words for a moment and said, "Well that could be okay, I guess."

"It's way more than okay, you dork! Tonight, *I'm* going to be the sacrifice!"

"What? How can you become eternal if you die?" He felt that he was being rather reasonable but her countenance told him otherwise. She lowered her voice confidentially.

"Don't you understand? These people are Illuminati! They're not really going to kill me, only symbolically. After that, they'll have sex with me and tomorrow I'll get a big promotion at work with double pay."

Ray was speechless. He had heard of the Illuminati and their twisted sex-parties before but had never dreamed that Meg could or would get involved with them.

"Oh Meg, you shouldn't do that. It's not worth it. You should follow your heart, let's get out of here and we'll go to a nice restaurant. One where they play jazz or something."

Meg frowned and Ray knew that he was in for it. He was surprised but relieved when she simply turned and walked away. "Don't wait up!" she yelled after she was far enough away that he couldn't tell she was crying.

Ray waited several hours for her and finally saw her get into a long, black limousine and drive away. He knew that he could do nothing more for her so he began the long drive home alone. His psyche was accosted with questions of sadness, loneliness and guilt as he tried to find peace in sleep.

\* 15 \*

August, 2015 - Thousand Oaks, California

A BMW merged in front of Spade's oversized work truck even though he was already tail-gating the car in front of him. He punched his horn and merged abruptly into the next lane.

*Make room, jerk!* The driver he cut off had also been tailgating the car in front of him and had swerved into another lane to avoid him. Spade failed to see the irony in the chain-reaction because his mind was occupied with getting to his bible study group on time.

*They always tease me when I'm late, he thought, and then they don't think I'm a good Christian.* Spade got off the freeway, accelerated through a yellow light and soon pulled into the church

parking lot. He opened the door for a church elder and earned a heartfelt, "Bless you, Son."

Spade was newly born again to Christ and he loved the feeling of *belonging* that the church gave him. He knew that he was saved now that he had given his life to Jesus and he was excited about it.

He entered the Disciple of Twelve bible study classroom and greeted his eleven brothers in Christ. These men knew one another's most intimate details, from thoughts of sex to sex-acts themselves; struggles with one's wife or kids at home, work issues and more.

Full honesty and disclosure were encouraged for one to grow in Christ and, though everyone held back their worst confessions, there was still plenty of emotional baggage flying around the room. The hour passed by quickly and the closing prayer was begun by the group leader.

"Dear Jesus, thank you for dying for our sins. Thank you for taking away all the pain and guilt and responsibility from my heart. We acknowledge that we are flawed beings, incapable of true goodness, yet we also know that you love us anyway and for this we are truly grateful.

We ask that you penetrate the hearts of the Muslims swiftly so they can learn to know your grace and be saved. We ask that you strike down those with violence in their hearts so that our beloved soldiers can finally come home from war.

We offer this prayer on our knees, knowing that we are not worthy to wash your feet. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen."

The name of the Egyptian sun god Amen-Ra was repeated by all the men and somewhere, in another dimension of the universe, their prayers were heard by the ascended collective-consciousness that had once made itself known as Ra.

*Pitiable man, he thought with a detached sadness, is it not written in your Book? I have already told ye that ye are all gods!*

\* 16 \*

August, 2015 - Ojai, California

"But Mom, don't you understand that the real Jesus, Emmanuel, taught that we all have the same potential that he possessed? He preached the truth of the Universal Laws and that we must take responsibility for our lives, not just give them over to God!"

Andy was doing it again. He meant well, she knew, but he was just so insistent that she could hardly stand the sound of his voice anymore. *Why does he reject Jesus?* she wondered sadly as he spouted off books that he thought she should read. She knew in her heart that there was only one book she needed.

She hung up the phone and prayed for her son, whose soul she knew was in danger of everlasting hellfire, especially because he knew better; she had raised him as a Christian and he had turned away from it.

*Still, he's my son and maybe I shouldn't have hung up on him again,* she thought. Daisy Lou subconsciously turned on the television to feed her anger and Fox News was there to help. The next presidential candidate was currently being indicted for treason yet he was still very popular and was likely to win the 2020 elections. *Anyone would be an improvement over Lillith Bushmaster,* Daisy Lou thought, *I think she's the anti-christ!*

The news switched to the war in Iraq and featured a sad story about thirty Christians who had been executed by the terrorist group known as Isis that week in Syria. Andy told her that the CIA had trained and equipped Isis and that an average of three to four hundred Iraqi citizens were being killed by United Nations'

forces every single day since the 9/11 bombings in 2001 but she knew that couldn't be right.

Andy had wanted her to believe that the 9/11 attacks were an inside job, too. He had also told her that, since 1776, the United States had been in wars for all but twenty-one of those years, but she knew that it was all too impossible to be real.

She remembered how Jane Fonda had commented favorably on the North Vietnamese and against US involvement in the war that killed 50,000 American soldiers and her blood heated up again. She didn't want to put her son in the same category as Jane Fonda but he wasn't leaving her much of a choice.

She glanced at the books he had given to her the last time she had visited his family in Ojai. The smaller one with a picture of Jesus on the cover was titled, "The Talmud of Jmmanuel" and the larger one was Zechariah Sitchin's translation of the Sumerian tablets known as "The Lost Book of Enki".

Andy had told her that the Talmud of Jmmanuel was similar to the Book of Matthew but he believed that it was closer to the real story. He also told her that it had been written by Judas Iscariot who she knew had betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

She couldn't believe Andy's explanation that Judas had been framed, and she couldn't bring herself to read the book either. *Oh yeah*, she laughed aloud to the empty room, *and aliens helped a one-armed man named Billy Meier find the book in a cave in Iraq!*

The other book was a re-translation of Sitchin's final book by her well-meaning but misguided son of ancient clay tablets from Sumeria. *The land of the Muslims*, she thought bitterly.

This book, too, Andy claimed, was a more accurate record of human history and predated the Holy Bible by up to three-thousand years. Daisy Lou found that hard to believe and, despite the

passionate introduction written by her daughter-in-law Anna, she found that she couldn't bring herself to crack it open either.

Instead, she opened the NIV to the book of Revelations and began to read. She desperately longed for the rapture to save her from the confusion and sin around her.

\* 17 \*

August, 2015 - Thousand Oaks, California

Joe flipped off the jackass in the oversized work-truck and swerved into the next lane. He started to experience a mild road-rage when he almost collided with the car occupying the lane he had swerved into but remembered that the last thing he needed was another fender bender. *Besides, Joe thought, I'm on my way to the bowling league and nothing's going to get between me and my 240 average.*

He walked into the greasy dive and greeted his friends with well-intended insults. "Hey average," someone joked, knowing that he was sensitive about the long A in his name.

"Get lost, Vinnie! I'm gonna destroy you out there tonight."

A crowd of men assembled around the enormous television in the bar. CNN was reporting on the destruction of the ancient city of Nimrud, which had been destroyed by ISIS that day.

"Who cares about some three-thousand year old city anyway?" Vinnie said.

The news changed to the extreme drought which loomed over California, stating repeatedly that reserves will only hold out for another year. The chairman of the state Water Committee stated, "We are now beyond the worst-case scenario."

Someone said, "Ah, forget this, let's bowl!" The hard-working men turned their back on the world and directed their attention to the more pressing task of knocking over the elusive ten pins.

Joe rolled a new personal best of 290 and endured the jokes about him being *above-average*. He felt good and bought everyone a beer before he realized that he couldn't really afford to pay for them. *Damn!* he thought. *I'll be as penniless as a bum 'til payday!*

He knew that he wouldn't go penniless; instead, he would get a payday loan and pay the usurious fees they charged. *Just forty-dollars would do it.* Joe didn't see the society around him as particularly bad, he just felt like he was on the wrong side of things. If only *he* could get rich somehow, then he'd ride the American dream all the way to Malibu.

His mind conjured up the wreckage of Nimrud, then the looming water shortage. He felt something pull at his mind from within, something pleading with him to get involved. It ceased pulling after the first three shots of bourbon he bought with the payday loan. He forgot about everything after he finished the bottle.

That night, Joe Average dreamed that he was a hero, dressed in badass military gear. He was gunning down everyone in his path like Stallone in Rambo. He held his estranged daughter underneath his arm and was trying to get her to the helicopter. *No, wait, is that a spaceship!*

His perspective pulled back to what cinematographers call a *long shot*. He now observed the dream-scene from above and behind his body, and watched himself load his daughter onto the alien spaceship. Suddenly, he heard his daughter's mom call out for him. He turned and saw her running toward the ship with dozens of little grey aliens chasing her.

He kissed his daughter goodbye and ran to save his lover. *Ex-lover?* As he drew near to the woman, she ran past him and said, "It took you long enough to save me, average Joe!"

He felt his knees go weak at her words. *Why doesn't she love me?* He looked at the approaching sea of grey aliens and knew that he was going to die, yet he managed to survive long enough to watch the spaceship ascend with his wife and daughter safely on board.

Then, with the suddenness only possible in dreams, he was a young boy again, seated in one of the old-fashioned one-piece chair-desks he had used growing up. His teacher was a glowing hologram of a wise man, who looked like Hermes or Plato.

The teacher spoke to him kindly but sternly, "You are stuck in the victim consciousness, Joe. It consists of three archetypes: the victim/martyr, the hero/martyr and the villain/oppressor. Your life will continue to cycle through these roles until you have learned to transcend them all."

"I don't understand how *I'm* a victim! I just saved my ex-wife!" Joe argued.

"But why didn't you save yourself, too? You created the entire event so you could become the hero/martyr. Begin to understand, Joe."

Joe passed into a deep sleep and remembered little in the morning but the recollection that he was broke and late for work again. *There has to be a better way to live!* he thought bitterly as he began another miserable day as an unwitting pawn inside the matrix.



September, 21 - 2015 - Antarctic Ocean

The innermost circle of Cabalistic leaders were assembled in the vast hall of a secret fortress on an unmapped island in the Antarctic Ocean. The hall had long ago been hollowed from the black rock and was now illuminated with torches, giving it a sinister, medieval ambiance.

The black altar with the darker-black stains was to go unused upon this occasion, yet its eerie presence was like a sleeping dragon in the room. President Lilith Bushmaster was ushered in and seated first so that she could rise to perform the subservient greeting of the Gemini, Isis and Shamash. Once the submissive ritual had been dispensed with, they all remained standing and awaited the Archangel's arrival in silence.

He manifested at the head of the table and, to a human off the street, would have appeared truly terrible indeed. Yet to the gods Isis and Shamash, he was simply their powerful leader. They considered him their superior in no other respect. Lillith had once been known as the wife of Archangel Samael but that had been eons ago. Now she was only a demi-goddess in his army and she knew her place well.

He addressed them without directly acknowledging their presence. "I have made my decision." A rush of anticipation rippled through the three subordinates. Only he and one other knew that the Sleeper's had issued the real order on scroll the priest had given to him.

The tall Archangel spread his enormous red-black wings and smiled venomously, "The Event is to begin in two days."

Dark mirth filled the unholy chamber for a time, then Samael began to issue instructions to Isis and Shamash. Execution of the Plan was an enormous undertaking, even for nearly timeless beings

of vastly superior intelligence and technology. Samael discussed intricate details with regard to chronology, sequencing and contingency plans until he was assured that his will was understood.

He stood before Lilith and smiled ferociously, "And I know that you will relish the special work I have assigned for you, Dark Lady. For you, I have reserved the depopulation of our most beloved children, the United States, the United Kingdom and," he paused for dramatic effect, "the final annihilation of Israel and her black-headed children."

Lillith shrieked aloud, betraying the harpy within her. "I shall not fail you, Dark Lord." Lillith knew that a well-crafted betrayal at this crucial moment could bring her soul many negative-energy rewards, but as she considered it for a moment, the Archangel sensed her thoughts. He penetrated deeper into her psyche and read what he saw, then smiled. *I have nothing to fear, she will continue to do as she is told.*

The Event was to begin with a global currency crisis in the morning closely followed by terrorist attacks in thousands of locations around the globe. Martial Law would be enacted to protect the people. Then they would be placed in camps and vaccinated. Soldiers, foreign and domestic, would be present to dispense with those whom the vaccine's hidden virus failed to destroy.

The infrastructure of the Event had been slowly erected within the apparent normality of everyday life. Few noticed or cared when they saw shipments of white UN tanks rolling past them on the railroad cars. Fewer still cared about the closing of the last US steel plant and the purchasing monopoly on firearm ammunition by the Department of Homeland Security.

Congress had willingly failed to investigate why, in March of 2012 alone, the DHS bought 1.5 billion rounds of ammunition when all

US military forces combined only expend 70 million rounds per year in the war in Iraq. Their cover story had not even attempted to explain why half of the bullets were hollow-points which had been prohibited against use on the battlefield under the current Geneva Convention for humane warfare.

While many other agencies were apparently preparing for war, the President had also militarized the police departments throughout the country. These pawns would do as they were told and work to enslave their own hometowns.

The Event was also perfectly legal according to the laws of each country, which was a necessary part of the Plan. Archangel Samael could not enthrall the masses forever without their own consent and the Event would be enacted through the use of their own laws so that they would, in essence, be asking him for help. They must bestow the authority on him willingly or he would not be able to hold them in thrall.

The technicality of Law, as ironic and dubious as it might appear to some, was an important part of the Universal Agreement that he had signed with the Galactic Confederation. They had insisted upon this point long ago knowing that the humans would never accept it, yet it now seemed that they had.

\* 19 \*

September 23, 2015 - Worldwide

Isis issued orders to the Black Nobility, the families whose roots were the oldest and the purest within the cabal. At their word, the wealthiest stockholders in the world sold their holdings in staggering amounts. The global economy was shattered by noon.

Most banks had been secretly notified beforehand and had never opened for business at all, but even those that did were closed by

ten o'clock. As ATM machines lost power or were quickly drained, the looting began.

Without legal access to their money, no one could buy goods ethically. As a result, even honest people were soon reduced to participating in the mad rush for food, water, tools and medicine. Tens of thousands were killed worldwide in the initial rush for resources.

Precisely at noon, televisions began displaying images of terrorist strikes all over the world. The US was peppered with catastrophe as all capital cities in all states were destroyed within the twelve o'clock hour. Yet somehow, Fox News was still playing on every television that wasn't destroyed.

There were reports from all parts of the globe of massive rebellious uprisings, which the indigenous militaries had been forced to bomb for the safety of the people.

Then, precisely at one-eleven, all screens turned to the President of the United States, Lillith Bushmaster. She was broadcasting from the luxurious presidential jet known as Air Force One and she greeted the world with a somber expression but with a fiery gleam detectable in her eyes.

"The world's economy has been utterly destroyed by the people, the lower and middle classes, who chose this morning to liquidate their life savings' and crash the economic infrastructure of the world.

Today we have experienced more than two hundred incidents of domestic terrorism resulting in the loss of nearly a hundred thousand American lives." Here, the president teared up before continuing, "I could not protect them, and I will have to live with that." Another long silence. "But," she continued, "I can protect *you!* I vow to take any and all steps necessary to protect the American people from further acts of terror and loss of life."

"These unprecedented challenges call for unprecedented action. I *can* protect you, but I must be freed from the bondage of Congress. I must be able to act quickly and decisively, as commander-in-chief around the globe, without waiting for bureaucratic approval from any other agency."

The immense duty of rebuilding the world into a better place, must fall to that same band of nations that has opposed terrorism, communism and oppression worldwide, the United States of America and the United Nations."

"It is, therefore, with a heart that is heavy with the burden of responsibility, that I invoke the National Defense Authority Act and declare the United States, and every other country included within the United Nations, to be hereby placed under Martial Law.

"I am ordering the American public, for your own safety, to stay in your homes and behave honorably. Share what resources you have with your friends and neighbors, the same as I would do myself. If you see men in uniform, trust them the same way you would trust an officer of the law, or a priest.

The recovery effort will employ various agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency to bring relief to those who need it the most but they can't do that if there's panic in the streets. Therefore I come before you today as a firm, but loving, parent, and order every American to remain in your home until help arrives at your door."

"Now, due to the enormity of the situation globally, we have asked our Chinese and Russian allies to loan us some troops so that we may feed our hungry and they graciously complied. So if you find yourself being fed, or clothed, or housed by someone who speaks a little differently than you, just remember that he is your brother, or sister. He is on *our* side, the side of humanity."

"We *will* bring order to the world, I promise you that. And that this new form of government, of a unified one-world government, will not simply mirror the old, flawed system, but will introduce an entirely new World Order. -God be with you, Amen."

The message repeated on every station until the power grids worldwide went out at nightfall.

\* 20 \*

September 23, 2015 - Ojai, California

"Did you hear that guys? She wants us to stay in our houses until the soldiers arrive at our door and put us in camps!" Andy said as he carried another load of emergency supplies out to the truck.

"I wish we could wait until it gets dark. I keep hearing small-arms fire around town." Anna said worriedly.

"I know, I wish there was some way to know what's going on. We just have to get our gear and get up to your dad's house. Your sister's family will be there and we'll be okay."

Anna silently considered the man who had seemed so passionate about exposing and avoiding the Event before it happened, who now seemed so calm and collected about it. The year before, the family had been thrown into severe disarray when Andy had emphatically suggested that the family flee to the jungles of Peru. His plan was to study under a shaman while the world fought its new war without them. He had been slow to realize that this was not to be and the discussions had been difficult for everyone.

Anna had found it impossible to leave her family and, after a few difficult nights of heated discussion, the family chose to remain where they were and to fight back with love and light. She had

once or twice felt so guilty for being the only reason why Andy couldn't take Merlyn somewhere safe, that she thought about taking dire measures upon herself. Luckily, Andy hadn't pushed the issue quite that far.

Once the decision had been made, Andy was content with it, even though he didn't expect any of them to live through the experience. Now that the Event had finally arrived, he was calm and clear-headed to a point of semi-detachment. He believed that he had willfully experienced the emotions of the Event so fully beforehand so he wouldn't be too shocked to help other people when it finally did happen, and it finally was.

The family had stockpiled a lot of food and solar or hand-crankable utility items like lanterns and battery-chargers. They knew it wouldn't amount to enough but it was all that their part-time incomes had allowed them to accumulate. Anna's parents had stockpiled more and so had her sister's family.

*Maybe we'll be able to get by*, she thought optimistically, then reconsidered, *get by until what exactly? The whole world is in shambles and the rescuers are also the jailers!* Worry began to overwhelm her and she felt her blood-pressure spike.

Anna successfully re-centered herself and climbed in the truck with Andy and Merlyn. They didn't even bother to lock the door to the house because they knew that soldiers and looters alike would find a way in if they wanted to. From Topa Topa Drive they only had to cover a single mile to reach Anna's parent's house on Foothill Drive. Andy let out the clutch slowly yet their hearts raced as they pulled out of the driveway.

They heard gunfire from the Mormon Church and it seemed to be aimed at the Episcopalian Church across the street. There was a tense moment as Andy's S10 pickup drove through the crossfire but the truck wasn't targeted.

Andy approached the intersection of Bristol and Ojai Avenue cautiously. The main street had been cordoned off like it was during the Fourth of July parade, but the DHS barricades were much heavier. He didn't see any police officer or soldiers, so he deftly maneuvered the narrow pickup between the barricades and drove quickly across the intersection.

As they crossed, Merlyn called from the backseat, "They have hummers and a helicopter parked in front of the Ojai Inn, Dad!"

"Did anyone see us?"

"I don't think so." Merlyn replied nervously.

Two minutes later, they pulled into Nick and Judy's driveway. Anna punched the code into the garage door opener and they unloaded the boxes and quickly reclosed the big door.

The loving parents embraced their daughter and her family for a touching moment, when Anna asked them, "Where's Laurie's family?"

"Your sister should have been here by now. I'm getting worried about her." Judy admitted slowly. A deafening silence filled the room.

"If they're not here by nightfall," Andy stated, "I'll go look for them."

"You can't drive, they'll catch you!" Anna pointed out emphatically.

"No, but Oak View is only what, eight or nine miles away? I could walk."

"What will you do when you get there?" Nick asked his son-in-law gravely.



"Well, it depends on what's happening when I get there, I guess. If they're just being lazy then I'll help them pack up and we'll head back right away. If there's been any trouble with the soldiers..." He realized that he shouldn't have started a sentence that he couldn't finish, but now there it was, dangling in the pregnant silence.

"I'll come with you, Dad!" Ten year old Merlyn added enthusiastically.

"Come with me for a moment." Nick said to Andy. After fifty years of marriage, Judy took her husband's cue and began to stock the groceries with Anna and Merlyn while the men excused themselves into the garage.

Nick's workshop was not a feat of form but it was efficiently planned for function. Nick poured himself a Canadian Whisky and offered his son-in-law a bottle of Andy's favorite Kentucky bourbon.

"Let me tell you what will occur if something bad has happened to Laurie's family, or if you and Merlyn get into trouble while you're trying to save them tonight," Nick began authoritatively. "My last daughter, Anna, will probably die of a broken heart. Then Judy and I will have no one left and nothing to live for."

Andy considered the horror of his statement for a moment. "Are you saying you don't want me to go?"

"Of course not, I want you to go save my other little girl." He turned to the heavy gun-safe Andy had never seen him open. "I know you're a hippie and don't believe in guns and killing, but you need to be armed tonight or you won't be of use to anyone."

While it was true that Andy was a pacifist, he was also a realist who had been counting on his father-in-law to supplement his own arsenal, which consisted only of a black steel samurai sword. When Andy had made the decision to stay in Ojai for the Event, he

had also made the decision to take another man's life if it was necessary to protect the family. He had agonized over the painful decision but he believed that all life is entitled to defend itself when attacked.

"I'd be very grateful for a rifle, Nick." Andy selected a scoped Henry 30-30 lever-action hunting rifle that Nick had sighted-in to one hundred yards. Andy decided that he could wear it on a shoulder-sling and still carry the katana on his back. He would also carry water, dehydrated food and medicine in a backpack, just in case.

The family waited nervously until darkness began to fall. They heard helicopters flying extremely low overhead and several more short exchanges of small-arms fire from somewhere in the town below. There had still been no word from Anna's sister, Laurie, or her husband Matt and their two daughters, who bore the optimistic names of Faith and Hope.

Anna began to realize that she didn't want her husband *and* son to go. If something bad happened, she couldn't lose them both at once like that. She wanted to forbid them from going together but her voice cracked when she thought about her sister's family.

"Andy, you should go alone. Don't take Merlyn. I can't risk losing you both," she said to him at length.

Merlyn locked eyes with his dad as if to say, *how do you want to play this, Dad?*

"Ok, you're right. We can't risk more than one person on *any* mission while there's so few of us. Merlyn, they'll need you to handle things here if something goes wrong. Besides, I need you on the other end of the walkie-talkie." They both knew theirs only worked within a half-mile of each other.

Merlyn's eyes teared up. He thought of all the conversations they had had about the Event and how horrible the reality of it was

going to be, but he still didn't imagine it would be like this. Not *really*.

Andy's wife and son held him close until the power went off on the west coast. Andy donned his gear resignedly while the last yellow sun any of them would live to see set majestically over the mountains.

\* 21 \*

September 23, 2015 - Ojai, California

Ray awoke at ten o'clock in the morning to the sound of gunfire. He leaped from his bed and peered cautiously out the window. His jaw dropped as he beheld a small group of his neighbors attempting to force their way into another neighbor's house who was apparently responding with gunfire.

*What the hell are they doing?* he thought. He picked up the telephone but there was no dial tone. He put on a grey robe, which had been white when he had stolen it from a Marriott long ago, and went outside.

"Hey Ralph," he called out as he recognized a big man who lived across the street. "What's going on?"

"This old bag is hoarding food and water. We're asking her to share with us, that's all!"

Ray didn't like the way they were asking her and told them so. Ralph responded, "I don't much care if you like it or not, Ray, there's nothing you can do about it."

Another neighbor, known as Hillbilly Tim, chimed in, "The way I see it, you have two choices; you can help us or you can get your skinny alcoholic ass back inside your house." Hillbilly Tim swung a sawed-off shotgun toward Ray.

"But why? Why do you need her food? There's got to be more to this," Ray said.

"Are you stupid, pal? The whole world's gone crazy, there's no money, food, water, nothing!"

The words sank into Ray's groggy mind slowly but he had little time to digest the information properly. At that moment Barbara, the *old bag*, poked a hand-cannon through a hole in the wall and fired at Tim, who dropped like a sack of potatoes. Ralph fired back without aiming as he took off running toward his own house three doors down.

Tim lay motionless on the ground and Ray moved toward him to check his pulse when another blast sounded from Barbara's magnum. Ray felt the lead sizzle the air next to his ear and he ran back to the relative safety of his own house.

*What's going on out there?* His panicked thoughts threatened to overwhelm him. *How could the world be ending today, why now? What started it?*

He turned the television on in time to catch a little of the financial news coverage before the terror events dominated the screen at noon. The little screen showed images of pandemonium and violence from around the world and Ray slowly understood that Hillbilly Tim was right; the world *had* gone crazy.

Ray looked in his own pantry and frowned when he saw five bags of cheap noodles and a box of cornflakes. The refrigerator was nearly bare and the freezer held only a two-year old package of Green Giant broccoli. *I'm a goner*, he thought.

He did have the presence of mind to fill every container he could find with the heavily chlorinated tap water. *At least it will keep me alive*, he thought optimistically. As the fifth pot was filling, the water turned dark brown, sputtered a few times, then stopped altogether.

September 23, 2015 - Thousand Oaks, California

Spade was already in the city of Thousand Oaks, nearly fifty miles south of Ojai, by six am. He pulled the work truck into the dusty jobsite and switched the engine off. He flicked a switch under the dash which diverted power to a backup battery, then turned the radio on to his favorite morning talk show.

The men who worked for him wouldn't pull in until six-thirty and would need another thirty minutes of coffee and small-talk before they would get to work. That was fine with him, though, he was making over six hundred dollars an hour on this job. He began to fill the fuel tanks on the tractors when something caught his ear on the radio.

"...dollar has dropped more than forty percent this morning in heavy trading. We are getting reports that currency traders are walking out of the exchange, Bob. It appears that they are quitting their jobs and rushing home to their families. What do they know that the American public doesn't, Bob?"

"They know that the US Dollar has been a fallacy for a long time and it is, and has been for a long time, completely worthless. Do you remember the stories of people pushing wheelbarrows full of cash down the street trying to buy food in Europe after WWII? The cash was so worthless they burned it and traded the wheelbarrow for food. The wheelbarrow was worth more than all the cash."

Spade thought about it for another moment, calculating the losses he was probably incurring in the stock, commodity and real-estate markets. He decided to look into it and pulled out his new computer phone.

"Siri, what is happening to the economy?" He didn't make the connection between the all-knowing telephone personality and the

oppressive beings from Sirius B that his brother was always talking about.

"Top stories: US Dollar down nearly fifty percent. Economic crisis looms. Terrorists have destroyed key targets around the world, including the United States, Israel and the United Kingdom. US Banks rumored to be shutting down across the country. ATM's are empty and there are reports of widespread rioting and looting."

Spade's blood ran cold. His mind turned to his daughter fifty miles away. An instant later he was bullying his way through northbound traffic. He didn't have an emergency plan but he kept money and a pistol with his passport. He knew he could keep his daughter safe if only he could get to her before things got real bad.

He was in the fast lane, tailgating the car in front of him mercilessly when he caught its brake-lights illuminate for an eighth of a second before he smashed into it. His airbag deployed as he rammmed the little car at nearly eighty miles an hour. He was already unconscious when the car behind him struck his work-truck, throwing his body violently backward into the seat.

\* 23 \*

September 23, 2015 - Ventura, California

Spade was already on his way to work when Daisy Lou's alarm woke her at five-thirty. She had moved in with her son when he and his wife had divorced so that she could help raise his daughter, Tiffany.

She set the coffee pot on and showered while it brewed. She was thinking of her younger son, Andy, who she had hung up on the day before. *Why can't he just be happy?* she thought sadly. She

was a good person and read the bible every day. She paid her taxes and said her prayers.

So what if she was passing around a petition for the President to kill the Muslims once and for all? Muslim extremists had killed thirty Christians that month in Iraq. Andy's point had been that the UN coalition forces had killed 300-400 Iraqis every *day* since 2001, and still were, but she knew that couldn't be right.

She dressed herself simply but still felt cute in shorts and a blueberry colored top that set off her cobalt eyes, then she went to wake Tiffany for school.

"I don't want to get up, Grandma! I want my daddy." Daily Lou sighed deeply and forced herself to smile at the little creature who was almost sixty years younger than herself.

"Daddy's at work and if you don't get up now, you'll be late for school." Tiffany knew the routine was adamant and soon submitted to it. Daisy Lou helped the willful five-year old shower and get dressed for the day, then fed her Cheerios and fruit for breakfast.

"I really don't want to go to school today, Grandma."

"Why is that, Honey?" Grandma answered absent-mindedly.

"I don't know. Something bad is gonna happen."

"Oh, don't be silly. Did anything bad happen yesterday?"

Tiffany thought about it. "No, Daddy took me to the zoo!"

"See, so that means nothing bad is going to happen today, right?" Tiffany sensed illogic somewhere in the reasoning but didn't quite know where. "I guess you're right, Grandma."

The school was nearby, but up a steep hill, which had become something of a personal nemesis to Daisy Lou on account of her

sore feet. Yet, Tiffany held her hand as they walked to school together.

She was in rather serious pain when she returned to the house thirty minutes later. She drew a small footbath and clicked on the television while she soaked her aching feet. She flicked past several commercials and news stations before deciding on The Andy Griffith Show. She watched Opie learn a valuable lesson about telling the truth in 1954 and wondered why people couldn't embody those old-fashioned values today.

She turned to the local news channel, hoping to see the schedule of events for the churches that week. A headline scrolled across the screen.

*US Dollar down over forty percent! Worldwide disasters have changed the face of the planet. Destruction, looting and Civil Unrest reported worldwide!*

Daisy Lou breathed a deep sigh of relief. She had been waiting for *the rapture* for most of her life, and maybe it had finally arrived. There was no part of her that wished to live another day in the sinful world and she would be grateful if it had come. Then she thought about the dangers of riots and looting and headed out the door to bring Tiffany back home.

\* 24 \*

September 23, 2015 - Ventura, California

Joe Average awoke with only a slight hangover which put him in an unusually good mood. He had been doing better financially and it showed in his choice of drink. *No more \$1.99 grain alcohol for me!* he thought. Then he saw the time and realized why he felt so good; it was nearly ten o'clock in the morning.



He drove the short distance to work listening to Led Zeppelin I on the CD player. At a stoplight, he observed a group of people behaving strangely and got a laugh when an old lady punched another old lady in the mouth. *Ouch, that must have hurt!*

Several cars ignored stop signs completely but Joe didn't see any cops to give them tickets. There were groups of regular people who seemed to be knocking on neighbor's doors to throughout town. *Maybe something's going on?*

He was surprised to find the garage locked when he got there but he had a key so he snapped the lock open and hoisted the heavy door. He looked at the pieces of the transmission that he was rebuilding and smiled. He truly loved getting his hands dirty.

Although Joe had displayed quite an aptitude for fixing things at a young age, his mother could never see through his poor grades. His father still struggled with the fact that Joe had never made starting quarterback on the high school football team like his father.

Good ol' Joe Average put the Zeppelin CD into the shop radio and turned it up loud. Then he turned his mind to his work and was gone to the world for several important hours.

\* 25 \*

2022 - Los Padres National Forest, California

Merlyn led the boys on the hunt for water for four unsuccessful days and the supply at camp was already running low. He knew that, in a few days, they would be desperate.

"Everybody gather round," he said one evening. "We have to get water or we'll die. I am going into town. It might take a day or

two but I'll be back. Make sure you ration the water like I taught you."

"I want to come with you," Charlie said. His sentiments were echoed by the others.

Merlyn shook his head. "Silence is key to this kind of operation and one person can move more quietly than four." He dirtied his face and donned dark clothes. He wore the katana on his back like his father had worn it and slung a rifle over his shoulder.

The children were clearly worried that Merlyn would never come back and no amount of reassurance seemed to appease them, so he tried a different approach.

"You guys have to grow up, you've got work of your own to do! Go get your tools and dig for water all day. I'll be back as soon as I can!" He said the words angrily and then walked away without looking back. He didn't respond well to *tough love* personally but he knew the mission was too dangerous to take anyone else with him.

Charlie led the group to a section of the dry riverbed that he had been keeping his eye on. The kids had already developed sore blisters and slight calluses on their hands from the last few days, and they weren't looking forward to swinging the pick or shovel all day. Yet, what else could they do?

Merlyn was not home when they returned in the late afternoon but they worked together to build a campfire and warm a little of the thin bean broth they had been living on.

Emily's emotions rose to the surface and she said, "He's abandoned us! He went to one of his other camps and he's never coming back!"

"That's not true!" Lucas said. "He cares about us and he is coming back."

"Besides, we can take care of ourselves, can't we?" Charlie said confidently.

Emily put her head on her knees and began to sob. Both boys sat down next to her and did their awkward best to reassure her. Then Charlie remembered, *the kindle has more on it than just classics and textbooks, it also has tons of children's stories!*

He gave the hand-crank to Lucas who already knew that he had to spin it every minute or so to power the reader but he didn't mind. He was secretly anxious for a bedtime story, too.

Merlyn brushed guilty thoughts aside and focused on his task. He didn't know where he was going exactly but he was sure to find something. He walked through the lonely chaparral using a small flashlight clipped onto his hat.

He paralleled the highway whenever possible but on some sections, especially bridges and tunnels, he had to walk right down the road. If a military vehicle came around the bend at that moment, he knew that he would have nowhere to go.

He came upon a house that was set quite a ways back from the highway. The gate was locked and bore a sign that read: *Site Closed. Trespassers will be shot.* The emblem of the United States Department of Homeland Security was written across the bottom. Merlyn had to laugh, *Ha! They even included a telephone number in case I want to call in a complaint!*

He peered through the fence and didn't see any signs of activity, so he quickly climbed over it. The house had been burglarized long ago, probably by his someone like his dad, who had been trying to provide for his family. *Just like yourself now, too!* his mind reminded him gently.

He found the well but was appalled to discover that it had been filled with UN sandbags. Merlyn knew that he would have to move closer to town before he could hope to find a house that still

had water. He marveled for the millionth time about what a little thing water had seemed when he was growing up. Now it was almost all that mattered.

He hiked as far as the junction of Highway 33 and Matilija Canyon Road. It occurred to him that there used to be a *lake* there. He looked up at the steep switchbacks and began to ascend. Once again there was no place to hide until he reached the relative cover at the top.

He moved quickly and had just completed the last switchback when his eyes bulged in horror at what he saw below him. His body reacted involuntarily by throwing itself down the hillside. He had only caught a glimpse of the DHS Base where the lake had been, but one look was enough.

As he tumbled down the hill, he questioned his chosen method of escape, but he also knew that the one road to this base, upon which he had been casually walking, would likely be used very soon by some very dangerous people. He reached the bottom and the air was knocked out of him, but he recovered himself like a soldier and scurried into the trees on the opposite side of the highway.

He half-expected to see headlights appear but decided that would have been too cliché. Instead, he had time to fully catch his breath and step out on the highway once more before they appeared.

September 23, 2015

Sir Pike knew that the Sleepers would not speak through him again and, therefore, he had nearly reached the end of his usefulness to the Cabal. Yet, he was a shrewd man and had taken steps to survive what was to come next. He knew precisely how the *gods* manipulated men because he had learned to manipulate them himself.

He possessed a small island that he had bought under a deep alias. Now he could only hope that it had remained a secret and he could reach it in time.

He slipped out of his mansion through a semi-secret exit to the underground garage. He approached the Rolls Royce but decided it would draw too much attention so he moved instead toward the big, black Range Rover.

"Hello, Ishmael," came a disembodied voice from somewhere in the garage. Pike recognized the voice and hissed, "Israel!" Israel Crowley stepped out from behind an extended limousine to confront his brother.

"You cannot stop me, you can't stop any of this. It's already too late!" Pike boomed.

"It has to be stopped!" Crowley replied with equal force.

"You know only *they* can really stop it, anyway. It's *their* planet, why do they give themselves to him. Why do they continually choose to believe his lies?" His brother understood that he was blaming the humans for their folly in believing Samael's lies.

"You know why that is, Brother. It is only because he has lied to them for so long."

Pike scoffed and unlocked the car door. "We have had this debate before, have we not? Let us simply agree to disagree and leave it at that, shall we?"

Frustrated rage welled inside Israel Crowley who attempted to quell it within himself. Tears ran down his face as he watched the Range Rover drive away.

He collected himself and left the grounds of the mansion by means of another tunnel. They had grown up there together and Israel had thought that maybe a meeting with his brother in their childhood home would give him a change of heart. Theirs had truly been a story of lightness and darkness polarizing two brothers onto vastly different paths.

Israel Crowley had felt a calling to serve humanity from a young age and had been indulged by his fabulously wealthy father to attend many schools and monasteries. His path was one of love and light, of knowledge, harmony and balance. Whereas the path of darkness was felt with equal strength by his twin brother, who had found no difficulty finding powerful secret societies to take him under their wing.

Crowley wondered why the husband and wife activist team hadn't contacted him yet. Usually, the parlor trick of foretelling the immediate future had proven itself to be sufficient to incite genuine interest in most people.

*The problem then becomes, he mused, that those who are nearest to enlightenment are not like most people.* He decided that he would try the couple again.

His twin brother, Pike, drove the short distance to his private helipad where a chopper was waiting for him. He climbed in and barked the order to lift off. There was no response so he unbuckled himself and moved into the cockpit to give the pilot an earful. Suddenly, the engine roared to life and the chopper bucked him into the rear compartment.

Pike attempted to open the doors but felt as if they might as well have been welded shut. He raised his hands in the Freemason's gesture of extreme duress and looked like he was judging a successful field goal.

"Put your hands down, fool!" The disembodied voice of Archangel Samael sent shivers through Pike's dark soul. "No Mason can save you from *me!*"

The helicopter rose unsteadily into the air while the big man screamed pleas for mercy. Unholy laughter filled his ears and he began to claw at them violently until he had nearly scraped them off his head, leaving blood and bits of ear-flesh running gruesomely down his arms and neck.

He had known, of course, that treachery was how the Dark Ones repaid their minions, but he had thought of himself as special. He had thought that he was above them.

The engine stalled at altitude and began its eerily quiet descent. The only sounds to be heard as the helicopter fell from the sky were the soul-panicked pleas of the wicked man and the rushing sound of the wind.

\* 27 \*

September 23, 2015 - Gaia's Underworld

Samael had enjoyed harvesting the dark priest's loesche, or negative soul-energy, but the rush of evil adrenaline did not sate him for long. He turned his thoughts to Lillith and began to watch her in his mind's eye. She was giving orders to the cabalistic elite who seemed to be presenting her with somewhat of a problem.

"With all due respect, Ma'am, if we issue these commands the whole world is going to fall apart!" The voice belonged to General Arthur MacDouglas.

"Don't be dramatic, Art. It won't fall apart, it will just change." Lillith replied coolly. The general began to speak again but a mysterious lump grew in his throat to the size of a golfball and he the seemingly powerful man was reduced to merely fighting for each breath.

"Anyone else?" The others in the room understood that Lillith was *different*, but had never seen her employ supernatural power before. In truth, none of the men and women present knew the whole truth about the president, although they all sensed something unnatural about her, something dangerous.

No one offered any further comment and she closed her briefcase. "Good. You all have your orders. I expect to receive status updates every thirty minutes until Phase 1 is complete." She said nothing further as she left the lavish boardroom. When the door closed behind her General MacDouglas was suddenly released from his malady and he gasped desperately for air.

The men avoided eye contact with him and quickly excused themselves to execute their orders. *The mutiny was short-lived, I see!* he thought bitterly. The others had simply left him to choke without uttering a single word in his favor. He began to question his chosen allegiance but knew that he was powerless to change anything now. It was too late.

Archangel Samael smiled at Lillith's performance. Only he and her knew just how badly she had wanted to crush MacDouglas' bones and drink his loesche. He was proud of her for exercising restraint. He would reserve them all for her alone, to consume at her leisure, once they had completed their appointed tasks.

He turned his attention to Shamash, the false sun-god and his wickedly cunning twin sister, Isis, with whom he was hopelessly in love, and had been for millenia. To win her affections through terrestrial power, Shamash had usurped the legends of Ra around the world.



For her, he had instructed the secret societies of the world to erect monuments in her honor, although the societies themselves knew little about their true symbolism. These phallic symbols, or *lingham*, representing her only true love, Osiris. These overt obelisks now appeared in thousands of cities around the world, including the Washington Monument in Washington, DC, the Vatican Obelisk in Vatican City and Cleopatra's Needles in London, Paris and New York.

It had been Shamash who had suggested that the cabal bestow her name upon the global terrorist organization who would help trigger the Event. She had loved the idea of calling them Isis.

The Archangel found the pair asleep in bed and marveled at their foolishness. For they had chosen the dark path, which would not share itself with love. To ascend at the end of the Great Cycle, a dark one must be *perfectly dark*.

*Perhaps Isis will succeed*, he thought, knowing her propensity for duping males and sacrificing them cruelly. It was certainly possible that she held no love for her twin. *If she were to betray him, she might ascend after all.*

\* 28 \*

September 23, 2015 - Ojai, California

Andy stepped from the house and was immediately confronted with his limited options. There were only two main roads to Oak View; Highway 33 or Creek Road. The highway itself was out of the question but it paralleled the dried-up Ventura River. He could avoid a lot of homes and intersections if the troops weren't patrolling it, but he thought they probably would be.

Creek Road was a small, winding road that paralleled its serpentine namesake on the other side of the valley. Locals used the road on

tourist weekends to avoid the traffic in Oak View, Mira Monte and most of downtown Ojai. The road ran on the lee side of the mountains and the creek would provide him with decent cover. If the road was patrolled or roadblocked, however, there were fewer escape routes than there would be in the Ventura riverbottom.

He began to wonder just how *commando* he should behave. *Should I run from house to house, scale their fences and stay off the road?* He knew that homeowners with guns would be a problem. *Should I walk on the road and just dive for cover if I see headlights?* He had tried this as a young teenager and had often been caught for violating the ten o'clock curfew for minors. *What if there's a foot patrol and I don't see them?* He knew that he would simply have to move more quietly than they did if he hoped to avoid them.

He moved cautiously down Foothill Road toward Creek Road. He didn't see anything alarming until he turned onto Bristol and neared Matilija Junior High School. He dove behind a low wall when he heard the first diesel engine roar to life. An Emu, a curious long-time resident of that intersection, stuck its nose in Andy's ear but he held his nerve and remained still.

Three more loud diesels fired up and he heard heavy tracks rolling across the weathered Ojai blacktop. *Tanks!* he thought with grim satisfaction. *I knew we were right.* The tanks were painted white and bore the bold, black letters "U.N." on the sides. Each tank was followed by two humvees and a personnel carrier as they split apart, each group heading to its own destination.

Andy guessed that the DHS would station one at the East End of Ojai, one at Highway 33 to block northerly travel into the Sespe, one at Highway 150 toward Carpinteria on the coast and one on Highway 33 south to Ventura at the Casitas Springs bottleneck. The whole valley could be contained with only four tanks.

He waited for the echoes of the war machines to die away before he rose up and began to move. He crossed Ojai Avenue uneventfully and moved rapidly down Country Club Drive to Creek Road. There was an ultra-rich golf course and hotel nearby that was rumored to be owned by the Illuminati. He wondered whether the expensive villas might be the barracks for the officers and visiting officials. The twelve-hundred dollar a night rates kept almost all locals from ever seeing the rooms for themselves but Andy suspected they would billet even a general comfortably.

Andy gave the Inn a wide berth, travelling through a horse pasture a hundred yards away from the road. He saw little over the Inn's high walls but the soldiers stationed at the gates made the military presence known. He kept moving and soon reached Creek Road, which he had walked many times as a kid when he had once had a girlfriend out there.

He turned southward and began walking the long, dark path that, as a teenager at night, had seemed to come right out of Washington Irving's Sleepy Hollow. Although it was not one of the ghost stories associated with Creek Road, Andy couldn't help but imagine a headless fiend galloping toward him on the lonely, dark road. He could almost hear the clomping of the fiery horse's hooves as it bore the demon ever closer.

Andy had also once personally observed a woman's luminescent corpse hanging from an overhanging branch near the hairpin turn that led into downtown Ojai near Persimmon Hill. He turned his mind away from the ghosts which haunted the road and were beginning to haunt his mind.

He moved almost silently down the road and was prepared to leap into the bushes at the slightest sound or movement, but the night was eerily still. Andy assumed that most people were still cowering in their homes, whispering confident words to one another. They were probably scared and largely unprepared for

the world to end. *Soon, he thought grimly, they'll be coming out to slake their thirst and hunger by raiding their own neighbors.*

He hoped that he was wrong. *Maybe most people had saved months worth of food and water and there was nothing to worry about.* Although he wanted to, he didn't believe it for a second. He knew that food, water, medicine and other resources would drive an ordinarily decent human being to behave in ways they wouldn't otherwise. He suspected this would prove doubly true when the matter became the safety of one's own women and children. Even Andy was prepared to kill in order to protect his own.

He reached the long straightaway near Tewa Court and peered into the distance. He didn't see anything out of the ordinary so he pressed on. The sound of approaching engines reached his ears and he was well-hidden by the time the headlights reached him. An old model Ford Bronco convertible and a white BMW raced into view. They looked to Andy like high school kids enjoying a Friday night road race.

Suddenly, from the far end of the straightaway, an immense spotlight was switched on and Andy heard two double-taps from M-16s. The two joyriders screeched to a stop. Soldiers flowed out from behind the enormous spotlight and surrounded the Bronco. The driver of the BMW got spooked and gunned the engine, flipping a tight u-turn in a mad dash to escape.

Andy thought he was going to make it when the soldiers opened fire. The rounds came out in practiced rhythm and were nothing like the endless barrage of poorly aimed shots he had seen in action movies. These soldiers hit everything they aimed at, and unfortunately for joyrider in the BMW, they had aimed at him.

His car rolled gently downhill and came to rest against a tree. Andy remained long enough to watch the soldiers take the driver of the Bronco into custody, then he moved on. He traveled on the

far side of the creek and moved as silently as he knew how. He hoped the soldiers had only barricaded the road and not the whole breadth of the small valley.

As he inched his way beyond the road block, he saw the detachment of six soldiers manning the barricade. *I would've walked right into them if it weren't for the poor teenagers!* he thought and breathed a sigh of relief once he had moved two hundred yards behind the soldiers. He had traveled only six miles and it was already nearly midnight. He knew that he would have to move faster if he was going to get his in-laws home by daybreak.

He began to think that the next logical position for the troops to block movement was at Creek Road and Highway 33. His heart pulsed heavily in his chest as he drew near the intersection. He didn't see or hear anything so he padded swiftly across the street and approached his sister-in-law's house.

He stopped at the gate and peered through the fence. The house was dark and there was no sign of movement inside or out. Andy slipped over the fence and slid up to a window on the side of the house. He peeked inside and his heart stopped in disbelief; he saw his in-laws laying on the floor, their hands and feet bound tightly with law-enforcement zip-ties. Standing watchfully over them was a soldier in a strange uniform who was shouting at them in Russian.

September 23, 2015 - Ojai, California

Ray knew that he couldn't stay locked up in his house for long. His spirits began to sink with the setting sun as his house lost electrical power. He didn't have so much as a penlight to see by, so he sat under the moonlight and meditated on the rapidly changing world.

He had watched the soldiers arrive at the house next door and had heard a lot of yelling, but it had quieted down pretty quickly and the soldiers had driven away hours ago. He sat in perfect stillness for quite some time before a shadowy movement caught his eye. *Someone just hopped over my neighbor's fence!*

He slowly rose and moved silently toward the fence line. He saw a man dressed in dark clothing looking through the window. His first thought was to call out, "Hey! What are you doing over there?" and, as action follows thought, that is exactly what he did.

Andy froze, knowing that the soldier would soon come out to check on the neighbor's cries. Andy thought about doubling-back and trying to sneak into the house another way but knew that he wouldn't have time to cut their bonds and get them out before the soldier returned.

Andy ignored the neighbor's cries for help and prepared himself for the soldier. He saw the barrel of the Russian rifle appear around the corner and knew that it was time to act. In one practiced movement, Andy drew and swung the katana down in a vicious hack that had been aimed at the man's weapon but the soldier had turned away just as the blade was descending and the blow missed its mark.

The soldier screamed inhumanly as he stared at his hands. His left had been severed just behind the fingers and most of his right arm

had been sliced off. Ray and Andy watched in horror as shock quickly overwhelmed the soldier and he passed out.

Andy picked up the rifle and said to the unknown neighbor, "He has my family tied up inside. Will you help me untie them?" He didn't wait for an answer but moved quickly into the house.

Ray knew Matt and Laurie from next door as well as their kids with the cool hippie names, Faith and Hope. He couldn't imagine why a Russian soldier would tie them up. *But*, he reasoned, *I can't imagine why a Russian soldier would even be in Oak View!* Ray climbed the fence, took a knife from the dying soldier and followed Andy inside.

"Hi guys." Andy said somberly. He cut the zip-ties off of Laurie first, then Matt. The two kids were so panicked that he didn't trust them to hold still until they were in their parents' arms. "We don't have much time. Grab only what you need and we'll leave in one minute."

"What happened to the Russian?" Matt asked.

Ray looked at Andy. "He dead or dying outside," Andy said flatly.

Matt took the news in stride, "In that case, let's go now. We can't carry much except for the girls anyway."

They grabbed jackets and ran outside. The parents tried to cover their children's eyes from the soldier's gory body but they peeked anyway. Andy thought they might scream but they were shocked into perfect silence.

They retraced Andy's path and were soon in the relative safety of the creekbed. Andy warned them of the roadblock up ahead.

"Here's my idea. You all move as quietly as you can and I'll hang back. If they spot you, I'll start shooting from behind and you

guys run for it." Matt and Laurie, carrying the girls on their backs, followed Ray up the creekbed.

After several tense moments, Andy sighed in relief as they moved past the checkpoint without being spotted. He hoped that he could do the same.

Suddenly, the spotlight came on and dark silhouettes of soldiers fanned out from it. Andy guessed that someone had found the Russian and placed all checkpoints on high-alert. There was nowhere to run so he covered himself with weeds while the patrols were still a few dozen yards away and waited.

He felt footsteps narrowly miss his shoulder and knew that a soldier was standing right over him. He thought about ambushing the soldier but knew that he would be taken out an instant later. He focused his will upon holding still and stifling his smoker's cough.

Fifteen minutes later, the soldiers returned to their post, reporting negative activity in their sector and shut off the light. Andy waited another fifteen minutes before moving up the creekbed on his belly.

He found Ray and his in-laws waiting for him two-hundred yards upstream, well hidden within a dense copse of trees and undergrowth. Andy warned them next of the UN occupation of the Country Club and the Junior High School. They passed both without being spotted and were soon nearing Nick and Judy's house.

They were only two houses away when a search-light appeared on the road in front of them where an armored humvee had been parked with its lights off. "Stop! Do not attempt to move or you *will* be fired upon!" The six civilians froze in their tracks.



September 23, 2015 - Thousand Oaks, California

Spade's eyes opened before his consciousness fully returned and he mistook the white airbag that had saved his life for the fluffy clouds of heaven. Then he heard a woman scream and a horn honk and his wits returned to him like water from a blown dam.

He pushed the airbag aside and exited the truck unsteadily. Before he could turn around, a highway patrol officer slapped cuffs around his wrists. "Remain calm, sir. I am taking you into custody for your own safety."

Spade wasn't going to have any of that nonsense and he began to tell the officer about it. "What the he-"

He was slammed in the small of his back by another peace officer who had quickly responded to back up his partner. It was a pity that the civilians failed to grasp that same concept for they vastly outnumbered the few deputies who were attempting to handcuff everyone as they were removed from their cars.

The deputy said, "Now get up and get in line! I don't want to make an example out of you." Spade looked up and saw a line of scared and confused citizens forming in front of dozens of white UN busses. He started walking slowly toward it, losing hope of seeing his daughter again with every step. He wondered what was really happening, what had caused it, and why no one had seen it coming.

The soldiers ordered them on the buses and Spade sat next to a young man who didn't look old enough to drive and told him so. The boy just looked up at him with terrified puppy-dog eyes.

Four sheriff's deputies boarded the bus and it began to roll north toward Oxnard. Spade saw the smoke from dozens of fires billowing on the breeze. There were roadblocks at every offramp

of US Highway 101 and the carnage was everywhere he looked. He saw the victims of the endless car accidents abandoned along with their vehicles, he saw wounded crying out for help in the street. He saw lost and bloodied children looking for their parents. He saw flocks of birds fleeing a city under the militant arm of Martial Law.

Although it had been converted into a FEMA camp with a double layer of tall fences topped with razor wire, he still recognized Arroyo Verde Park immediately. He was pleasantly surprised that he had been bused to this location, for Ojai and his daughter, were only eleven miles over the mountains to the north.

Outside the bus, the men were separated from the women. Spade was made to undress fully and endure the fire hose with the other men. They were given orange jumpsuits with numbers printed on them and ushered into the camp.

Spade saw soldiers from several allied nations, including others who weren't known to be US allies, such as Russia and China, working together to imprison the population of Ventura County. He wondered what was happening in the rest of the world if Ventura was this bad. He was assigned to a tent and shoved inside it.

Nine other men looked up from their private miseries and beheld the newcomer. One man spoke up, "Hiya, Pal."

"Hey." Spade replied.

"Next thing you're gonna want to know is what happened, am I right?" the man asked.

"Yeah, that's right. What *is* going on?" Spade said, taking the bait.

"I'll tell you what I know in a word; nothing. No one knows nothing," he laughed at the elaborate setup that Spade figured he

must have developed one by one as new men had been thrust into his tent.

Spade looked down at the boy who was still holding his hand. "Don't worry, kid. It'll be okay." The boy's eyes lit up. He had clearly been afraid that he would be left alone in the world without an adult who cared about him. Now that he had one, he nestled up on the ground next to Spade, who found himself wondering how a kid like this could ever grow up and have a normal life. *It's like it was stolen away from him.*

His thoughts turned to Andy, his anti-war, hippie brother. Andy was the kind of kid who cried during war films, or even the heavier episodes of MASH. Spade had never taken his weirdo brother very seriously but he thought about him now. Andy had warned him that Martial Law was coming to America but it had seemed too outlandish to be real. *That couldn't be right, why would the United Nations ever agree to that? How could anyone imprison its own people?* Andy's facts were always so contrarian, so philosophical and esoteric, that Spade had summarily dismissed them, and his brother, altogether.

He thought of his mom, Daisy Lou, and hoped that she would be able to protect Tiffany and keep her from landing in a camp like the one he was in. His mind then offered the severe image of them both being sprayed down and in-processed. He closed his eyes and wished for anything, death or sleep, to take him away from the nightmare unfolding around him.

September 23, 2015 - Ventura, California

Joe finished rebuilding the transmission at noon and went outside for a cigarette break. He thought there was a strange feeling to the air but couldn't place it. *Like something's tickling the hairs on my neck.* It was also strange that no one else had showed up to work. He flicked the butt toward the garbage bin and went back inside to install the rebuilt tranny in a sexy black '76 Trans Am.

Daisy Lou's feet were killing her as she ascended the hill for the second time that morning. She told the nurse that Tiffany had a doctor's appointment and signed her out. Tiffany held her grandmother's hand happily as they started the walk home.

"I'm so glad you rescued me, Gramma!"

"Well, I think maybe you were right this morning. If something bad does happen then I want you at home with me."

A white Honda Civic sped toward them in the bike lane at nearly seventy miles per hour. Then several cars tried to switch lanes at the same time and collided. Daisy Lou swept her grand-daughter into her arms and took shelter behind a telephone pole to avoid the slew of broken glass that resulted from the collisions.

She knew that Victoria Road would be closed for hours and she considered their options carefully. *If we stay here, Spade might come back. But there's really no way we can survive here anyway, there's too many people.* She began to panic until she thought of her son, Andy, and his family in Ojai. *If I'm going to try to get there before things get crazy, I'd better get going now.*

"Pack a suitcase, Sweetie, we're going to go visit Uncle Andy in Ojai."

Daisy Lou packed her own bag and left a detailed message for Spade in case he came home. She didn't usually drive but today

didn't seem like a good day for her to take the bus to Ojai. She swiped the keys to her son's Chevy Tahoe and despite the closure on Victoria, they were on the Northbound 101 fifteen minutes later.

She pulled off the highway five miles up the road when she ran out of gas near the Stanley Road exit. *I should have taken the bus!* she thought.

"C'mon sweetie, we're going to have to take a bus after all."

"Ah, I don't wanna! Can't we ask that man for help?" Tiffany pointed to a run-down auto-repair shop. There was a truck parked outside but no one was in sight.

"Oh, I don't know, honey. How do you know someone's in there?"

"I know there is, and he's nice too!" She led her reluctant grandmother toward the building and they followed the sound of the radio to the rear work-bay.

"Excuse me, sir?" Daisy Lou asked timidly. The man apparently didn't hear her so Tiffany yelled, "Hey, mister! Help!"

Ray lurched up and hit his forehead on the oil-pan. "What? Ow! Damn it!"

Daisy Lou had suspected that it had been a bad idea and now she was sure. She took her grand-daughter by the hand and said, "C'mon honey, we're leaving."

Joe slid out from underneath the car and stood up. "Hi there, I'm sorry for my language. I've been alone under there all day and you kind of surprised me."

Daisy Lou hesitated at the threshold. Tiffany said, "Well?" The two adults looked at her as if to ask *well what?*

"Well, aren't you supposed to introduce yourselves?"

Joe laughed out loud and answered, "Yes, ma'am, you're right. I'm Joe. Can I help you folks with anything?"

Daisy Lou was about to answer when Tiffany beat her again, "We're out of gas." She pointed to the Tahoe on the highway outside.

Joe wiped grease from his brow and answered, "Well, we don't keep more than half a gallon around here. Do you want me to call triple-A for you?"

Daisy Lou answered him nervously, "Normally I would but, well, it's kind of an emergency." He waited for her to say something else while she waited for him to ask another question.

"Well, if it's an emergency, I can drive you wherever you're going. I'm all done with this beauty and she could use a test drive."

Daisy Lou looked at the car, which even she recognized from Smokey and the Bandit, then she looked at Tiffany who was nodding emphatically. "I guess I can leave the Tahoe where it is. Thank you for the ride, Joe."

The TransAm roared to life and Joe invited his guests to take a seat. "Where to?" he asked good-naturedly.

"We need to get to Ojai," she answered.

"Okey-dokey," Joe said amiably, turning the hotrod northbound onto Highway 33, "What's the emergency?"

She paused a moment before answering, "Do you believe in Armageddon, Joe?"

2022 - Los Padres National Forest, California

After catching his breath and psyching himself up in the face of his discovery of the outpost, Merlyn began a mad-dash down the street to the next area of cover thirty yards ahead. He was halfway there when he saw the tell-tale glow of headlights approaching the bend in the road.

Cursing Murphy's Law, he sprinted hard and dove into a thick patch of poison oak. He held the branches with his hands trying to steady them so they wouldn't be shaking as the vehicle passed by.

Three armored humvees passed him and started up the steep switchbacks toward their secret base in Matilija Canyon. Merlyn moved swiftly from cover to cover until he found an opportunity to descend into the dry creekbed. He followed the creek for another mile when he found what he was looking for.

The creek crossed under the highway in a certain place that had it all. His dad had often taken him to the idyllic spot to shoot airsoft guns and swim in the deepest pools they knew of. *Maybe I'll find water there*, he thought optimistically.

He set his rifle down and removed his backpack to withdraw a Vietnam-era folding trench-shovel that had once belonged to his grandfather, and he began to dig. The rising sun soon sent surreal shadows onto the steep stone walls.

By the morning following Merlyn's departure, the boys at camp had nearly come unglued. The resolve they had showed the night before at the possibility of having to survive without Merlyn melted as the reality of his absence settled in. By noon, there had been arguments, hurt feelings and tears but they still hadn't pulled it together to eat anything or to look for any food, water or firewood.

"You guys, we have to do something!" Emily pleaded. "Can't we at least go out and get some firewood?"

After sitting around fighting all morning, Charlie and Lucas were finally ready to agree with her. They had already scoured the few trails near the camp when it became apparent that they were going to have to explore a new section of chaparral, and risk getting lost, if they wanted to find any wood.

Charlie tried to imagine what Merlyn would tell them to do. After a few minutes an idea came to his mind. "I know what to do," he said, "follow me!"

They followed him up a slope for about fifty yards when he turned and said, "Ok, Emily, you stay here and call out every thirty seconds. If we don't hear you, we'll come right back."

Charlie led Lucas farther up the trail. Emily counted to thirty and then realized that she didn't know exactly how to signal the boys. A moment later, she started screaming bloody murder. The boys, sure that she had seen a snake or something, came running back to her.

"Are you ok?"

"What happened?"

Emily's face reddened, "I'm okay, I just didn't know what to call out." The boys began to laugh and she joined them a moment later when she was sure they weren't making fun of her.

"We thought you were attacked by something!" Lucas said.

"Next time, just call *time* or *hello* or something." Charlie advised her patiently. The boys started back up the trail. Thirty seconds later they heard Emily's "Hello?" and replied with their own. A few minutes later, Emily's voice was barely discernible, so Charlie stationed Lucas there.



"Now you do the same thing, right after you hear from Emily, got it?"

"Got it."

Charlie started up the trail and was reassured to hear Lucas' voice yell, "Time!" Charlie pushed ahead until Lucas' voice grew less distinct. He was proud of himself for coming up with a way to make sure they didn't get lost. He spent a few minutes musing on his little victory before he remembered what they were supposed to be doing in the first place.

Charlie returned to Lucas with an armload of firewood twice, then he and Lucas each carried a load back to Emily's position. From there, the camp was easy to find. The children began to feel more confident in themselves and they felt like grownups as they successfully lit a small fire to warm themselves and yesterday's thin bean soup.

\* 33 \*

September 23, 2015 - Ojai, California

"Do you believe in Armageddon, Joe?" she had asked him. Joe Average didn't know the literal definition of the word, which referred specifically to Mount Megiddo in Palestine, but he had heard of the Great Cataclysm. He had watched a documentary on it once.

"Yes, ma'am, I do."

Daisy Lou shifted in her seat then fidgeted with Tiffany's hair. "Well, I think it started this morning," she said quietly.

The words took nearly a mile to sink in and Joe began to wonder what he was doing driving around with a doomsday nut. *Still*, he

thought, *she must have her reasons for thinking that the world was ending.*

"What makes you say that?"

She considered her answer for a moment too long and Tiffany answered for her, "The television says the economy is broken."

Daisy Lou added, "Yes, it seems the value of the dollar dropped to almost nothing this morning. There have been terrorist attacks all over the world, and most US cities have fallen to Isis."

It was Joe's turn to take some time to think about what he had just been told. It was hard to believe the world was ending when everything still looked so normal. He replied sarcastically with, "Is that all?"

"Oh, and the banks are closed and the president has ordered Martial Law."

Joe's face lit up and he let out a triumphant Jim Morrison yell. "That's great news, I was in debt up to my ears!"

They approached the narrowing freeway at Casitas Springs and marveled at the beauty of the green pastureland and layers of mountains behind them. Daisy Lou didn't want to rain on Joe's parade but she did want him to understand the situation.

"The news said there might not be any food or water. And without money, everything will stop."

"You mean like shipments of food and stuff like that?"

"Even worse, gas stations will run dry if they stay open at all. We'll have to walk everywhere we want to go."

"It'll be like the good ol' days, right Grandma?" Tiffany chimed in innocently.

"Yes, dear, it might be a lot like that." *Except in the old days, we weren't facing a global apocalypse.*

Joe thought about it and asked, "How many people do you suppose live in California?" His mind was on water and California's supply had been estimated to last only another year, and that was before the crisis.

"Almost forty million, I think." Daisy Lou answered.

Joe's heart began to race as three highway patrol cars zoomed past them in the right lane. He turned on the radio but the only station that came in clearly was KHAY Country 101 and their repeating twelve-song playlist. He switched it off.

"Where are we going exactly?" Joe finally thought to ask her.

"My Uncle Andy's house in the mountains!" Tiffany cried out, "I've never been there before."

"Yes you have, but you were still very young and don't remember." Daisy Lou thought of her two boys, who she could have named Yin and Yang or Cain and Abel. *What's worse*, she thought sadly, *is that their children don't even know each other.* It was true, Merlyn and Tiffany had not spent more than a few hours together over the years.

"Andy lives in downtown Ojai, by Carrow's restaurant. Do you know where that is?"

"Oh sure, another eight or ten miles and we'll be pulling in the driveway." Joe said confidently. "Is he expecting you?"

"N-no, I guess not," she stuttered. Without cell phone coverage, communication was impossible. She hoped that he would be home.

They drove through the idyllic countryside without incident, although it seemed to Joe that a larger number of drivers than normal were behaving erratically.

They were forced to drive through Oak View and Mira Monte very slowly because cars and trucks, waiting to get to the gas pump, were sticking out into the lanes and blocking traffic.

They passed the Y intersection and the Ojai Inn. A couple blocks further Daisy Lou said, "Turn right here." Joe soon brought the car to a stop in Andy's driveway and turned the engine off. In spite of the worldwide meltdown beginning to take shape around him, he was secretly pleased with the performance of his rebuilt transmission.

Tiffany jumped out and explored the front yard while Daisy Lou unlocked the front door and said to Joe, "Will you please come in? You should figure out what you want to do."

Joe's natural response was to decline and get his ass back to the shop but he discovered himself actually saying the words, "Thank you, you're probably right."

"I didn't see Andy's truck outside and he's not home but I'm sure he'll be back soon." Tiffany explored the house and yard while the grown-ups brewed coffee and listened to KHAY playing yesterday's hits and today's favorites. Joe desperately wished that he had thought to grab the Zeppelin CD before he had left the garage.

September 23, 2015 - Temple of Isis, Egypt

Isis rose from her lavish bed and crossed the room lightly. She didn't want to wake her brother. She stepped through an archway and moved down a dark, stone hallway. She stopped at an apparent dead-end and began to chant softly, "Kia Kanpa, Ia Zi Dingur Kia Kanpa."

The dead-end began to rotate slowly inward with only the slightest sound of stone scraping upon stone. She slipped inside, repeated the incantation and the hidden door closed. She was left standing alone in perfect darkness.

With the night-vision of a cat, she quickly found her way to the ancient circle and scooped water from a cistern into a low, flat obsidian bowl. This she placed upon a black altar and began to meditate while gazing with unseeing eyes into the clear liquid, enveloped by utter darkness.

Her mind was focused solely on one act and its likely aftermath. Her brow furrowed for a time then relaxed as she reached the deep state of meditation known to some mystics as *samedhi*. She felt her mortal body grow cold as her consciousness left it to travel in the misty realm of the Otherworld.

Dark humanoid shapes writhed in the moist air, twisting and contorting their formless bodies into the basest manifestations of pain. Isis did not look at them for she had learned not to trust the truly damned. They, who had once nearly gained mastery of the dark realms but had failed, were now only beginning to comprehend their folly. They, who in the final moment of ascension, had somehow betrayed themselves and their dark path, were awaiting the day when they could begin the long, long cycles of growth back toward the path of light.

*Fools, she thought, I will not make that same mistake!*

Her *Nous* transported Isis forward through earth's time-space and she saw her temporary, mortal body standing over the man she had betrayed. Then, in a dizzying whoosh of motion, she watched as she was crowned Queen of Earth, Sovereign ruler of every surviving human slave.

Isis had seen enough and she slowly became aware that the visions were receding and had been for some time. As they faded, her consciousness returned to her physical body and she soon had control over it once more.

The beautiful face smiled triumphantly in the darkness. She now knew that her plan could work and, most likely, would. She knew that there were always unknown, uncontrollable factors that could affect any event until it had been formally inscribed into the Akashic Records. Once printed therein, an occurrence would remain for all time, to be accessed by the worthy through the collective-consciousness that runs through all Creation.

Isis felt slightly weakened from the out-of-body experience but willed herself to explore even further. This time, she meditated upon the happenings of her kings and chieftains around the world, or as they were addressed in modern languages, presidents, senators, congressmen, emirs and even His Holiness.

She scryed them in the perfect darkness and was pleased by what she observed. Her minions had enacted all aspects of Phase 1 without committing any grievous errors.

Her generals had shown themselves to be extremely creative in the treasonous tactics they had chosen to employ against their brethren. Humans had long since proven that they would betray their friends and family, nation or religion, if they could be on the winning side of the wave of power.

Most humans believed that, as bad as their system of government might seem to them, if they could only climb higher up the ladder, everything would be okay. Isis knew that this was one of the first

steps upon the left-hand path of Set, the dark path of service-to-self.

At her command, the minions had created situations where currencies, as well as the stock and commodity markets, had become almost worthless overnight. Terror plots had been executed around the world, violent riots had been encouraged enflamed, and it had all been answered with Martial Law. The divided humans blamed each other and, she was sure, the hidden vampyr fed gluttonously on the negative energy that human fear spewed into the abyss.

She slowly pulled her vision up through the mire of human mind-thought and returned it to the perfect darkness of her own psyche. She then rose and exited the room as quietly as she had entered. Isis had foreseen the success of her particularly traitorous betrayal and only needed to discover the proper sequence of events which it required. She knew that if *he* was successfully slain, she would rule as the sole monarch of earth.

\* 35 \*

September 23, 2015

Shamash awoke in the empty bed and sighed like a mortal; exactly as a man who knows that the woman he loves does not love him back will sigh. It was a mournful sound. He knew that he was not like his beloved, he was not pursuing ascension on the negative path. Yet he had allowed himself to commit terrible distortions and atrocities upon the masses of mankind, all for her, and all in the once-great name of the sun-god Amen-Ra.

The first Being who had claimed the title had been his Uncle Enki's second son, known as Ningishzidda in Sumeria or Thoth in

Egypt. In the latter days of great Atlantis, Thoth had spoken of being the *King of the Soul-Sun*. This was long before the people of Greece came to know him as Hermes, before he ascended into the collective-consciousness that he eventually became.

Yet the true architect of the sun-god mythos was Amen-Ra, Thoth's older brother and Enki's firstborn son, Marduk. Marduk had been a restless god in his youth and grew impatient with his uncle Enlil's sober rule. He traveled the new settlements of the sons of Adam and shared great wisdom to their tribes on all continents. He taught them writing and mathematics, irrigation and farming, so that the people of the world came to adore the sun-god.

After the war with Enlil, Marduk ruled over Babylon but soon grew restless once again. Although Marduk was very wise, having been taught by Enki himself, he had not yet learned the secret to divine ascension. Thoth's soul had worked hard throughout many incarnations to achieve the precious wisdom, yet he chose to remain a while further to aid his elder brother along the path as he had been aided by the Children of Light from the realms above himself.

When Marduk ascended spiritually, most of the Anunnaki had already returned home. The people of the world had been left without the gods they had fully entrusted themselves to. Shamash knew that the humans would have been better served by teaching them how to trust themselves but it was far too late for that now.

Now, Shamash thought sarcastically, *I am the great sun-god and I use that power only to serve the whims of my sister!* The Gemini, as Inanna and Utu, had always been well-respected as gods by the humans, but were irritatingly subordinate to the Elder Gods. Inanna, as he called his sister, had quickly conceived of the plan to seize the power from the vacuum the Elder Gods had created when they left.



*That was over three-thousand years ago, he mused sadly. Now we are obliterating the entire race of man, the innocent along with the sinful.*

Shamash did not like to meditate upon the other one that he served, for the Archangel was an ancient, bitter creature whose sinister ability to rule by deception did not impress him. *Yet, Shamash thought openly, I must admit that his power exceeds that of any other Being on the planet. That is, as long as the three Sleepers are meditating upon his will.*

Shamash was wise, but he had failed to grasp that the Archangel was subordinate to the will of the Sleepers, a fact that might have helped him change his own mind a long time ago. Yet he remained largely unfamiliar with the true place they occupied in the dark hierarchy, as he had for millenia.

His thoughts turned then to the duty he had been assigned and quickly entered the meditative state that allowed him to contact the myriad priests of Amen-Ra, the great Sun-God, now known under many names. He knew that the people would not question his commandments, although a fool could see that it meant the treacherous destruction of their own race.

*They certainly are foolish sheep, he thought condescendingly, who will slay their brother at the whim of another being.*

He then remembered that they believed him to be the actual Divine Creator, the very One who designed the pattern of the great wheel of life itself. Guilt tried to overwhelm him but, like mortal man, the will of personal desire soon overcame his guilty conscience and he issued the fatal commandments to his blind but loyal servants around the world. The Great Cycle was over and the Armageddon that had been prophesied so long ago was not to be diverted.

September 24, 2015 - Ojai, California

Anna's mom, Judy, had tried to serve a cheerful breakfast but everyone's spirits were very low. Their thoughts were on Laurie's family, and on Andy who had left the night before to find them.

Nick arose before dawn to reconfigure the solar power. He rerouted the house's panels from the city grid to six deep-cell batteries in the garage that were, in turn, hooked up to a high-wattage inverter. This accomplished, he plugged in the police scanner that he had bought in his thirties. *Way back in '76*, he thought, still proud of his perfect memory.

The scanner picked up activity on every channel. He listened for some time before he could identify the frequencies being used by all the different agencies that were operating in the area. He began to write them down.

Judy knew that the cure for the blues was work, women's work. She cleaned the kitchen after breakfast and then wiped the counters clean. "Who's ready to can some peaches?"

Merlyn, who loved learning new skills, perked up at the offer. Anna remembered him at six years old, equating himself to a dungeons and dragons character because he was always looking for ways to *go up a level*. She thought it had been cute then, but seeing his growth applied to his daily life, she had become thoroughly impressed with her son.

He had gained a lot of experience for a ten-year old and had also earned a degree of insight that Anna wouldn't have thought possible in one so young. *Unless*, she thought proudly, *he were the Dalai Lama or the young druid Ganymede. In fact, most adults never grow as wise as he already is!*

She went out for a cigarette, realizing that she would soon be out and have to quit them altogether. The thought pleased her because she never could have quit without something major

happening to intervene. She and her husband had spent most of their afternoons and evenings reading to each other or talking while they smoked endless cigarettes on the back porch. She could handle life without cigarettes, or even without the house and back porch, but she was not sure that she would be able to live without Andy.

Blessed laughter interrupted her melancholy and she turned to see Merlyn and his grandmother playfully throwing sliced peaches at each other. Anna considered reminding them of the importance of conserving food but thought better of it. *It's so nice to see them smiling.*

Anna looked all over the house for her father and found him in his workshop listening to the scanner. "Good morning, pumpkin," he said, rising to give her a hug.

"Morning, Dad. I'm impressed that you have this up and running so fast. What have you picked up so far?"

"You'd better sit down, sweetie." She did. "They are making house-to-house sweeps called *Wellness Checks*. They're taking everyone they find to a FEMA Camp setup at Nordhoff high school."

"Oh, God, no." Anna placed her head in her hands and looked like a popped balloon.

"This is exactly what you and Andy were trying to warn us about, isn't it?" he asked gently. A cold thrill raced up her spine but she nodded without looking up. No one wanted to open a can of *I told you so*.

Nick cleared his throat and said, "There's more. Do you want to hear it?"

Anna *didn't* want to hear it but knew that she had to. She looked her father squarely in the eye like he had taught her and nodded bravely.

"They blocked all the exits first. They started rounding people up in Casitas Springs and Oak View last night. They expect to be in Ojai by tonight."

The chilling desperation of their new reality crashed in around her like a submarine collapsing under the pressure of great depth.

"I don't know what to do," he confessed. "I expected my son-in-laws would be here to help me handle this type of situation. I'm afraid that I can't protect you here."

"We can't go anywhere without Laurie's family!" she cried through clenched teeth.

"I know, honey. They'll be here soon." Nick put his arm around his daughter and nearly choked up himself.

A bright light turned on outside and he looked out the window casually. What he saw made his blood freeze cold. A white DHS humvee, which had apparently been stationed in the middle of the road, had turned on a large spotlight. A moment later they heard the soldiers speak through its public address system.

"Stop! Do not attempt to move or you *will* be fired upon!"

Nick jumped into action. "Go tell everyone to get down on the ground and stay quiet."

"What are you gonna do, Dad?"

"I don't know. I think I'll go the fence-line and try to sneak a peek at whoever it is they're talking to."

She nodded, knowing that it would have been impossible to dissuade him, even if she had wanted to. *What if it's them?* she

hoped against hope then ran to tell the others what was happening outside.

Nick grabbed his rifle, slipped out the side door and crept silently toward the fenceline. The sun was rising but it was still too dark to see anything clearly except where the soldiers were shining the spotlight. When he saw his daughter's family clearly illuminated in the harsh light, determination settled across his brow and he raised the rifle to his shoulder.

He saw two soldiers, one up top manning the spotlight, and the other one was stepping out of the driver's seat. Like an athlete, he pictured the sequence carefully in his mind beforehand to visualize success, then slipped the safety off. His first shot caught the driver in the narrow, unprotected area below his chin strap. Next, he swung the barrel expertly toward the man at the spotlight and put a whole in his helmet; just as he had envisioned.

Nick opened the gate and ran out into the front yard. He made sure both men were dead then waved Andy's group forward. Matt and Laurie took their kids directly to the house while Ray and Andy instinctively looted resources off the truck.

After turning the spotlight off, Nick said, "We can't leave it here." He got in the driver's seat and placed the transmission in neutral. He coasted it to the first intersection then steered it behind a clump of trees. He knew they would find it soon, as well as the tell-tale blood in the street in front of his house, but he figured the subterfuge might at least buy his family a little time.

Nick quickly rejoined the other two men and they slipped into the privacy of the backyard before exchanging any words.

"Glad you made it, son." he said to Andy, who expressed gratitude of his own.

"This is Ray, he lives next door to Matt and Laurie." The men shook hands.

"Let's go inside, Andy. There's a couple of people who have been missing you very much," Nick said as he proudly led his son-in-law into the house.

\* 37 \*

September 24, 2015 - Casitas Springs, California

Israel Crowley sensed his twin brother's demise but was largely unmoved by it. He had foreseen Pike's end long ago, yet a sadness would always linger that it could not have been averted.

He sat now in deep meditation within the inner sanctum of his mind. His body remained motionless while his spirit moved freely through the Otherworld. He attuned himself to the frequency of the collective-consciousness and began to draw data from it. He used this knowledge semi-willfully to seek and develop a new plan of action.

It was his intention to aid humanity in some small way and he had been particularly drawn to the activist family who had divined much of the truth from their studies. Yet, now there was a new direction of influence that he felt would soon intersect with that family. This he took on faith, a deep-seated faith in his own intuition, and infinite trust in the All.

He then chose to attempt to make contact with the girl's father, who Crowley sensed had been incarcerated nearby. He adjusted his own frequency to match Spade's and concentrated upon making psychic contact.

Spade looked down at the slop on his plate. *I can't believe it's even legal to serve this stuff!* he complained to no one in particular. The other men in his tent were either lost in their own melancholy or in blessed sleep.

He began to grow aware of a tugging sensation in his brain that was foreign but not altogether unpleasant. He began to respond to the pull by becoming *interested* in it. He closed his eyes instinctively and soon lost the awareness of his five senses.

His mind's eye revealed to him an amazing pattern that he somehow knew was the Flower of Life, the Great Mandala of which all life is part. He then viewed himself as if from far away; he was sitting morosely in his tent-cell. He observed himself check his watch, which read three o'clock am, then rise and simply walk out of the tent leading the orphan boy in tow. He saw them walking north over the Ventura hills and into the Ojai valley. *He suddenly knew where his daughter was and how he would get to her!*

The knowledge shook him out of contact with Israel Crowley who could only hope that it had been enough. Spade looked at his wristwatch which read two-forty five am, then he looked at the sleeping orphan.

*How can I trust a dream?* he thought doubtfully. Yet he somehow knew that it had not been an ordinary dream. *What had happened to him? Had God really given him a vision?*

He looked around at the misery of the FEMA camp and decided it was worth the risk. He roused the boy gently and spoke softly to him.

"I will be leaving in a few minutes," Spade said. The boy's eyes widened in fear but, as always, the traumatized boy said nothing. Spade continued, "I want to know if you would like to come with me. It might be risky."

The boy's eyes showed his relief candidly and he threw his arms around Spade. He knew the boy trusted him more than Spade trusted himself.

*What if I get the boy killed?* he thought pessimistically, but somehow he didn't think that would happen. *After all, God is with us.*

He thought about Tiffany and hoped that she was safe. His mom had probably driven them both up to Ojai to wait out the unrest with Andy and his family. He didn't care for his brother but trusted him enough to keep his daughter safe. *At least, he rethought, I don't have much say in the matter right now.* He looked down at his watch. It read two-fifty nine.

\* 38 \*

September 24, 2015 - Air Force One

Lillith was pleased that she had prerecorded the martial law speech because the 23rd had been a busy day. It was now day two of the Event and the world's stability had already been shattered. Her soldiers had executed their orders and the terror events, though not as synchronous as had been planned, had sufficiently set the stage for global lockdown.

Since she had been elected, she had quietly passed many highly questionable laws while the press was instructed to report on the endless celebrity gossip, racial and religious tensions and financial concerns. Some of the laws had literally given her the authority to bypass congress entirely during times of Civil Unrest. The American people had been sleeping while the FEMA camps were being constructed and when pictures of the millions of bodybags the DHS had foolishly stored in Georgia, they simply offered an absurd cover story and the Americans had bought it. Again.

Now the US Dollar was worthless. Banks and ATMs were closed. Almost all commerce had come to a screeching halt in the first day. There had been violent uprisings around the world within a matter of mere hours. The people had wanted to believe, despite



repeated evidence to the contrary, that their government, or their God, would save them.

Lillith entered the crisis room onboard Air Force One with relish, she *loved* this room. *From here*, she thought, *I can see and hear it all!*

"What's the sit-rep in Los Angeles?" she barked to a major general, who consulted his clipboard and replied apologetically, "It's bad, ma'am. City Center has been completely lost. The suburbs are a warzone. We have nearly one-hundred thousand National Guard and DHS units providing containment operations on the ground. One report estimates containment as high as six percent.

Lillith did the math instantly. The city of LA held about four million souls, so almost a quarter of a million citizens had been moved to camps on the first day. "That is not good enough, general. Do better."

She turned her back on him and repeated the same process with the other generals who were tracking the progress of devastation in other regions of the United States. Her reply was always the same, "do better." Inwardly, however, she was impressed at the cold efficiency of the civil war machine that had been assembled right under the people's collective noses.

She left the war-room and retired to her private cabin. She walked by a mirror and nearly didn't recognize herself. *I am absolutely glowing!* she said happily. *I guess Armageddon agrees with me.*

2022 - Los Padres National Forest, California

Merlyn nearly filled a five-gallon expandable water container with muddy liquid. He hoisted the heavy bag onto his shoulder yet didn't feel its weight, only gratitude. He knew how to live on a very small amount of water and he hoped to prepare a week's worth of soup with it. He was also secretly hoping to brush his teeth again.

He waited in the shade of the late afternoon but didn't allow himself to sleep. When the sun went down, he began to move homeward. The walk seemed shorter once he had learned where the hot-spots were and he gave them a wide berth.

It was after midnight when he returned to camp. His arms and legs felt like jelly from the hike but he was glad to be home. He called out to the kids so that his arrival wouldn't scare them. They arose from sleep bleary-eyed but ecstatic. With Merlyn's return, they held hope that tomorrow would be a better day.

In the morning, Merlyn showed them several methods to purify the water and they measured what they needed for the soup and shared the remaining five or six ounces. Merlyn was pleased that everyone was happy for the moment but he remembered that they were still in big trouble. *If it doesn't rain soon, we're going to have to move*, he thought sadly, then tried to turn his mood around.

"Today, we're going to go on an adventure walk!" he said enthusiastically.

"Ooh, that sounds fun!" Emily said.

"What's an adventure walk?" Lucas asked.

"You'll have to wait and see. But I *will* tell you that part of the adventure is finding herbs that we can use for the soup tonight."

They hiked deeper into the northeastern Topa Topa Mountains. Merlyn had not hiked that way for a long time and, in addition to the important herbs he was looking for, he hoped to discover something new, something they could use to survive. The rugged terrain contained mostly aging sage-brush, which was beautiful but was of little use to the group.

A large, vertical white rock jutted out from a sheer face above them. Merlyn followed a hunch and searched the area around the rock for any sign of hidden moisture. He reached his arm into a deep cavity and his fingers touched something. He closed them and extracted a camera film canister and a seemingly ancient bottle of water.

He opened the film canister and unfurled the scrap of paper that had been secreted away like a Geocache by some extremely optimistic person. Yet, here he was reading the message against all odds.

*Join the Resistance! Three miles northeast.*

Merlyn read the message out loud but announced that they would save the water for a more desperate time. He thought about the unlikely message and considered the likelihood of a *resistance* just three miles away. He looked at the sky and knew they had only two or three more hours of real daylight left.

"What do you all think? We could go look for the resistance but that means we'll have to camp hungry tonight. Or we could go back to camp and start our herbless soup."

"Well, this *is* an adventure walk, remember?" Charlie said happily. The group decided to press on and they could feel hope rising in their spirits once again. *What if they actually found people, refugees like themselves?*

"What if it's a trap?" Emily asked astutely.

Merlyn pondered her question before answering, "It *could* be, but they couldn't count on anyone ever finding their hidden bait. I'm kind of surprised that *we* found it.

To me, it seems more like an act of desperation. We only discovered the hole in the rock while we were looking for water, right? Only a refugee would have a reason to look in that hole. The common need for the most basic necessity of life, water, was like a password. I think we ought to investigate it."

"And we don't have to walk into their camp blindly, right? We can still scope it out when we get closer," Charlie noted.

"Good thinking." Merlyn thought that the kids were catching on very quickly. The group covered two miles quickly and then began to observe signs of a vague trail. They moved quietly for the last mile, listening intently for any sound in the silent high desert chaparral.

The sun had already begun to set by the time Merlyn's pedometer read two-point-nine miles. "I think we should wait here until it gets dark. Let's see if they start a fire."

"Or we could go find them and say hello before it gets dark," Emily said, clearly second-guessing her decision to camp outside for the night.

They moved to the shelter of a large tree and remained quiet for a time. They watched the red sun set magnificently over the mountains and were truly awed by its beauty. Suddenly, two children scurried into view only seventy feet in front of them.

*Where did they come from?* Merlyn thought curiously. He watched as they collected firewood then he blinked and they were gone. Merlyn rose and motioned for everyone to follow him. They moved stealthily up to the location where the children had disappeared and began to search the area carefully.

A bush, attached to a ground-level wooden trapdoor swung open and a young boy stuck his head up. "Eee!" he cried and slammed the door shut. Merlyn didn't want to invade anyone's home, so he instructed everyone to back up and wait for someone to come up and make friendly contact with them.

Only a few moments passed before a big man sprung from a bush thirty feet away. He held a three-foot section of steel rebar out before him like a spear. Merlyn held his own hands up in the air, smiled and remained still. For a long time, the man looked at Merlyn and the kids with a heavily critical eye. Then he, too, smiled and motioned for them to follow him down the trapdoor.

The kids looked at Merlyn for guidance, and he knew that they had little choice but to follow him. *After all, these people have to be the Resistance we've been looking for.* He resolved to follow the man into the tunnel and was relieved that no attempt had been made to disarm his group. *That, Merlyn considered, should be construed as an act of trust.*

"All right, let's follow him. I don't think there'll be an ambush or anything but just keep your-"

"Eyes peeled, got it," Charlie interrupted.

Merlyn approached the tunnel and saw stone steps descending at a gradual rate, deep into the earth. He stepped down and was followed by Emily, Lucas and Charlie. They were plunged into total darkness when the spring-hinge on the trapdoor snapped it shut behind them.

September 24, 2015 - Gaia's Underworld

Archangel Samael observed the worldwide carnage with an emotion that approached spiritual elation. He fed from the humans' negative energies like never before. Gaia appeared to be dying but he knew she would, if pushed far enough, simply shrug her titanic shoulders and change the face of the world. It had happened before.

He had long feared intervention from the Galactic Confederation but, to his eternal astonishment, their belief in the Law of Allowance forbade them to alter Mankind's destiny overtly. He scoffed loudly, *They're waiting for the humans to save themselves!* His cruel laugh resounded throughout the dark chamber.

He had often wished that they would act in some way, at least *try* to stop him from destroying the planet. He had met with the Confederation long ago and had offered the following plea when questioned about his treatment of Gaia and her humans: *My involvement is fully justified, for the people have chosen to follow me. I have acted within law, I have not forced them. They have chosen to accept the path I have offered them.* The Confederation had been forced to acknowledge the sad truth in his words.

After that, he feared nothing. He was rushing headlong into his dark ascension and welcomed the unknown transformation it would undoubtedly bring. He was reaping soul-energy at an unprecedented rate and was growing bloated on it.

*Once I have achieved the necessary depopulation, I must dispense with every member of my Cabal. I shall begin anew as the one true God over a new flock of a half-million sheep. I shall rewrite their histories and begin the next Great Cycle as the sole ruler of Earth!*

The Archangel knew many secrets, yet the Great Cycles were not even considered secret among his kind. Most beings in the universe had long understood that every planet developed its own Cycles which, once they had been studied and measured, were incredibly consistent. Knowledge such as this was taught in schools and had been carefully catalogued and standardized throughout the universe.

In the present age, Gaia was completing her third Cycle which had begun seventy-five thousand years ago. Archangel Samael was planning a New World Order for the next seventy-five thousand.

The people and nations of the world had been willingly divided, had shown a zealous propensity for war, and had duly fallen. A viral outbreak would spread systematically through the world, claiming far more lives than soldiers or climate change ever could. The New World Order required no more than half a million humans, so the Event must be of sufficient magnitude to decimate seven and a half billion human souls.

All that remained was to wait for the right moment to harvest the cabal and retire into dormancy while Gaia performed her cataclysmic end-Cycle shift. His ancient heart held no empathy for the deaths of innocents, the animals and children, for he knew that they only brought glory to those seeking mastery of the dark path of the Self.

\*41\*

September 24, 2015 - Ojai, California

As Andy walked through the door, Merlyn was rushing out to greet him. "Daddy! You made it!" They hugged each other tightly, then Anna came up and put her own arms around the two men she loved. They embraced for a long moment before Andy remembered the two soldiers who had been killed outside and excused himself from the warm embrace to begin calculating a plan of action.

While Andy and Ray began to load backpacks and suitcases with food, tools and clothing, Matt and Laurie began to tell the story of their capture.

"They were coming house-to-house. The radio said that they were only confiscating firearms but..." Laurie choked on the words.

"But they were really confiscating *people!*" Matt finished for her.

"That's ridiculous, why would Homeland Security take our own people?" Judy responded incredulously.

"We don't know. They knocked on the door and stormed into the house when I opened it. We were tied up and forced to watch as the soldiers looted our house."

"Then most of the soldiers left, probably to unload their stolen war-booty. They left one Russian to keep an eye on us."

This was the first time that most of the small group had learned that Russian soldiers were on the ground in their small, innocuous hometown. One thought repeated incessantly through their shocked minds, *Why were Russian soldiers, operating under the Department of Homeland Security, jailing the American people?* Andy and Anna knew there would be time for explanations later so they merely looked at each other sardonically.

"Then Ray started yelling for help and the soldier went outside to investigate."

"That's when Andy killed the Russian with that crazy sword," Matt interjected.

The group fell silent. They all knew what a pacifist Andy had always been and were shocked to learn that he had been forced to kill a man to save them.

Laurie turned to her father, "And Dad, thank you for saving us from the soldiers outside." She knew that, for all of her NRA



father's pragmatism, it could not have been easy for him to take the mens' lives either. He was a big-game hunter who always spoke a prayer of gratitude for the animals he harvested and never killed anything for pleasure.

Hope began to cry, "I don't understand what is happening!"

Faith, slightly older than her sister, complained, "I just want things to go back to normal."

Laurie put her arms around her skinny little daughters and hugged them tightly but did not offer an answer to their questions. How could she when she didn't understand what was happening herself?

Nick waited for the conversation to die down before stating, "The soldiers will be missed soon and we have to be gone before they begin their search."

This was a new thought for almost everyone present who had envisioned themselves waiting out the trouble in the large, well-provisioned home.

"We can stay here and try to defend the house," Matt offered.

"Against armored humvees with mounted fifty-calibers?" Nick retorted.

The small group grew silent once more as they began to weigh their limited options. Nick rose and met up with Andy and Ray in the garage.

"We're going to have to walk, aren't we?" he asked them although he already knew the answer.

"I think so, the streets have been closed down. There are tanks stationed at the main arteries to make sure no one gets out," Andy said. Nick sat in the timeworn chair at his desk, opened a drawer and began to look through the manilla file folders. He selected one and extracted it carefully.

It was a topographical map of the Los Padres National Forest which began only a mile north of the house. "I don't see that we have any other options. We have to get up in the mountains and find a place to hide."

They all began to wish that they had planned for the contingency but soon gave up the futile *would have's* and *should have's* in favor of a concrete plan of action.

Ray spoke up, "We could use this wheelbarrow and the backpacks to carry what we can and maybe sneak back down for another load of provisions in a day or two."

Nick looked at the man he had just met and nodded his approval, "Yes, that may be our best option. I can lead us to a camp about ten miles north of town. It was a Quail Unlimited project and they have a wildlife cistern with water, a generator, gas and ammunition."

Andy laughed involuntarily with relief, "That's great news, although it sounds more like a doomsday prepper's camp than one used for quail hunting!"

Nick's eyes gleamed knowingly but he said nothing more. He marked its location lightly on the map, withdrew two shotguns and four more hunting rifles from the gun-safe and attached slings to them. "First to come, first to be served," he said to the men.

Ray's only experience with real firearms were the pistols he had seen sticking out of police holsters during the Fourth of July parades, but he had watched all the action movies. He selected a semi-automatic pump shotgun and filled a bag with shells. Nick taught him how to load and hold the shotgun while Andy stocked up on rounds for the 30-30.

Merlyn's eyes grew big when his grandfather handed him a .22 rifle that had been fitted with a scope. They had been shooting

together before but Merlyn had never been allowed to walk around with a loaded weapon before.

He silently cautioned himself to follow all of the gun safety rules that he had been taught and accepted the rifle while making meaningful eye contact with his grandfather. He knew that he had just received a significant field promotion and, at ten years of age, had become one of the men.

Not everyone in the family agreed with the plan but the majority did and soon they were packed up and waiting for the second night to descend upon them since the Event had begun.

\* 42 \*

September 24, 2015 - Ojai, California

Daisy Lou, Tiffany and Joe Average had tried to find a radio or television in Andy and Anna's house but found only books and CDs. They felt more than a little awkward sleeping in the eerily vacant beds but fatigue overcame etiquette at last. The following day provided no further clues other than short instances of gunfire. After waiting around for most of the day, the restlessness and worry began to grow intolerable.

"Don't worry, Grandma, I'm sure they're okay. They probably just got lost or something," Tiffany offered sweetly. Her naivete charmed Daisy Lou as it always did.

"You're right, sweetie. I just wish I knew where they were."

"You said he was some kind of an activist, right? That he knew something like this was going to happen?" Joe asked.

"Yes."

"Then he must have had an emergency plan of some kind. Did he ever share anything like that with you?"

Daisy Lou felt like a fool. *Of course he did!* She stood up and said, "You're right! His family's plan was to meet at his father-in-law's house up on Foothill Road!"

"Where's that?"

"Just a mile or two up the road. If we hurry, we can still make it before it gets dark." They loaded the TransAm with as many needful things as it could carry and five minutes later they got into the car.

Joe didn't really understand what was happening, or why he felt so inclined to help the two ladies but he did know that something big was going on and they needed his help. His life had suddenly been imbued with a purpose that had eluded him when he had lived only for himself.

Though he didn't know it, according to Universal Law, he would only begin to experience this knowledge into wisdom at a later time; for the moment, he was simply happy. *Happy? During the apocalypse?* he questioned himself mirthfully, fully enjoying the irony within his sentiments.

Although they didn't know it, the rules of engagement on the second day were vastly different than they had been when they had driven up from Ventura the day before. Joe backed out of the driveway and followed Daisy Lou's directions toward Foothill Road.

They approached Ojai Avenue and realized their mistake. Armored humvees had been stationed near the Ojai Inn to the west and Carrow's restaurant to the east. Other than the military trucks, the TransAm was conspicuous as the only other vehicle on the road.

Joe's blue-collar adrenaline fueled his adventurous spirit and he whispered, "Get down!"

Joe let out the clutch and gunned the racy 455cc engine. They couldn't hear the machine gun fire over the sound of the engine but saw the rounds cutting into the black asphalt all around them. Daisy Lou and Tiffany were practically laying down in the back seat when a bullet shattered the rear window and the windshield.

Joe knew he had been shot but also knew that he couldn't stop to feel the pain at that moment. "Tell me where to go!" he yelled into the back seat.

Daisy Lou popped her head up just as the TransAm rocketed past the Junior High School. "Keep going straight, the second left is Foothill!"

Joe knew that there wouldn't be enough time to hide the car once they found the house. He rocketed up the middle of the road for nearly a half mile when Daisy Lou said, "This is it!"

Joe turned into the driveway and said, "Get out, run to the backyard!" Daisy Lou grabbed Tiffany and ran to the side gate, which was hidden behind a cluster of oleander bushes.

Joe backed up and was just beginning to accelerate when the first humvee appeared behind him. *Thank God he didn't see me in the driveway!* Joe thought. He didn't know it but his mother would have been proud to watch the selfless behavior of her prodigal son, perhaps his daughter would have been proud of her daddy, too.

The soldiers opened fire and the TransAm was chewed up badly but the tires weren't hit. Joe didn't know his way around Ojai and when he turned left into the labyrinth known to the locals as the Arbolada, he was quickly lost. The soldiers immediately lost sight of the speedy TransAm and they were soon lost as well.

Several tense minutes passed as Joe and the soldiers drove aimlessly around the narrow, labyrinthine streets. It would, perhaps, have been comical to observe their many near-misses from a birds-eye view but Joe knew they would find him soon.

He pulled the car into an open garage and shut the door quickly. He heard the hummer driving around every five minutes and laughed inwardly when they resorted to using the loudspeaker in an attempt to coax him into turning himself in.

Joe stepped out of the car and left the garage through a door that led into someone's backyard. He whirled suddenly as two soldiers shined lights in his face, lights that he knew were attached to automatic rifles.

"Get down on the ground, now!" Joe thought of his daughter and considered his options.

\* 43 \*

September 24, 2015 - Oak View, California

Spade watched the convergence of the seconds with the minutes as they slowly coincided at three o'clock in the morning. He took the boy's hand and they confidently turned the knob on the prison tent which was kept locked all day. It turned freely in his hand.

He moved through the door and immediately set off for the hills to the north. He knew there were hundreds of soldiers nearby and they weren't all sleeping, yet he led the frightened boy right around the outposts with an otherworldly assurance that would have been impossible without his strong faith.

The boy grew tired as they passed the Ventura landmark known as The Cross. Spade thought of the Christian poem *Footsteps* where a man questions the existence of only one pair of footsteps on the

sand during his most turbulent years. Jesus replies with a heart full of love, "It is at those times that I carried you."

Spade carried the boy through the long night and felt immense gratitude in his own heart. His muscles were strong, as was his will, and they arrived safely in the hills around Casitas Springs known as Black Mountain, where legend says thieves hid a vast treasure they had stolen from the mission San Buenaventura long ago.

He observed the DHS checkpoints on the highway and resolved to wait out the long day under the cover of the trees. He had no food to offer the boy but he held his hand tightly as they fell asleep under a tall valley oak.

Israel Crowley observed Spade's progress and lauded his diligence. Although Crowley lamented the misinterpreted laws of religion, their believers were capable of summoning vast amounts of power by faith alone.

*Well, we are never truly alone now, are we?* he reminded himself. He focused his mind upon Andy and his family, who were awaiting nightfall to flee their safehouse. He was proud of them for being able to do so, to let go. The vast majority of their neighbors had simply withdrawn into their own homes like ostriches sticking their heads in the sand. They hadn't yet felt compelled to step out into their communities, they hadn't yet felt the sting of hunger, sickness or thirst, but they would.

Crowley then attempted to raise his vibration to a level that he found to be extremely strenuous. He pictured the life-form with whom he wished to commune, and let the vibratory trance carry his message through the ether.

The image in his mind seemed to gain substance and an intelligent light entered the eyes.

"Greetings, Israel Crowley." The words were willed into existence without being spoken out loud, for that is one way higher vibratory beings can communicate with those of the lower frequencies.

"Greetings Semjasa. I seek your wise counsel."

"And counsel I shall give you, but you may not like it."

Crowley braced himself and said, "I understand."

"The Event will not be stopped by the Galactic Confederation, nor by Gaia herself. Not until the humans, themselves, rise to attain a different quorum. It is in their hands now as, truly, it always has been."

It was the answer that Crowley feared. "Then the race of earth humans is to be ended?"

"Not yet, for many of them are becoming enlightened with the passage of each day. The Event will only accelerate that process. There is still time for the balance to tip. Already, many millions are prepared to ascend to the higher realms upon the termination of their physical expression." Crowley knew that *physical expression* was referring to the mortal body, which was merely one expression of existence.

"If enough of them embrace the truth and let go of the old beliefs, then there is still hope."

"What can be done?" Crowley asked the being from beyond the star system known as the Pleiades.

"Your continued efforts are not without fruit. You have already helped right the paths of many, though you acknowledge only minor successes. Continue in your efforts, yet take care that you do not fail *yourself* in the process. Remember always that the fourth density awaits you at the termination of your physical expression."



Semjasa broke contact and Crowley's Nous, known to Hermetics as the highest part of the soul, began to spiral backwards through space and time. His astral form, still tainted with ego, attempted to crane its vision to see what was coming, but it was not possible. He suddenly grew aware of an immense amount of life around him. He felt them breathing in time with his own breath, then he was plunged into further blackness.

He understood that his perspective had become subatomic; he was a thick, black spoke on a six-rayed wheel that sped eternally through time-space while spinning gently around its own hub, or nucleus. He understood that he was now experiencing feelings of blissful inclusion, the inimitable truth that he was a part of the building blocks of all that *is*.

*As above, so below* echoed in his ears as his perspective expanded from the micro-verse, the role of a single fraction of a cell in his own body, to an infinitely larger intergalactic viewpoint that included billions of star systems. The loving sensation of *unity* struck him once more and he realized that, even something as disastrous as the Event on earth was, it was all going to be okay in the end, for everyone.

Israel Crowley understood this clearly, that all life was on an ever-expanding, upward journey. There was always another rung in the ladder or a step upon the path to be labored for. He remembered the words of Thoth, scribed in Atlantis thirty-six-thousand years earlier upon alien stone known as the Emerald Tablets.

*One message he taught crossed Crowley's consciousness; Mankind requires resistance, else he could not live. It is none other than his own Nous which assigns him the particular struggles he will face in each new incarnation, and further, he has fully agreed to accept this role for the betterment of his Nous and for the All.*

*It is mankind's personal and collective quest to seek ascension toward light by experiencing all aspects of life into a deep, ever-growing wisdom. It is a man's Great Work.*

\* 44 \*

September 24, 2015 - Berlin, Germany

The Gemini attempted to meet in secret, but it was very difficult to escape the Devil's all-seeing eye. They sat together in a private box at the Berlin Philharmonic but there were no musicians, there were only sounds of warfare coming from the streets outside the bombed-out theatre.

They smiled at one another as they enjoyed the symphony of death going on around them and embraced intimately. Isis' mind was, as usual, far away from her physical body, which she viewed as nothing more than a plaything that she used to win the hearts of men.

She longed for greater terrestrial rule and knew that only one Being stood between her and true, unadulterated power. Her mind transported their bodies back to the enormous bed they shared together in the Palace of Shamash, hidden deep within the earth.

She held little authority over the elemental spirits in her brother's land and dared not invoke them lightly but she knew of no other way to attain her heart's desire. While Shamash slept, she clandestinely left the bed and stepped into the gardens outside.

Hidden deep within the sprawling flora and fauna, she withdrew a small copper dagger and described a circle in the rich soil around her feet. She placed a small stone at each elemental quarter of the circle; a clear crystal to the east as wind, a ruby to the south as fire, lapis lazuli to the west as water and obsidian to the north as earth.

She walked sunwise around the circle twenty times, for twenty had been her sacred rank among the gods. Thrice she spoke the charm in the beloved tongue of the druids, "Y Gwir Yn Erbyn Byd."

She stepped reverently into the circle, lit a candle and the appropriate incense at each elemental watchtower. She then aligned herself toward the element that she sought contact with. Facing south, she began to chant a string of sounds that were from a language far older than that of druidic Celtia.

The smell of sulphur filled the air within the circle as the immortal essence of flame-energy manifested itself as a fire-drake, which appeared to Isis rather like an enormous dragon. Its fiery flesh sizzled and crackled like logs burning in the hearth and it spoke in an eerie hiss that seemed to pan from left to right and back again with dizzying speed. Isis had encountered Elemental beings before and knew that they were more truly *of the Earth* than any other entity living upon her surface or within her hidden bowels.

She spoke in thoughtforms to the fire-drake, "Hail and praise Girra, the fire of god!"

"Hail and praise be to Girra," It hissed back at her impatiently.

"I have summoned you to help me rid the world of a god who is not a god."

The fire-drake intuited her intended target and writhed with barely-constrained enthusiasm. "Yes, this can and should be done. Yet, know you the risks inherent to the attempt? Know ye that he has never fallen?"

"I know it well."

"Know ye the price which must be paid?"

"Aye."

"Then you have my service until the deed be done. I will acquire the rare poison which the bold task will require."

Isis smiled broadly and the two beings shared secret, sinister words between them. The sun had set upon the land but that mattered little to those whose kingdoms lie deep within the earth. Isis went forth into the night above to search for the twelve innocents who must be sacrificed to pay the elemental for its assistance.

While his sister ensorcelled the elements outside, Shamash received a mysterious dream-vision. He saw the world at his feet, with the Archangel gone at last. He turned to embrace his beloved twin and felt her cold copper dagger pierce his heart and he realized lucidly, in that instant as never before, that he was being used.

He awoke to an empty bed once again but this time he was relieved that his sister was not there.

\* 45 \*

September 24, 2015 - Atlantic Ocean

Lillith ordered Air Force One to land on a remote island that was equidistant from South America, Africa and Antarctica. She had been instructed to destroy it long ago but she had learned ancient hydraulic and cloaking technologies and had secretly employed them upon the island.

The landing platform lowered into the ground and the President of the United States stepped off the plane and into her secret island's underground lair. She knew that the term had become a Hollywood cliché in recent years but also knew that it had become so for a very good reason.

The security staff was curtly dismissed to the surface and Lillith was finally alone. Her thoughts turned not to the plight of the American people, as they might have hoped, but to her own future. She had no doubt that the world, as many knew it, was about to end, yet she knew equally well that all of the souls would reincarnate after their time within the bosom of the All.

Knowing that this would be her own fate one day, she too, had persevered with the sole purpose of dark ascension. She knew, as did Archangel Samael, that only the beings who have perfected the path of the Self would ascend at the end of the Cycle, and she planned to fulfil her role to the utmost.

She was going after the big one, Archangel Samael himself. She wanted to deny him ascension while earning her own. She had put the machinery in motion years before and now she had only to await the opportune moment to strike.

Her plan was to create just the slightest bit of love in his heart during Earth's final hour. The treachery would earn her the most sublime ascendance while causing an untold amount of turbulence to his own wicked soul. She believed that she had found just the instrument that would reveal love in the ancient villain's breast.

She entered the secret code and a panel of two-foot thick steel opened to her. She walked through and entered a high-tech global mission control chamber. She pressed a button on the desk and a drawer clicked open. It held the preserved right hand of the Secretary of Defense, untouched by decay, which she would need to access the fingerprint scanner armament authorization systems of the hundreds of nuclear missiles that she had secreted all over the world.

The love she planned to create within Archangel Samael would be the love of his own soul. She knew that nuclear weapons dissolved not only the appearance of matter, but also disbursed the very essences of the soul itself. When he realized her treachery,

and the peril his soul was in, his instinctive love for self would rise to the forefront of his psyche and he would attempt to save himself. That final, desperate act would be his final undoing.

She would remain in the chamber until the appointed time, then she would unleash the terror weapons upon the world, betraying mankind's own betrayers and winning her own long-awaited ascension at last.

Lillith felt so good that she wanted to *let her hair down*. She disrobed and allowed her true form to overcome the powerful illusion that she displayed before the world in her current role as the President. Her long hair writhed and hissed of its own accord and, below her navel, scales replaced smooth skin and terminated in a long, serpentine tail.

Lillith, first wife to ancient Adam, had been cast out of YHWH's precious Eden and cursed with her present shape. That was when she had turned her affections toward the archangel, who had indeed married her once, only to forsake her for another. Over the eons, however, she had grown accustomed to her shape and admitted to herself that she now preferred it over the human form.

Since the days of the great Perseus, she had been forced to take distinct pains to camouflage her true form. She had haunted Europe and the near East as a Harpy, Succubus or Vampyr but in truth she was none of these. She was Lillith, true Queen of Man and she had been long scorned.

*Soon*, her breath hissed out from between sharp teeth and forked-tongue, *I shall achieve what has been denied to me for so long!*

She put the severed hand back in the drawer and closed the secret control room. The guard saluted her sharply and, at the whim of her will, he was turned to stone. She slithered through the entire subterranean complex and acquired many statues before she began the sequence that would cause her island hideout to sink beneath

the waves, a technology borrowed from fair Atlantis, who had used it themselves more than thirty-thousand years before.

\* 46 \*

2022 - Los Padres National Forest, California

Merlyn ensured that his group maintained physical contact as they followed the mysterious man through the ingenious tunnel. The tunnel split into several directions and Merlyn had the presence of mind to drop scraps of foil upon the path they had come from. He didn't know whether it would help or not but it was what his father had taught him to do when he thought he might get lost.

Merlyn missed his parents, his friends and everything else about his old life and he resented the feeling of responsibility that had been thrust upon him simply by chance. *Yet, he counseled himself, nothing really occurs by chance, does it.* He steeled his will to the duty that he had chosen for himself and refocused his mind upon the big man in front.

Merlyn would have guessed that the man had been a butcher in the old days, but now, he was probably just a sentry. Yet he was apparently welcoming Merlyn's group into the group's cave without reservation, which must have required a certain level of authority among his own refugee tribe.

The children held hands nervously but had faith in the discretion of their leader, thinking, *he won't lead us astray.* It was the very same blind-faith that the world had put in its leaders, although Merlyn was truly dedicated to their welfare, and that was a pivotal difference.

The tunnel finally terminated into a large hall that was occupied by only a handful of starving human beings. They appeared to be well-hydrated from a central well, but their emaciated forms

shuffled listlessly around the room until the big, well-fed man called out to them.

"Brothers and sisters of the apocalypse, rejoice!" They turned dull eyes toward the man. "I bring you hope from above!" He introduced the group with a wave of his hand and, tired as he was, Merlyn knew he was *on* again. He felt like a corporate rock star personality who had to play the role that had been assigned to him. Responsibility felt as heavy on his shoulders as a bear-skin pelt.

He took a deep breath in preparation for a speech when something caught his attention. He observed a shriveled human form on the butcher's table, which was being prepared as food for the group. Merlyn chose an altogether different tact than the one he had initially decided upon.

He walked silently up to each individual, smiling and holding out his hand in friendship. The first skeleton refugee shrunk from his presence but the second and third embraced him. They shared quiet tears of empathetic sadness which soon reached all the others.

Merlyn's group shyly spread out and embraced the starving refugees until the cavern was filled with tears that sprang from recognition of their degradation, and hatred at the impotence they felt to avert it.

The moment reached a climax and Merlyn said in a loud, confident voice which he hardly recognized, "Survivors of the apocalypse, our meeting brings good tidings for us all! You have water and we have food!"

An alertness entered their eyes and replaced the listless gaze that had clouded them. The big man strode forward and spoke quietly, in the voice of one who wishes to *keep the others out of it*, "Don't play around now, what kind of food do you have?"



Merlyn answered him in a voice that was loud enough for everyone to hear, "We have nearly fifty pounds of beans but we cannot eat them without water. We have seeds and grow-lights in our camp which is only eight miles away."

The people began to smile and the light of hope returned to their eyes. Merlyn looked at his own group who were beaming at him proudly. "If we leave at midnight, we can return with the food by dusk tomorrow."

The big man introduced himself by name, "I'm Hank, good to know ya. I worked at the lumberyard."

Merlyn's group introduced themselves. "I just found these skinny folks about a week ago. They hadn't had nothin' to eat for days and days. It was my idea to try to make some kind of soup with the deceased..." Hank's conscience got the better of him and he wept into his hands.

"You might have helped keep them alive long enough for us to find each other." Merlyn said, overcoming his own revulsion in an attempt to uplift the man's tortured spirit.

\* 47 \*

September 24, 2015 - Ojai, California

When the TransAm pulled into their driveway, Nick and Judy knew it would mean trouble. Andy had quickly recognized his mom and rushed out to meet her in the backyard as the screech of tires was heard out front.

"It's my mom and Tiffany!" Andy cried, more surprised than he would have thought possible. The blood-kin embraced warmly but Andy soon regained his situational awareness. "I'm so glad

you're here! We've been waiting for dusk to move out but now I think we'd better get moving."

"But what about Joe?"

"Who's Joe?"

"The nice mechanic who brought us here. They're after him right now!"

Andy walked over to Nick and they exchanged a few words privately. Andy returned to his mom and asked, "This guy, Joe, he saved you, Ma?" His brown eyes met her blues and they felt a deep echo of the closeness they had once shared.

"Yes, son. He asked nothing for himself, just drove us here and sacrificed himself so we could survive." The sensitive, good-natured woman began to choke on her words.

Andy looked at his father-in-law and nodded. "I'll go look for him but the rest of you have to get moving. The soldiers will be all over this place soon."

Anna ran up to Andy and pleaded, "Oh no, don't do this. I can't lose you now!"

Andy's heart was torn between his duty to the average joe who had saved his mother and niece, and to the wife, son and extended family who still needed him alive.

Nick solved the dilemma when he announced, "The scanner says that he's already been caught, not four blocks from here." A moment of intense silence filled the room.

"Let's move," Andy said stoically. "We'll follow you, Nick."

The group followed Nick up Foothill Road toward the Los Padres National Forest, which extended for nearly one-hundred miles to the north. The chapparal provided only low cover but Nick had

assured Andy that the resources he and his Quail Hunters had stashed would sustain them all for a long time.

Andy had always respected his father-in-law but they had been guilty of holding each other at arm's length. No one had wanted a clash of testosterone to handicap the family holidays and, even after eight years in the family, they had spoken intimately only a handful of times. Andy discovered that he was pleased for the opportunity to know the man more deeply.

The moon rose red-orange above the Ojai Valley that night as the refugees sought solace in the mountains above the town. Their thoughts were on the billions of human beings and the trillions of animals experiencing the aftermath of the second day of the Event.

Anna and her three nieces, Tiffany, Faith and Hope, sang songs quietly to pass the time and to quell the fear of walking through the woods in the dark. Everyone's pack seemed to weigh twice what it had when they had left the safehouse but there was firm resolve in their decision. The world had fallen apart, their nation had either failed or betrayed them, and they were penniless pilgrims on a mission of evasion and survival.

Merlyn, with the endless energy of youth, moved up and down the ranks cracking jokes and lifting spirits as well as literal burdens from his loved ones. He was surprised to find that he could be happy as long as these people survived, yet at that moment, he didn't believe that his life was destined to be one of sustained happiness.

His optimism returned as he recalled his father's words, *Don't ask that your task be easy, ask that it be worthwhile.* He knew that this group of people was worth every ounce of energy, optimism and willpower that he possessed and he would offer it to them freely until he had nothing more to give.

September 24, 2015 - Ojai, California

Joe submitted voluntarily to the soldiers, who took him into custody as forcefully as if he had been violently resisting arrest. He knew that he was a goner but was relieved that he had helped the two strangers escape.

He was driven to the high school and thrown into a blood-stained holding cell where he was to endure many bleak hours. A tall, handsome *all-American kid* strode confidently into the room. Joe saw an eagle on his collar but couldn't remember the rank associated with it.

"I am Colonel Warburg and you are a terrorist, correct?" At those words, any remaining hope that Joe might have been clinging to fled from him.

"I am not a terrorist, I'm a mechanic."

"You killed two of our men in the area last night, did you not?"

Joe had never even seen a dead body before and his countenance showed it as he replied. "I didn't kill anybody! I've never seen anyone get hurt in my life, except for some fist-fights way back in high school."

The young colonel stared carefully into Joe's eyes for a full minute before he began flipping through pages of data on his clipboard. "Where is your rifle? The one that you killed my men with."

"I don't have any guns. Never did." Joe was pleased that he could answer all of the man's questions honestly and he hoped that would at least count for something.

Colonel Warburg turned to the captain on his right and spoke with irritation. "There were no weapons recovered from the TransAm, nothing on his person? This man is clearly not the shooter."

Joe rejoiced at the words and began to hope the man would issue the order to let him go. Instead, the colonel performed a tight about-face and strode out of the room without a word.

The captain turned to the sentries and said, "Take him to the camp."

Joe was given the usual internment welcome shower with the fire-hose and issued an orange jumpsuit with a number. His thoughts were on his daughter and her mother. *What had happened to them? Were they nearby or in another camp somewhere? Were they free?*

He looked back on the events of the last two days and couldn't suppress a small amount of laughter. The other inmates hearkened at the sound of it and moved a little closer to him. Joe struck up conversations with the practiced fluidity of a bartender. He realized the guys needed someone like him in their tent and he started to feel a little better.

He told the men about the TransAm, though not about the lady and her grand-daughter. They had a good laugh when he described the chase inside the Arbolada.

The men chose to adjourn for the night while their hearts were still lifted with laughter and they all turned to their blankets. Joe found himself alone with his thoughts once again which quickly returned to Daisy Lou and Tiffany.

He realized that he had never had a chance to *save* anyone before and he was proud of himself for the first time in many years. His go-nowhere life had just been given some meaning, even though the act was likely to cost him his life. *Saving them was sure better than what I usually do*, he thought.

If he had been a reader, Joe would have recognized that his own sentiment echoed the words of Sydney Carton in Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* as he submitted to Madame La Guillotine in an order

to save a man more noble than himself. *It is a far, far better thing I do now than I have ever done. It is a far, far greater rest that I go to than I have ever known.*

\* 49 \*

September 24, 2015 - Oak View, California

From the vision he had experienced, Spade knew where he was supposed to go but he didn't know which path to take to get there. From Foster Park one could travel several different ways to reach Ojai and, having grown up there, Spade knew them all. One road led to Casitas Dam, another to the Lake Casitas campgrounds, while others led through residential Oak View and Meiner's Oaks. There was also Creek Road and the riverbed.

*The riverbed!* he thought excitedly. He gently roused the sleeping boy as night began to fall who rose unsteadily but soon set his jaw to any task Spade might set before him. Spade thought such resignation looked out of place and slightly amusing on one so young.

They paralleled the riverbed on its western shore taking care not to silhouette themselves. Spade didn't know whether it was patrolled or not but figured it was safer to assume that it was. He wondered if they had lights set on motion-detectors and was relieved when he saw a single spotlight suddenly blaze up and sweep the riverbed.

They were hidden within the brush and held still until the light was shut off. Spade noted the time, hoping there would be a pattern to the spotlight. They walked for only ten minutes before Spade had them halt in good cover. They waited in tense silence for five minutes when the spotlight came on and swept the riverbed.

"They sweep it with the light every fifteen minutes," he told the boy.

They made better time and soon found themselves approaching the Highway 150 bridge. Spade spotted a road block on the bridge and knew they couldn't sneak under it.

They stole across the riverbed, crossing to the east side before they were within earshot of the men on the bridge. From there, they moved stealthily through the city streets, from house to house, hiding behind trees, fences, trashcans and parked cars. By midnight, they had reached the small town of Meiner's Oaks.

They skirted it widely, paralleling the riverbottom again until they reached Fairview Road which ran perpendicular to the Ventura River. Spade followed Fairview and soon approached the intersection with Highway 33, just a block up from the World Famous Dog Log.

There was a white UN tank and two armored humvees blocking Highway 33 farther up but there didn't seem to be any presence right where he wanted to cross. Spade led the boy to cover between two parked cars and explained that they had to wait.

*But wait for what, exactly?* Spade's mind rushed through possible scenarios and soon selected one and explained it to the boy.

"When the next vehicle comes up the road to the checkpoint, the headlights will be in their eyes. If we cross right after the vehicle rolls by, we should make it without being seen by the soldiers at the checkpoint." The boy gulped then nodded bravely.

They waited another thirty minutes before a lone hummer drove past them toward the checkpoint. Spade took the boy's hand, counted three seconds and then they dashed across the highway and took cover safely within the scrub oak trees on the eastern side of the road.

They moved parallel to Fairview Road through private property and, though he knew the road well from behind the wheel of his car, he didn't remember it being so steep. They rested for a

moment at Camp Ramah and then moved further up the hill. At the crest, they took another rest before descending toward Foothill Road.

As they approached the intersection, Spade realized that he didn't know which house belonged to Andy's in-laws. Mild panic began to set in when he realized that he didn't even know their last name.

Suddenly, he heard a shuffle from the bushes. "Hold it! Stay right where you are!"

\* 50 \*

September 24, 2015 - Gaia's Underworld

The archon, Samael, sent his consciousness forth to survey the destruction he had caused and was pleased. In some parts of the world, people had already begun to defend their own resources or to plunder from their neighbors with a violence that made the dark lord proud.

*Truly, these are my children, he thought, then counseled himself against the emotion. They will serve me until their last drop of essence has been given, then they will die and be reborn to serve me again and again, until the beginning of the next Great Cycle.*

Other humans were attempting to fight the UN soldiers in open combat, which caused great casualties among them all. The Archangel no longer cared to differentiate between those who had been pawns from those who had served him faithfully in key positions.

He heard their dire pleas in the aspect of his consciousness that received such prayers, and he took cruel delight in ignoring them all. He watched as Gaia herself objected to the rivers of blood that were being spilled across her skin. With a little help from the HAARP project, earthquakes and volcanoes were erupting all over



her body. In some areas, these resulted in massive tsunamis that decimated coastal cities for thousands of miles.

Many of those who considered themselves *insiders* within the various cabalistic covens, had holed themselves up in vast underground chambers. Samael smiled as Gaia's tectonic movement collapsed most of them.

*Fools, he thought, how can you betray your brothers and then seek solace within Gaia herself? Do you believe that she sleeps so soundly as to be unaware of your treachery? Have you not also assaulted her fair complexion in your pursuit of power?*

He knew that, even among the enlightened, few truly understood that Gaia was a Being, not so very different from themselves. The archon understood that the ever-upward journey of all life must inevitably include the ascension to a planetary collective-consciousness themselves, though it take many eons.

Yet, this wisdom would never be revealed to the generations of earth humans who would remain blindly under his rule after Gaia's shift. The humans of the new age would walk in such absolute darkness that the lies of the last five thousand years, which he had employed to dupe mankind into seeking his governance, would seem beneficent by comparison.

His disembodied consciousness roamed further into the vibrations of individual human thought-waves. *I told you this would happen! You should have listened to me!* Then another, *Oh God, why won't you save us? How could you let this happen?* Another, *Where's my baby?* The dark lord smiled grimly.

The broad wings of his consciousness ascended high above the earth. Volcanic activity and manmade explosions had tainted Gaia's blue/white complexion. Now the blue of her oceans blended with a poisonous and stifling dark gray-green which now loomed sickly over her continents.

The archangel admired the effect and thought, *Oh fair Gaia, you are beautiful when you're angry.*

\* 51 \*

September 24, 2015 - Atlantic Ocean

Even though Israel Crowley had helped guide Spade's instincts, he was still proud of the man. He had led the boy through much of the distance but Crowley turned his mind to another matter once Spade and the boy had crossed the checkpoint at Highway 33.

Israel Crowley didn't like to do it, but he knew that he should begin preparations for his own survival. There was little he could do for anyone now. He extricated himself from the meditation and entered the elevator outside the chamber. He pressed *G* and descended to the lowest floor of his mansion.

Like his twin, Crowley possessed several impressive automobiles in his garage. He strode past them all and exited the garage on the other side which led to the runway. Crowley had already stocked his private jet and was aloft within minutes.

Nine hours later he arrived at the coordinates his mother had given him but he could not discern the island she said would be there. He saw nothing on the radar and his searching eyes beheld only the vast ocean.

*Mother! How could you do this to me?* Israel Crowley had rarely spoken to his mother but she had recently contacted him to provide him with the location of her secret island *just in case something big happened.* He had been reluctant to accept *anything* from her, knowing some of the truth about her as he did, but he hadn't expected this treachery.

Due to the extremely isolated coordinates of his mother's *island*, Crowley's jet now lacked sufficient fuel to travel to any charted

land mass. *This, he thought calmly, means I will crash into the ocean.*

It would have been hard to find a soul more fully prepared to dispense with his physical expression than Israel Crowley, who accepted his fate calmly. He would continue to search for the island until the fuel supply failed but held little hope for his survival.

He circled the jet around and around the coordinates and suddenly began to discern a landmass rising out of the depths. His LF radio crackled, "Israel, I'm so glad you could make it!"

"It looks like I almost missed you, mom!" he replied. He was only slightly grateful that his physical expression would be maintained a bit longer, but was vastly grateful to his mother for not abandoning him.

Lillith Bushmaster waited for her son to land his aircraft on the short runway then greeted him as he stepped out. "Hello, son."

"Hello, Mom." he replied uncertainly.

"Well, let's get inside and drop beneath the waves, shall we?" Her cheerful demeanor contrasted sharply with the grotesque statues of soldiers which she had scattered about the complex.

She brought him to a plush lounge area and said, "I haven't see you in nearly thirty years! Tell me, how are you?"

The small talk was ludicrous given the global apocalypse happening everywhere except within her private underwater hideout, but he answered stoically, "Pike is dead."

"Yes, I know. I always could reach him telepathically but with you it has been different."

Her casual tea-party etiquette was irritating him and he replied coldly, "The world's ending and you're the President of the United States! Aren't you supposed to do something?"

She stood up and pointed to a map on the wall. "By the end of the third day, there will be no United States, there will be virtually nothing left on the surface of the planet. Just you and I and a half-million scattered survivors."

"What do you mean by the third day?" he asked hotly.

"I mean this," she said and entered the code that provided access to the hidden control room. "I can launch my missiles from here and take *him* by surprise!"

"Mom, I don't understand. Will you please start at the beginning."

A look of deep irony entered her eyes, "The very beginning? Son, that would take far too long, believe me. I am very old."

Crowley was confused by her words but wasn't going to be put off the subject entirely. "Well then, what about the missiles? Who are you planning to take by surprise?" he asked.

She looked at him with triumphant defiance burning in her old eyes, "Why, the devil himself, of course."

2022 - Los Padres National Forest, California

At midnight, Merlyn's band cheerfully began the trip back to their own camp. With luck, they hoped to soon return to Hank's tribe. *It's funny, Merlyn mused, how it has come to be known as Hank's tribe, even though he said that he'd only been there a week. He's their leader because he's the only one who's had enough food to remain healthy enough to speak!*

"Hey guys?" Charlie asked while they hiked a long stretch of welcome shade. "I think we need a name."

"You don't like being called Charlie anymore?" Emily teased making Lucas snicker. Merlyn was grateful that their morale was improving.

"I mean *us*. We should give ourselves a name. I vote for Merlyn's Wanderers."

"Ooh, that's good!" Emily agreed.

Merlyn was flattered but knew that if a group's name could not last forever, then it was flawed. He said, "Someday, one of you will be leading our clan, so I propose we just call ourselves Wanderers."

The name was adopted and the Wanderers made short work of the eight mile hike. They packed most of the beans into Merlyn's pack, but not all. Every Wanderer who had a backpack carried at least five pounds. They decided to cache their tools because Hank's clan seemed to possess more than enough already.

*With water, Merlyn thought excitedly, we can finally start planting seeds again!* In the months after the Event, Merlyn's parents had managed to create an underground garden. He thought of his mom and dad for only a moment before he cast them out of his mind.

The Wanderers returned to find Hank's secret door unlocked. Merlyn entered first and was relieved to find no evidence of an ambush. He wanted to trust people but he also had to be cautious.

Hank, it was clear, had been busy as well. The human remains were gone and the dishes had been fully cleaned. The hope that had entered the starving refugees had not left them. No longer could their slow, sluggish steps be considered listless, for they now had purpose.

Charlie helped Hank start a fire while Emily and Lucas drew water from the well. It was fragrant, sweet and cool, with the subtle hint of sulphur that fresh underground sources impart to their water.

Soon, they added two pounds of black beans into the boiling water. The hungriest people took turns stirring the pot anxiously and, had it not been for Merlyn's strong advice, they would have tried to eat the beans raw.

While the food was cooking, the two groups continued their awkward attempts at mingling. Emily pointed out, "We're all from the same town and speak the same language, right? And I'm sure we're all Christians, so there shouldn't be any problems."

An elderly woman with a hooked nose, who was tragically emaciated, cackled some dissonant words in Hebrew. Merlyn interjected, "Let's not discuss religion right now. We have work to do." *The last thing we need is to divide ourselves over religion!* he thought wisely.

The Wanderers remained with Hank's clan in relative peace for several months. Merlyn's seeds and Hank's underground well were all that had really been required to sustain the group, who had all come to adopt the moniker of Wanderers. There were remnants of several camouflaged solar panels hidden above ground and they used these to charge several deep-cell batteries that rested in a corner of the large cave.

The batteries were used primarily for the grow lights which hung suspended over plants deeper within the cave, but they could also use the electricity to power small tools and charge their devices.

The old setup had been so similar to the one that his parents had devised that Merlyn sensed that their hands had once been involved. They *had* made a few secret excursions which were now beginning to make more sense to him.

They celebrated their first harvest with bean soup, spiced with fresh tomatoes, potatoes and several varieties of herbs and lettuces. Health had slowly returned to the clan and now the community of thirteen felt unified and secure.

One day, Hank surprised the Wanderers at dinner by saying, "By the way, I found a list of refugees who are currently being held in the FEMA/Nordhoff camp."

\* 53 \*

September 24, 2015

"Hold it! Stay right where you are!" Nick's eyes were the oldest in the group yet had been the first to spot the man and the boy in the darkness. He kept his rifle trained on the man while Andy stepped up to make contact with him. When Andy shined his light on the man's face, his knees nearly buckled with the shock of recognition.

"Spade, is that you?" he asked knowing at once that it *was* him and yet it seemed impossible for it to *be* him.

"Hi, Andy," Spade replied casually. The truth was that he *had* felt alone and unguided for the last couple of miles and was extremely happy to run into someone, even if it was his brother.

"And who is this?" Andy asked, shining the light on the boy's face.

"I don't know his name, he hasn't spoken a word."

Tiffany ran up to her daddy and hugged him with a strength that he would have thought impossible of her little arms. His mother, Daisy Lou, joined the hug and they offered a quick, but heartfelt, prayer of gratitude.

Nick coughed to interrupt the moment after *Amen* to say, "There's a lot to catch up on but we have to keep moving."

The group fell into silence as they headed up Foothill to the one trailhead that led to many others within the Los Padres National Forest. Nick's quail camp was about ten miles up Highway 33, but that was by road. His ragtag group of refugees would eventually have to ascend and descend steep hills nearly barren of navigable trails.

Nick summoned Andy and Ray up front. "I've been thinking," he began, "I think it'll probably take four or five days to get to that camp." He gauged the men's reaction to be one of confidence and resolve, so he continued.

"We should only travel at night, but then it will take even longer." Andy suggested.

"It's the only way we can be sure that we'll even make it to the camp." Ray stated flatly.

They marched clumsily through the long night but covered only a linear mile. They made camp shortly before dawn under the cover of a small grove of eucalyptus trees.

Judy and Anna prepared everyone a quick meal of instant oatmeal and cold water, then handed them each a small piece of deer-jerky from Nick's most recent kill. The vegetarians silently suspected that he had been a handsome, mature buck full of life and vigor, yet no one refused his flesh. Rather, they were all grateful to the animal and to the hunter whose skill had harvested him.



The group took the news of the week-long journey as well as could be hoped for. They experienced many hardships along the way, sometimes fighting desperately for every single step up slippery slate and shale mountainsides. Y nine hard-won nights later they arrived at Nick's quail camp.

When the clan saw the camp by the light of day, they hailed Nick as a very clever man. The whole camp, including the concrete cistern, had been camouflaged by a dense grove of eucalyptus trees that Nick had planted nearly a decade before. The cistern had a series of grates of finer and finer weave which did a very good job of keeping leaves and other debris out of the water.

When Nick opened the storage locker that he and his buddies had sunk into the ground, the clan hailed Nick as a genius. There were fifty-gallon barrels full of beans, rice, flour and water. There were smaller jugs and jars with handwritten labels, weapons and ammunition as well as seed banks with solar panels, batteries, clay pots and indoor grow lights. There were two shovels and a pick as well as hammers, nails and screwdrivers.

"You and your buddies clearly understand the golden rule of survival," Andy joked with his father-in-law when he saw the seemingly inordinate number of toilet paper rolls and feminine hygiene products the men had stashed, "If the wife ain't happy, ain't no one happy."

There were other luxuries like pillows and blankets, jackets and shoes but, more importantly to Andy, the wise old men had even stocked toothbrushes and baking soda.

There was also a substantial amount of survival medicine which Nick had been given by his doctor. He had once told Anna that all he had had to do was explain to the doctor what he wanted the medicine for his survival kit pay for it out of pocket. The government-mandated healthcare, known as Lillith-Care, didn't cover apocalypse-preparedness kits.

In the weeks and months that followed, they succeeded in carving out several large caves which they used to grow an abundant variety of herbs and vegetables. They slept in other, smaller caves which proved very difficult to dig. The rainless years had hardened the rocky soil so that, once again, they were forced for work hard to gain every inch. Yet, largely due to Nick's wise preparations, they did not feel like barbarians and were eventually successful at all they put their collective minds to.

They were also successful at avoiding detection and capture, although they observed heavy air traffic daily. They talked frequently about what might be happening in the rest of the world. Emotions ran high at times but the family remained united through all the trials that arose to thwart them.

Anna and Andy had started a daily *school* for the four children, teaching them practical life-lessons gleaned from personal experience, or reading to them from one of the hundreds of textbooks and classic fiction they had downloaded onto their electronic readers. These devices were easily recharged from the solar panels.

They celebrated the first anniversary of the Event with poorly-hidden melancholy. The sun had turned red and the moon was now absent from the night sky. The year they had spent *camping* had toned the flab and united the disparate family into a micro-community that truly cared about every individual. They philosophized broadly and discussed possible changes they would make to the System if they ever got the chance to rebuild society.

"Would we even want to rebuild it?" Merlyn asked innocently after one such discussion. His question hung in the air unanswered.

Spade and Tiffany held hands in their sleep beginning with that first night, feeling the infinite gratitude of the love they shared. Spade spent his time toiling the night-time hours building and maintaining the supports that held the earth above their heads.

The soil was sandy and a cave-in was an ever-present possibility that haunted one and all.

Daisy Lou patched torn clothing and also helped with the cooking and gardening but ate little herself.

Ray turned out to be skilled with a pick and shovel and often played the one harmonica he possessed to cheer the family's spirits. This wasn't always easy since the harmonica was tuned to the mournful, haunting key of A-Minor.

Living in the cave had, perhaps, been the hardest on the children who were not permitted to run and play. Instead, they developed their visualization skills as Anna guided them on meditation techniques and discussions about the universal laws. They did pushups, sit-ups and jumping jacks, in addition to the daily digging, to prevent their muscles from atrophying.

Always, there was the concern for the rest of the world. *What was happening out there?* Anna and Andy felt tremendous distortions occurring throughout the world but had learned nothing new in a long time. One day, the sky suddenly grew so polluted that the air was hard to breathe. They knew something truly horrific had occurred, some disastrous eruption or detonation. That was when the sun had first turned crimson. The moon had just simply disappeared. It had been full and beautiful one night, then it never rose again.

The myriad of unanswered questions preyed upon their stillness of mind to such an extent that Andy considered an excursion back to town to reconnoiter information. This idea, however, was emphatically vetoed by Anna.

Matt and Laurie missed their old life more than the others in the group. They longed for the raucous nights at the tavern with their large circle of friends, drinking expensive beer and laughing like the young and successful professionals they had once been. Yet,

the emergency had forced everyone to grow and they, too, slowly began to transition into a healthy acceptance of their new life.

The children were grateful for each other's company. To them, the *old folks* were always too sad and serious. *They couldn't even remember how to have fun!*

Even before the Event had shattered their lives, Merlyn had a long history of creating his own brand of old-fashioned, fantasy role-playing games; the creative ones that are played mostly in your mind. In the days after the apocalypse, he led the others on long voyages into their imaginations and he earned a reputation as a storyteller.

The boy Spade had brought with him had still not spoken. When the boy had first realized that Spade already had a *real* child of his own, he had let go of the man's hand. He had tried not to be sullen, and dutifully found chores that he could perform, but he spent most of his time alone and remained mute.

Everyone in the group took careful pains to include him and made attempts to connect with him but no one succeeded in getting close. He was like a ball of sadness in the corner, present and helpful, but still somehow apart from the rest.

\* 54 \*

September 24, 2015 - The Atlantic Ocean

Lillith smiled at her son but he did not smile back at her. His mouth gaped open and he doubled-over slightly as if he were about to retch. Her face wrinkled with anger and impatience.

She realized how little she really knew about Israel. He had evaded not only her own psychic attacks, but also her most powerful intelligence agencies. She realized that his core belief system was entirely unknown to her. She had always assumed

that he was a simple Goyim, one of the *sheeple* who conformed, more or less, to the same base instincts of the modern human. Now she was beginning to have doubts about her long-held but uninformed assessment.

Crowley composed himself and asked, "Lillith, who are you, really?"

"Who am I?" she cackled happily, clearly gaining caustic momentum. "I am the President of the most powerful nation in history, yet I am also much more than that! I have been known under many titles, from Lilitu or Kali to Satrina and Kokos. I am the first wife of the one known as Adam. It was I who bear the sin of his fall from grace. And then I was betrothed to the highest dark archon of them all, until he cast me off as well!"

Crowley thought that he had taken the news well, but his knees buckled and he fell to the ground anyway. *Had I known?* he asked himself, *Had I known all along? How could I have been so blind?*

"And now, I exact my revenge upon Archangel Samael and the world of humans!"

Crowley longed for more time to weigh his options but knew that he had only seconds to react if he was to save the world. "Lillith," he said, "I can't let you launch any missiles. You have to stop this." He bent forward slightly to activate a large, red shut-down button on the command console but his hand never reached it.

Her shape changed instantly into its hybrid human-serpentine form. Israel Crowley was not aware that his body was hardening, he knew only that his soul was suddenly being jerked out of his physical expression. As his soul was reabsorbed into his Nous, the Nous itself was reabsorbed into the great ether of potentiality within the All. He would await rebirth inside the all-knowing mind of the Creator and leave the affairs of the earth humans to themselves.

Lillith gazed upon the statue of her son, which still bore the distinct signs of his secret Dragon Lord parentage. *Now he will never know.* She paused to reflect for only a moment before resuming her destructive task.

Using the Secretary of Defense's severed hand as identification, she successfully logged into both terminals of the nuclear armament command module. Without pausing to make any speeches or grand gestures, she entered the launch codes and pressed the red button.

Although she couldn't see them, she knew the missiles were on their way to the very Underworld of Gaia herself, to hidden lands of the subterranean lifeforms, the physical bodies of the Sleepers, and most importantly, the realm of Archangel Samael's source. The warheads would begin a chain-reaction that would destroy all life within the Underworld and change the surface of Gaia forever.

She laughed out loud and said to her son, "When he senses his own danger, the love he harbors for his own soul will rise to the surface of his psyche and the attainment of perfect darkness will be denied to him."

"Greetings Lillith, Queen of the Damned." The pungent odor of brimstone suddenly filled the air which had grown stifling hot, yet the voice made her blood run cold with a mortifying chill.

She spun to face Archangel Samael in his ever-changing chimera of horrifying countenances. *It can't be!* her cold reptilian blood immobilized her body yet her mind was paralyzed with a terror that ran deeper than anything she had ever felt before. She had betrayed the devil and now it was time to pay.

\* 55 \*

September 24, 2015 - Temple of Isis, Egypt

Isis called a celebration and she ordered her Otherworld guests to arrive in their most alluring physical manifestations, the human body being chosen because it granted the greatest liberty for pleasures of the flesh. The archangel arrived in the form of a giant-yet-dashing hunk of a man in a black tuxedo with a voluptuous girl on each arm. When the women beheld the otherworldly beauty of Isis, who had once been known as Athena, Artemis Cleopatra and Diana, the girls began to purr erotically.

Shamash was not present at the archangel's arrival so the quartet proceeded to do what they were there to do without him. Afterward the carnal pleasures had been enjoyed, Isis did insist that her brother accompany his guests at the table for dinner. He complied amiably and even poured the wine for his dark guests, though he did not approve of them.

"To the fall of Man!" Isis said, raising her drink. The glasses clinked and Samael winked as Isis fell to the floor. She was gagging like a mortal and couldn't understand why it was happening.

She looked to her twin brother for help but he offered none to her. Yet his eyes teared up as he gazed upon the dying goddess.

Shamash spoke softly, "Now that the deed is done, my love, I wish that I had never discovered your plan to betray me. Without you, my life is not even worth protecting."

A rare look of honest confusion crossed her face and Shamash knew that he had made a mistake. She replied through a voice choked with blood, "The poison wasn't for you, it was for..." His beloved twin sister, who had been his soul-mate for five-thousand years, died quietly in his arms, exactly like a mortal.

Shamash wept bitterly until Archangel Samael's low laughter disturbed his sorrow. The sun-god, who was not without power himself, flew into a raging fury. His own shape grew nearly as brilliant as the sun in the extremity of his anger. Everything in the

room burst into flame and the two mortal concubines were incinerated but the Archangel's voice remained, half-tangible in the air like a Cheshire cat.

"Do not be angry with me, O mighty Sun-God, for this deed was done by your own hand."

"Fiend!" the sun-god roared. "*You* sent me the false dream-vision! She was plotting against you, not me!"

"Aye, I sent the vision but did nothing more." Samael was pleased at the turn of events and his voice oozed with gluttonous irony.

Shamash realized that the words were true. Although he *had* been duped, it had still been his own choice. He realized that it was the same manner of trap that had been used on the earth humans for centuries. Had they, like himself, chosen differently in spite of Samael's illusions, their fate would not be vain destruction and death.

Shamash bent sadly over the body of his beloved Inanna and kissed her lips which were still red with the essence of the physical expression. He withdrew the small vial of poison, which he had discovered hidden in her bureau. He held the strong poison in his hand and knew that it had been brewed by a fire elemental from within his own kingdom. He had believed that it had been intended for himself, never guessing that his sister would attempt to assassinate the dark lord himself. He kissed her once more and drank its contents bravely.

The Archangel watched as the two spirits, who had once been innocent babes themselves, rose toward the heavens leaving dense wisps of essence behind them. Isis' was a thorny briar, Shamash's a red rose. Samael observed with some curiosity as the two ethereal essences joined in the air, a lover's knot; the red rose and the briar.



2017 - Los Padres National Forest, California

One day, Laurie was digging through their belongings when she stumbled upon Matt's driver's license. "Hey Matt, remember that first summer with our Mercedes convertible?"

"I remember the car wasn't the only thing topless that summer," Matt crossed the room and kissed his wife affectionately. He took the driver's license and stared at the picture.

*Who is that?* he wondered. *It doesn't look much like me anymore.* He had been quite a few pounds heavier then, and his skin hadn't yet developed the worry lines that were now beginning to characterize his face.

He slipped the license into his pocket and stepped into the night air. The family members rotated turns in the fresh air above-ground at night so as to keep the number of heat signatures down. The military might mistake two large mammals as mountain lions, but any more would be suspicious.

He and his wife danced and kissed under the night sky, which hung low in a vapid, semi-poisonous cloud above them. When their allotted time of thirty minutes was at an end, they went directly to their private cave-room to *talk*.

"I just lost the signal, sir." The lieutenant wore thick headphones and stared intently at the radar screen.

"Are you sure you saw something out of the ordinary?" General Arthur MacDouglas asked.

"Yes, sir. The data recorder can play it back." The general peered over the lieutenant's shoulder at the screen. "There, sir. For almost exactly thirty minutes we had a reading from a Radio Frequency ID micro-chip."

"Where was it coming from?" General MacDouglas asked, pointing to the map.

"About nine miles north of Ojai, sir. Right about here." He pointed it out on the large, tactical wall-map.

"There's nothing out there, we secured that entire area months ago."

"Yes, sir."

The lieutenant obviously wasn't going to challenge him on the issue so Arthur knew that he would have to make the decision himself. He turned to his aide and barked the order.

"Send one ground assault team to check it out." As the aide was leaving the room, the general called after him, "And try to find a team that isn't trigger-happy!"

The general had received a terrible demotion as a result of his encounter with Lillith. His new watchdog post no longer provided access to inside information, and he was experiencing serious misgivings about the role he was playing in the greatest war mankind had ever waged against itself, which some of the enlisted men had taken to calling the Apocalypse.

Andy and Merlyn passed Matt and Laurie on the sloping passage to the surface. Once outside, Merlyn asked, "Dad, can I go look for some wood to carve?"

Andy knew that his son had been working hard to make a chess set to play with the other kids and he acquiesced with a nod. He smiled after the boy who was now twelve years old. *He's become so full of knowledge, he thought proudly, that he'll make a wise leader someday. That is, if the people will ever listen to wisdom.*

Merlyn knew the exact piece of wood he needed and where to find it. He had spied a long, twisted chunk while he and his father had

been digging *emergency holes* the week before and he ran off with his back turned to his father.

Andy heard the engine just an instant before he turned around. A single armored humvee had crept up from behind and now stood only a hundred yards away.

"Get to an emergency hole and stay there!" he yelled to his son, whose back was turned to him.

Andy didn't know what to do. His son was a hundred yards to the east, his enemy equidistant to the west, and his family was under his feet completely unaware of the danger. He dropped to the ground and slithered toward the cave's opening.

"There's a patrol outside. I think they found us!"

"Get down here, quick!" Nick shouted.

"Merlyn's still outside!"

Nick swallowed hard. "He'll get to a hole, you know he will."

Andy knew that Nick was right and that he was risking everyone's lives by hesitating out in the open. He crawled inside and swung the false-bush trapdoor closed.

The family huddled in a perfect silence that reminded Nick of the final episode of MASH when Hawkeye nearly loses his mind after a woman smothered her own baby to keep its cries from alerting the North Koreans.

They could feel the ground rumble above them, then stop. Nick supposed that the men had dismounted and were searching the area on foot. Andy hoped that he hadn't been spotted.

Many agonizing minutes passed while the family waited with their rifles trained upon the trapdoor. The wait was ended when the trapdoor was kicked in and they heard the humvee's PA system

announce, *We have found your entrance! Stand down or we will drop grenades in and bury you alive!*

They weighed their odds against the .50 caliber machine gun outside and the grenades inside and quickly understood that it had become simply a question of living or dying. Nick, the patriarch of the family, looked into the eyes of those who were many years younger than he and made the difficult decision to lead them in surrender. They were held at gunpoint until a personnel carrier had arrived to take them away.

There had been a fruitless, cursory search after the capture which had turned up nothing of interest, so the soldiers simply followed regulations. The family watched from behind dirty windows as the soldiers tossed grenades into the family's cave-home.

\*57\*

2022 - Los Padres National Forest, California

Hank handed the list to Merlyn. He took the thick FEMA/Nordhoff roster from Hank and his eyes began to scan the immense list of names. He held his breath subconsciously, hoping against the odds that his family was still alive. He would be eternally grateful if at least one kinsman's name was on the list.

When he found his aunt's family, his heart began to beat faster. He marked their cell numbers down in a small notebook and continued looking for others who might still be alive. He eventually found them all and let loose the tears that he had pent up for five years.

Everyone understood his emotion and many experienced something of it themselves. Nearly everyone had a family member in the FEMA/Nordhoff camp and everyone personally knew many more. A pall fell upon the Wanderers as they

painfully recalled the loved ones they had been trying to learn to live without.

The list was dated three month's earlier, which indicated to Merlyn a strong likelihood that everyone on the list was still alive. *Why keep them alive for three years, he reasoned, only to kill them now?*

*Yes, he thought, deciding to follow the white rabbit further, why would this document be left for us to find? Hank told them that he had found it near a rarely used military trail, like it had fallen off the dashboard of a hummer. Merlyn began to suspect that someone had planted it to bait them. For all I know, they throw these huge lists everywhere in hopes of catching some of us stray refugees. After all, there are so many names on it that anyone would almost certainly find someone they knew and be stirred into foolish action.*

Yet he also knew that he could never live with himself if he didn't do something. *What if they were alive?* Merlyn briefly entertained thoughts of his ragtag band infiltrating FEMA/Nordhoff, playing the hero and saving everyone, but reality soon bore down upon him with the unpleasant recollection of his somewhat humbler ambitions.

Merlyn stood up and addressed the Wanderers, "Everyone, I want to say a few words if you don't mind." The people drew closer and gave him their attention. "This list is probably a decoy. Bait they threw at us just hoping that we would try to do something about it."

Cries of assent and murmurs of disagreement filtered tangibly through the clan. "That being said, I still want to do something about it. I want to discuss a plan with you all, a plan that might allow us to save some of our loved ones, neighbors and friends from their long confinement at the hands of our oppressors." Merlyn's face reddened as he felt his words sounded cliché, but the hope in the eyes of each sad Wanderer emboldened him.

"What can we do?" Charlie asked.

"Here's the way I see it. They probably have the football, baseball and softball fields fenced in with barbed wire and maybe smaller divisions of holding cells within the yard. They would use the gymnasium for processing arrivals or as a hospital. The main forces would probably be billeted in nearby houses with the officers at the Ojai Inn. Maybe if we created diversions we could open a hole somehow."

No one said anything, the idea was ludicrous. Merlyn realized that any attempt to infiltrate the FEMA camp would likely be disastrous in spite of careful planning. The Wanderers adjourned for the night with the agreement to discuss it further in the morning.

Merlyn had learned the Law of Intention from his parents and he summoned his energy for meditation. He envisioned his subconscious mind, connected in sleep to the infinite collective-consciousness, and trusted it to work on the riddle while he slept.

2017 - Los Padres National Forest, California

Merlyn fell into a shock-induced coma in the little emergency hole. He awoke nearly fourteen hours later with muscle-cramps but little memory of what had happened. When he opened the trapdoor, he saw thick, heavy smoke trailing out of the caves that had been their home. Memory returned like a rogue wave and swept him into the abyss once more.

He retched and swooned and stumbled. *They're all gone! I'm all alone and they're all dead!* The boy was nearly twelve but he wailed up at the acrid sky like a newborn. Hunger began to gnaw at him but thirst eventually motivated him to stand up. He knew they had only found the main cave and not the emergency holes or caches, because they had not been destroyed like the main cave.

He maintained hope of finding another survivor until he opened the last emergency hole and found it empty. He opened the cache and found water then he saw food and grew openly ravenous. He wept into his granola bar and felt guilty for being alive.

Several days passed with Merlyn sitting in the bombed-out cave. He didn't know what else to do. One night he remembered the meditation techniques his parents had taught him. He attempted to calm himself and focused on his parents. Many minutes passed while his senses attempted to distract him with itches and other alluring distractions, but he persisted faithfully.

Suddenly, in his mind's eye, he saw a megalithic trilithon, enormous upright stone posts topped by an impossibly heavy, horizontal lintel. He visualized himself stepping through the doorway and immediately lost all sense of *body*. His consciousness was now in a crowded camp with his father who was still alive!

His father, ill-used and emaciated, looked at him fondly and said, "The Philosopher's Stone can only be acquired through knowledge experienced into wisdom. Through mental alchemy, you must distill all parts of your mind-body-soul expression into their purest forms. Only then will you come to understand yourself, and the universe, as they really are.

The highest part of your soul, your Nous, has chosen this difficult path for you, for itself. A man must learn to live in many worlds and must explore the full depth of experience that each life has to offer. Go forth, Son, and survive!"

Against his will, Merlyn's consciousness left his father and the FEMA camp. His bodiless spirit sped backward and leapt forward through time and revealed long-forgotten memories and jagged, irregular visions of the future. The dream-vision slowly mutated into genuine sleep which the boy badly needed.

Merlyn committed himself to survival after that and drew upon all that he had been taught. He slowly moved the remaining survival gear deeper into the mountains and created stashes, emergency holes and a living-cave. As the weeks turned into months he emulated almost every aspect of the cave that he had lived in with his family, everything except for the loved-ones themselves.

Nearly five years passed in loneliness for Merlyn until the day arrived when he accidentally *picked up* Charlie, Lucas and Emily. For his parents and for nearly five-thousand residents of Ojai, the years had been much worse than lonely.

The FEMA/Nordhoff camp had cast few illusions as to its true nature. The prisoners were held in a single detainment yard divided in the middle to separate the genders. They were further subdivided into tents which were used as cells to separate inmate groups from each other.

In almost as many years, Anna had caught only five fleeting glimpses of Andy who had been unlucky enough to miss her each



time. He had no idea if she were still being held in the camp, or what they might be doing to her. He felt in his heart that she was still alive but he longed for confirmation each day.

Nick, Matt, Andy and the little mute boy held clandestine meetings whenever possible, such as when most of the wardens were ganging up on a group of prisoners.

While his own day usually consisted of beatings and humiliations, Andy would have been proud to discover that Anna had started a covert school of sorts, which was also helping people cope with their imprisonment, shock and loss. She taught meditation and philosophy to anyone who would listen and she even gave quiet lessons on what had really caused the Event.

Anna felt very useful in the camp and she decided that her lot in life was to be a source of love and support for the others. She longed for her family and sent focused intention into the cosmic ether that she would see them again. She gave little attention to the risks she took to help uplift the other inmates' morale.

The availability of data that had become available in the years leading up to the Event had been truly staggering. Andy and Anna had attempted to take full advantage of it and she was now able to put some of her wisdom into the service of others.

She had long since reconciled herself with the imminent death of her body. It had been a monumental event in their lives when she and her husband had made the choice to remain in Ojai and simply await the Cataclysm, which they knew, would result in their deaths.

They discovered their peaceful Zen philosophy through extensive reading of ancient texts from Sumeria, Babylon and Egypt, cross-referenced with modern scientific titles and relatively recent finds such as the Nag Hammadi scriptures and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Anna had also explored the far more contemporary *Message from*

*the Pleiades* and *The Law of One* channellings with aliens and even Ra himself.

The fascinating, mind-altering truth was just beginning to come into focus within the scientific community, the truth that Thoth and others have always taught; *All is One - the Universe is mental*.

She had learned of the revelatory experiments with water, that when bombarded with the scientist's chosen *intent*, whether nurturing or harmful, the molecular structure of the water actually changed. The former grew into beautiful, harmonious symmetry while the negative intent had caused discordant and chaotic disfigurement to the pattern.

Anna thought often of her father and brother-in-law but was grateful that she still had her sister and three nieces. There were rumors that the soldiers were beginning to take children into reeducation centers where they would be reconditioned to fit the New World Order.

She missed Merlyn and Andy viscerally but sent them love throughout each day they had been apart. She closed every night with a prayer, not just for herself or her family, but for *all* of Gaia.

2022 - Los Padres National Forest, California

The Wanderers sat, stood or paced impatiently in their underground hall. The discussion centered around the list had grown heated and divisive. Although nearly everyone favored an excursion of some kind, every idea or stratagem put forth was quickly found to be fatally flawed.

Hank and Merlyn, to their credit, did not attempt to guide the clan's opinions one way or the other. They listened but participated lightly until the others had fully exhausted their ideas, then Hank nodded to Merlyn and rose from his chair.

"I don't see that we have too many choices when all is said and done. I think that we should split into groups and approach FEMA/Nordhoff from all sides. We will try to find a way to get the prisoners out once we have seen the layout of the camp."

Several individuals assented immediately to this plan but Merlyn had his doubts, "We can't share information or plan our attack simultaneously if we're split up. I think we should stick together."

Hank seemed to be at a loss for words for a moment then appeared to be flabbergasted, "All of us? We'd be caught for sure!"

"We could stick together until we are close enough to make a plan. Then we could split up." The majority of Wanderers enjoined Merlyn's opinion, causing Hank to frown.

"Okay, but how is a big group going to get down the mountain without being noticed?" The mood in the cave grew somber as every member realized the gravity of the proposed undertaking.

Merlyn pondered the issue for a long time before an idea occurred to him. "What if I went alone?" Charlie, Lucas and Emily immediately objected so he rephrased the question. "What if only the four of us went?"

Someone piped up from the dark corner of the cave, "What if they capture you alive? They'll torture you until you tell them where we are!" His question hung dangerously in the air until Merlyn answered it.

"We'll give them my old site eight miles southwest of this cave. If you stay under ground they shouldn't be able to find you."

"We'll be sitting ducks if someone squeals!" said the one from the shadows.

Hank's face lit up and he chimed in, "That could actually work, except I should go with you!"

The discussion continued along those lines until the small task-force of five had been agreed upon, loaded with supplies and fully armed. Hank led the group out of the trapdoor and into the cool night air and they began the long journey down the mountain toward the little town of Ojai.

They successfully avoided notice and skirted the imposing roadblock on Highway 33 just north of Fairview Road. Merlyn led them onto Rancho Road, whose height afforded them a clear view of the former high school only two or three hundred yards away.

They shared the binoculars and collectively surveyed the war-torn scene. The large field that lay between Rancho Road and FEMA/Nordhoff, once a favorite place to watch the Fourth of July fireworks display, was now a parking lot for the ugly machines of war. Jeeps, hummers, armored personnel carriers and tanks stood at attention in neat rank and file order. Most had been painted white with *UN* written in the familiar bold black lettering but some green ones belonged to the US Army and the black ones to the Ventura County sheriff's department or department of homeland Security.

Merlyn's heart faltered at the sight of the monstrous prison that had been constructed on the football field. He observed the double rows of twenty-foot high chain-link fences topped with insidious coils of razor wire.

He noted that the announcer's little room at the top of the bleachers to the north had been converted for use as a central guard-tower. He had stood there many times on weekends and knew that you could see just about everything from up there.

"It will be hard to avoid detection from that watchtower," he whispered to the group. "I think we'll need to draw all of their attention in the other direction." Merlyn stated the words without enthusiasm.

"How are we going to do that?" Charlie asked.

"We could blow up a few cars over by Vons to the south. If we time it right, we can set them on a fuse and get clear before they blow. If we stagger the fuses to blow every few minutes, they might think there's a big threat in that region and throw all their attention on it," Merlyn suggested.

"And sneak in the back, behind the bleachers!" Hank offered excitedly.

"Then what?" Emily asked. She was not at all certain that she wanted to be where she was or to be doing what she was doing.

"I guess we use the bolt-cutters and cut through those fences. We'll lead the people to the north," Merlyn's hollow words didn't even convince himself.

Hank said enthusiastically, "I think it'll work if we can time it correctly. I'll set the diversions and you four should cut the prisoners loose."

"You know how to blow up a car?" Merlyn was impressed, *he* didn't have any clear idea how it was to be done.

"Oh sure, you leave that to me. You guys should get started right after the first charge blows. I'll rig 'em to start at midnight; five of them two minutes apart so you'll only have ten minutes of real cover."

The plan appeared to be sound as they played it through their mind's eyes. *While all eyes are looking south, we'll cut a few holes in the chain-link prison and everyone will come running out to the north. Most of them would be recaptured but maybe some would escape to the hills. Maybe someone would be reunited with their family.*

"Excuse me, I'm gonna go find a place to relieve myself," Hank said as he rose and left the room.

\* 60 \*

September 24, 2015 - The Atlantic Ocean

Lillith attempted her gaze attack at the archangel who merely laughed back at her. "Come now, my queen, surely you do not consider us equals."

"My nuclear warheads will destroy this world and you along with it!" she hissed belligerently.

"It disappoints me to discover that, after these many eons, you have learned so little. You have placed your faith in crude instruments whose navigational systems are easily overrun. The missiles shall arrive upon your own head in twelve minutes. Your soul will be shattered into such multitudinous minutiae that it will never be whole again. Nevermore will you know the blessed shape of incarnation or the sanctity of individual thought. You, Lillith, are finished as an entity."

Lillith's ovoid eyes bulged as her heart ached like never before. *Surely this can't happen to me!* she thought vapidly and decided to try another tact with the Lord of Lies.

Her mind raced over the thousands of pleas for mercy that she had heard in her long life, searching for any appeal that would avert her impending doom. Yet, she found that she could not remember being brought to mercy by any of them and despaired now of diverting the dark archangel from executing his punishing will upon her eternal soul.

"But surely you, of all Beings, cannot justifiably harbor anger toward me for what I have done. Maybe," she added coyly, "you even enjoyed it a little?"

Samael laughed coldly and replied, "I have always enjoyed you, Lillith. That is why you have been my queen for so many ages. Yet, I have foreseen this moment countless times and this, truly, is your end."

Lillith's serpentine form writhed menacingly around the chaotic chimera, her forked-tongue lashing the air around the archangel's face. "Did you reroute the rocket I sent to the moon as well?" Immense fangs were revealed by her vindictive smile. "Or is it already out of your range?"

Had the archangel a heart, it would have stopped dead. He had not known about the thirteenth missile but he now sensed the truth of its existence and trajectory. The archangel had long held secret armies in hidden bases on the dark side of the moon. If Lillith's warhead targeted his own nuclear facility there, the moon and hundreds of millions of Beings would be annihilated, *his* Beings. He howled in impotent rage at the ancient adversary whom he had so severely underestimated in the end.

Without the moon, Gaia's rotation would become unstable, she would spin ever more slowly creating longer daily cycles. The surface of the earth would become nothing but deserts and ice-caps

with nothing in between. The perpetual motion of the oceans would slow to that of mere lakes. Millions of species would become extinct and the world would become virtually uninhabitable for humans. *What use was lordship over such a planet?*

The archangel saw more than three-thousand years' planning threatened in an instant. A lump developed in his throat as the all-too-human emotion of fear entered his soul. In that moment, he realized that he *loved* his plan, loved his domination over the world, and that this love must be crushed deep within his soul or he risked imperfect darkness. *This, he thought, must never happen. The path back toward the light would take thousands of eons.*

"Goodbye, Lillith," he said flatly and willed himself elsewhere.

Lillith, who did not wield the knowledge of teleportation, rushed to the helipad outside but remembered that she had to raise the island out of the water first. She began the sequence and the immense hydraulic motors began to hoist the small island. This accomplished, Lillith then ran to the helipad and pressed the button to lift the chopper from its subterranean garage. As it was rising, ever so slowly, Lillith looked into the sky.

Twelve invisible warheads left long trails of puffy exhaust through the sky as they convened upon her. This time, there would be no dramatic, last-minute exit for the Queen of the Damned. She would suffer the fate that she had willed upon others. *At least, she thought sardonically\*, there won't be any pain.*



2022 - Ojai, California

At ten minutes to eleven, Merlyn and the *kids* gathered to inspect each other's gear and discuss their roles. Merlyn was to take the point, followed by the others who were to travel as a group fifty feet behind him. Charlie carried the bolt-cutters while the others held crowbars to help move the chain-link fencing aside because they knew that many prisoners would have to move very fast through a small opening. Merlyn looked into their faces and was proud to see resolve in their eyes. He looked across the room at Hank and noticed that he was sweating profusely.

"Hank, are you gonna be okay?" he asked.

Hank stood up and nodded reassuringly. "I'll be fine, all I gotta do is blow up some cars, right?" The group shook hands with him solemnly as he left to set his charges. Merlyn and the remaining Wanderers endured the excruciating hour in silence and then moved out. They crossed the five-way intersection of Highway 33, El Roblar and Rancho Road and reached the boggy nature preserve behind the high school.

They hid in the dense Eucalyptus grove and waited tensely for Hank's first diversion. There didn't seem to be many guards on-duty but Merlyn knew they would soon rise to arms like well-ordered Minutemen. He scanned the area around them carefully but missed the Marines who had been cleverly camouflaged and lying in wait all around them.

A moment later a rifle barrel touched Merlyn's temple and he heard the whispered words, "Don't even breathe, rebel."

Twelve seconds later, Hank watched nervously as Merlyn and the three kids were handcuffed and loaded into a humvee. "What will happen to them?" he asked the general who was standing next to him.

"They will be executed in front of the prisoners."

Hank's conscience grappled with his soul as he tried to swallow the jagged, bitter pill of consequence. "So you'll leave the rest of us alone now, right?"

General Arthur MacDouglas' grim face did not change as he looked at Hank and said, "You will lead me to them now."

Hank's face paled as he whined, "But you promised to leave us alone! We had a deal!" The general merely looked at him from behind mirrored glasses.

Hank's face grew defiant, "I'll never tell you where they are!"

The general had anticipated the man's change of heart but yet was still slightly surprised by it. He was impressed by the number of traitors who chose to become martyrs after their treacherous deed had been accomplished. He turned to a colonel and issued a terse command.

Hank was taken to the men's locker room within the FEMA/Nordhoff compound where he was to be tortured as a terrorist according to US law. As he was stripped and strapped into the chair, he was the only one present who did not know with certainty that he would soon reveal any secret they wished to extract from him. Forty-five minutes later, Hank led the Marines to the Wanderers hidden cave that still harbored the unsuspecting refugees.

A helicopter soon returned with the new prisoners and the entire clan of Wanderers, including Hank, were shackled and placed in a holding cell until, as one guard had cheerfully informed them, they would be publicly executed by guillotine.

2022 - Ojai, California

Rumors of all kinds swept through the prison, carrying with them the seeds of discontent. When the stories reached Spade's ears he couldn't believe them. *Who ever heard of the military beheading prisoners?* It all seemed far too barbaric to him and he dismissed the rumors as nonsense.

On the other side of the prison yard, Andy was explaining the very plausibility of the rumor to a small group of men. "The state of Utah legalized the guillotine as an approved means of dispensing corporal punishment in 2014! There were reports of thirty-thousand military-grade head-choppers being shipped to nearly every military base in America way back in 2015."

The men grumbled disbelievingly and, one by one or in pairs, they began to move away from Andy and his conspiracy theories. *These are indisputable facts!* he thought wildly. *It was in all the newspapers, you people just didn't care! Even now, while you're locked up in a government camp at the local high school, you still can't believe it.* He shook his head sadly as life had taught him to do many years earlier.

Andy didn't understand why they were keeping him alive at all. They knew that he was a dissenter but they treated him no worse than the others. His rather innocent, naive mind had not even conceived of the possibility that his, and nearly everyone else's, very existence was being used as bait to lure refugees down from the mountains. The rumors of an execution at dawn chilled his nerves but he entertained no thoughts that his son might be among them.

When the news reached Anna, she knew instinctively that Merlyn was the young leader everyone in camp was talking about; the seventeen-year old boy who had been caught with a small group of rebels. Long before the prisoners were lined up to witness the

executions the following day, she knew that something drastic had to be done.

She began to organize a rather overt *prayer meeting*, beginning with those women who were in her own tent-cell. She encouraged everyone to hold hands and focus their energies in support of the prisoners. This peaceful act caught on like wildfire amid the torment and helplessness in the camp and soon, nearly half of the females were maintaining an impromptu spiritual vigil. It mattered not whether the prayers were offered to Jesus, God, Allah, the Creator or to the Universe and Gaia herself; the accumulated energy was palpable.

When Andy caught word of what the women were doing, he sensed the hand of his soul-mate in it. Although it was a far less popular notion among the men, and the hand-holding was dispensed with altogether, Andy succeeded in unifying some of them into a similar focus.

He coerced them gently but passionately, "C'mon you guys, just focus your energy on love. That's it!" He knew that it would be hard for the men to accept, ignorant as they were of the universal laws, but he had to do something. He remembered that a true quorum was rarely necessary to effect great change and knew that even a small percentage of unified thought would be sufficient.

The prisoners were led to a quarantined area in the center of the camp and shackled to a fourteen-foot military grade guillotine that had been wheeled in during the hidden hour before sunrise. The effect their appearance had on the waking prisoners was intense and extreme. The women wailed woefully while the men roared and rioted, yet there was seemingly nothing that could be done for the doomed.

The women maintained a sense of practicality and gleaned the names of the children from the shackled prisoners themselves and passed their identities around the camp with the efficiency of a

news-wire. Anna closed her eyes tightly when she heard her son's name circulate on the lips around her but she did not alter her strategy. She moved slowly through the crowd, who parted for her, while she sang Allison Krause's *\*Down to the River to Pray* and, soon, others fell in line behind her.

The men took up the haunting tune and added their collective baritones to the spiritual melee that was spontaneously arising from the desperation of the moment. They, who could not fight injustice with strength, had been distilled in an alchemical process which separated that which was wholesome and pure within them from that which was impure. Since the prisoners at FEMA/Nordhoff could not attempt to fight fire with fire, they instead chose to employ a higher law against a lower; love versus oppression.

A distinct mood of calm energy settled over the camp and the riots were quelled from within before rubber bullets and tear gas had been deemed necessary. The soldiers appeared to be highly unsettled by the strange development. They, who had only been trained to fight, did not know how to combat the inescapable unity of love that was suddenly confronting them. They fingered their rifles and batons nervously while their superiors chose how the incident would be dealt with. *Once their orders came, they would know what to do.*

\* 63 \*

2022 - Ojai, California

General Arthur MacDouglas was not pleased with the development in his camp, especially not on a morning when he was to be visited by his own superior officer. Lieutenant General Clinton Bush was due to arrive at any minute to witness the riots, which the military knew, were sure to occur either before or after the executions. *They always did.*

The higher-ranking general arrived amidst the pomp that was due his three-stars. As General MacDouglas escorted General Bush around the camp, they had been expecting to be cursed at by the desperate prisoners, but they were met with nothing but a radiant cloud of positive energy. Most of the captives had their eyes closed and appeared to be either meditating or praying. A chilly sense of foreboding charged up Arthur's spine and he, too, began to exhibit the sense of calm resignation that characterized the strange, quiet protest.

General Bush said, "What is this...feeling that you have allowed to develop in your camp, General?"

"I don't know, sir. It isn't the reaction that I would have expected from them this morning."

"Hmm," Bush grumped. He would clearly be dissatisfied with anything short of a riot and the requisite violence that would be required to quell it. "Well, they'll be singing a different tune after the first head rolls into the basket."

They paraded into the quarantined area like eighteenth-century French monarchs to inspect the prisoners and soon took their seats facing them. Military regulations state that blood can shoot up to fifteen feet from a severed neck so the two generals had been stationed a safe twenty feet away.

General Arthur MacDouglas did not condone what was about to be done but, like so many other military men, felt powerless to stop it. He knew that he would simply continue to follow orders and that would keep his own family safe, but he shuddered at the thought of his wife, mother or son, observing him now.

Sergeant Dickens hated his job as the guillotine engineer and it was beginning to show. He had rarely completed an execution lately without getting sick. He couldn't even look at the prisoners this time; he had been warned that some of them were young.

*Why does the government make me kill kids?* he asked himself.  
*Why do I let them?*

He had considered submitting his own neck to the vile instrument he had been taught to know so intimately, but something, the inkling of a higher purpose perhaps, had always held him back.

When Andy and Anna reached the fence nearest to their condemned son, the crowd of five thousand grew eerily silent. Merlyn's eyes moved between his parents and his heart ached that they would be forced to watch him die.

He had told the Wanderers that the calm which had overtaken the prisoners was likely the work of his parents. Or rather, it was the hand of Wisdom, administered to the people, *through* his parents. He was proud of them for banishing the anger and hate from their own, as well as from the hearts of the people around them, both soldier and captive.

One final axiom from old Celtia entered his mind and he recalled it being the first and most important rule of the druids: *Do not disfigure thy soul.* He, his parents and his Wanderers would go to their deaths with the pride of knowing that they had refused to let the darkness of anger and hate enter their souls.

He knew that their souls, individually and collectively, were on an infinite journey that transcended their present sacrifice. He tried to explain something of this philosophy to the poor, young Wanderers who were shackled to him in wide-eyed fear, though they had not the benefit of his parents' gnostic teachings.

He was grateful to his parents for teaching him the wisdom to accept the universal laws, and thus his own death, without great upheaval of spirit. *In truth*, he thought, *I worry more about the executioner's soul. He doesn't really look like a bad guy at all.*

2022 - Ojai, California

The moment was finally upon them. The visiting general spoke a few words about the evils of subversion toward the New World Government, which were met with muted response from the throng of prisoners who had not led subversive lives. To his parents' horror, Merlyn was unshackled first and led toward the guillotine. Then, to everyone's horror, General Bush interceded and ordered the little girl, Emily, to face the guillotine first. Andy and many other men started to lose the fight against hate in their hearts but they still did not react.

Emily's fear overcame her twelve-year old mind and she screamed at Sergeant Dickens. "How can you do this? How come everyone wearing a uniform is a monster? You should take it off, it's going to kill your soul!"

The blue-eyed, handsome young man held her eyes for several moments. He knew that he was supposed to place her tiny little neck into the crevice and lock her in place according to DHS regulations. He also knew that the little girl was right and his uniform *had* turned him into a monster, a demon that he couldn't live with any longer.

His hand moved slowly to the top button on his fatigues. *Maybe God will still forgive me.* He didn't understand that forgiveness, or damnation, would come from within himself.

The two generals could both understand what was happening but only one rose against it. General Bush drew his revolver and aimed it at Sergeant Dickens.

"You will execute your orders, Sergeant, or I will execute you for treason."



The sergeant kept his gaze on Emily and his fingers moved to the second button. The general did not wait for him to finish. The pistol flashed and the sergeant's body fell to the ground with a soul-less grunt as the air was forced out of his lungs.

"I want another man up there, now!" the general screamed at the men. No one moved. Bush, a three-star general, turned to the single-star General MacDouglas and barked, "You get someone to man that weapon or you get up there and do it yourself!"

Arthur's thoughts were suddenly on the peaceful summers he had spent in Maine as a child. He could smell the maple within the trees and had been one with the life in the forest around him. Roused slightly by General Bush's maniacal lust for blood, he replied coolly, "Do you want some freshly-tapped maple syrup, General?"

Rage burst the blood vessels in Bush's eyes and nose and he turned to the nearest enlisted man. "You! Get up there, now!" The man did not move although one or two of the spectators may have spotted a single tear descend the Marine's cheek just before a bullet from the general's pistol ended his life.

The rabid general turned to the next four brave men with the same result. The lucky seventh man ignored the general and his empty revolver completely, crossed in front of him and began to unlock the door that separated the quarantined zone from the general population. "Enough is enough, General. I'm letting the people go."

A gung-ho detachment of special forces opened fire on the unlucky seventh man and he dropped to the ground like meat. This act polarized the rest of the troops who drew their own weapons and took aim at the special forces. The ensuing gunfight left twelve dead soldiers lying in growing pools of crimson littered with white, shattered bone-fragments.

The prisoners maintained the supernatural calm as the soldiers unlocked the gates. Scattered incidents of violence occurred but were quickly quelled by the new-found pacifism of the many individuals who had witnessed the uttermost reaches of inhumanity and had turned away from it.

The energy, and the accompanying acts of noble defiance against military law, spread synergistically throughout California. Had a Rothschild-owned newspaper existed, they would have reported widespread treason and rebellion, yet in truth, very little violence accompanied the soldiers' peaceful disobedience.

When news of California's dissenting soldiers spread through the states, all those in uniform who had secretly questioned the tactics of the New World Order began to lay down their weapons as well. Soldiers simply refused to pull the triggers.

News of the peace spread through the military-controlled airwaves until the entire world, once manipulated through covert means by a hidden few, was suddenly illuminated with the truth that resistance was possible. Soldiers who fired upon soldiers for their peaceful treason were soon cut down by others who had grown tired of serving as agents of violence and oppression.

All incidents of violence soon stopped altogether as no further retribution was sought by the people. The balance of power quickly shifted away from *the few* to be taken into the hands of *the people* within hours as prisoners were released by the millions.

2022 - Ojai, California

The scene at FEMA/Nordhoff, and around the globe, was a joyous one as families were reunited with each other. Everywhere one looked, there were teary but joyous reunions among the downtrodden refugees. The soldiers had removed their uniforms and were taking part in the heartwarming scene themselves. They were then only conspicuous by their well-fed and unbruised physiques, yet no one sought retribution from them.

The prison experience had awakened them as individuals and they had learned how to transcend the false divisions that had led to hatred. Everyone was just grateful that it was over.

Against all odds, Andy, Anna and Merlyn found themselves embracing once more. Tears of joy and relief streamed down their cheeks unchecked as the realization of what had just occurred fully dawned upon them. *A quorum of love and peace had actually been reached! The light has finally overcome the darkness!*

"I'm so glad you two are okay!" Merlyn cried and his sentiments were emphatically returned by his parents. Long-held fears of never seeing each other again could now be dismissed and the energy released as a result was spreading through the world.

"What happened with the soldiers?" Merlyn asked.

"I think they finally had enough, they simply stopped pulling the triggers." Andy said respectfully. It had been hard to watch the first noble, rebellious soldiers fall to martyrdom but their sacrifice had saved many others who were far more innocent than *any* war-time soldier. They had fallen because no one else could stop the military machine; it had to be dismantled from within.

As Merlyn knew they would, his parents took the orphans, Charlie and Lucas, into the family as their own. The three boys who had met as strangers upon the battlefield of life had now become brothers.

Matt and Nick greeted their wives and the children on weak knees, sobbing heavily with gratitude. Anna, Judy and Laurie had been able to shelter the girls from the worst that imprisonment had threatened them with, but Matt could still see the pain in their eyes. Anger passed through his mind at their loss of innocence but was recalled to hope by the girls' sing-songy voices. He knew that they would be okay in time.

Spade was reunited with his mom and daughter in a similar manner. He re-introduced the boy who had spent nearly seven years under Spade's care. Daisy Lou remembered him right away but Tiffany eyed him suspiciously for a moment before blurting out, "I remember you from the *cave days!* I'm glad you're back, you're the best listener I know!"

The boy's eyes sparkled brightly. He still harbored fears that Spade would forget about him when it was all over but now his fears were assuaged. He knew that he had truly become part of Spade's family. The boy remained mute and they never learned his real name but his good nature eventually earned him the nickname *Handy*, and he seemed to like it.

Daisy Lou saw a man with a severe limp and a long beard pass by. He was conspicuous not by his limp as much as by the fact that he seemed to be alone. Daisy Lou moved empathetically toward the man and touched his shoulder. The grizzled, downcast face turned toward her and she gasped.

"Joe! You're alive!" She put her arms around him and they wept quietly together. She sensed that Joe was in danger of losing his way and didn't want to let him go.

"Yeah, I made it," he said with an honest smile. "They shot me in the leg and never took the darned bullet out. So I have a pretty good limp but at least it didn't get infected."

"Oh, Joe. I can't tell you how glad I am to see you. God himself moved through you, Joe, and you saved me and my niece. I want to introduce you to my family, I told them all about you."

Joe's first instinct was to reject her offer but then he gave it another thought. *There will be a lot of rebuilding to do and maybe they could use a good mechanic.*

Daisy Lou introduced Joe to Andy and Anna, who expressed their extreme gratitude for his selfless heroism. Merlyn was standing with the kids when his father called him over to meet Joe. Merlyn could still remember the story of the man in the black Trans Am and was glad to finally shake his hand.

"And who are these kids?" Joe asked.

"We're not kids, mister," Charlie interjected proudly, "we're Wanderers!"

Merlyn pointed to him and said, "The loud one is Charlie, that's Lucas and-"

Joe stared at the twelve year old girl who now looked so grown up and weary. "Emily, oh God, is it you?" Great wracking sobs overwhelmed him and rooted him to the ground where he stood.

"Daddy? Daddy!" Recognition flooded into Emily's face. She had never understood what had gone wrong between her parents but she had always held a special place in her heart for her daddy, and here he was. She ran toward him and they embraced unabashedly.

Eventually, Joe had to ask his daughter, "What happened to your mom?"

Emily started crying, "I don't know, I was so young. I kind of remember soldiers taking me away to this camp. I think they took her somewhere else."

Joe shut his eyes tightly and held his daughter closer. When he looked up at Daisy Lou and her family it was with hope in his moist eyes. As Mankind itself was no longer bound to the veiled life experience they had known, Joe knew there was also a rare opportunity in the post-apocalyptic world for him and his estranged daughter to shape their relationship anew.

\* 66 \*

Archangel Samael felt the dimensional shift occur in the human consciousness and understood that the game was over, he had lost. He had suspected that the severe trauma of the Event, coupled with the vastly reduced population, could possibly polarize enough of them toward the path of light, but he hadn't really expected it of them. The prisoners had been asleep for so long that slumber had overcome their captor as well. Now he understood that his time of power had come to its end.

A tiny spark of light erupted in his psyche and, for the first time in vast millennia, he chose not to snuff it out of existence. He realized that he was happy for the human beings who had suffered so much by his hand. He was happy, too, that his role as *Adversary of Man* was finally over.

Archangel Samael fell to his knees and wept mournful cries that penetrated deep into the earth. At that moment, no one in the universe would have traded places with the ancient devil who had long wielded such awesome deceptive power.

The Three Sleepers heard his sorrowful song and laughed between themselves. They knew that the archangel had forsaken the dark path and found great humor in the contemplation of the eons of grueling labor that his soul would be forced travel on its long path back toward the light. They gorged upon Samael's unprotected loesche, firm in the knowledge that his fate would never be their own.

A bodiless Being of Light, existing on the 6th density, studiously marked the irony of their sentiments. He knew that the Sleepers would eventually realize that they, too, must one day begin their own journey back toward the light, and it would be a much longer journey than even the devil's own path toward redemption.

#### \* Epilogue \*

Amidst the global reverie, an immense, moon-sized spacecraft warped into the earth's atmosphere with the suddenness of light. It had long been in place but its cloaking device had kept it safely hidden in another dimension. Shadows moved over the earth as smaller, yet still city-sized craft, stationed themselves along the ley lines of the earth at historic locations.

Israel, Iran, Iraq, Egypt and India were occupied first, followed by Turkey, Greece, Italy and Spain. They quickly spread further into Europe to the north and east into Russia and China. The enormous crafts settled over parts of Africa, Australia and were dense over the Americas as well.

Human society had fallen and its survivors were wholly unprepared to face an alien invasion. They were powerless spectators who could do little but turn their faces up to the sky and hope the beings came in peace.

An order was issued from deep within the largest craft and the smaller crafts blazed into radiant color around the world. Pure,

white light pulsed upward from Gaia's dragon lines and into the crafts where it was focused like a prism. Rainbows of energy shot through the earth, travelling upon the conductive ley lines like an electronic circuit.

The humans were bombarded with waves of pure energy, which held them enthralled as they were prepared for psychic contact. It was an ecstatic period of instant revelation for the survivors of the apocalypse. The mysterious light transferred upon them a higher perspective and knowledge which enabled them to see through the veils that had been set before them. For the first time in recorded history, human beings were free of the bondage of darkness and could choose their path in the light.

Due to the energetic bombardment, a voice was able to make itself heard and understood by all of Gaia at once:

"Greetings People of Earth, We are representatives from the Galactic Confederation of Light and have come to deliver an important message to you all.

Long have we watched your struggle and heard your cries for help, but you have isolated yourselves into a *victim consciousness*. This giving of your faith to something outside of yourselves, in hopes that you will be *saved*, vibrates below the necessary levels for you to enter our higher dimensions.

We have been awaiting the time when you would awaken from your long nightmare and realize that it has always been of your own creation. The truth of who and what humanity really is has been buried deep beneath a landslide of misinformation.

Each and every being on this planet arrived with the purpose of bringing the situation here into alignment with the cosmic plan of Free Will experience, which leads to balance. That *intention* is there to be tapped in order to bring this situation to completion. When humanity, or at least a significant portion of it, can go



*through* this situation and heal it themselves, then and only then can they move through their intention to come into balance.

The goal of all should be the eternal process known as *Becoming*. How this is to be accomplished is uniquely experienced through Free Will choice. Each must know that theirs is a unique experience not to be compared with others. Each incarnation is chosen for one's own particular soul-purpose and is to be created through their choices and decisions. There are no mistakes other than to remain closed to seemingly new concepts and continue to repeat the current experience.

Planet earth is now poised at the transition point of several cycles. This is an occurrence that does not happen frequently and is of great interest to this portion of the galaxy and has earned the close attention of the Creator. The result of these coinciding cycles is that the transition between polarities will be of greater impact and import, enhanced by the fact that the consciousness of the Beings and the planet, Gaia herself, are also poised to ascend to the Fourth Dimension of experience.

Due to your failure to make the transitions that were available in the last cycle, approximately 26,000 years ago, you have been slow to arrive at a sufficient level of evolvement. Added to this has been the insidious plan of the adversarial forces to disrupt the cycle transition into deliberate chaos with the intent of continuing the negative polarity cycle at the expense of *your* evolvement.

I hope that this brief explanation helps to bring into understanding the necessity of the humans on this planet to make the necessary leap in consciousness in order to survive the transition of energies into the next cycle by coming together in a *mass consciousness* focused upon increased frequency.

Prepare yourselves to rise now, into the Fourth Density, and take the responsibility further. Learn to use the Universal Laws to take charge of your physical expression. Become aware of the

planetary situation that is being observed by your galactic neighbors, most of whom are existing in a higher vibrational state of existence than planet earth.

Knowing the truth and knowing what to do after the truth is learned is another matter. The Universal Laws require that this branch of mankind must come into understanding, and with deliberate focus, overcome your victim consciousness through personal responsibility in order to change your experience.

Appreciation of the gift of self-awareness is understanding that a piece of absolute potentiality, that is the sum of *All That Is*, is the point of coagulation around which all living things exist, and this power dwells *within you*. No worship is necessary, to begin to comprehend it is to honor it.

The important first step you have finally chosen opens the doorway to re-entry into the galactic family that you have been separated from for so long. The family has been anxious for your return and desires to help you in any way that is allowed now that Earth's inhabitants have taken the responsibility of ownership upon themselves.

Those who choose a New Paradigm will have many choices and opportunities of places to continue their evolution. The members of the ground crew, Light-workers, Indigo Children, etc., will come to remember who they really are and will be welcome to return to their points of origin. The balance will be returned, though your planet and human societies will require our combined assistance to be returned to health.

We hope that you have developed a deeper appreciation of the Creator as a result of the opportunity you have received; the opportunity to experience self-awareness manifested into the glory of a human body and thus evolve through the process of expressing creational energies from within."

The enigmatic voice ceased speaking into the humans' minds but the craft remained to activate the powerful ley lines that criss-crossed Gaia's surface. The survivors knew that they were no longer quarantined from the rest of the universe and would finally receive some honest guidance. They turned their thoughts to building a New Paradigm of existence, one that existed in harmony with the Universal Laws which had been hidden from them for so long.

### *The Beginning*

